

question their right to use the funds of the State for the purpose of such an enterprise without legislative authority. If Parliament, in its wisdom, should consider that a new State enterprise, or State business concern, of this nature ought to be established, we must accept that decision. However, I refrain from making any further remarks on this subject pending the introduction of the Bill which the Government propose to bring before Parliament. In the meantime I may repeat the view which I have always expressed in regard to State trading concerns. I am opposed to the establishment of State trading concerns. I see no reason for altering that determination, even in regard to a matter such as this. In my opinion, it would have been possible for the Government to discover a way out of the difficulty in which they found themselves. At all events, the Government should not have taken the action they did take until they had legislative authority for embarking on such a class of business.

Hon. J. R. Brown: That is all nonsense.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: With regard to migration, I welcome everything that has been said, and everything that has been done, by the Government. I believe the Government have used their best endeavours to forward the migration scheme and are fully alive to the importance of the subject. A mighty big question is involved, and there is much that one could dilate upon. However, I will not detain hon. members on this occasion. I hope that the scheme will extend, and that the settlers generally will be successful. If they are, it will be a great gratification to every Government associated with the migration scheme. There is one other matter I must allude to. I wish to applaud the Premier for the stand he took in replying to the A.W.U. of Sydney relative to unwarranted interference on the part of that union in the carrying out of the duties of Government here. As the Premier in his reply rightly pointed out, the Ministry have taken upon themselves the responsibilities of office. It is indeed pleasing to know that the Premier, as head of the Government of this State, recognises those responsibilities and refuses to be swayed by any interference from outside bodies. That is the proper attitude to adopt, and I hope it will be adopted by every other Government here. The responsibility for the carrying out of the laws of this land lies, not upon the A.W.U., but upon Ministers. I repeat, the Premier is

to be congratulated and applauded for the stand he took. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. G. Potter, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.52 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 4th August, 1926.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—FREMANTLE RAILWAY BRIDGE.

Fruit for Export.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, In view of requirements of additional harbour space at Fremantle, for the pre-cooling of fruit and other produce for shipment abroad, is it the intention of the Government in their consideration of the construction of a new railway bridge, to remove the present location in an easterly direction, thereby providing the required room? 2, Will consideration also be given to the need for additional louvered railway vans for the conveyance of fruit?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, The whole question of the construction of a new railway bridge is, and has been for some time, receiving the attention

of the expert advisers of the Government, and until their report is received no decision will be come to. 2, The provision of additional louvered vans for the conveyance of fruit will receive consideration in conjunction with other rolling stock requirements of the department.

Traffic Expedients.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it the intention of the Railway Department to go on with the erection of a railway platform at the North Fremantle terminus? 2, If so, when? 3, If not, is it the intention to go on with either of the other schemes, namely, a tramline to the North Fremantle station, or a train to North Fremantle wharf, and thence by ferry? 4, If so, when will the scheme be put into operation?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, Arrangements are being made for trains to run to and from North Wharf during the busy portions of the day to connect with the ferry. 4, The combined service is being brought into operation to-day.

QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAYS.

Narrogin Institute.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Are the Government aware that an up-to-date railway institute is urgently required at Narrogin for the use and benefit of the large number of railway men who are stationed there? 2, When will the erection of a suitable building for the purpose be commenced?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Yes. 2, When funds are available.

Lake Mollerin project.

Mr. LINDSAY asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that large areas of land have been selected eastward from Lake Mollerin to Bullfinch? 2, Will he ask the Railway Advisory Board to make an inspection and advise on the route of a railway to serve this country?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, The matter will receive consideration.

QUESTION—MINING, SAND QUEEN AND GLADSOME.

Hon. G. TAYLOR asked the Minister for Mines: Has he any objection to laying the

papers relating to the Sand Queen and Gladsome gold mines, Comet Vale, on the Table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: The hon. member can move for the papers in the ordinary way.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. A. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.36]: It is the usual custom for the Government, particularly in a session preceding a general election, to put into the Governor's opening Speech a great deal of padding. When Mr. Scaddan was Premier we had a very long opening address, and I think that by the time the Governor finished reading it, probably he said, like Micawber, "Thank God, that is finished with." I am afraid that on this latest occasion also His Excellency was pleased when he arrived at the conclusion of his Speech. That Speech certainly contains some excellent matter, and deals largely with the work of the Government during the past two years. As is usual, the Speech begins with a declaration that the financial position of the State may be deemed satisfactory. No doubt the financial position has considerably improved. The hon. member who moved the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply was eager to ascribe all the honour for this to the present Administration. I do not think the Government are quite so anxious to take the whole of that credit to themselves. The financial position has certainly improved, but in my opinion, instead of showing a deficit of £99,142, we really should have shown a surplus.

