

The **PRESIDENT**: The hon. member was not in order in quoting from "Hansard" of the current session.

Hon. H. Seddon: These were remarks by the Premier which I read in the Press, and which I afterwards saw in "Hansard."

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [12.56]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn to Tuesday, the 6th September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 12.57 a.m. (Thursday).

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 17th August, 1927.

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

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES, SUBSIDY.

Mr. **FERGUSON** asked the Premier: In view of the educational value to the general community of agricultural shows, will the Government take steps to re-instate the subsidy to agricultural societies?

The **MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS** (for the Premier) replied: It is regretted that other and more urgent claims on Government funds make this impossible at present.

QUESTION—STATE SHIPPING SERVICE, EXTENSION.

Mr. **COVERLEY** asked the Premier: 1, Do the State Shipping Service propose to extend their monthly trips to Wyndham? 2, If so, when will the extension commence?

The **MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS** (for the Premier) replied: 1 and 2, The provision of monthly trips would entail heavy loss to the service under present conditions, but the matter will be reconsidered as developments warrant.

QUESTION—HALL'S CREEK, MEDICAL OFFICER.

Mr. **COVERLEY** asked the Minister for Health: 1, Does he intend financially to assist the residents of Hall's Creek for the appointment of a district medical officer? 2, If so, to what amount?

The **MINISTER FOR HEALTH** replied: 1, The matter will be favourably considered if application be made in accordance with the adopted arrangement for subsidised doctors. 2, Two-thirds of the difference between income from private practice and £1,000 per annum. One third of such difference would require to be guaranteed by a local committee.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Ninth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.36]: I have had the pleasure of speaking on the Address-in-reply on numerous occasions. This debate is supposed to present an opportunity for members to discuss all matters that they consider to be of importance to the State.

Mr. Griffiths: It provides a good safety valve.

Mr. **THOMSON**: I hope some members will not be superstitious of the fact that this is the thirtieth Parliament. Possibly some do feel that way and look forward to the next elections with a certain amount of trepidation. The latest election was remarkable for the fact that it left the personnel of Parliament practically unchanged and, in a sense, no election need

have taken place. It is true that the Constitution provides for an election every three years, but the extraordinary result of the latest contest was that all the members save one who submitted themselves for re-election were returned with a large majority. The Country Party have reason to feel proud that they were the only section that increased their numbers. We have now arrived at the happy position of having reached a perfect number, because Country Party members now total seven.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: And in the thirteenth Parliament, too.

Mr. THOMSON: I think the House will agree with me that the new member for Moore (Mr. Ferguson) is a decided acquisition to our strength, and I feel sure that he will prove creditable to us generally. In the Governor's Speech one naturally looked for a promise of a redistribution of seats Bill. Prior to the expiration of last Parliament, the Premier informed us that such a measure would be introduced at the proper time and in the proper place. I am not going to enumerate the various electorates or the number of electors for each, but I think everyone will agree that a redistribution of seats Bill is long overdue. I am one of those who feel that if we had had an equitable redistribution of seats, the results of the election would have been different. In addition, the Government would have been in a better position to claim that they had a mandate from the country. I am not going to quote figures, but it is quite possible that the action of the Main Roads Board in putting 600 odd men into various electorates did affect the final results of the election.

The Minister for Lands: It could not have had the slightest influence.

Mr. THOMSON: I think it had. In my opinion there are at least three districts in which the action of the Main Roads Board had a very material effect.

The Minister for Lands: Name those districts.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not intend to mention them; I am merely stating my views. The matter has also been dealt with by other speakers and I do not propose to enter into details. The fact remains that a considerable number of men were sent into various electorates just before the election. I sincerely regret that such methods should

have been adopted, and I hope it will prove to be the last occasion on which such methods will be resorted to. It is the principle to which I object. The principle was wrong, and one cannot but admit that the present position is unsatisfactory. When the Government give consideration to a redistribution of seats Bill, I hope they will not adopt the attitude that, because they were returned with a majority, they have a mandate to bring in redistribution on the basis of one vote one value. If they do so, it will mean giving to the metropolitan area one-half of the representation.

Mr. Sleeman: You do not believe in the one-vote-one-value principle?

Mr. THOMSON: I do not think the metropolitan area is entitled to half the representation in Parliament. The Bill that was introduced by the previous Government laid down a basis that to my way of thinking was sound and equitable in the interests of the State as a whole. Therefore I hope that when the Government introduce their redistribution of seats Bill, which they will be compelled to do, it will be on a more equitable basis than that outlined by the member for Menzies (Mr. Pantou) yesterday.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The member for Fremantle represents only a quarter of the number represented by the member for Canning.

Mr. Sleeman: Bring in one vote one value and I shall be with you.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for Menzies told us yesterday that he favoured the one-vote-one-value principle.

Mr. Pantou: No; I said that that was what your side favoured.

Mr. THOMSON: Quite so, and by way of interjection I asked whether he was willing that the metropolitan area should have half of the representation in Parliament.

Mr. Pantou: Did I answer "Yes" to that?

Mr. THOMSON: I understood so.

Mr. Pantou: I said nothing of the sort.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret if I misunderstood the hon. member. I hope that when the Government introduce their Bill it will be on such an equitable basis as to give the country fair and reasonable representation.

Mr. Pantou: You take it for granted that we are going to introduce a redistribution of seats Bill.

Mr. THOMSON: I think public opinion will compel the Government to do so. No

one regrets more than I do the present unfortunate position of our goldfields areas. The goldfields electorates are reaching a very unfortunate position, and even the Minister for Mines and the member for Menzies must admit it, however reluctantly. On my return from the Eastern States recently I travelled over portion of the goldfields and I confess to a feeling of great sadness at seeing so many places, where there had once been thriving townships, from which the houses had been removed and where the country was quickly reverting to its original bush condition.

Mr. Sleeman: Do not you think we should have a more equitable method of electing another place?

Mr. THOMSON: That is a matter of opinion. I have maintained in this House, and I now maintain, that the present system of electing another place is quite equitable and just.

Mr. Sleeman: We do not agree with you.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course the hon. member does not, but I think the public of Western Australia will agree with me. At least in one House the householder, the man with a stake, should have special representation. The present qualification is a matter of paying 6s. 9d. or 7s. per week rent, or owning a block of land worth £50. Either of those qualifications entitles a man to vote for the Upper Chamber. Hon. members opposite, I know, hold with the principle of one vote, one value.

The Minister for Mines: Who said so?

Mr. THOMSON: The member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) has just been saying so.

Mr. Sleeman: I do not speak for many members.

Mr. THOMSON: I am replying to the hon. member's interjection. Seven shillings per week rent is a very low qualification, and the property qualification of £50 likewise is not too high. For my part I have maintained here, and I now maintain, that the present system of electing another place is just. People with a stake in the country are entitled to more consideration than those who might be termed birds of passage. I am perfectly sure that, as stated by the member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths), there are thousands of people who have the right to be on the Legislative Council roll but do not bother to enrol. Indeed, the Minister for Works himself, prior to the last general

election, said he was not entitled to vote for the Legislative Council. That was his own fault, because the hon. gentleman does own property in this State of the value of £50. Surely to goodness he could have had his name on the Legislative Council roll in respect of the house in which he resided.

The Minister for Mines: No, he could not.

Mr. THOMSON: He was a householder.

Mr. Marshall: He was not a householder. Nothing of the sort.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. THOMSON: I was always under the impression that a married man living in a house was a householder.

Mr. Marshall: The Minister for Works was not a householder.

Mr. THOMSON: He could have got on the Legislative Council roll if he had wanted to.

The Minister for Mines: He was disqualified.

Mr. THOMSON: Any resident in a house is entitled, if head of the household, to exercise the Council franchise.

Mr. Sleeman: The Minister for Works was not head of the house at that time.

Mr. THOMSON: Then, was his property in his wife's name?

Mr. Sleeman: No, you are wrong.

Mr. THOMSON: If his property was not in his wife's name and if he was a householder, he was entitled to vote for the Upper Chamber. At all events, the Minister for Works does happen to own some property at Pinjarra.

Mr. Sleeman: Now he does.

Mr. THOMSON: And he did then. Therefore I still maintain that the hon. gentleman was entitled to have his name placed on the Legislative Council roll, and that if his name was not on it nobody but himself was to blame.

Mr. Marshall: You would not say that if he were in the House.

Mr. THOMSON: I never make in the absence of a man any statement that I would not make in his presence. I have made this statement before, and on the public platform. However, I shall not pursue the matter further. I regret that the Minister for Justice is not in the Chamber, as I wish to draw attention to what may be considered the remarkable partisan spirit exhibited by the Electoral

Department. In the metropolitan area canvassers could be put on to go from house to house to see that everyone eligible to vote was placed on the electoral roll.

Member: You do not blame the electoral officers for that, do you?

Mr. THOMSON: The same thing applied in the goldfields areas, and at Geraldton, Bunbury and Albany. I have no objection whatever to the Electoral Department putting on canvassers to see that the rolls are full and complete, but why confine the revision to the metropolitan seats, goldfields seats, and the three ports? If it is fair and just to incur such expenditure in those places, it is logical to ask that the same conditions should apply to country districts. At Northam no canvassers were employed. It gives one cause to wonder why the Electoral Department put on canvassers, paid by the Government, to bring the rolls up to date in certain electorates while other electorates were left alone. It makes one wonder what reason actuated the Government in their action.

The Minister for Mines: One of the reasons was that we did not want to get everybody in the country on the roll, or we might have beaten you!

Mr. THOMSON: I cannot congratulate the Minister on that interjection, for certainly no effort was spared to defeat me. We had the Premier, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Lutey and Mr. Heron in my district; and they certainly spared no effort to prevent my return. I bear those gentlemen no ill-feeling whatever. They were perfectly entitled to come to my district and fight for the party with which they are allied.

Mr. Panton: It was just a change in personnel since the previous election.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so. The Governor's Speech refers to our friend Mr. Angwin, who has gone to London as Agent-General. I endorse the statement of previous speakers that that hon. gentleman will do every justice to the State, but I wish to take exception to the Government's action in curtailing the services of Sir Hal Colebatch, which were available to the State for another three years if desired. I am not speaking from any personal aspect whatever. From a public point of view I contend it is absolutely undeniable that if we send a man to represent this State in the Old Country, a term of three years is not long enough. It

is not a fair thing to ask a man to give up his seat in Parliament and leave this State and then, just when he has gained a proper grip of things in London, to recall him.

Mr. Panton: The same thing applies to Ministers.

Mr. THOMSON: With Ministers it is a matter of the voice of the people. I do honestly consider that we should extend the term of the Agent-General to at least five or six years.

The Minister for Lands: Probably that is reasonable, but it is not fair to say that the Government brought Sir Hal Colebatch back. He fulfilled his term.

Mr. THOMSON: When the Premier returned from Great Britain he stated, to the best of my recollection, that he was extremely gratified with the work Sir Hal Colebatch was doing in the Old Country. We were led to believe that Sir Hal would have a renewal of his appointment. I fully admit that three years is the period for which an Agent-General goes Home, and I want to see that period extended so that better results may be secured for the State. The ex-Agent-General had such an excellent grip of Old Country affairs, particularly from the publicity aspect, that I feel it was an unfortunate mistake to make the change when it was effected. I want it to be clearly understood that I am not casting any reflection whatever on the ability of the present occupant of the office of Agent-General. I am sure that gentleman will do his duty to the State in another sphere, for he will come into touch with numbers of people with whom probably the ex-Agent-General would not have been brought into contact. The ex-Agent-General, very fortunately for Western Australia, had the ear of the British Press; and I am just afraid that our friend the present Agent-General will not have as good a command of the Press as Sir Hal Colebatch had. What we want in the Old Country is more publicity than we are getting at present. There is such a thing as knowing the ropes, and an old journalist like Sir Hal Colebatch certainly possessed that knowledge.

The Minister for Lands: Then we must always send journalists Home?

Mr. THOMSON: I do not say that. One suggestion of which I hope the Government will make a note is this: We pass certain sums of money each year for expenditure

incurred in the Agent-General's office, and therefore I maintain that copies of the Agent-General's reports should be laid on the Table here and in another place exactly in the same way as are the reports of other departments.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If we adopt the financial agreement we shall not want an Agent-General.

Mr. THOMSON: I think we shall. I appeal to the Government to make a note of my suggestion. Every member of Parliament should be fully conversant with the doings of the Agent-General.

The Minister for Mines: I would like to be, but I do not think he submits a report.

Mr. THOMSON: He should. Sir James Connolly submitted reports. In fact, the State is entitled to such reports.

Mr. Marshall: Sir James Connolly submitted an account here at one time.

Mr. THOMSON: And rightly so. I shall deal with that matter. Good value was obtained for the account.

The Minister for Lands: The Agent-General does not make any reports.

Mr. THOMSON: Sir James Connolly did, and his reports were most valuable.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Let us have that report he sent. I will ask for it to-morrow. The Minister for Lands: What report?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Sir James Connolly's report.

The Minister for Lands: I know nothing about it.

Mr. THOMSON: There is such a report, and the Leader of the Opposition knows about it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do not know about it. I do not remember it.

Mr. THOMSON: We will leave it at that. However, there was such a report. I can produce a copy of a report which was presented to me when in London. That report was not written for me, because it was a printed report.

Hon. G. Taylor: To whom was it addressed?

Mr. THOMSON: To the Government here. The expenditure in connection with the Agent-General's office is incurred on behalf of this State, and members of Parliament are entitled to have the Agent-General's reports placed before them. I wish to repeat my statement—I regret that the Premier is not in his chair—that in my opinion the present Government made a serious mistake,

a big blunder, when they sold the Agent-General's house in the Old Country. We were in the happy position of having what might be termed an ambassador representing Western Australia in London. We had our own house there, and that circumstance had a considerable effect. Now, unfortunately, we are in the position of having our Agent-General living either in a flat or in a hotel. It carried greater weight in the eyes of the public when Western Australia had an official residence for its Agent General. After all, the world takes a public man at his own official valuation. The mere provision of an official residence demonstrated to the British people that we had confidence in our State and desired our Agent General to be housed in conditions consonant with the dignity and prestige of his office.

The Minister for Lands: One Agent-General did not desire to have the official residence.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was too big. He could not afford to keep it up.

The Minister for Lands: That is so.

Mr. THOMSON: I will deal with that phase when the Budget is before us. We should not be content with any loss of dignity where the State's interests are concerned. If we send a man home to represent us in London, we should provide him with an allowance sufficient to enable him to maintain a proper residence. We should not be parsimonious in that direction.

The Minister for Railways: There is a difference between parsimony and lavishness.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so. I have been to London and I have a knowledge of the position. I believe the Government made a serious blunder when they disposed of the official residence. No doubt the Premier was influenced by the feelings of at least one of the Agents-General, but gentlemen holding that office are our ambassadors, and we should place them in a position to enable them to maintain an official residence with dignity to themselves and credit to the State. Another matter referred to in the Governor's Speech is the approaching visit of Col. L. C. Amery, the Secretary of State for the Dominions. When the British Parliamentary Delegation were here, I was disappointed with the proceedings in this Chamber, when we were asked to meet the delegates and discuss migration matters with them. There was actually no discussion at all. I am prepared to admit that the then Minister for Lands, Hon. W. C.

Angwin, made a very full statement on migration matters and in my enthusiasm for that subject I suggested one or two ways in which migration matters could be improved. In times of stress we could have additional assistance in defence matters if we were able to induce British seamen from the Old Country to engage in the fishing industry here. I made that suggestion during the course of my remarks. I know we are sincere in our desire for a genuine migration policy, and if there had been a round table conference with the delegates, they would have left Western Australia feeling more optimistic than they did. Had a general discussion taken place, we might have been able to impress upon the delegates the advantage that would accrue to residents of their own electorates if they were persuaded to give Western Australia their first consideration. I know the Government of the day put their views before the delegation, but when Colonel Amery visits the State I hope we shall have the privilege of a round table conference with him, for I am convinced it would prove beneficial to Western Australia. Mr. Amery is one of the great statesmen of the Empire. He is a man of vision, who believes in migration within the Empire. He looks upon the transference of Britishers from the Mother Land to Australia as merely the removal of those individuals from one part of the Imperial dominions to another. That is the spirit we want to inculcate, and therefore I hope we shall have an opportunity to discuss this important question with him.

The Minister for Mines: I should like to have the opportunity to discuss his itinerary when Colonel Amery is in Western Australia, but we shall not have that privilege.

Mr. Heron: Who is arranging the itinerary?

The Minister for Mines: The Commonwealth Government, of course. We are being ignored again.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret that. If the position were put before the Commonwealth Government, no doubt we would have an opportunity to assist in arranging Colonel Amery's itinerary.

The Minister for Mines: We have put the position before the Federal authorities.

Mr. THOMSON: Colonel Amery is desirous of advancing the interests of the Empire, and of the various parts of the British

dominions. I think we could advance the interests of the State if we had an opportunity of dealing with these matters with him.

The Minister for Mines: Don't you think the Western Australian Government are in a better position to say where Colonel Amery should go in Western Australia than are the officials of the Commonwealth Government?

Mr. THOMSON: I agree with the Minister entirely. I hope it is not too late now for the Government to impress upon the Federal authorities that we should have the task of arranging the itinerary. We are all aware that arrangements were made for the Duke and Duchess of York, but they were altered because public opinion was so strongly in favour of an alteration. Surely the Federal Government must have some officers in the State with whom they could confer. Are those arrangements being made in conjunction with the Secretary of the Premier's Department?