Mr. Sleeman: We will show that next year.

Mr. THOMSON: So you should, having regard to the amount of money presented to you by the Commonwealth Government. In 1925 the revenue of the State was £8,381,466 and in 1926 it amounted to £8,806,166. So for the year that has just passed the Government had an additional £426,720 with which to meet current expenses. The Governor in his opening Speech said this—

Ministers recognise that continued care must be exercised in relation to the finances, and they

are confident that the operations of the current year will terminate the long series of annual deficits.

A good deal of the credit for the improved financial position is due to preceding Governments, who laid the foundation of our new prosperity. Every State of the Commonwealth, and indeed the bulk of the countries in the world, are steadily recovering from the effects of the war. So, too, Western Australia, as the result of the developmental policy that has been in existence for many years past, must eventually begin to feel the benefit of the huge amount of money now being expended within her boundaries. Let me draw attention to the relative position. In 1924, when the present Administration took office, the debt per head of population was approximately £148. In 1923 also it was £148, but at the end of 1925 it had increased to £159, or an increase during the first year the present Government were in office of £11. Last year Parliament authorised the expenditure of £4,748,795 which, in my calculations, means that to-day our net indebtedness per head of population has increased from £159 to £172, or an increase during the last 12 months of £13. I am pleased that the Government should have declared they recognised that continued care must be exercised in relation to the finances, but I am afraid they are not exercising general care in their administration, for despite an increased revenue of £426,720 last year, we went back to the tune of £99,142. The policy of the Government is not conducive to the exercise of care in our finances. We have under construction various works estimated to cost approximately five million pounds, but we have no adequate check upon this. Last year the railway working expenses increased by over £100,000. The whole of the work undertaken by the Government is being constructed by day labour. Of course, that is according to their avowed policy, and as they were returned to office by the people, who knew that if they were placed in power they would put their policy into effect, I am not blaming them for carrying it out. In the opinion of many of my electors the policy is not in the best interests of the State, and I should be wanting in my duty if I did not protest against its continuation. Approximately £5,000,000 worth of public works are being constructed to-day in the form of railways, roads and buildings, and there is no check upon the cost. The Min-

ister may argue that there is no reason why in the case of works constructed under the departmental day labour system the State should not get the best return, because all profits are eliminated. I am sure that under this system we are not getting the best results, because there is no competition. Unless the trouble has been adjusted since yesterday a new public building within 400 or 500 yards of Parliament House is being held up by some workers. This is one of three buildings. The union officials say that the officer of the Public Works Department who has been placed in charge of the building must go. That ultimatum has been issued to the department. The officer is endeavouring to do his duty by the Government, but he dismissed some men he thought were not earning their money and were incompetent. Because of this, three public buildings are being delayed.

The Premier: Has that condition of things never happened under contract?

Mr. THOMSON: No.

The Premier: Rubbish! It has happened dozens of times.

Mr. THOMSON: It does not happen in contracts. It is recognised that a contractor has a right to dismiss men if, in his opinion, they are incompetent.

The Premier: I have known of dozens of contracts being held up because of this having been done. Probably some of your own contracts have been held up, and a church may have fallen down.

Mr. THOMSON: It shows what a pernicious system this is, and that we are not having our affairs administered as they should be.

The Premier: You know that has no relation to day work. It frequently happens with contract work as well.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not know of one case where men have gone out on strike, and presented an ultimatum to the contractor stating they will not work unless the contractor is put off the job. The officer in charge of these public buildings is placed there by the department in the same position as a contractor.

The Minister for Works: He is the contractor's foreman.

Mr. THOMSON: If he is not there as contractor, he ought to be. He is placed in charge of works involving a large expenditure of public money.

The Minister for Works: I am in charge of the money, not he.

Mr. THOMSON: He is in charge of the work. The Minister expects him to do his duty and he should stand up for him, and see that the State receives proper value for the money expended.

The Minister for Works: I will see to that.

Mr. THOMSON: The building is hung up because the union officials say the officer in charge must go.

The Premier: He has not gone yet.

Mr. THOMSON: That is a sample of what we have to face in the administration of our public finance. It is not in the interests of economical Government that we should continue this policy of day labour in connection with public works. Tenders should be invited for all works and if the tender of the department is lower than that of the contractors, the Government would be justified in accepting it.