The Minister for Mines: No, they are not.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think we should ask Colonel Amery to be our guest while he is here.

The Minister for Mines: All that we have been asked is a question concerning the condition of certain roads over which Colonel Amery is to travel. We have been asked whether the party will be able to proceed over them.

Hon. G. Taylor: What has Mr. Shapcott to say about this?

The Minister for Mines: He has as much to do with it, as he had in the arrangement of the Duke's itinerary or that of Mr. Bruce himself.

Mr. THOMSON: Well, I hope this matter will be arranged properly. Regarding the financial position we have to congratulate ourselves on having recorded a surplus—according to the statement issued publicly. There is no doubt we are doing remarkably well for such a small handful of people. It is astonishing to think that our revenue last year amounted to £9,750,833 and our expenditure to £9,722,588, leaving a surplus of £28,245. I congratulate the Government upon the financial result, if it represents the true state of affairs.

The Minister for Railways: Why put in that qualification?

Mr. THOMSON: The statement made by the member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) last night was a very scathing indictment. So far as I can judge, and taking the Premier's statement, it seems to me that if the Treasury officials have been juggling our financial returns for years past, it is time a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into our finances.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not suggest that that has been done for years past?

Mr. THOMSON: On that point I will read a statement published in the "West Australian" on the 18th July last—

Commenting on Saturday on Sir James Mitchell's criticism of the financial position, the Treasurer (Mr. P. Collier) said that Sir James had endeavoured to show that the position was worse to-day than it was when he left office, and to do so had stated that the surplus had been created by the simple process of not paying the interest bill.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Anyone can see that; he did not pay the interest.

Mr. THOMSON: I am merely reading the Premier's own statement. He continued—

I must take strong exception to that statement, and the conclusion which Sir James has applied to it. I do not think Sir James has done credit to himself in attempting to show that the State is in a worse position to-day than it was when he left office, simply because, during the election campaign, he made a foolish prophecy that there would be a deficit of a quarter of a million pounds at the end of the financial year. I have not departed from methods adopted by Sir James Mitchell when he was Treasurer, and I have not manufactured a surplus by avoiding the State's obligations to meet payments.

The Minister for Mines: That is true.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is absolutely not true! You did not pay the interest bill and the Premier has since said so himself.

Mr. THOMSON: The statement continues—

All interest due to stock holders up to the end of the financial year has been paid. What is the position?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Anyone can see the position from the Public Accounts.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret the Premier is not here. If he were in his seat we could ask him what he meant by this statement that he had not departed from previous methods.

The Minister for Railways: He meant what he said.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not blaming the Premier, Sir James Mitchell, or anyone else, but if the method has been adopted all along of charging up amounts from loan funds to revenue, then something is wrong.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: How could that be done?

Mr. THOMSON: The statement was made by the member for West Perth last night that he could prove that something like £100,000 had been taken into consolidated revenue by means of raising money at 1 per cent. and taking credit in revenue for anything from 4 per cent. to $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. He said that had been charged up against the group settlers; at least I assume it was charged up against them because the group settlements constituted the only Government activity to get the advantage of the cheap money.

The Minister for Railways: The group settlers are not paying that money.

Mr. THOMSON: That was the point raised by the member for West Perth. He said that anything from 5 to $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. was being charged up for money for which the State had to pay 1 per cent, and that the Treasurer had taken credit for that additional percentage in his revenue returns. I think I have repeated his statement correctly.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, you have not.

Mr. Marshall: You two will be getting in a tangle, if you continue!

Mr. THOMSON: That was the statement upon which the member for West Perth challenged the Government. If that is the system adopted with our finances, then it is time it was changed. The surplus has been announced not by the Premier, but by the Treasury officials, who after all are the men responsible and who put up the figures. While the Treasurer is responsible to this House, practically the work is the work of the Treasury officials. If they have misled the Treasurer and the State, it is time to see that we have a change in our Treasury officials. I urge upon the Government that the Auditor General's report should be placed on the Table at the earliest possible moment. That officer is the only one who will be able to give the House a true digest of the position.

The Minister for Mines: We cannot direct him as to his report.

Hon. G. Taylor: And a good job, too.

Mr. THOMSON: But we can ask him, in view of the position and of the criticism. One cannot but be impressed by the criticism put up by the Leader of the Opposition, for no one in the House is better able than he is to dissect the figures placed before us by the Treasurer. The Leader of the Opposition occupied the position of Treasurer for five years, and so is in a far better position than anybody else to criticise the figures submitted to the House. It is very easy for a private member in going through such a maze of figures to be misled, despite the fact that he has the public accounts to turn to. So I say the Auditor General's report should be placed on the Table at the earliest possible moment in order that members may be able to get a proper grip of the true position. I trust we have turned the financial corner and are now much nearer to being able, not only to pay our way, but to reduce the accumulated deficit, and above all to reduce taxation and render lighter the burdens imposed on the people creating the wealth of the country. The Premier was in the happy position of being able to have a balance of £58,000 from sinking fund and to have the satisfaction of the earmarking in anticipation of the £150,000 to be paid if the financial agreement is accepted by the States and the Commonwealth. That £150,000 is certainly going to be a saving to the State from the Treasurer's point of view, but his attitude is a little different from what it was when I suggested that he should reduce taxation and anticipate the amount we are going to receive from the Disabilities Commission. However, I do not propose to pursue the question of the surplus any further just now, for we shall have the opportunity to discuss the finances of the State more fully when the Budget comes before us. We have had a remarkable experience of Premiers since I have been in Parliament. I remember when we had "Gone-a-Million-Jack," who told us, of course, that the million pounds deficit had gone into the pockets of the people. Then we had our late Treasurer, who was known—I hope he will not take offence at this—as "Moo Cow Mitchell!"

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is a very good name, and I am much obliged to the people who gave it to me.

Mr. THOMSON: I think we should certainly dub the present Premier "Collier the Lucky."

Mr. Panton: Why not "Collier the Genius"?

Mr. THOMSON: No, I could not call him that, because he would not be entitled to it.

Mr. Panton: He is not entitled to the other one, either.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes he is; there can be no doubt about that. No Treasurer since Responsible Government in Western Australia has been so fortunate as the present Treasurer in respect of the treatment received from the Federal Government. He has come in on the flood tide. For years we had successive deficits, and by the vigorous land development policy inaugurated by this side of the House, with the aid of the present Government—of course, we all say that; by the vigorous development policy that has been in existence and by the beneficence of divine Providence in furnishing bountiful harvests, we have produced over 30,000,000 bushels of wheat.

Mr. Sleeman: Are we not to get any credit for good seasons?

Mr. THOMSON: If the Premier can rightfully take credit for the seasons, I say may he continue Premier of the State for all time, because then we shall always have good seasons, since we shall have at the head of the State the man who can give them to us. But nobody on either side of the House is responsible for the good seasons. As for saying that Mr. Collier is a genius, I ask what, my friends opposite would have said if we had had a repetition of the 1914 season? They then would have said, "How unfortunate that we should have come in on a bad season." But because they have had good seasons, which have been reflected in the amount of money paid in every direction and in the revenue of the railways—I shall come to that presently—

Mr. Panton: What has been wrong with the seasons since 1917?

Mr. THOMSON: I am prepared to give the Government every credit to which they are entitled.

Mr. Sleeman: Remember how the Labour Party were blamed for the drought of 1914.

Mr. THOMSON: I give the Government credit for all they are entitled to, but one hesitates to say too much in their favour.

The Minister for Lands: You were always cautious.

Mr. THOMSON: I have good occasion to be. If one is considered to be a carping

critic, he is regarded as no good and up against the Government. But if one wishes to be fair and give the Government all the credit they deserve, one learns at the next general election what the Leader of the Country Party or someone else has said. For instance, at the last general election pamphlets were sent out because one delegate at our previous conference stated that in his opinion the Western Australian Labour Government were the best Labour Government the State had ever had. That was broadcast, and it led people to infer that it was the consensus of opinion of our people. So one is naturally diffident in referring to the good qualities of the Government.

The Minister for Lands: That delegate's opinion was an honest one.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course it was, but it was not the opinion of the conference. That gentleman was quite entitled to his opinion, but the trouble was that our friends seized it as a reason why people in the country should vote for the Government.

The Minister for Lands: I believe that delegate of yours did vote for the Government.

Mr. THOMSON: He may have done so. In my opinion the present Treasurer can well be dubbed "Collier the Lucky," because no Premier of this State since the early days of John Forrest has ever been so fortunate as Mr. Collier. We hope that these good seasons will continue, and that in consequence the satisfactory prices prevailing for our wheat and wool will be maintained. The Treasurer has seized every opportunity to assail the Federal Government. Yet never before have we had a Federal Government so sympathetic with Western Australia.

The Minister for Lands: Mr. Charlton would have done far more for us.

Mr. THOMSON: That is a matter of opinion.

The Minister for Lands: His programme was to pay us £450,000 per annum for 25 years—and he is a man who keeps his promise.

Mr. THOMSON: But it would have been for the Federal Government to decide. When the Minister for Lands was sitting on these very cross benches he was at liberty to get up and speak with the utmost freedom as to what he thought should be done; but to-day, with the responsibilities of office upon him, he is not nearly so free to say what he thinks. There we have the situa-

tion also of Mr. Charlton, who is not in a position to do what the Bruce Government have done. It was the present Federal Government that brought into being the Disabilities Commission that secured £565,942 for this State.

The Minister for Mines: And the Federal Government refused to give it to us.

Mr. THOMSON: But you have had it.

The Minister for Mines: For one year!

Mr. THOMSON: You had that money on your last year's Estimates, and £200,000 of it has gone to reduce your taxation, while the Minister for Mines has in his control, pending the decision of the Government, £165,000 to be spent for the benefit of the mining industry, provided it gives some return. All this has come from the Federal Government.

The Minister for Lands: Mr. Charlton would have given it to us for 25 years.

Mr. THOMSON: On that point the Minister is more optimistic than I am. Those were not the arguments used in this House last session. However, I will reserve my comments on the financial proposals until a later date. The State Government have had £565,924 from the Federal Government by way of two years of the disabilities grant; £796,000 to write down losses on the returned soldiers and £386,000 from the Federal Aid Roads Grant. I doubt very much whether Mr. Charlton would have done what the present Federal Government have done, or would have adopted the policy of that Government in contributing to Western Australia on a population and area basis. The great bulk of the votes relied upon by Mr. Charlton's party come from the cities, and we know the keen opposition that was shown by the cities to those proposals, particularly that of the Federal Aid Roads Grant. I doubt very much whether the party my friend represents would have given Western Australia as good treatment as we have received from the Bruce Government. However, I want to draw attention to the fact that we have had in those three items £1,747,924. That has helped to lighten the burden and put the Premier in the happy position of producing his surplus.

The Minister for Railways: That is for the good of the State.

Mr. THOMSON: I quite agree. I am glad we have a Federal Government in power who recognise our rights. This Parliament will be able to tell the Premier many ways in which he can spend his

surplus of £28,000. I could use it in my own district, and no doubt other members could do the same in their districts.

Mr. Kenneally: And you condemned the officers for the part they played.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member is trying to put into my mouth something I did not say.

Mr. Kenneally: Will you not stand up to what you say?

Mr. THOMSON: I am always prepared to do that. What I said was, "If the statement that was made by the member for West Perth is correct"—

Mr. Kenneally: Ah, is that it?

Mr. THOMSON: "These officers should be indicted for putting a false financial statement before the Treasurer and before the people." We ought to appoint a Commission, but we can only do that when we have the Auditor General's report before us. Strictly speaking, we should have a public works and accounts committee. I have advocated that for years, and cannot understand why Parliament has not adopted the principle. It is in existence in Federal circles, and in practically every other State. The Public Works Committee has saved the Commonwealth many hundreds of thousands of pounds. If we had such a committee here, composed of members of Parliament, we should be in a happier position in regard to many of our financial proposals. Members of Parliament have been furnished with a financial statement. Some say there is a surplus and others say there has been deliberate misrepresentation, and that the statement of the Premier is not correct. A public accounts committee would be in a position to bring the Auditor General before it, and upon his evidence to place the facts before the House. I ask any member who is removed from political bias whether he can give a fair opinion regarding the financial position. Very few could do so. Naturally members sitting behind the Government will back them up.

The Minister for Lands: Members who went out on the last election and claimed that the Government had not reduced taxation were not competent to give an unbiassed opinion. They did not tell the truth.

Mr. THOMSON: What we want is an accounts committee made up of all political sections.

Mr. Griffiths: It has worked very well in South Africa.

Mr. THOMSON: There is grave doubt as to the financial position. Such a committee would be able to call the officers before it, and be able to place the facts before members. If I go to the Treasury or the Auditor General, how much information shall I get? One cannot expect the officers to give it.

Hon. G. Taylor: They will give you any information you should have.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member is an old Parliamentarian and knows the position.

Hon. G. Taylor: I have never been refused legitimate information.

Mr. THOMSON: They will give him the information he asks for, and that is all. He would be none the wiser for it. I am very keen upon the appointment of a public works and accounts committee. Much good could be accomplished by it. The illustration I have given would show how far we would get at the facts. I regret that there is such a divergence of opinion in the House as to the present financial position. The Treasurer states that it is correct, and the ex-Treasurer and others say it is not correct.

The Minister for Lands: The ex-Treasurer could not get within a quarter of a million pounds of his Estimates.

Mr. THOMSON: That is not a fair interjection.

The Minister for Lands: He was no judge of Estimates.

Mr. THOMSON: The position is not parallel. I wish to do justice to the Leader of the Opposition. He was not in the happy position of the present Government in the matter of financial aid, which in three items alone amounts to £1,700,000. On top of that there has been a reduction in interest.

The Minister for Lands: I am not referring to interest, but to the fact that he did not get to within a quarter of a million of his Estimates.

Mr. Sampson: The surplus has been vigorously criticised, and the House awaits an explanation.

The Minister for Mines: No explanation will satisfy you. No one would expect it. You open your mouth and say the same thing over and over again.

Mr. THOMSON: We are spending large sums of money on railways, water supplies and roads. If we had a public accounts committee it would provide a good safety valve and a safeguard for the Government. No big public work is approved by the Commonwealth Government unless it has been investigated by the Public Works Committee. Such a committee would have saved this State many hundreds of thousands of pounds. I do not propose to deal now with the financial agreement. That will be dealt with fully by the House when the Premier submits the proposal. I adhere to the statement I made to the House during the last Parliament. I regret that the Premiers, when they were discussing the financial agreement, put up no alternative; in fact, they hardly discussed the matter at all. When the Commonwealth Government said, "You will not tell us what you want," the whole thing was abolished. Later on another proposal was put up to the Premiers. If the smaller States had combined together and put up a counter proposal, when they were first asked to discuss the matter, who knows but we might have had better conditions than are now offered. I do not know what is in the present agreement. We have had only the statements that have appeared in the Press, and are told it is not wise to take any notice of such things. I will reserve any criticism I may have until the agreement is placed before us. Judging from the statements that have been published, Western Australia is greatly advantaged by what it has been given. The Speech refers to our production records, to a record harvest of 30,041,000 bushels, to the fact that a greater acreage under wheat is anticipated, to the record advance in the number of sheep from 6,861,000 to 7,436,312, to the bountiful rainfalls in the pastoral areas, and to the increases that has taken place generally. That is very satisfactory to the State. The Government have been fortunate in the good seasons they have experienced. Long may they continue. Our wool and our wheat are the staple industries of Western Australia, and the foundation of our financial position. For the first time since the war the fruitgrowers have had an adequate return for their labours. I trust the legislation the Government propose to introduce will not impose further burdens

upon our primary industries. Even now an attempt has been made to increase the burdens suffered by the people on the land. I hope the Government will seriously consider an amendment to the Land Tax and Income Tax Assessment Act, relating to such industries that cannot pass on taxation. The Government should remove the present anomalies, and allow a deduction from land tax and income tax in the case of land that is in full use for primary production. The Minister for Lands said that the statements that were made to the effect that the Government had increased taxation were not correct. It is rather difficult to understand that remark. Prior to the amendment of the Land Tax and Income Tax Assessment Act, and the imposition of the additional land tax, those engaged in primary production had to pay only one tax.

The Minister for Lands: It was an income tax after all.

Mr. THOMSON: The Government say these taxes are small. There is such a thing as the last straw. It is only a fiddling thing, but according to tradition it was the last straw that broke the camel's back.

The Minister for Lands: Look at the reduction in income tax.

Mr. THOMSON: Who made that reduction possible? Was it the administrative ability of the Government, or was it because the Federal authorities made us a grant for our disabilities?

The Minister for Lands: That is not the point.

Mr. THOMSON: The Treasurer earmarked from that amount £200,000, whereby he could reduce our income tax by 33½ per cent.

Mr. Lutey: What would you have done?

Mr. THOMSON: I have indicated that. I agree that the reduction was necessary. Every other branch of industry in the State benefited by it.

The Minister for Lands: Not the worker.

Mr. THOMSON: He had the benefit of it. Every person who paid income tax to the State Government benefited by it. Every section of the community participated in the benefit.

Mr. Lutey: The farmers included.

Mr. THOMSON: I have said so, but the farmers were the only people who were earmarked to pay an increase. I am dealing with income tax, not Customs duties. Everyone derived a benefit by the reduction of

the supertax, but it was the Legislative Council that compelled the Government to abolish it. If members opposite care to read "Hansard" they will find that is so.

The Minister for Lands: We agreed to that.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course, at the suggestion of the Legislation Council the Premier acquiesced in the proposal made by the other Chamber. That House said to the Premier, "We will pass your land tax provided you agree to abolish the supertax," and the Premier agreed to do so in two moieties. The Government are now claiming credit for something that they were compelled to do.

The Minister for Lands: The Upper House increased the land tax.

Mr. THOMSON: No; how can the Upper House increase taxation? They are not permitted to do so. All the taxpayers participated in the reduction of the income tax by 33½ per cent. and it remained for the present Government to impose class legislation on the primary producers by compelling them to pay double tax. Merchants and others pay only income tax and that was reduced by 33½ per cent. Those who were making their living from the land prior to the introduction of the amending Act by the present Government were permitted to deduct their land tax from their income tax. The present Government, however, compels those who get their living from the land to pay not only income tax but land tax as well. It is also a recognised principle in connection with income taxation that there shall be an exemption. The present Government wiped out the exemption of £250 and now they make people pay right up to the hilt.

The Minister for Railways: Have you any land?

Mr. THOMSON: Yes.

The Minister for Railways: And do you pay more taxation?

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, I pay more. I want to bring under the Minister's notice this viewpoint: I might say that I quoted it very extensively during the elections. If a man invests £5,000 in city property or in a business, he is taxed upon the income he derives from that business.

Mr. Lutey: Does he not pay land tax?

Mr. THOMSON: If he does, he is able to pass it on, whereas the man making a living from the land cannot pass it on.

As I was saying, if a man invests his money in a business he pays only one tax on the income he derives from the money he has invested. If he invests his £5,000 in land and he makes his living from that land, the present Government, which reduces taxation, compels him to pay income tax on the income he derives from the capital he invests, and also makes him pay land tax.

The Minister for Lands: All workers are taxed on the blocks they own.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course they are. They pay the magnificent sum of half a crown. I hope the Minister will be able to persuade Cabinet to submit an amendment to the Act. I maintain that we are entitled to have the original section reinstated. I assure the Minister that if ever we are in the position of administering the affairs of the State, that will be one of the first of our acts—the amendment of the taxation legislation so that the farmer shall pay only one tax.

Mr. Lutey: Consumers in the city pay.

Mr. THOMSON: I would advise my friend to look into matters a little more fully before he makes a statement of that description. When the measure was introduced by the Premier he stated that the metropolitan area would pay more than half. That has not been borne out by results. He also said that he was going to give it back to the people in the country by way of reduction of railway freights. The Government did reduce freights by about £40,000 but the reduction was made on freights that did not benefit the people who are paying land tax in the country.

The Minister for Railways: The reduction did not benefit the railways.

Mr. THOMSON: The reductions were made on a class of goods in respect of the carriage of which the railways had competition, and it was a class of goods from which the producers did not earn any income.

The Minister for Lands: Then suppose we reimpose the freights?

Mr. THOMSON: It is all very well to make that statement. I am hoping that the Government will see their way to reduce freights and not to reimpose or increase them. We find that in the Taxation Department's returns for 1922—the latest available—the metropolitan area contributed 43.74 per cent. and the country 56.26 per cent. That shows that even before the

Act was passed, the country districts were paying more than the metropolitan area. On the revaluations that are taking place, and they are by no means completed, we find that the valuations in the country areas have been increased by 81.02 per cent.

Mr. Lutey: Of course you are pleased.

Mr. THOMSON: Naturally. The valuation of the metropolitan area is set down at 51.701 per cent. increase. That proves conclusively that the Premier unintentionally or otherwise misinformed the House. As a matter of fact, the statements made by members on the cross-benches when they fought the introduction of the measure, have since been borne out by the fact that with the increased valuations in the country, the greater part of the tax will be borne by those resident in the country.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: This Government was not responsible for that increased tax.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course it was the present Government. If the hon. member turns up the division list he will find that members opposite voted solidly.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: No.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, the present Government increased the tax and not only did they do that, but they did away with privileges that had been enjoyed. At an early date we propose to place before the Premier a number of suggested amendments which we think it desirable, in the interests of the primary producer, should be made to the Act. I hope those amendments will receive favourable consideration. I trust also that the Government will give serious consideration to our request that the individual who is making his living wholly from the soil should pay one tax only. I repeat that the present tax is unjust and unfair. Dealing with land settlement, I wish to say that if the pendulum had swung as we hoped it would, we would have endeavoured to put into effect the policy that we have advocated. I am proud of the fact that the policy which was practically laid down by the Primary Producers' Association some years ago is to-day actually the law of the land. That applies to land settlement and even to groups, but not to the management of the groups. Had we been in a position to administer the affairs of the State we would have endeavoured to give effect to some of those principles. I commend to the earnest consideration of the Government, who will

control the destinies of the State during the next three years, some of the planks that we would have put into force had we been in a position to administer the affairs of the State.

Until an equitable and systematic basis of land valuation, on the lines laid down in the Land Valuation Act of New Zealand, has been determined by Parliament, we are opposed to all further taxation of land. We are opposed to any increase in taxation until satisfied that every effort has been made in the direction of economical administration and the reinstatement of exemptions and rebate of tax on land used for agricultural purposes, which were removed by the Collier Government in 1924. Agricultural Bank advances should be made for the development of light lands. The exemption of all agricultural lands from taxation for five years from the date of selection. The co-ordination of the Agricultural Bank and Lands Department in regard to settlement of new areas in order to assess the amount of advance to be made.

Let me explain our views on the last-mentioned clause. While the Department of Agriculture, the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank are apparently working in co-ordination they seem to be as far apart as the poles in actual practice. It is the duty of the Lands Department to find land for settlement, survey it, and classify it. When the land is thrown open for selection we broadcast to the world the fact that we are prepared to give assistance to settlers by means of advances from the Agricultural Bank. That is not so. I regret that the member for Yilgarn is not in his seat, because he could bear out the statement I am about to make. A deputation that waited on several members requested that steps should be taken to provide financial assistance for men who had gone on the land. In portion of the Yilgarn electorate which is just on the border of my district, 14 men have taken up land and are actually on their holdings. They have spent over £3,000 of their own money on the work of erecting homes, clearing and bringing their land under cultivation. According to the conditions binding the trustees of the Agricultural Bank, those settlers cannot get advances. The bank trustees reply to their requests, "We are sorry for you, but you went out there of your own free will and accord. We told you we could not grant you any advances and so you cannot get any." The Country Party believe that if the Government throw open the land for selection, the Government should back their opinion. They

should do exactly as they did in the Esperance district. You, Mr. Speaker, know what was done there, and probably you were partly responsible for it, as you represent that portion of the State. The Agricultural Bank was indemnified for the amounts advanced to settlers for opening up and developing all the Esperance area. That was a very wise policy for the Government to adopt, because since then we have constructed a railway through that area which we are told, is going to be one of the big wheat provinces of the State. It is grossly unfair that men who have had the pluck to go out a few miles further than other settlers in the hope that railways would ultimately be provided should have to bear the cost of proving the suitability of their districts for wheat growing. If the Government are not prepared to indemnify the Agricultural Bank for such advances, they should say to the bank trustees, "We have thrown open this area of land for selection and are prepared to hand over to you, subject to your administration, a certain sum of money to assist settlers in those parts, even though they be located more than 12½ miles from a railway." That would be a sound policy, and I hope the Government will give the proposal reasonable consideration. There are one or two other clauses that are well worthy of consideration by the Government. Our wheat, wool and other primary products are the foundation on which the prosperity of the State rests. We have large areas of land open for development, and they are attracting people from other parts of the Commonwealth and even from abroad because we are able to offer those areas at a reasonable price. For agricultural and pastoral development, we stand for a policy of contract as opposed to day labour. We favour the acquisition by the Government of the Midland railway and lands on an equitable basis with a view to extending to Midland settlers the operations of the Agricultural Bank and other advantages enjoyed by settlers on Crown lands in those areas. Another plank in our policy reads—

The effective decentralisation of the Agricultural Bank and the amendment of the Act to enable the Act to perform the functions of the Industries Assistance Board.

That, in effect, is in operation to-day. We also believe in the encouragement of profitable production. That is most important.

If we are going to encourage people to settle on the land it should be the function of the Government to say that they will offer them profitable means of livelihood. We know the unfortunate position of the men who have engaged in the dried fruit industry. When we advised those men to undertake the growing of fruit for drying, we thought it would be a wonderful thing. The Government when encouraging people to settle on the land and engage in a particular branch of production, should be in a position at least to warn them that if they pursue a certain course, it may not prove profitable.

Hon. G. Taylor: On the price of dried fruit five years ago, it was a good thing.

Mr. THOMSON: If those in authority five years ago had considered the world's production of dried fruit and the fact that we were proposing to grant land for the planting of vines, hundreds of acres would never have been planted.

The Minister for Lands: It was speculators who cut up the land for vine-growing, not the Government.

Mr. THOMSON: But land was provided to enable soldier settlers to engage in the dried fruit industry. The Minister's remark might apply to some parts of the State, but it does not apply to all. We are aware of the experience of the Eastern States as regards the dried fruit industry.

Mr. Maley: You spoke of the purchase of the Midland railway on an equitable basis. What would you say was an equitable basis?

Mr. THOMSON: I must ask the hon. member to give notice of a question of that description.

Mr. Maley: That is the cry you always put up.

Mr. THOMSON: What cry has the hon. member put up since he has been in Parliament in furtherance of the proposal?

Mr. Maley: I have done as much as you have.

Mr. THOMSON: We are putting forward a policy that we believe will get us somewhere. There must be some basis on which to start negotiations. If the Midland railway is to be resumed, it must be on a basis equitable to the State.

Mr. Maley: But what is an equitable basis?

Mr. THOMSON: An equitable basis, of course.

Mr. Maley: You are not getting any further than we were four years ago.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. THOMSON: It is absurd to press me to say what would be an equitable basis. I have not the balance sheet before me, and I have not gone into figures. If I had done so, I should be only too pleased to deal fully with the question. Still I doubt whether it would come within the purview even of a speech on the Address-in-reply to go fully into the question of what would be an equitable basis for the purchase of the Midland railway.

The Minister for Railways: That is the trouble; they want to make the balance sheet the determining factor instead of the assets.

Mr. THOMSON: It is necessary to adopt some basis for negotiations. I regret that the Midland line was not purchased when the Daglish Government had the opportunity to buy it. That was a lost opportunity.

The Minister for Lands: The Premier of the day did not have the opportunity to buy it.

Mr. THOMSON: I understand that he had. As one who resides on the Great Southern line I can testify to the wonderful progress made when that railway was purchased by the Government and the settlers along it were brought under the same conditions as those enjoyed by settlers in other parts of the State. That is what we desire to be done in the Midland districts. If we can assist the representatives of the Midland districts—we have proved our willingness to do so whenever the question has been brought forward—and if we can assist the Government to devise means to fulfil the desires of the Midland settlers, we are willing to do our part.

Hon. G. Taylor: As soon the Government suggest buying the line, up go the shares.

Mr. THOMSON: Whenever the Government enter into negotiations for its purchase or suggest compulsory resumption, that will happen. If it is desirable to resume the Midland line—

Hon. G. Taylor: I do not know whether it is within the power of the Government to resume the railway.

The Minister for Mines: That would not come under the Public Works Act.

Mr. THOMSON: But we have to start somewhere.

The Minister for Railways: We put up a proposition on an equitable basis.

Mr. THOMSON: I am aware of that.

Mr. Maley: You know all about the equitable basis and why refer to it again?

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the member for Irwin not to interrupt any further.

Mr. THOMSON: We also believe in the provision of market facilities. I am pleased to see the announcement in the Press that the Government at last have appointed the board for the metropolitan markets. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Government on their choice of some of the members. Others of the board I do not know and am not in a position to discuss their qualifications. The Government are to be congratulated on having secured a practical man such as Mr. Hawkins as chairman of the board. His knowledge of building construction must prove of inestimable value when the board come to consider the preparation of plans and the lay out of the markets. Then there is Mr. Harper, whom we all know, and Mr. Langley, who I think will prove a capable representative. I have not met Mr. Mooney.

Hon. G. Taylor: You might meet him at the next election.

Mr. Pantou: He is worth meeting, too.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, he is a good man.

Mr. THOMSON: The board appears to be a sound one.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. THOMSON: One point to which I draw the Government's attention is the necessity for clearing tracks or roads to new areas. In that function the Government have rather slipped. If new areas are to be subdivided, intending settlers should be given reasonable access to their blocks. I do not know whether it is because, as a result of the Federal road grant, road-construction has been handed over to the Main Roads Board, but I think that aspect has been rather neglected. It should be part and parcel of the Government's policy in opening land for selection to give reasonable transport facilities. We adhere to the principle of the freehold tenure of land. In the event of compulsory acquisition of land by the Government, statutory rights should be respected. From the Governor's Speech I learn that the Government intend to introduce a Closer Settlement Bill. To that measure we shall not offer objection, provided that in the acquisition of land the

statutory rights of owners are respected. We should utterly oppose confiscation.

The Minister for Lands: What do you mean by statutory rights?

Mr. THOMSON: If a man has complied with all the conditions imposed, he is entitled to fair compensation. There have been cases—I do not say they were deliberate—where owners have not been treated quite fairly. The resumptions in question may have been in the interest of the State, but we should remember the many resumptions made during past years in other parts of Australia, where it was considered that land was being held up in large parcels. We should bear in mind that when the large holdings were subdivided into a number of small holdings, in some instances these proved too small. Coming nearer home, I can give an illustration of that in my own district. The Government purchased what is known as the Palinup Estate, and subdivided it into 620-acre blocks. The soldier settlers on those blocks have done remarkably well; I do not think there has been one failure on the estate. Nevertheless, the fact is that the blocks have proved too small to allow of the settlers making a good living; and as a result the soldiers are selling out to their neighbours. Thus the estate is gradually reverting into larger holdings. Closer settlement sounds very nice; but we have had expensive experiments with that principle during the past seven years, and the Government should be most careful in regard to any closer settlement schemes they may embark on. We are also committed to a definite policy of water conservation for dry areas by means of extension of the Goldfields Water Scheme wherever practicable, and the establishment of catchments in districts wherever suitable catchment areas are available. Ministers will probably agree with me that that is an important suggestion to offer for their consideration.

The Minister for Mines: That has already been done in the Esperance district.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, but we want it adopted as a general policy. Esperance has had the good fortune of being the pet district of the Government. I commend Ministers for what they have done there. The policy of providing water was absolutely essential to the Esperance settlers. Now, we want that policy extended all over Western Australia. I repeat, I applaud

the Government for their action at Esperance. As regards drainage, had we been returned we would have put into effect what may be termed a comprehensive drainage scheme in the South-West. The member for Sussex (Mr. Barnard) mentioned the stoppage of the drainage scheme for Busselton, giving as a reason, I think, the impression that it was going to benefit one or two private persons. At all events, that drainage scheme is not being proceeded with. I can refer, as also can the member for Albany (Mr. A. Wansbrough), to a drainage scheme that was constructed in part of the Albany district. If that scheme had been part and parcel of a comprehensive drainage scheme, it would have proved much more effective and far more beneficial to the settlers. In point of fact, while two or three settlers have benefited by the Torbay scheme a number of other settlers declare that it has ruined them. The trouble is that the scheme has been done piecemeal, and that insufficient attention has been paid to the natural drainage previously existing. As a result, the scheme has produced more harm than good. I want to commend the Government for their comprehensive scheme of drainage in other directions, such a scheme being absolutely essential to the development of the State. Turning to land settlement, I shall later point out an excellent avenue of settlement available to us to-day. The Governor's Speech mentions that there have been many applications for land. Quite a number of people, we are told, have made application for each individual block. The policy of the Agricultural Bank has been to regard it as unsafe for farmers to farm outside the 12½ mile radius from a railway. As regards the migration agreement under which this State participates in the loan of 34 million sterling raised by the Commonwealth, I have in this House criticised the Federal Government for negotiating with the Imperial authorities without consulting the State of Western Australia. I now desire to apologise for the remarks I made, and to withdraw them, because I consider the Commonwealth made a better financial deal than Western Australia could have made. The Migration Development Commission have placed us practically in a position to see that the money expended under the scheme is so applied as to produce reasonable chances

of success. From the bottom of my heart I wish that this State, before spending money as it did on group settlements, had had a similar Commission to supervise the expenditure. As regards the migration loan, we know that none of the money can be expended by a State Government without the approval of the Migration Development Commission. That condition is, of course, in the interests of the Commonwealth; but it is possible, and even probable, that the condition will prove to have been for the benefit of this State in the long run. I congratulate the Government on having taken the fullest advantage of the cheap money available under the Federal Government's migration scheme. I suggest that the Government should give effect to a policy which has been advocated by every section of the House, the policy of pushing out railways before land is surveyed.

The Minister for Lands: In order to do that we would find it necessary, as a precedent, to classify the land.

Mr. THOMSON: I sincerely advocate the appointment of a committee of men with the necessary knowledge of land to go out and classify and then to report. "Here is an area which, if surveyed and thrown open, is suitable for settlement and cultivation."

The Minister for Lands: Such a committee has recently been appointed.

Mr. THOMSON: Again I am pleased that this little section has been able to put forward a suggestion proving that we are on right lines. We are proud of the fact that we put forward such a policy during the last election.

The Minister for Lands: We never heard of it.