Mr. Hughes: The contractors object to that.

Mr. THOMSON: When a contractor signs a contract for a public work, he has to carry it out within the amount of the estimate. If an engineer fails to carry out work at the price submitted, the Minister should look for another man to do the job.

Mr. George: And place the matter in the hands of an independent man to see that the work is carried out and that the specifications are not altered.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member, who was Minister for Works for many years, says it will be necessary to place an independent officer in the position to see that the specifications are not altered. This shows the methods adopted by the department.

Mr. George: I do not say this method has been adopted, but it is the logical sequence of what you say.

Mr. THOMSON: In the interests of the State tenders should be invited for all public works. Some time ago the Leader of the Opposition, when Premier, introduced a Bill to provide for the appointment of a Public Works Committee. I regret that another place defeated it. Such a committee should be established to inquire into the various public works that are to be carried out. Last year we passed Loan Estimates for approximately £5,000,000. I am not casting any reflection upon the present Government when I say that any Minister can spend this money on some costly scheme without there being any check upon it. Whilst logically this

House is in charge of the finances, actually all we can do is to vote the money and it is then expended. A Public Works Committee should be appointed to deal with all works involving big expenditure. The Government said if they were returned to office they would restore the 44-hour week to those who had enjoyed it, but had been deprived of it. They are strong believers in arbitration. They pay the Commissioner of Railways £2,000 a year to administer the affairs of his department, but the Government have gone outside the Arbitration Court and given the railway employees the 41 hours and an increase in wages.

Mr. George: The result is reflected in the report.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so. Thank God we have competition on the roads, or the railway freights would have been considerably increased. There is no shadow of doubt about that.

The Premier: There is no shadow of justification for that statement.

Mr. THOMSON: We can only go by precedent. When the Leader of the Opposition was in power Mr. Justice Burnside gave a considerable increase in wages to the railway men. I do not mind that, but immediately after, the Government levied an increase on the railway freights in all directions to meet the increased expenditure. I have no doubt if we had the inner knowledge possessed by the Minister we would learn that the Commissioner has said that a considerable increase in freight would be necessary in certain directions to recoup the department for this increased expenditure.

The Premier: He has not said any such thing.

Mr. THOMSON: I know it is public knowledge.

The Minister for Railways: It is entirely wrong.

Mr. THOMSON: I will show the Minister where it appeared in the public Press. If it is wrong I am sorry.

The Minister for Railways: I thought you were going to produce the files. You always have some inside information.

Mr. THOMSON: There is no bogey about this.

The Premier: Perhaps it appeared in the "Leader" or "The Primary Producer."

Mr. THOMSON: It may have been in the "Worker." At all events it meant considerably increased expenditure for the department.

The Minister for Railways: Motor competition would hardly lead to a reduction in freights on super.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not discussing that point. The increase in wages has added another £90,000 to the expenditure, and I think the working expenses are £143,000 more than last year. We know what the 44 hour week is costing us in the railways, and what this administrative act of the Government is also costing us. Out of loan moneys we have expended £5,000,000 on works that are carried out under a policy over which we have no check.

The Premier: Has that £5,000,000 been spent on wages?

Mr. THOMSON: It is not possible for any member to arrive at the additional cost incurred as a result of the policy of the Government.

The Premier: Your people got a fair slice of that four millions, without its going in wages at all. You are two or three millions out, but that is nothing for you.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret that the Minister for Works has left the Chamber.

The Minister for Lands: He cannot stand your incorrect statements.

Mr. THOMSON: I speak subject to correction, but I believe he was reported in the Press as having stated at Bayswater that the Government had balanced the ledger by giving increases of two millions pounds to the public servants and the railway employees. That is an excellent way to balance the ledger.

Mr. Richardsin: Two million pounds?

Mr. THOMSON: No; £200,000.

Mr. Marshall: That is about as accurate as the rest.

The Premier: The member for Katanning is not more inaccurate than usual.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not want it to be supposed that I am advocating reduction of wages, but the method described by the Minister for Works is a curious one of giving close scrutiny and continued care to the finances of the State. I recognise that we must borrow money to open up and develop Western Australia; but in the opinion of the party I represent, the method of day work, as against contract, is not in the best interests of the State. I do not profess to be an expert in finance.