Mr. THOMSON. I shall have pleasure in submitting to the Minister for Lands full reports of speeches showing that we advanced that suggestion. However, I have no desire to take away credit from the Government for having established the committee in question. I am delighted at its establishment. Thus effect is given to something that will prove beneficial to Western Australia.

The Minister for Lands: The Surveyor General, the Manager of the Agricultural Bank, the Chief Engineer for Water Supply, and the Director of Agriculture are a committee now engaged on that very work.

Mr. THOMSON: I repeat, I am indeed pleased that the Government have given effect to that suggestion. It is something which must prove beneficial to Western Australia. After these men have gone out and inspected and reported to the Government that there is a large area of land suitable for cultivation, the step I am about to indicate should be taken. We are led to believe by people who have visited that country, that a large area of agricultural land exists from Southern Cross right down to the coast, and from the Great Southern railway across to the Esperance district. We urge that after such inspection and report the Government should take advantage of the funds available under the migration agreement and push out railways into the area, thus for a change giving the new settlers the benefit of transport facilities from the beginning. I feel quite sure that such settlers would willingly pay a little extra per acre for their land in consideration of railway facilities. Therefore I am very pleased indeed to hear that the Government have appointed the committee. I hope the Government will go further and give favourable consideration to the proposal to construct railways into areas before selection, if they are satisfied those areas are suitable for settlement. If that were done, a new era of prosperity would follow. Such a policy would save new settlers years of drudgery. I also hope that the comprehensive scheme of railway construction that is being discussed just now, will have as its objective the deviation of traffic to natural harbours. During my recent visit to Queensland I was gratified to note that in that State a true scheme of decentralisation is in operation. Right up the northern coast there are the various seaports with their harbour boards. In Western Australia I want to see each port benefit from the trade that rightly belongs to it. I desire to see that accomplished for various reasons. I wish the cost to be minimised, for we have to export our goods to the world's markets at the cheapest possible rates; while assuring the producers an adequate return for their labour.

Mr. Lindsay interjected.

Mr. THOMSON: I am dealing only with the principle, not the administration of the railway system in Queensland.

Mr. Kenneally: The Labour policy deals with the problem of decentralisation.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) desires to ascribe to the Labour Party all the honour for the results achieved. But the men who were responsible for the policy in Queensland were in office years before any Labour Government.

The Minister for Lands: That is not so.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, it is. When the McIlwraith Government were in power, the policy was in existence and that was long before the advent of Labour. In those days there were isolated railways running inland from the various ports, and it is only within recent years that the lines have been linked up with the main railway system of the State. We desire to extend justice to all sections of political thought, and I, therefore, cannot subscribe to the suggestion that the honour is due entirely to the Labour Governments of Queensland. If I were asked, of course, who was responsible for the deplorable position of the railway finances in Queensland, I would be quite prepared to give Labour all the credit and honour for the enormous deficit!

Mr. Kenneally: That is where your fairness comes in!

Mr. THOMSON: The member for East Perth wishes to take all the credit but none of the blame.

The Minister for Lands: There is a deficit of £1,000,000 in connection with the Victorian railways.

Mr. Marshall: Don't mention that!

Mr. THOMSON: And there is a Labour Government there.

The Minister for Lands: There was a Country Party Government.

Mr. THOMSON: I would not expect to prove to the satisfaction of the member for East Perth that the excessive demands that have been made on railway administrations by railway unions and others are responsible for the parlous position of the finances of the various railway systems in the different States. He would not be convinced by anything I could say, but nevertheless those are the facts. That is one of the reasons why the Queensland railways are not paying. They are over-staffed and run under conditions such as I hope will never apply to the railways here. I will give the Queensland railway men credit for being as fine a body as one could meet anywhere, and they extend to travellers civility equal to that to be found on any of the other railways. As

one who has travelled extensively over the railway systems of Australia, I can say that we in Western Australia have every reason to be proud of our railway service.

Mr. Kenneally: Then don't begrudge the men reasonable conditions.

Mr. THOMSON: That is where great difficulty will be experienced, if we may judge from the utterances of the hon. member elsewhere as to his idea of what constitutes reasonable conditions. His ideas obviously differ from those of many others.

Mr. Kenneally: They would need to be different from your ideas.

Mr. THOMSON: Thank God they are, too. I have referred to the necessity for better co-ordination between departments and for a comprehensive railway scheme. I hope the Development and Migration Commission will approve of the expenditure of money enabling us to give effect to that policy in Western Australia. I refer to the construction of railways prior to settlement. That work will come within the scope of the Commission because the expenditure of the money will provide for the development of the land and for settlement generally, while at the same time furnishing work for migrants. The Governor's Speech contained the statement that relief had been granted to 1,113 soldier settlers, involving the cancellation of an aggregate indebtedness of £359,076, that amount being recoverable from the Commonwealth Government. I was under the impression that the money had been made available to the State, and that the Government actually had the cash in hand.

The Minister for Lands: The whole business has not been finalised yet. Every week we are writing off indebtedness.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, but the State has £790,000 for that.

The Minister for Lands: I do not know where it is.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Government write off the debts and save the interest every year.

Mr. THOMSON: Again, we find it is the Federal Government who have come to the assistance of the State, and the State Government have been saved an expenditure of £50,000 a year by way of interest.

The Minister for Lands: The settling of soldiers was a Federal responsibility.

Mr. THOMSON: It may or may not have been a Federal responsibility, but I am pointing out that in this instance the

Federal Government have made available a large sum of money that has saved the State from paying interest. Next we come to the question of group settlement, and I will be brief in my references to that problem. During the course of his speech the other evening the Minister for Lands outlined the position. I must confess that since I have sat in this House, I have never been more depressed than I was on that occasion. We all recognised that we would have to write off a certain amount, but I do not think anyone was prepared to believe that we were in such an unfortunate position as to necessitate the statement the Minister made. It rather staggers us to find that on the Peel Estate alone we have spent over £2,000,000 to establish 242 settlers, which works out at £8,264 per settler. The Minister stated that his departmental officers had advised him that there were 242 settlers who would have a chance of making a success of their holdings on the Peel Estate. I will not enter into the question of the merits or demerits of the position at the Peel estate. The statement of the Minister must cause anxiety and regret to all, including those who sponsored the scheme. In my opinion someone has been to blame for the continuance of the expenditure of such a vast sum of money. The present Government have been in office for three years. They must have known that the position was unsatisfactory, because anyone who has discussed it with departmental officers must know that they had grave doubts about the work. If you, Mr. Speaker, or I were confronted in our private business with a position similar to that confronting the Government, we would take steps to remedy it long before the Government adopted that course. In view of the fact that a Royal Commission was appointed and reported adversely on the Peel Estate a long time ago, surely some steps should have been taken to prevent the continuance of the expenditure of such vast sums of public moneys.

Mr. Withers: Will not the construction of roads and so forth be of benefit to the district?

Mr. THOMSON: That argument has been used by many people. So far as I can, I endeavour to view matters of public concern, and the expenditure of public

moneys, exactly as I would view them if they related to my own private business. The mere fact that £2,000,000 has been spent on the Peel Estate to secure the results I have indicated, should be a sufficient answer to the question asked by the member for Bunbury (Mr. Withers). After spending that amount, exclusive of the money required for hospitals, schools and so forth, only 242 settlers have been placed on holdings where they have a reasonable chance of success! In view of that, I say the money has not been expended in a manner calculated to give an adequate return to the State. That is my point. What I should like to know is whether it be possible to devise ways and means whereby Parliament will be able to prevent a repetition of such a wasteful expenditure of public money. That is what concerns me. Many of us recognised that the group settlements were bound to involve a large expenditure of money, and we felt that we would have to write off a large amount. The Party I have the honour to represent are chiefly concerned as to the men and women put on those groups. I have no doubt that ultimately the State will derive benefit from the expenditure of money on the group settlement scheme. Because we raised our voices at the initiation of the scheme and strongly urged the Government to place group settlement under the control of a board of practical men with a knowledge of the South-West—because of that it was said that we were opposed to the scheme. However, that is what we put up 7½ years ago. Now, 7½ years later, the Minister for Lands is putting into effect the very thing we urged the then Government to do.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The group settlements were not started 7½ years ago.

Mr. THOMSON: You were in charge of them for 4½ years, and the present Government have been in charge for three years which, taken together, mean 7½ years.

The Minister for Lands: No; group settlement was not started until 1921.

Mr. THOMSON: Very well, then I shall say it is now six years late.

Mr. Marshall: It is near enough. We like to hear of calamities.

Mr. THOMSON: There are some calamities the House has to put up with, the hon. member being one of them. Here, 6½

years late, the Minister is doing what we urged the previous Government to do.

Hon. G. Taylor: It shows what far-seeing men you were.

Mr. THOMSON: It does. The tragedy of it is that the Government did not take advice that was tendered to them in all sincerity.

Hon. G. Taylor: They did not realise its value.

Mr. THOMSON: No, they did not; but they should have done.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It gets back to what the lady said to the soldier.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not want to indulge in any personalities. I am dealing, not with what anybody said to the soldier, but with a matter of vital importance to the State. We have to-day over six million pounds invested in group settlement, and we want to see the scheme successful. At the elections before the last we advocated that a board should be put in control of group settlement. I congratulate the Minister for Lands on the steps he has taken, for I believe they will be in the interests of group settlement and of the State as a whole. We asked that the blocks of individual settlers should be valued. The sooner that is done the better. We passed in this House a Bill dealing with group settlement and empowering the Agricultural Bank to make a valuation of the blocks and take them over. The Agricultural Bank has refused to take them over. That is the position we are faced with to-day. The bank would be foolish to take over those blocks; it would not be fair to the bank. The sooner the Government appoint a board to deal with them, the better. The Minister should have his valuers. I commend that to the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: Will it be of advantage?

Mr. THOMSON: I think I can point out where the advantage will be. Some time ago there was grave dissatisfaction over the Industries Assistance Board. Many men, owing to their gross indebtedness to the board and to the Agricultural Bank, found themselves in an impossible position. The Government realised that if a man walked off his block they could call for tenders for the block, and accept the highest; but the Government also realised that instead of the Industries Assistance Board and the bank getting from the block

a return of the £2,500 or £3,000 owing on it, they had to be content to take £1,200 or £1,500. So the Government concluded that it was a fair thing that the men who had spent nine or ten years on their blocks were entitled to consideration. I do strongly urge upon the Minister that he appoint a board of valuers just the same as is to be found in relation to the Industries Assistance Board. Then those valuers could go around—

Mr. Lindsay: But have they done that for the Industries Assistance Board? Never in my time.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, they have done it. Perhaps the hon. member is so fortunate as not to have in his district settlers so badly affected.

The Minister for Lands: Still, it must be realised that some men are prepared to make sacrifices.

Mr. THOMSON: I recognise that there would be quite a lot of inequalities in the final adjustment. However, it is of no use taking the value of the blocks as being what these blocks have cost.

The Minister for Lands: Any valuation just now would be premature, because the settlers have not passed over to the bank. It is when they do pass over that the valuation should be made.

Mr. THOMSON: That is where I disagree with the Minister. We have all considered the position from different viewpoints. As one who by request has been through a portion of the groups and gone on to the individual blocks and discussed difficulties with the men, and as one who went there with a sincere desire to assist the settlers, I say the sooner we put those men on the Agricultural Bank, the better. We do not say to a man who goes out into the wheat areas, "Until such time as you are self-supporting we will continue to look after you." There is a certain amount of difference between the settlers in the group areas and those in the wheat areas. I will say, and the Minister will agree, that there is a large number of group settlers just as sincere in their desire to make a success of their holdings as there are in the wheat belt.

The Minister for Lands: Oh, easy!

Mr. THOMSON: To those people who are on the wheat belt you say, "Here is your land and you can have so much cleared." You put no restrictions on their earnings. You say to them, "As you do your clearing,

so you can draw from the Agricultural Bank." Very well. I say we should do the same with the group settlers. Scores of them are looking for the day when they shall be independent of the control of the group foreman.

The Minister for Lands: When the settler has paid for all his improvements and there is nothing else to be done and still the farm is not in a condition to maintain him, what will you do then?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He cannot live without stock, of course.

The Minister for Lands: But the pasture is not there.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But the plough is there.

Mr. THOMSON: My reply is that those settlers will be able to do the same as has been done in other areas. Many of our wheat farmers have had to go out on the roads, and take clearing and fencing contracts from others more fortunate, in order to obtain means of sustenance for keeping on. But it remained for this Government to debar our settlers from getting work on the roads. They said to the settlers, "You are not entitled to go out and work on the roads: you must stay on your farms." I hope the Government will reconsider that decision and give those men the same opportunity as they enjoyed in previous years. If there is a bit of road construction in hand, who is more entitled to it than the men who are going to live in that district and develop it?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Many farmers on the wheat belt could not have stayed there in the early days but for outside work.

Mr. THOMSON: That is perfectly true. If they had not been permitted to go out and take contracts they would not have been able to remain on their blocks.

The Minister for Lands: Men have gone out, taken contracts and neglected their farms.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is no doubt about that.

Mr. THOMSON: But many men would not have been able to carry on had they not been permitted to go out and get such work. If the Minister visits a portion of my electorate this coming week-end I will point out to him two successful farmers, brothers, who developed their farm by taking turns in going out for work. Under the rules laid

down by the Government they would not be allowed to do that.

The Minister for Lands: I am not surprised at the illustration. All Australia has been built up like that.

Mr. THOMSON: Well, may I appeal to the Minister to get his colleagues to cancel the order that no settlers shall be permitted to work on the roads?

The Minister for Lands: I do not know of such an order.

Mr. THOMSON: It is in existence. From the inception of group settlement I have been accused of being opposed to it. Time and again have I reiterated that I am strongly in accord with the opening up and developing of the South-West. It is a duty that devolves on every Government and every member of Parliament to see to it that every section of the State has an opportunity for development. I regret to say that on more than one occasion the statement has been repeated deliberately, and by those who knew it to be contrary to fact. I hope the Minister will take into consideration the appointment of valuers to go on to each of those blocks and take them at their value. Because until that is done the Agricultural Bank will not take the blocks over. The sooner we have a stocktaking in respect of group settlement and give the settlers a knowledge of their full indebtedness, the sooner will they know whether to carry on or to leave and take up some other avocation. I am confident that a great majority of those I have met are anxious to make good. If we are willing to write down their holdings to a value that is reasonable, I am sure they will make good. We find from the statement of the Minister that the cost of pastures, including buildings and fences, ranges from £60 to £114 per acre. I have worked out the figures on another basis, namely, on the average acres of pasture land cleared, compared with the amount of money that has been spent. On that basis the average cost is £97 per acre.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, it is. I am taking the Minister's own statement and the total amount of money spent on the groups.

The Minister for Lands: You are taking in the Peel Estate.

Mr. THOMSON: I am taking them all, the acreage of land under pasture. If we divide that into the amount of money ex-

pendent, we find that the average cost of the pasture land is £97 per acre. On the statistics supplied on Return No. 16, issued by the Publicity Officer attached to the Premier's office, the area cleared and under pasture is 48,450 acres. The cost at that date was £4,689,534, which gives the average cost I have mentioned. I do not say that is the actual cost of each individual acre, but it is the average cost of the cleared land and pasture land, including buildings and fences.

Hon. G. Taylor: Does that include the land cleared but not sown?

Mr. THOMSON: It is the cleared land.

Hon. G. Taylor: Are you taking the land grassed?

Mr. THOMSON: It is the sown land.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is there not some land cleared but not grassed?

The Minister for Lands: It is nearly all sown. I do not think the figures are correct.

Mr. THOMSON: They are the Minister's own figures. I went into the matter very closely. They are figures supplied by the Publicity Officer (Mr. Mercer) in Return No. 16. It has cost this State £97 per acre to bring this area under pasture.

Hon. G. Taylor: What is the land worth now?

Mr. Lindsay: That is capitalised to carry 300,000 cows.

Mr. THOMSON: It is impossible for group settlers to have any reasonable chance of success with an average capital cost of £97 per acre.

Hon. G. Taylor: People are getting over £100 per acre for land in New South Wales.

Mr. THOMSON: And they are getting £1,000 per foot for land in Hay-street.

Hon. G. Taylor: Not for pastoral purposes.

Mr. THOMSON: At Subiaco one can get land at £1 per foot.

Mr. Richardson: Where is that?

Mr. THOMSON: We must write down the cost to give these people a reasonable chance of success. Some of the group settlers have just cause for complaint. They say, "You tell us you do not expect us to succeed, and that others will take our place." We have set out to give these people an opportunity to make a living for themselves. Instead of driving them off, bringing others on and driving them off, and so on, we should write down the holdings to their proper value. This will give them a chance to

carry on. Some of the people have given five or six years of their lives in an endeavour to make good on these blocks, and they should be given an opportunity to fulfil their ambitions. We have to do with our group settlements as we did with our Industries Assistance Board clients. We sent officers out to value the blocks. The settlers were then written to and informed that their total indebtedness of £3,000 had been written down to £1,500. They were asked if they would then carry on.

Mr. Lindsay: That was not done in my district.

Mr. THOMSON: It is what occurred. We must deal with group settlement in the same way.

The Minister for Lands: The group settlers know very well that they will get a fair deal.

Mr. THOMSON: Does the Minister think that even at a low estimate of £60 per acre as the capital cost our group settlers, working on average land, can possibly make a success and pay their interest?

The Minister for Lands: Why make a row about it when they are not paying anything? Group settlement has paid nothing.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must address himself to the subject and not hold conversations with other members.

Mr. THOMSON: That is where I disagree with the Minister. He says group settlers are not paying anything. I wish to place them in a position to pay something. I want them to be able to pay their way and to become taxpayers. We say to them we cannot afford to carry them on, and that it is not wise to do so. We are taking the heart out of these people, and shall not get the best out of them. I do not say we should write down the holdings to such an extent that it will mean giving away our security. If the land is only of a certain value when cleared, why not cut it down to that value? This would give the average settler who is willing to make good a reasonable chance of doing so.

The Minister for Lands: It is premature. Not one of them is capable of standing on his feet yet.

Mr. THOMSON: That is a matter of opinion. We are trying to run this scheme from Perth by certain rules and regulations. I do not say that offensively. We are trying to run it like an army, wherein orders are issued and obedience must be exacted. The

settlers are not allowed any individuality. They are not permitted to do anything except obey the rules and regulations. I want to see every settler placed on his own, just as wheat growers were when they were given a chance to make good. The group settlers will make good under the same conditions.

Mr. Clydesdale: How much do you think should be written off the Peel Estate?

Mr. THOMSON: If there are to be only 242 settlers there, and it is considered that a capitalisation of £1,000 or £1,500 is all they can reasonably carry, I leave the hon. member the task of making a simple arithmetical calculation. Is it reasonable that they should carry a load of £2,000,000.

Mr. Clydesdale: They cannot do it.

Mr. THOMSON: Is it not better to give these 242 settlers a chance of making a living and becoming taxpayers? At present that is impossible. The same thing has to be done with the groups. As a result of my visits to the Eastern States I am convinced that our South-West areas will carry large dairy herds. If unfortunately Western Australia runs into a drought period, which God forbid, I assure those who have any doubt about the merits of the South-West that in that part of the State we shall have a valuable asset, because it will be able to supply large quantities of fodder for starving stock. In Queensland enormous losses occurred in the sheep areas owing to droughts. I hope the Government will consider the writing down of the securities of these settlers to a proper figure. I do not make any of these remarks in a spirit of "I told you so." I am only too sorry to find we are in our present position. But we are in it, and must make a success of the scheme. The only thing is to cut our loss, to face the position and see that the men, women and children get what we promised them, that is, a fighting chance of making good.

The Minister for Lands: I hope you are not trying to get support from the groups. I can outbid you, you know.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have no right to say that.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret the interjection of the Minister. Although it was made in semi-jocular vein, there is a certain amount of meaning in it. I am not in a position to offer the settlers any bribe, or to assist them except by voicing my opinion here. I am not voicing anything new. For

the last three or four years I have taken up the same attitude. I have made suggestions in all sincerity, believing them to be helpful not only to the State, but to Parliament.

The Minister for Lands: It is just as well to leave politics out of the scheme.

Mr. THOMSON: I have had the honour of leading this party in the House for some three years, but I have never yet been officially invited to visit the groups.

The Minister for Lands: I invited you.

Mr. THOMSON: Only recently.

The Minister for Lands: I invited you to Denmark last year.

Mr. THOMSON: That was a field day. Only once during the regime of the Leader of Opposition, when it was a public invitation, was I invited to go to the groups. I was not invited to go by Mr. Angwin.

Mr. Mann: You should have the same privileges as members on the other side.

Mr. THOMSON: I take no exception to that. We are told we should not visit the groups for political purposes. When we do visit them, not for political purposes, and go down with the desire to find out things for ourselves, we pass from group to group in the course of our investigations. Then it is said of us that we go down for political purposes. We are not given an opportunity to go down in order to get into touch with the settlers and if we do go down we are accused of going there for political purposes. Later on, if a member attempts to assert his rights by discussing the groups, he is accused of being against them, and again using the groups for political purposes. The scheme is too big to be made use of for political purposes. Every member has a duty to perform in seeing that the groups have a reasonable chance of becoming successful. Members generally have not had an opportunity to go down to the groups. Those who have been there have done so individually and with a sincere desire to help, if possible, to establish their success. We have to remember that those settlers are placed in a different position from people in the wheat areas. The latter go out on their own initiative. They select their own blocks and are free agents. The people on the groups, or many of them, have been taken straight from the boat, placed in the train and escorted to the groups without having had the opportunity to come into contact with the Australian people. They are not aware of the conditions that exist outside the group settlements, and they have no one to speak to except fellow settlers in the

neighbourhood, other than of course the foreman of the groups who has to obey the instructions of his superior officers. Therefore I have great sympathy for many of the group settlers. I consider that if members had been given the opportunity to get into close communion with the settlers, possibly many of the things that are only now being altered, might have received attention very much earlier. I feel that group settlement as a whole has been what might be termed a costly experiment. At the same time, we hope to make a success of it. I am sure that ultimately it will be a success and will be of considerable benefit to the State as well as to the people engaged in the industry. I consider, however, we might have had better results to date. The member for Sussex (Mr. Barnard) told us last night that in his opinion over £2,000,000 would have to be written off. He blamed the administration.

Hon. G. Taylor: And he is taking only one end of the settlements.

Mr. THOMSON: He represents that district, and he is in the position of acquiring a considerable amount of knowledge and speaking with authority. I consider that the Minister for Lands was most generous in his remarks the other evening when he stated that there were quite a number of reasons why the groups were not a success. He is to be commended for performing what must have been to him a most unpleasant task, that of having to inform the House of the unfortunate position of the settlements. The amazing thing is that with all our knowledge of closer settlement in Australia and other settlements similar to those of our groups, we did not take the slightest heed of their experiences and mistakes. We first of all started to clear the land in the face, and we perpetuated every blunder that was committed by those who had previously carried out similar experiments in land settlement in the Eastern States. If we had had the benefit of the advice of a Commission similar to the Migration and Development Commission, I believe that many mistakes might have been avoided. Like many of my fellow members on this side of the House I regret the present position of the gold mining industry. I do not envy the Minister for Mines the task that has been placed upon his shoulders. The gold mining industry, like other primary industries, is suffering very materially from the settled policy of the

Commonwealth, a policy that has imposed upon it a very heavy burden. True, also, a certain amount of mismanagement and excessive overhead charges may have had something to do with its present position, and I consider that the offer made by the Government to the mining companies of Kalgoorlie was certainly generous, the offer to provide a big power station with the object of reducing costs in that direction. If the present Minister can evolve some scheme whereby we can make gold mining pay, he will accomplish very much. But I cannot help repeating that the mining industry, as well as the industry I represent, are suffering from the high protective policy of the Commonwealth. Unfortunately we have to submit to it, but I believe that Australia in the long run will learn its lesson and will be convinced that the existing policy is not sound, and is not in the interests of the workers. Dealing with the Forests Department, I consider it is time that the Government decided what was the true forest area of Western Australia. So far as I can gather, for years past there has been a battle going on between the Forests Department and the Lands Department as regards the areas which should or should not be alienated from the Forests Department in the interests of the State.

The Minister for Railways: There is a big measure of agreement between them.

Mr. THOMSON: While possibly there is something in what the deputy Premier has interjected, we should have sufficient experience to enable us to say which shall be the area that is to be regarded as the State forest area. On the subject of the railways, I am glad to see that a new Railway Advisory Board has been appointed. In making that appointment the Government acted on sound lines and much good will result by having that independent board.

The Minister for Railways: Times change and methods also.

Mr. THOMSON: It is time we gave consideration to railway construction on what we might call scientific lines. The trouble in the past has been that the settlers have gone out and struggled for many years. They have battled and fought and they have had to lobby in order to secure railway extensions to their districts. The suggestions put forward by Mr. Stileman, the Engineer-in-Chief, whilst I may not agree with them

in their entirety, are worthy of every consideration. A broad comprehensive scheme of railway construction is something that ultimately must benefit the State. It is to be regretted that there has been a suggestion that because one member has a little more political pull than another, he has been able to secure the construction of a railway in a certain direction which has afterwards been proved to have been not in the interests of the majority. In the matter of railway construction we should see that every mile of railway built will eventually become a part of the comprehensive scheme. So long as we bear in mind the flow of trade to its natural port, the State must in the end benefit. In my opinion and in the opinion of the party I represent the work of railway construction should be in the hands of the Railway Department. I am one of those who believe that as far as possible we should avoid duplication, and I consider that the Chief Engineer of Railways should be the officer to supervise the construction of all railways. He should be better able to decide on the grades and the particular direction a line should take so as to make the grades as easy as possible. We know that under the present administration large sums of money have been spent in re-grading. That is the reason why the railways are in such a happy position just now of being able to increase the train loads.

Hon. G. Taylor: The railways engineer should attend to construction only.

Mr. THOMSON: The railways engineer should be a member of the Advisory Board because his experience would no doubt enable him to suggest means for the reduction of costs. I understand that about £30,000 is being spent in the deviation of the railway from Wooroloo to Chidlows with the object of considerably increasing the capacity of the train loads along that section. I speak only as a layman, but when that railway was built, surely the engineers might have advised its construction in that direction.

The Minister for Railways: In the early days all the heavy loads were going inland to the goldfields, and they did not bother about grades in respect of traffic coming to the coast.

Mr. THOMSON: I am pleased that the Government have appointed a representative of the Railway Department to that board. Let me now turn to an interesting table

dealing with the working of the Government railways. While the capital has increased by £539,470, the interest per train mile has decreased by 1.99 per cent. That to my mind is certainly very satisfactory, especially as the railways are able to show a profit of £34,556. It is a splendid tribute to the administrative ability of the Commissioner, Colonel Pope, and his executive officers that, notwithstanding an increase of 818 employees, the adoption of the 44-hour week and the payment of increased wages, etc., it has been possible actually to reduce working expenses plus interest per train mile by 3.57 per cent.

Mr. Kenneally: It indicates that employees respond to good conditions.

Mr. THOMSON: There are some people so biased in their opinions that they are not even prepared to give credit to the men who are responsible for the present financial position of the railways.

The Minister for Railways: No, it is due to co-operation.

Mr. THOMSON: With all due respect to the member for East Perth, I have no desire to detract from the work of the railwaymen. As I stated previously, we have an excellent body of employees. But the management of the railways lies with the executive officers and whatever savings have been effected—doubtless suggestions have been made by employees and acted upon—the Commissioner and his officers are responsible for the present satisfactory position.

The Minister for Railways: Each horse in a team has to pull its weight.

Mr. THOMSON: I am aware of that, but we also know that with an army of 8,833 employees there must be a pretty good guiding hand on the rein to obtain those results. I want to give credit where in my opinion credit is due, and I say unhesitatingly that the Commissioner and his executive officers have shown remarkable administrative ability.

Hon. G. Taylor: Are not you going to give the Minister any credit?

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. THOMSON: Working expenses increased by £176,644 and the interest increased by £27,515, or a total of £204,159. Despite those additional charges and thanks to a bountiful harvest, the Commissioner has been able to show a profit.

The Minister for Railways: Thanks to the general expansion of trade.

Mr. THOMSON: If we had not had a bountiful harvest, there would have been no general expansion of trade.

The Minister for Railways: I am speaking of the railways.

Mr. THOMSON: So am I.

Mr. Kenneally: You are not studying the figures much at the present time.

Mr. THOMSON: Perhaps I can do so as well as can the hon. member, because he studies them from only one viewpoint, and I study them from all angles. We have to thank the bountiful harvest for the fact that the Railway Department showed such a profit. Why, the railways are still hauling wheat, and it is the first occasion on which the railways have been so engaged at this season of the year. We have often had it thrown up at us that wheat is not a profitable commodity to the Railway Department, and yet the only time that the railways have shown a substantial profit has been when they have been hauling full loads of wheat.

Mr. Clydesdale: What about timber?

Mr. THOMSON: Timber plays its part also, but the big harvest has been largely responsible for the expansion of trade and the satisfactory position of the railways. An additional £40,000 will be levied on the railways to pay for long service leave, and I hope we shall get a harvest of 35,000,000 or 40,000,000 bushels this year, for otherwise the Railway Department will not show such a substantial profit next year as it has done this year. Let me analyse the figures and compare the years 1923 and 1927. In my opinion the Commissioner has achieved almost the impossible. The mileage open has increased by 10¼ per cent., the train miles have increased by 21¾ per cent., and the ton miles of goods and livestock have increased by 51¼ per cent. Yet our locomotives have decreased by 6 per cent. I am prepared to admit that our present-day engines are hauling heavier loads, but actually the number of locomotives has decreased. Though the mileage open has increased by 10 per cent., the passenger vehicles have decreased by two coaches, and our wagons have increased by only 3 per cent.

Hon. G. Taylor: The department must have scrapped a lot.

Mr. THOMSON: No, in 1923 we had 12,108 wagons and this year we have 12,471. Yet our ton mile traffic increased by 51¼ per cent. The capital cost has increased by 9.97 per cent., the average earnings by 23¾ per cent., the working expenses by 21½ per

cent., and the train miles run by 21 per cent. It is rather a startling fact that this year we carried 720,149 passengers fewer than in last year.

Mr. Clydesdale: Due to motor competition.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so. It is interesting to note also that the ton miles of livestock and goods has increased by 51¼ per cent., and yet the department have been able to carry that increased traffic with an additional 3 per cent. of rolling stock. My friends opposite say that the co-operation of the employees is responsible for that result. Doubtless they have done their part, but the executive officers have provided the organisation. It is marvellous that the department should have been able to move such a largely increased tonnage with an additional 3 per cent. of trucks.

The Minister for Railways: We spread the harvest over a considerable period and against opposition too, but that is our policy.

Mr. THOMSON: The department have been rather at fault this year, and it was not wise for the wheat pool to force all the wheat on the market, firstly, because it would not be profitable, and secondly, because the task was impossible with the limited rolling stock available. I admit that the Minister for Railways, so far as the Treasurer will permit him, has ordered a small number of trucks, but we must increase the stock of wagons and certainly the stock of sheets. Increased supplies of both are badly wanted.

Mr. Kenneally: You were never better off for sheets than you are to-day.

The Minister for Railways: Never half as well off.

Mr. THOMSON: Still we have not enough. There are plenty of men with £5 in their pockets who were never better off in their lives, but it is not to say that they would not like to be better off still. When any faults are to be found with the wheat pool, the member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) seems to be a ready mouthpiece for the people at Fremantle. He is concerned about 10 tons of wheat that got wet. Who was responsible? The fact is that the sheets were not available and trucks were not available. I am not blaming the Minister for not having provided more sheets and more trucks. Out of all the millions of bushels of wheat produced, 10 tons got wet and the member for Fremantle is concerned about it.

Mr. Sleeman: You do not know anything about it.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course not; the hon. member is the oracle for all things. I happen to know possibly a little more than the hon. member knows about it.

Mr. Sleeman: If you do, you are not showing it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. THOMSON: Altogether 10 tons of wheat was damaged. If the Railway Department had been able to supply us with more sheets and more trucks no doubt the 10 tons would not have gone to waste. There is always a certain quantity of wheat that gets wet. The member for Fremantle was keen to draw attention to the damaged wheat, but there was one thing he forgot. The wheat pool that handles the wheat for the farmers is their own concern, and its officers have sufficient business experience to know that it does not pay the pool or the State to send away wheat that is not of the standard for which it is sold.

Mr. Sleeman: But they get the extra weight for the wet wheat.

Mr. THOMSON: Under those conditions I should be able to rely upon the hearty support and co-operation of the hon. member in urging upon the Minister the supply of more sheets and more trucks.

Mr. Sleeman interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have called attention to the interruptions of the hon. member repeatedly; and if I have to do so again, I regret I shall have to take more drastic action.

Mr. THOMSON: I commend to the Minister's earnest consideration the urgent need for providing more wagons, in view of the fact that we are extending our railways in all directions to develop the State. The figures I have quoted show that the Railway Department have all but achieved the impossible in shifting 51½ per cent. more goods with an increase of only 3 per cent. in trucks. I hope the Minister will be able to prevail on the Treasurer, when framing his Estimates, to provide a larger amount for trucks; and certainly more sheets are needed. While to-day we may be in a better position than ever before in this respect, nevertheless the demands on the Railway Department are greater than ever they were. If next year we have the crop we sincerely hope for, the demands upon the Railway Department will exceed anything known previously. Long may that state of affairs continue! As each succeeding harvest comes, we hope the

demands will be such as to compel the provision of more sheets, more trucks, and more locomotives.

The Minister for Railways: An amount of £600,000 is already authorised for rolling stock.

Mr. THOMSON: Even that is not enough. I hope the Minister for Railways will be able to prevail upon the Treasurer to place more money on the Estimates for this purpose. I regret I have been so long, and I shall be as brief as I can be in concluding. Another matter I should like to submit to the Minister is the question of trucking yards, for which I do hope provision will be made. I do not want to be parochial, especially as you, Mr. Speaker, are interested in the Esperance district; but the Press states that a trucking yard has been provided at Esperance.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. THOMSON: I have not the cutting by me. By the next mail after the appearance of the paragraph I had a letter from a certain part of my electorate pointing out that the people there have been asking for a trucking yard for 15 years and so far have not succeeded in getting one. I do not suppose that the Minister for Railways, who has more important matters to attend to, concerns himself about individual trucking yards; but I hope funds will be made available for that purpose.

The Minister for Railways: I think we installed over fifteen trucking yards last year. The same number will be installed this year.

Mr. THOMSON: So far the Government have deemed it of paramount importance to grant the wages staff of the railways the 44-hour week, long service leave, and increased wages. I hope the Government will now be able to extend some consideration to those who provide loading for the railways and thus afford employment for railway employees. I trust the Government will extend the period for cheaper carriage of super. I should like to see it extended throughout the year, at all events until May.

The Minister for Railways: Even if it were a little more expensive, a flat rate all the year round would be better.

Mr. THOMSON: If a man at Katanning gets his 6 tons of super in January, February or March, the railway freight amounts to £2 ls. 6d. If he gets it after

the period which the Minister has been good enough to extend, the railway freight amounts to £5 7s. 5d., or a difference of £3 3s. 11d. on the six tons. That is hardly equitable. I know of no forward freight carried by the Railway Department which gives a better return in back freight than super does, though it may not do so immediately. I have pointed out before that every ton of super carried by the Railway Department gives them an average return loading of over eight tons. Further, I would like the Government to consider favourably the granting of assistance to country industries. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) tells me that the Government propose to establish some works on the Eastern Goldfields line. Let me point out the difficulties in connection with country industries. Every section of the House claims to stand for decentralisation, and therefore I ask the Government to consider favourably a through mill rate for flour mills. I acknowledge that the Railway Department now give a rebate of 12½ per cent. in respect of freight on flour for export, but our country mills are at a disadvantage in quoting for export. I do not ask for something that does not exist elsewhere. It exists in Victoria to-day. Let me give an illustration. It is estimated that the average haul of wheat is 140 miles, which at the special rate costs 12s. 2d. per ton. Taking that as the average haul to the mill at Katanning—I speak of Katanning because it is my home town—it would cost 12s. 2d. per ton to get the wheat there. If, after the wheat had been gristed, the miller desired to export it through Albany, the haul of 116 miles, less the 12½ per cent. allowance, would cost 10s. 2d., making a total haulage cost of £1 2s. 4d. per ton. I will now quote the Cottesloe flour mill, taking it on the same basis with an average haul costing 12s. 2d. per ton.

Mr. Mann: You are wrong now. The average haul is much greater than 140 miles.

Mr. THOMSON: Not according to the Railway Department's figures, on which I am going.

Mr. Mann: That would refer to one of the York mills.

Mr. THOMSON: If the hon. member will study the matter, he will find the average haul to work out at about 140 miles.

The Minister for Railways: A lot of wheat comes from Geraldton, where the average haul is very close.

Mr. THOMSON: The average haul costs 12s. 2d.; and the cost of haulage from Cottesloe to the port, less 12½ per cent., amounts to 3s. 11¼d., or a total haulage cost of 16s. 1¼d.; say 16s. 2d. Thus the Cottesloe mill has an advantage of 5s. to 6s. per ton on export flour over the Katanning mill. The Minister will readily see that this fact places country mills at a disadvantage. It is not desirable that all our industries should be drawn to the ports; we want to keep in the country those which are already established there, and therefore I commend the matter to the Government's consideration. Let me give an illustration of what is done in Victoria.

Mr. Mann: The average haulage to Katanning would not be 140 miles.

Mr. THOMSON: With all due respect to the hon. member interjecting, who represents Perth, I still believe the figures which I have given to be pretty correct. The Victorian Railway Department assist the Victorian dried fruits industry to this extent, that the freight on every ton of dried fruit carried from Mildura to Melbourne for local consumption is £2 7s., while the freight on dried fruits carried from Mildura to Melbourne for export is only £1 3s. per ton. I commend to the serious consideration of the Minister and his department the suggestions which I have put forward. I advance them as being in the best interests of our country districts. This is one means whereby the Government may encourage a true system of decentralisation. I am indeed pleased to see that something which we as a party have advocated in and out of season is now being taken notice of by metropolitan people. At a recent meeting of the City Council a councillor moved that metropolitan utilities should be vested in a separate board. We of the Country Party have argued for many years that such metropolitan utilities as water supply, sewerage, electric light, and transport in the form of tramways should be vested in a metropolitan board of works similar to that which exists in Victoria. I am delighted to see that the proposal is being considered in the metropolis. May I also suggest to the Government something farther? While one regrets making a

lengthy speech, nevertheless this is the one debate in the course of which members are able to give a great deal of advice and throw out many suggestions. In the Eastern States much interest is now being taken in Western Australia. We have the Council of Industrial Development, who exhibit our local manufacturers and perform other useful functions. I commend to the Government's earnest consideration the establishment of similar offices in Melbourne and Sydney. Western Australia would benefit from them. We had offices in the Eastern States years ago; and if we now set up something in the nature of tourist bureaux in the chief capital cities of the East, incidentally making available first-hand information concerning Western Australia's possibilities, we shall encourage an influx of Eastern visitors. And not only that: there are numerous Eastern people looking for land, and the Eastern offices I suggest would afford reliable information as to that aspect. The Minister stated that not a day passed without his office having inquiries from men seeking land, some of them with £5,000 or £6,000 capital. If advantage were taken of my suggestion, many such men might be induced to come here and take up land. Dealing with road construction, I note with regret that during the past year a sum of £38,000 was spent from State funds in making roads on the Peel Estate. In my opinion that expenditure reflects no credit at all on the Government, having regard to the position which they must have known to exist on the estate. Surely to goodness the expenditure in question, especially in view of the meagre information at the Government's disposal, was a wicked waste of public funds! I hope Ministers will be able to furnish a satisfactory explanation of the matter. I am not going to say much regarding the Main Roads Board. We have had evidence, gained as the result of the formation of the Industries Assistance Board, of what we may expect, for that concern got into an unholy mess. We know that its operations extended to a degree with which the officers were unable to cope. Without casting any reflection on the members of the Main Roads Board, it seems to me that we are in the same position regarding the construction of our roads. We have started much too soon. It would have been better to have delayed operations for a few months so that the

Board would have been in a position to cope with the demands made upon it, instead of pushing on in the way we did. I was rather staggered at the statement of the Minister that the preparations of plans and specifications would have meant a serious delay and served no good purpose. Surely in the expenditure of £500,000 upon road construction, we should work to plans and specifications. When the legislation dealing with the main roads problem was under consideration we were given to understand that the board would be composed of practical men. Now we find that the board is really a Public Works branch transferred to the Main Roads Board.

Mr. Mann: But the board has much greater authority than the members would have if they were in the Public Works Department.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, but it seems remarkable that we should immediately launch out and spend large sums of money on road construction. We were told that the members of the board had a thorough knowledge of road construction and knew their job. As soon as they were appointed—I do not disagree with the action taken by the Government—it was found necessary to send the chairman all over the world to acquire the latest information regarding road construction, and to purchase the most up-to-date machinery available. If the Minister in charge, or the board, decided that it was in the interests of the State to send the chairman away on that mission, surely it would have been wiser to have waited—

Hon. G. Taylor: Until he came back with his fuller knowledge.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, or at any rate not to have gone so far ahead with the work as we did.

Mr. Mann: Then we would not have got the grant from the Federal Government.

Mr. THOMSON: That is not so, because the arrangement was made that if we could not spend the whole of the money available in one year, the balance could be transferred to the succeeding year. We need have had no fears from that standpoint. We know that the policy of the Government favours day labour. They may, or may not, be able to get better value for money expended by the adoption of that policy. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) quoted figures regarding work done by a road board compared with that done departmentally by day labour. That demonstrated the posi-

tion. A great proportion of our roads should be constructed by the local authorities. I confess that I have always favoured the system in vogue years ago whereby the Government made a grant to road boards for the construction of certain roads that had to be constructed according to the conditions laid down by the Public Works Department. Good value was received for the money expended in that direction. To-day operations are overloaded and the overhead expenses must be great. I doubt whether we can get the results that we should obtain. One of the main reasons for this is that we started on our main road construction before we were ready. The Government have laid down a policy of road construction for each board covering a period of five years and for each year £2,000 will be available for the road boards concerned. In the interests of the State, the Government should call for tenders for the construction of the roads. If that were done sufficient inducement would be held out to contractors to purchase efficient plants for road construction. As, however, it is the policy of the Government to do the work by day labour, it cannot be expected that the contractors will go to that expense. If the Government will call for tenders, I will guarantee that tenders will be submitted to them. While the Main Roads Board is supposed to be apart from political control, it was a remarkable coincidence that just before the election the board rushed men into various electorates. Some 690 men were sent to various electorates on the last day upon which they could qualify for enrolment in those electorates. Notwithstanding that fact, the works were commenced on the 6th January without approval of the Commonwealth authorities. The Minister stated that no work had been commenced without authority, but it is remarkable that no application was made to the Federal Government until the 22nd February. That was when the approval of the Federal Minister for Works was sought for the operations to be carried out by day labour. That action placed members of the Main Roads Board in an unenviable position, particularly when they were induced to send men to various electorates as I have indicated.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do you think the absence of the chairman had anything to do with it?

Mr. THOMSON: I cannot say.

The Minister for Railways: He was not away at that time.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret that it was done. I believe the local roads boards should have the opportunity to construct the subsidiary roads and that tenders should be called for the work.

Mr. Heron: Tenders are called for the work.

Mr. THOMSON: Since when has that been done?

Mr. Heron: For a long time.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not aware of that fact. I can give an instance where, in a certain district, the Government were constructing roads by day labour, but the men were knocked off because it was too wet to work. Then the Government call for tenders for road construction in another part of the district, where, to use a vulgarism, the state of the road would bog a duck. The contractor, however, was expected to tender for the construction of that road in winter, notwithstanding the fact that the Department considered it was unprofitable work to undertake. If that is what some hon. members consider is a fair comparison, I do not agree with them.

Mr. Heron: It is three years ago since tenders were first called in my district.

Mr. THOMSON: Then the hon. member is fortunate. Such a thing is not known in my district.

The Minister for Railways: Road boards are asked to tender.

Mr. THOMSON: The point is that day labour is the Government's policy and therefore contractors cannot be induced to spend money on the purchase of plants, unless there is likelihood of continuity of the contract system.

Mr. Clydesdale: Most of the work throughout Australia is done by day labour.

Mr. Withers: Even contractors adopt the system.

Mr. THOMSON: I will deal briefly with the question of child endowment. The State Labour policy on that question was recently determined when 100 union delegates from all over the State, conferred at the Trades Hall. Including those present were the Premier, Senators Needham and Graham and a number of members of Parliament. The conference decided to press for a Commonwealth scheme of child endowment of 10s. 6d. per week per child. That is one

of the loads the unions are endeavouring to foist upon the community. Some workers are quite willing to urge that they should get the maximum, and I am willing that they should have it. We, in Western Australia, however, will be placed in an unfortunate position by the unions if they succeed in imposing upon the people of Australia the basic wage of £4 5s. per week for a man, his wife and two children, plus 10s. 6d. for each child per week. Where is the money to come from? Senator Needham said that during the war we were able to find £400,000,000, so that it was obvious it was quite easy to raise the money. Let me give one or two small instances. There is a commodity that can be manufactured in Queensland but the factory is not working. It is cheaper to send goods from Melbourne for distribution throughout Queensland and to sell that commodity at 3s. per case less than the cost of manufacture in Queensland. We know that recently the Commonwealth Shale Oil Company closed down because it could not operate on the 44-hour basis and incur the additional expenditure imposed upon the concern. Yet we have these 100 union delegates, supposed to represent the brains and ability of the Labour movement, deciding that, apart from the basic wage, there must be paid weekly 10s. 6d. per child! That is the burden the wisdom of the Labour unionists would impose upon the primary producers of Australia and of Western Australia in particular. I am dealing with this from a Western Australian point of view, because this State depends upon primary production. We have spent £6,000,000 to put people on the land in various groups. So far they have not been successful in making a living. Yet, what do we find? This conference urged upon the Commonwealth a national system of child endowment apart from and independent of the basic wage I have indicated. They also decided that no Royal Commission appointed to discuss the question would be acceptable as adequately representative unless representation were given to unions and women. This is what the conference urged—

That the Commonwealth Government should provide such financial aid as is reasonable to admit of the proper preparation and presentation to the Commission of such data as the trade unions deem pertinent to the adequate statement of their views on the subject of child endowment generally, and, in particular, concerning proposed schemes which, if adopted, would involve readjustments of wages for any

section of workers. That the idea promulgated by the Prime Minister at the recent Premiers' Conference calling for a reduction of wages by enforcing a reduction in the domestic unit are absolutely repugnant, and therefore rejected. the conference holding that industry should by wages provide a reasonable standard of life for the average worker on the basis of a man, wife and at least two dependent children.

I hope the standard will be as high as possible, but I want to draw the attention of those gentlemen who are putting forward that scheme to the question of where the money is to come from. Why is our gold mining industry not in a position to pay its way to-day? It is not solely because of the tariff; it is also because of the high costs imposed upon the industry by the vicious circle in which we live.

Mr. Panton: You are not going to blame the wages for that.

Mr. THOMSON: High wages have something to do with it. The Arbitration Court were reluctantly compelled the other day to refuse an increase.

Hon. G. Taylor: Because it could not be passed on.

Mr. THOMSON: Quite so. The judge in giving his decision said he sympathised with them, but could not give it to them. There is an industry that must go out, so what is the use of—

The Minister for Mines: It is not going out yet. Don't make any mistake about that.

Mr. THOMSON: I sincerely hope it is not. What is our position to-day? We find there is a tightness of money throughout the Commonwealth. I wonder if our friends ever ask themselves the reason why. We are importing more than we are exporting, and therefore money is getting tighter.

Mr. Mann: Has the motor car business anything to do with it?

Mr. THOMSON: It certainly has a little to do with it, but it is not all the cause.

Mr. Clydesdale: Don't you think so?

Mr. THOMSON: Well you can blame the lot on to it if you like, but that does not get away from the fact that with all the money invested in our manufacturing industries and with all the protection they have in the tariff, 96 per cent. of our production exported is primary production. That is the point our friends should consider when urging greater increases and

more comfortable conditions. I must say that as the result of what little I saw in the metropolitan areas in the East I do not wonder at industrial unrest. When a man cannot get a house for his family under £2 per week I quite understand why the workers are discontented and say they have not sufficient money to pay their way.

Mr. Kenneally: Will you support a Fair Rents Bill?

Mr. THOMSON: What benefit has such a measure been in New South Wales? It has not been of any advantage at all. If you want a decent house there you have to pay £2 or £3 per week. And that in New South Wales, where you have a fair rents law! One of the reasons why, is because we are living in that vicious circle and because the member for East Perth and others are always urging that things should go up and up, forgetting that it must all come back on the worker in the long run. I want to draw attention to the fact that my friends are living in a fool's paradise. I know all sides of this question, and probably have suffered as many of the difficulties and hardships that occur to men as have any members sitting opposite. So I have every sympathy with their desires to improve the position. So far as I can judge, that proposal put forward by the Prime Minister was ultimately in the interests of the workers. Why do we ask for child endowment? Because we consider that the man and the woman doing their duty to the State by bringing children into the world are entitled to some assistance. But we have fixed the scheme, not on the basis of a man and his wife, but on a basis that adds two children to the unit. The Commonwealth Government's suggestion was a reasonable one. If there is anything sound in the principle of child endowment—we all admit that—here was an equitable and reasonable way of getting it. Would it not be better to start on a reasonable basis? Is it fair to be paying for millions of children not in existence? The basis of a man and his wife is quite fair. But if by imposing these new conditions we put people out of work, what will be the position of our primary industries? The Minister for Lands, when speaking of the Paterson butter scheme, said the creation of high land values were responsible for it and that it was a general tax on the consumers of Australia to the ex-

tent of two million pounds, due to the fact that the soldiers had taken up land at high value when butter was 2s. per lb. He could see ahead, he said, an unhappy time for consumers if they did not wake up. He added that the dried fruits people were in somewhat the same condition. Why is it that our butter and dried fruits people want assistance? It is not all ascribable to the high value of land and to the tariff. There are other conditions that make the position impossible. The tariff has a considerable effect, and the Arbitration Court also imposes difficulties. The unions appeal to the court and, so far as one may judge, when the finding is satisfactory to them they accept it. Take the present position. Hundreds of men marched to the Arbitration Court in New South Wales the other day. The unions appealed to the court and afterwards refused to abide by Judge Beeby's decision regarding piecework. Having tried the Arbitration Court they say, "We cannot get any more from that, so we want industrial courts." Where is the fairness of those men, such keen advocates of the Arbitration Court, who are not prepared to abide by the findings of that court? Mr. Keane, the General Secretary of the Australian Railway Union, addressed a mass meeting of employees at Newport and urged them to refuse to accept piecework. Here is a report of his remarks:—

The policy of the Australian Railways Union, Mr. Keane said, was to secure a shorter working week based on the day labour system of payment. The union had made a careful investigation of the piecework system, and was satisfied that it should not be adopted. Mr. Keane outlined the action which had been taken by the annual conference of the union to oppose the piecework system, and the meeting endorsed the action which had been decided on.

We hear a lot about efficiency and the lack of efficiency in the employers, but if you go to the Eastern States you will find that the average manufacturer there has the most up-to-date machinery in the world. And he will say to you, "I have conditions imposed upon me by the unions. In the United States, where they are manufacturing, and we have to compete with them, they have perhaps one man attending to half a dozen automatic machines. However, the conditions laid down in Australia will not permit that." The unions themselves are saying, "We will not allow our fellow workmen to earn more than the basic wage." While with one breath they call for the protection of the

court, in the next they say, "We will not obey the orders of the court, because Bill Jones might earn more than Bill Smith." They want to put all employees on the one level. In the interests of the workers themselves and in the interests also of Australia, it is time that men like those 100 union delegates who met together should at least consider what their efforts will bring them to. Let us take the position of the primary producers as a whole. The Minister for Lands said he was very much concerned, that he saw a serious position ahead for the consumers. Why was the Paterson butter scheme brought into existence, and why did they ask for a duty? Because the conditions imposed upon them have rendered them unable to compete. Therefore they say the worker is entitled to go to the Arbitration Court and is protected against foreign or cheap labour by having his wages increased; the manufacturer goes to the Tariff Board, and because the Arbitration Court has increased the rate of wages he is immediately granted an additional percentage by way of protective duty. But the people who have to sell their primary products in the world's markets are not in that happy position. I wonder whether our friends who are such staunch supporters—

Mr. Mann: We send secondary production also overseas.

Mr. THOMSON: We are not in a position to sell secondary production overseas. The only products we are selling in competition with the world overseas are our primary products, fruit, wool, wheat, timber and coal.

Mr. Coverley: Don't forget the meat.

Mr. THOMSON: All I can say is that any man interested in the meat industry in Australia must know that it is the poorest paying proposition of the lot.

Mr. Coverley: In your opinion.

Mr. THOMSON: If any man knows whether or not meat is a profitable industry it should be the member for Kimberley. I do not know what the average price is here. On the Atherton tableland there are meat works where the average price paid is 10s. per cwt., live weight. Of course that is a payable proposition! One need only ask the Duracks and the others in the Kimberleys who are engaged in cattle raising how much they have made out of the meat industry during the last few years. We have exported meat, but every pound weight of it has been exported at a loss.

Mr. Coverley: That is no fault of the employees you are moaning about. You have moaned for four hours.

Mr. THOMSON: If I could not moan to greater effect than the hon. member I should be sorry that I had risen to my feet. We are dealing with export commodities. Even in the matter of meat we cannot compete successfully with the outside world.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: And we are paying a Federal bonus.

Mr. Coverley: It has been knocked off for three years.

Mr. THOMSON: They are asking for it again. Our main products are meat, wool, wheat and timber. We are not in a position to export manufactured goods. That is why those engaged in the butter industry voluntarily decided to contribute 3d. per lb. to the pool. This means that they are getting an increase of 3d. per lb. If the Australian worker is entitled to maintain his standard of living, does he want to deny it to those engaged in the primary industries? It seems that he does. He wants these satisfactory conditions, but is not prepared to give them to those who are engaged in the dairying and dried fruits industries. The producers are going to pay their share of the 10s. 6d. per week which the union delegates in Melbourne have decided is a fair and proper charge to be put upon the industry.

Mr. Kenneally: That was in Perth.

Mr. THOMSON: If a man is fortunate enough to be working at day labour under union rules, he will receive the child endowment. If he is working for himself on the land he will not be entitled to it. Even with a hard struggle he cannot get the basic wage, and though he is asked to contribute to the endowment he is to be denied the right of receiving anything from it.

Hon. G. Taylor: That will be something. He will not be left out altogether.

The Minister for Mines: That would be a pity.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister objected to the 3d. on butter being paid, and said it was a bad thing. The Minister for Agriculture, at the conference held in Adelaide, was the only one who raised his voice against it. He was more concerned about the consumers than the producers. Although Western Australia does not contribute 1d. towards the Paterson butter scheme, the producers of the State are benefiting to the tune of 3d.

per ton. The chairman of the butter factory at Bunbury said he was not in favour of it, but that his factory on last year's output had benefited to the extent of £14,000.

Hon. H. Millington: Who paid for it? The consumer?

Mr. THOMSON: Of course the consumer paid. Does the hon. member think he should not pay?

Mr. Chesson: The consumer always pays.

Hon. H. Millington: You said Western Australia did not contribute. It does contribute.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course. The producers themselves in Western Australia have not contributed 1d. towards it. As the producers in the Eastern States have put that into the fund they have been able to increase their price by 3d. a lb. Why should they not do so? Who would members expect to pay for it? If it is logical and right that these benefits should be given to the Australian worker and the manufacturer, I wonder if they are willing to agree to the Australian price of wheat. The wheat producer in this State should get the London parity plus all charges. From Western Australia to London these are estimated to cost 1s. 9d. per bushel. The cost of wheat on the London market at 54s. a quarter works out at an average of 6s. 9d. a bushel. Our local price was 5s. Last year we produced 30,000,000 bushels of wheat, and our total estimated local consumption was 2,000,000 bushels. If it is logical for the Australian Arbitration Court to protect the worker, and for the tariff to protect the manufacturer surely it is logical that the same argument should apply to the wheat producer, and that he should receive the Australian price. If we were given the London parity in Western Australia for our local consumption, £175,000 more would be paid by the consumers in Western Australia, that is if the conditions which apply to manufactured goods which enter from overseas, namely, the London price plus the cost of transport, applied to wheat. That is what happens in connection with our wire netting, which is admitted duty-free provided the price it costs from London to Australia does not come below the Australian manufactured price. If that is logical it would be fair to say that instead of wheat being sold in Western Australia at the London price less handling charges we were entitled to the cost of bringing it into Australia. Instead of the difference being 1s. 9d.

we should be paid 3s. 6d. a bushel more for our wheat.

Mr. Clydesdale: Do you think the farmers would complain then?

Mr. THOMSON: They would be quite satisfied, and the money would be willingly paid.

Hon. G. Taylor: I should like to see them satisfied.

Mr. Marshall: They were not satisfied with 9s.

Mr. Lindsay: You have never heard wheatgrowers complain about the price of wheat.

Mr. THOMSON: In New South Wales at the last conference of the primary producers a motion urged upon the State Government the necessity for abolishing the agricultural employees award, since it was causing unemployment and hindering development by its harassing conditions. Some members who have taken part in this debate did not give sufficient consideration to the subject before them.

Mr. Kenneally: You have made up for that.

Mr. THOMSON: That is the hon. member's opinion. We were told that politics should not enter into group settlement. Politics should not enter into the child endowment scheme that is being submitted to the people. The decision that should be given by the Royal Commission should be based upon evidence submitted by all sections of the community, and the findings should be based upon how each industry in Australia can carry the burden.

Mr. Withers: And the report be binding upon both parties.

Mr. THOMSON: As far as one can judge from the hon. member and those supporting him, so long as a decision is acceptable to them it is accepted as binding. If they do not approve of it, as is evident in the engineers' case, there are many reasons why they should not accept the decision of the court.

Mr. Withers: And Piddington's finding also?

Mr. THOMSON: No one should know better than the hon. member that it was clearly proved that the Piddington finding was an impossible charge to place upon industry in Australia.

Mr. Withers: Naturally.

Mr. THOMSON: That is the reply of a man who has not studied the question as to

whether industries can bear the burden. We have our group settlements and our returned soldiers to consider. Members opposite are very keen in their desire that the basis upon which the child endowment scheme shall be arranged shall be upon a certain standard. I wish to refer to the judgment given by Judge Pike in New South Wales. A Commission was appointed to inquire into the position of returned soldiers on the Murrumbidgee River. A number of witnesses were examined and an inquiry was held to determine the production from the various classes of soil. Members of the Commission agreed unanimously that the settlers were over-capitalised and a classification board was appointed, but the settlers objected to the small representation on the board. A land valuation court was assembled, over which Mr. Justice Pike presided. The settlers appealed against the determination of the classification. The classification board had wanted to allow the settlers £4 a week. When the committee of inquiry presented its report the Commission gave a remission of five years on account of water rates and a reduction of between £300 and £500 a settler as a general concession. Mr. Justice Pike was appealed to by the settlers to determine what was a home maintenance area. He declared that £208 was not a sufficient allowance as, on the basis of the figures of the Commission, the settler would not have paid for his property for 38 years. Mr. Justice Pike fixed as the minimum £312, which should be allowed as a settler's wages. Our friends are out for a basic wage and a child endowment scheme. Every section of the community is entitled to the same privileges, to the same basic wage, before any land tax or income tax, or rates, or any other charges are levied upon them. If they would go upon that basis I believe they would get a great deal more support than they are getting outside the House. In my opinion they are going to load up the industries of the country with a greater burden than they can bear. They put forward something as being in the interests of the community, but I am sure they are going to place too great a burden upon it. The Minister will be dealing with public hospitals. I am not a gambler, but I am sorry the Bill he introduced for what may be termed the "Golden Casket" did not become law. I visited Queensland recently and was surprised to

find the success that was attending the Golden Casket consultation. I was astonished to learn that it had been responsible for the payment of £100,000 to the hospitals and that it had paid in prizes £170,000. Speaking for myself, I would sooner have one art union such as that than half a dozen carried on under the pernicious system existing in Perth to-day. We find that there are art unions for motor cars and other prizes, to assist the Parkerville Home, a very deserving institution, as well as many others. It would be far better to have one, as I have stated, under a proper form of control than to permit a number of art unions to be conducted.

The Minister for Mines: I have nothing to do with them.

Mr. Marshall: The Minister for Police controls them.

Mr. THOMSON: I can only repeat that of the two evils I prefer to have the one conducted on lines similar to the Golden Casket and forbid every other. In that way I am sure that the hospitals would benefit considerably.

The Minister for Mines: That would have been done if Parliament had carried the Bill that was introduced two years ago.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, I supported that Bill.

Mr. Clydesdale: Your friends in the other House threw it out.

Mr. THOMSON: I may be pardoned for touching on a few small matters affecting my district, and then I will conclude. I am sorry that the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Lands are not at present in the Chamber. Katanning is a fairly old-established town and its courthouse has been in existence to my knowledge for 25 years. The building is in a very bad state of repair and lacks accommodation. When witnesses are ordered out of court they are obliged to go out on the footpath. There is no accommodation for either witnesses or lawyers.

Mr. Davy: There is not even any accommodation for solicitors in the Perth courthouse.

Mr. THOMSON: That does not say we should not have it at Katanning. I might also draw attention to the disgraceful condition of the Agricultural Bank. The Minister for Mines will agree with me on that point because I showed him the premises. If it were any other employer than the

Government I am certain a prosecution would be instituted for confining the officials in such a limited space. It must surely be a breach of the Health Act. With all the valuable files that are there, something should certainly be done. Katanning is a fairly progressive town, and we are all keen that every encouragement should be given to Western Australians to support the State Savings Bank. I can assure the House that the space afforded clients of the bank is no wider than a distance that can be measured by my two hands. I hope the Minister when framing the Estimates will give some consideration to these matters. I know that members have been somewhat long-suffering and patient, and I thank them sincerely for having listened to me with so much attention. I had no idea that I would occupy so much time, and for that reason I thank members for the courtesy they have extended to me. I give members opposite every right to express the opinions that they hold and to fight for what they think is correct. I trust that they will always accord me the same privilege and that whatever we have to say within the walls of this Chamber it will make no difference to our friendship outside.

MR. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [10.7]: I have not very much to add to the debate on the Address-in-reply. I desire to take advantage of this opportunity to bring under the notice of Ministers a few matters for their consideration and immediate action.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is the stuff; now they are sitting up.

Mr. COVERLEY: As a change of programme I desire to express my electors' appreciation for sympathetic administration by the present Government during the past three years. It is a fact that when people are situated so far away from the seat of Government, with a very big spread between their governing bodies, they lack that organisation that is so necessary for them to make themselves heard. Therefore when they do get a little consideration they appreciate it, and they demonstrated that appreciation at the last election, in spite of the visit of my friend the member for West Perth with his powerful advocacy, and the Leader of the Opposition who kept the telegraph lines very busy with urgent wires to some of his friends. I am very pleased for one reason that the member for West Perth and his colleague did

take the trouble to visit my electorate. If we were to encourage a few more visits to Kimberley, members would get a better idea of the vast distance of the place from civilised areas, and I am sure they would then give us at times the assistance that we require when we are advocating special consideration for the far North and North-West. I feel personally gratified that my electors are assured of a further term of sympathetic consideration, because I look forward to a great future for that part of the State, when its mineral resources have been thoroughly prospected and its many industries developed. It is a fact that the pearling and pastoral industries have undergone a few lean years. This is merely a temporary set back which will be overcome in due course. Our main drawbacks are due to marketing problems. Recently we had a promise that the Federal Government will introduce legislation that will be of great benefit to the pearling industry, and when the Marketing Mill is put into operation, and the whole of the pearl-shell product of Australia is dealt with on a co-operative basis, we hope to have a big improvement and to secure fresh capital for the development of the industry. We have many other drawbacks, and what I might term the main drawback is the want of population. In the whole of Western Australia we are short of people, and although there is a slight increase in the total each year, we find that the population of the North and North-West suffered a decrease. It is not very hard to suggest reasons for the failure of the population to increase in the North. Having only two industries, pearling and pastoral, and both being seasonal occupations, they do not attract men to that part of the State because the majority of people employed in them are only part-time employees, and consequently when the seasonal work is over they have to go elsewhere in search of a livelihood. That might have been materially altered had the Government responsible refused the extension of the pastoral leases in 1917. That was one drawback that debarred persons from selecting a decent piece of country with permanent water or a river frontage such as would give a settler a reasonable chance of success. I do not see any prospects immediately for the North with the exception perhaps of the policy that the Government propose to carry out, namely, the resumption and the survey of blocks in the vicinity of the Wyndham Meat Works.

While on the subject I wish to express my sympathy with the relatives of the late Mr. Despeissis, the officer who went to Wyndham to take charge of the experimental farm. It seems to me that the wheel of fortune once more turned against the North-West when it removed Mr. Despeissis, because in that gentleman we had a valued officer whose duty to the State was always his first consideration. Had Mr. Despeissis been spared to continue the good work that he was embarking upon, we would now have had an experimental plot well advanced, a plot that would have been of benefit to Kimberley and to the whole of the State. I hope the Minister for Agriculture will see fit to fill the vacancy at the earliest possible moment, because it is necessary we should have expert advice when we throw the blocks open for selection. When the time arrives I hope that the Government will see that they provide more protection for the settlers against the aborigines than is afforded at the present time. I hope the Government will not lose sight of the fact that some definite stand must be taken; otherwise it will be nothing short of a calamity and the loss of public money, and perhaps the loss of life amongst new settlers who are not aware of the treachery of bush natives. While on the subject of natives, I desire to tell the Government that the time is long overdue for a revision of the administration of the Aborigines Department. Under the present system of administration neither the aborigines nor the white population of the Kimberleys are getting a fair deal for the money provided by the taxpayers. When I say that the aborigines are not getting the justice they are entitled to, I refer particularly to the measures taken for the health of bush blacks that do not come into contact with the white population, and also the accommodation provided in the shape of isolation wards for aborigines generally. I mentioned this matter three years ago, but so far nothing has been done. Quite recently three cases of leprosy and an advanced case of venereal disease were treated at the Broome hospital. They were treated in an obsolete bathroom, because the district medical officer had nowhere else to place those aborigines. At night they were allowed to visit the town natives and come and go as they pleased. That of course had a tendency to spread

the disease amongst the aborigines employed by the residents of the town. Such a state of affairs would not be tolerated for ten minutes in the metropolitan area, because the risk of disease being spread would put the wind up the whole population and something would be done.

Mr. Richardson: Not the whole population.

Mr. COVERLEY: The residents of the Kimberleys are as much entitled to protection from the spread of leprosy as are the people residing in the districts of Claremont or Nelson. It is my duty to tell the public what is being done with those cases in the Kimberleys. If the disease spreads to the white population up there, some of those people might come to Perth and bring the disease down here. The sooner something is done to stamp out the disease, the better it will be. What I am saying is not new to the department, because the Broome Road Board has been continually protesting to the Minister for Health and the Aborigines Department pointing out the critical state of the health of natives located along the coast between Broome and Derby and between Derby and Wyndham. I suggest to the Government that it is time the Aborigines Department or the officials responsible were stirred up and that a searching medical inspection was made of the aborigines in the whole of the North-West. Decent accommodation in the way of isolation wards should also be provided in various centres for the reception of patients suffering from infectious disease. When all that is done the department can claim to be doing something for the welfare of the race for whom they are responsible. That is an instance of where the present administration has failed from the point of view of the natives. It fails also from the point of view of the white population in many ways. To give an instance, the Act allows any employer, on the payment of two guineas per annum, to employ as many natives as he chooses. He is issued with a general permit on paying that sum. That system is entirely wrong from many points of view, and generally speaking it operates to the detriment of settlement. Every native that submits himself for work claims the keep for his mother and father, and probably also for four or five other relations.

Mr. Marshall : They are pretty good socialists.

Mr. COVERLEY: In fact, a nigger has been known to produce three fathers. It has also been known for a tribe of 15 or 20 aborigines to camp in close proximity to a station, for five of the tribe to submit themselves for work, and while the station owner or manager was busy supervising them, for the rest of the tribe to kill as many bullocks as possible before the owner woke up to the fact. Thus the employment of aborigines operates to the detriment of settlement in the long run. After all we are trying to get population into the North and not to hunt it out. It is generally recognised that cattle killing is more prevalent in the Kimberleys to-day than is realised by the Aborigines Department. I intended to get some figures but omitted to do so. Still I know there are many cases of cattle killing that are never brought before the courts, because the offenders are not captured. There is much country in the Kimberleys, in fact it might be called the wide wide world, and the natives take some catching. When it is reported that aborigines have been killing cattle on certain runs, the police go out, but they cannot always find the natives and thus the offenders cannot be brought to justice. Consequently it is useless to try to prove that cattle killing is more prevalent than it was five years ago, because many cases are not brought to justice. We have a standing example of the detrimental effect of cattle killing in the Kimberleys in the experience of the late Mr. F. W. Hay and his partner Mr. L. R. Overheu. No two men could have been a greater acquisition to the Kimberley district than were the two gentlemen to whom I have referred. In 1922 they took up some country 80 miles from Wyndham. They started off with 1,400 head of mixed cattle, and in three years they had 35 miles of fencing erected, a homestead built, two yards constructed and over 12 tons of cotton growing on the property, in addition to castor oil beans and practically every kind of tropical fruit and vegetable worth mentioning. Mr. Hay unfortunately was murdered by a native, and Mr. Overheu finally abandoned the place. He stated on oath that he reckoned their loss from cattle killing at £5,000. It is for the Government to decide whether settlers of this calibre

are to receive adequate protection to enable them to go on developing the North-West or whether we are just to muddle on under the present stupid system of protecting the aborigines to the detriment of the settlers as a whole. I could cite many more instances of small men who have been driven out of the country merely as a result of persecution by the natives. I again suggest as I did on the Address-in-reply three years ago that the officials of the Aborigines Department be immediately transferred, box and dice, to Wyndham, or some other part of the Kimberley district. I do not say exactly where they should be located, but they should certainly be sent to the Kimberley district to get a real grip of the position and incidentally to shed a little of the red tape in which they indulge at present. I do not infer that the aims and ideals of the department are not good. I think they are quite in order, but the whole system of administration is wrong, and badly needs revising. We shall never get an alteration until the department or the head of the department is put in the proper place, and the proper place for the Chief Protector of Aborigines is somewhere on the job where the aborigines are to be found. I mentioned this on a previous occasion and the outcome was that the Government appointed a travelling inspector. I do not know that he has ever done anything for the benefit of the aborigines or of the white population: as a matter of fact I have heard quite a lot of complaints against him. I do not wish to weary the House by reciting complaints laid against that officer; I wish to complain about the department as a whole. It is the right of members to know just what the department are doing. I have pointed out that they are not protecting the aborigines in the matter of health, and that they are protecting the blackfellows to the detriment of settlement. I would further suggest to the Government that they inaugurate an aborigines' fund to which every employer should contribute a weekly sum for every aborigine he employs, and that the rest of the aborigines should be drafted to the nearest aboriginal reserve where they could be provided for out of the funds contributed by the employers. In addition I suggest that the Government arrange a police patrol for 12 months, or until the aborigines

understand that they must remain on the reserve. After that the Government should abolish the whole of the protectors of aborigines with the exception of those in charge of the reserves to which the blacks were sent. Then it would be a matter of employers going to the protector on the reserve when they wanted a new permit. The aborigines are not granted permits unless they are reliable.

Mr. Mann: What is your experience of the missions? Are they good?

Mr. COVERLEY: The aims and ideals of the missions are quite in order; the trouble is they are overlapping in many respects to the detriment of settlement. The head of every mission is appointed a protector of aborigines and the department in Perth give the protectors assistance to overlap and interfere with everybody's business. If there is a few tons of cargo to be forwarded by lugger, one of the missions gets the work. The missions work with aboriginal labour and have no wages to pay and so can do the work more cheaply than anyone else. There is a Broome man who does that class of work for a living, but when it is necessary to forward stores from Broome to Lagrange Bay, he does not get the work because the mission is able to do it much more cheaply. In consequence we have many complaints against the missions, but merely from the unpaid labour point of view. If the missions stuck religiously to their religious job, they would be all right. Even if the proposed new system did not do better than the present system, the results could not possibly be worse. If the loose-end natives were concentrated on reserves, the ringleaders in cattle-killing would be gathered together there.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Would you have a policeman to control the natives on the reserves?

Mr. COVERLEY: No. It would only be a matter of a police patrol long enough to get the natives to understand that they must not go off a certain area. Then the natives would remain there. By the gathering in of the ringleaders in cattle-killing the job of discovering dead bullocks and issuing the necessary punishment would become a responsibility of the directors in charge of reserves. In reference to the Medical and Health Department, I wish to thank the Minister for the small improvements which have been secured in the

Wyndham, Derby, and Broome hospitals. However, there are one or two matters now under consideration to which I desire to refer. The Broome hospital is waiting for a bacteriologist, and the Minister should hurry the appointment on.

The Minister for Mines: We are awaiting a reply now.

Mr. COVERLEY: It is realised that the alterations requested in the Broome hospital represent a costly proposition; but that is not to be wondered at, having regard to the coloured population to be catered for. I would suggest that the Minister render the Aborigines Department assistance towards research and stamping-out of the leprosy that is slowly but surely taking hold of the natives on the coast between Broome and Derby and throughout the Kimberleys. With regard to the Broome hospital, I understand that some engineer or Public Works Department foreman has reported to the effect that the accommodation for the orderlies is quite all right. When visiting Broome hospital six months ago, I inspected the orderlies' quarters, and I would not put a decent-sized dog into them, even regarded as a kennel. If orderlies are to be retained in these out-of-the-way places, the first requirement is decent accommodation. The night nurses at the Broome hospital at present have no place in which they can sleep quietly, nor have they any privacy: they use an empty mental ward as sleeping quarters. Thank goodness there are not many patients for that ward in the Kimberleys. I am grateful to the Minister for his replies of to-day regarding the appointment of a doctor at Hall's Creek. There has been a definite promise of financial assistance, which is exceedingly gratifying to anyone who realises the isolation of Hall's Creek, 240 miles away from any medical assistance, and with only the crudest methods of transport available. Moreover, the very industry followed by the population of Hall's Creek leaves them open to serious accident at any time. The matter is one upon which those people look with grave concern. At present a few married men are working at Hall's Creek, and with the introduction of the better halves it is time to provide a doctor for the place. If we want to keep the population there, we must supply them with medical attention at least. Another suggestion I have to offer is in regard to mining operations. It is rather re-

markable that the first gold discovery in Western Australia took place at Hall's Creek in the Kimberleys. Incidentally, that was the first Western Australian goldfield to be deserted. It was discovered in 1886, and it was abandoned in 1908. Hon. members can well imagine the crudeness of mining methods in those early days. Notwithstanding the crude methods, statistics show that most of the crushings from mines now abandoned went well over an ounce to the ton. I suggest to the Mines Department the sending of a couple of good prospectors with a geologist to Hall's Creek for research work.

The Minister for Mines: A geologist is on his way to the Kimberleys now.

Mr. COVERLEY: I did not know that, and I am indeed pleased to hear it. I stipulated Hall's Creek for a specific reason.

The Minister for Mines: The geologist is going to the Kimberleys. I do not know about Hall's Creek.

Mr. COVERLEY: I stipulated Hall's Creek because some four years ago a prospecting party were sent by the Mines Department to the Kimberleys, and that prospecting party put in four months touring in the vicinity of Turkey Creek, the only place in the North-West that no one ever accused of carrying gold. The result was that the party, when they returned after finding nothing, put in a report very derogatory to the Kimberleys as a whole. We do not want that experience repeated. In future, when a geologist and a prospector are sent to the Kimberleys, they should go to the proper places, and then one day there might be an announcement of re-opening of Kimberley goldfields.

The Minister for Mines: The geologist is going to the Kimberleys principally in connection with a copper and tin show.

Hon. G. Taylor: What is the position regarding oil?

Mr. COVERLEY: They are still boring. I support the remarks of the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) on the good work performed by officers and men of the State Shipping Service. It is indeed pleasing to know that the State line has become so popular since the arrival of the new boat, the "Koolinda." I differ from the member for Gascoyne in one respect. I have been an ardent supporter of the State Shipping Service as a trading concern for years, and I am not a recent convert under the camou-

flage of public utility. I find it extremely difficult to understand the reasoning of the member for Gascoyne. Seeing that the State ships have for years been trading along the North-West coast and also with Java and Singapore, and the latter in competition with lines carrying coloured crews, I do not know how the hon. member can take up the position that the State Shipping Service is a public utility.

Mr. Thomson: But he has always held that view.

Mr. COVERLEY: I do not know how the State ships can be regarded as a public utility any more than the State brickworks can be so regarded. I was rather disappointed with the Premier's reply of to-day regarding the extension of the State Shipping Service to Wyndham. A monthly extension to Wyndham and Port Darwin has long been desired. At present the State boats go to Darwin and Wyndham every two months. Apart from the inconvenience to the public of Wyndham and the back country, the State Shipping Service are losing an enormous trade with Port Darwin owing to the fact that the Eastern boats call there every month. If we were to send our State boats to Darwin every month, it would not only bring more freight to them, but also more trade to Fremantle. Many of the Darwin firms would be pleased to deal with the Western Australian side if they could get a monthly service there, as on the Eastern side. I hope the Government will see fit to place an order for another ship on the same lines as the "Koolinda" and extend their service to Darwin on a monthly basis at the earliest possible date. As regards the Wyndham Meat Works, it is pleasant to know that they have again shown a profit, even if that profit is small. For the financial year ended on the 30th June, 1927, the balance over and above working expenses amounts to £868; but we have to bear in mind that the object of the works is to encourage the production of cattle. The aim is to pay the best possible price to the producers of cattle. That has been done: the present price, I understand, is 12s. 6d. per 100 lbs., which is considerably above the figure quoted by the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) as ruling at the Queensland meat works.

Mr. Thomson: Only 2s.

Mr. COVERLEY: But on a 500lb. bullock the difference amounts to something considerable. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) alluded to the proposed handing over of the North-West to the Federal Government. I wish to put the hon. member right as to the portion of that country which it is proposed to hand over to the Commonwealth. It is a long distance from the electorate represented by my friend. The matter was discussed by me on every platform from which I spoke during the election campaign. I have opposed, and do oppose, the proposition from start to finish. In every one of my speeches I advised the electors that if ever the matter came before them by way of plebiscite, they should vote against it. Both my opponents advocated the proposal, which amounts to separation, or in other words a separate State. If the result of the election is to be regarded as any indication of the wishes of the northern people the Treasurer would do well to be extremely careful in his dealings with the Federal Government. I suggest to the Premier that instead of worrying a lot about the Commonwealth proposal, he should proceed with the appointment of the Royal Commission agreed to by Parliament last session on the motion of the member for Pilbara (Mr. Lamond). That Royal Commission was to inquire into the position of the North-West. I consider it necessary that the Commission shall be appointed immediately, if for no other reason than to give members of this Chamber and the Government themselves the information necessary to enable them to start negotiations with the Commonwealth Government. If that course were adopted, it would at least furnish the Government with something concrete to place before the Federal authorities. If there is any likelihood of negotiations being opened up, the expenses involved in the appointment of the Royal Commission will not be wasted, because when the financial aspects are under consideration, we can include the cost of the Royal Commission and make the Federal Government pay for it. Recently I asked a question regarding the pastoral leases that expire in 1928. I asked that question for the purpose of protecting myself when the matter is brought before the House. I have not been able to make the inquiries necessary at the Lands Department and therefore I intend to reserve my opinion until

the Bill is before the House. One other matter concerning the Kimberley district is the Vermin Act Amendment Act that was dealt with last year. I have heard a lot of criticism to which it is unnecessary to reply. Most of it has emanated from members of the Country Party. After all, the vermin tax does not represent a tax but merely a contribution towards the destruction of pests in the interests of the producing community.

Mr. Lindsay: It is in the interests of the whole State.

Mr. COVERLEY: Of course it is. The pastoralists are prepared to pay their quota towards the destruction of the vermin.

Mr. Sampson: Don't you think all the citizens of the State should contribute towards that cost?

Mr. COVERLEY: Why should they?

The Minister for Mines: Yes, why should everyone pay?

Mr. Sampson: Because it is of benefit to the State as a whole to get rid of the pest.

Mr. COVERLEY: In conclusion, I would again stress the importance of the appointment of the Royal Commission to inquire into the position of the North-West, for the reasons I have already indicated.

MR. ROWE (North-East Fremantle) [10.48]: At the outset of my remarks I desire to express my pleasure at the privilege conferred upon me of occupying a seat in this House. Particularly do I feel privileged in that I am representing a constituency formerly represented for so many years by the Hon. W. C. Angwin, one of the best men who has laboured in the interests of this State. I have been acquainted with that gentleman for close upon 30 years, and I am sure that he will fill the position he occupies at present with credit to himself and to the State. I realise the difficult part I have to play in following a man of the calibre of Mr. Angwin. With the march of time, however, and by strict attention to my duties and the business of this Chamber, I intend to do my best to follow as closely as I can in his footsteps.

Mr. Sampson: There can be only one Billy?

Mr. ROWE: I have listened attentively to the speeches delivered by various members and I am delighted to think that they are all of one opinion, namely, that the

prospects of the State are of the brightest. I refer particularly to the prospects of the agricultural industry and the wheat export trade. I was greatly impressed by the speech delivered by the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay), for his statement awakened memories of 30 years ago. I recollect that in those days we could not grow sufficient wheat in Western Australia to meet the requirements of our own population and I well remember handling hundreds and hundreds of bags of wheat that had been imported from South Australia to meet the demand here. I have watched the progress of the State with interest year by year and now the time has arrived when we can grow sufficient wheat to serve our own requirements and to export to the world's markets as well. I have also watched closely the expansion of the Fremantle harbour. I wish to impress upon the Government that the time has arrived when matters relating to the harbour at our chief port must be taken into consideration seriously. On several occasions last season there was the spectacle of ships lying at anchor in Gage Roads because no berths were available at the wharves. I trust that that difficulty will be overcome during the forthcoming season. According to the reports in the Press it is anticipated that next season's wheat yield will represent upwards of 38,000,000 bushels, which will be a large increase on the quantity handled last year. In those circumstances the fact is pointed to conclusively that something must be done to provide extra accommodation for ships that will come to Fremantle to lift our harvest. I am also interested in the apprenticeship question. When passing along our streets and watching boys going to and coming from the various schools, I often ask myself what prospects they have of ever becoming artisans or mechanics, and of assuming their places on the road to independence. I trust sincerely that something will be done to enable the rising generation to have the opportunity of becoming tradesmen.

Mr. Sampson: Hear, hear! That is the spirit.

Mr. ROWE: I served my apprenticeship for five years and I would have served six years but for the fact that the contractor concerned would not take me because I was too small! Despite that, however, I have

now a trade at my finger tips, but for 35 years I have had no occasion to fall back upon my trade. At the present moment, however, I feel that I can compare myself to an apprentice surrounded by so many journeymen! I hope, by strict attention to business, I shall become a journeyman in politics in due course. I wish to deal briefly with the question of the supply of trucks for the forthcoming harvest. On several occasions recently men employed along the water front at Fremantle have had to cease work at 10 a.m. and sometimes at midday, merely because no trucks were available for carrying on operations. Nothing is more disheartening to men than to have to knock off work, particularly when the weather is fine, because trucks are not available. I was pleased to hear the Minister for Railways state that a large number of trucks will be available this year in addition to those in use last year. I agree with the statements made by the member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) regarding the damaged wheat that was exported recently. Whether that was due to a shortage of tarpaulins or not, I am not in a position to state. I know, however, that an inadequate supply of tarpaulins has been at the disposal of the Railway Department but I believe the Government are making a big effort to overcome that difficulty.

The Minister for Railways: We have done so.

Mr. ROWE: I am glad to hear that. The hour is late and there are several other questions that I wish to deal with, but I can do so at greater length when suitable occasions arise. For instance, we will have an opportunity to discuss a Hospitals Bill during the session, and I will have something further to say on that question. My 15 years experience in connection with the working of hospitals enables me to deal with the problems involved. We are also promised a Bill to amend the Workers' Compensation Act, and I will have something to say when that measure is before us. My experience, extending over 25 years while secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation at Fremantle, has afforded me some idea of the advantages and disadvantages of the existing Workers' Compensation Act. During that period I was actively associated with the control of industry along the water front, and hon. members may be

surprised to hear that the average number of men injured while working there is 30 per month.

The Minister for Railways: Practically one every day!

Mr. ROWE: That is so. I can also state that that is a low estimate. In these circumstances I can assure the House that I shall be pleased to have the parent Act amended. I have not much more to say at the present juncture, but I hope in due course to be able to speak at greater length when dealing with matters of interest to the workers and to the State in general. I hope to be able to impress hon. members with a realisation of the fact that I intend to do my best for the electors of North-East Fremantle, and for the State as a whole. I realise that the country of which we are the occupants is indeed a most valuable State and it appears to me that there are a great many people in Western Australia who do not realise the value of the country we own. A little while ago I was in Melbourne and I was astonished at the ignorance of the people regarding Western Australia. I favour the suggestion made this evening that a publicity officer should be appointed and placed in control of work in the Eastern States so that he might place before the people there some idea of the possibilities of Western Australia. I will reserve further comment on matters of interest for a future occasion and will content myself with supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Mr. Marshall, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.58 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 18th August, 1927.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—WHEAT PRODUCTION.

Branding of Bags.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Agriculture: Does he intend to bring before Parliament a Bill to provide that wheat bags shall be branded?

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: The advisability of introducing legislation this session is under consideration.

Railways and Bulk Handling.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Agriculture: Seeing that we are rapidly approaching the 50,000,000 bushel mark for wheat production, is the building of railway wagons being carried on with a view to their future utilisation when bulk handling is forced upon this State?

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: The Railway Department advises that 255 all steel trucks of 14 tons capacity are being built at Midland Junction workshops, and that these will be suitable for the handling of bulk wheat.

QUESTION—SWAN VALLEY, ABANDONED BLOCKS.

Mr. FERGUSON asked the Minister for Lands: 1, How many blocks, previously held by soldiers in the Swan Valley, have been