The Premier: That is an unnecessary observation.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not know that even the Premier is an expert in finance. Pro-

bably we are on a par in that respect. If I were in the Premier's place, perhaps I could speak with a good deal more authority on the finances of the State, since I would know the inner workings and the juggling of figures that possibly takes place. I can merely deal with the figures supplied by the Treasury. Subject to correction, I say that those figures disclose a system by which articles purchased out of loan funds, under the Government Property Sales account, are put into revenue account. Whilst it is true that our deficits show considerable reduction, our loan expenditure is chiefly responsible for the position in which we find ourselves. I would like to point out to the Government where they may save a small amount of money. I brought this matter under the Government's notice on the last Estimates. It has been laid down time and again, more particularly by the present Government, who are strong believers in State trading, that public utilities are not to be used for profit-making. Generally speaking, however, Government activities in every direction are now being utilised as taxing machines. I am not charging the present Government with having initiated the system of transferring money from loan to the Government Property Sales Fund. That system came into existence in 1904, and therefore the present Treasurer is merely continuing an old-established practice. However, I wish to deal with the Fremantle Harbour Trust. The "Statistical Abstract" shows that last year the Fremantle Harbour Trust, after paying contributions to the State sinking fund and the whole of its working expenses and disbursements for salaries and wages, and also renewals, paid into Consolidated Revenue a surplus of £140,517. Moreover, last year's Loan Estimates included an amount of £75,000 to provide for new works. If our financial methods render it necessary to charge works of that description to loan account, why continue to levy upon the port of Fremantle such charges as leave an annual profit of £140,517? Some people may argue that this does not matter, because the shipowners pay the charges; but the digest which is furnished shows that shipowners pay 31 per cent. of the harbour dues and cargo owners 68 per cent. This means that the public of Western Australia have to pay the 68 per cent., because the cargo owners pass those payments on with some additional percentage. If the Government propose to

put into effect their policy of not running public utilities for profit, but of running them in the interests of the people; they should abolish the super charges imposed by the Fremantle Harbour Trust on cargo coming into and going out of the port. The Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners are paid by this State to administer the port. According to the evidence submitted, the Commissioners submitted to the Government a recommendation for the abolition of outside pilotage, which would mean a saving of £10,000 to the shipping at Fremantle. Yet the Government continue that charge.

The Minister for Lands: I told you last year that that is untrue, and I tell you so now.

Mr. THOMSON: The profit shown of £140,000 and the £10,000 for unnecessary pilotage represent a possible saving of £150,000 per annum to the people of Western Australia.

Mr. Sleeman: What amount is lost on the wheat?

Mr. THOMSON: Other ports would be very glad indeed to have the volume of trade passing through Fremantle, and would be only too pleased to have the wheat traffic diverted to them.

Mr. Sleeman: The cost of handling has to be paid.

Mr. THOMSON: The work that is being done at Fremantle is paid for. The hon. member interjecting should feel highly pleased that so large a quantity of wheat goes through his particular port.

The Minister for Lands: I am pleased to see the wheat passing through, but there is no charge on the wheat.

Mr. THOMSON: I did not say there was. I am dealing with the unnecessary charges that are being levied. I am not now dealing with wheat. My object is to show that the people are being supercharged by the port of Fremantle to the tune of £140,000 annually, and that to this extent costs could be reduced for the benefit of the people. The figures I have quoted show that the Government are not exercising that care which a private citizen would use in running his own business. If a private citizen saw a means of reducing his working costs by £150,000 annually, he would do it.

The Premier: And you call that reducing working costs!

Mr. THOMSON: A profit of £140,000 is shown for the year, and that profit the Treasurer collars and then exhibits as a proof of the administrative capacity of the Government. On the other side, the Government borrow £75,000 for necessary works in the port of Fremantle. That is how the finances of the State are being juggled to-day.

The Premier: You are a gem, to talk about reducing working costs!

Mr. THOMSON: The Government can reduce their working costs or charges. Such a reduction would mean lessened costs to the people, because it is the public who pay eventually, though allegedly the shipowners are paying 31 per cent. and the cargo owners 68 per cent. We can rest assured that actually the public pay the lot. I am anxious that in a Government utility, out of which, according to the Government's policy, no profit ought to be made, the charges should be as low as possible. Now I turn to another portion of the Governor's Speech—

Every encouragement has been given to the secondary industries, and an amount aggregating £62,680 was guaranteed on advance during the year to nine separate companies.

I presume that the money has been advanced to the companies by way of loan, and I hope the lending of the money will result in the firm establishment of secondary industries here. However, I have grave doubts about that. At Bayswater, where the Minister for Works made his remarks regarding the £200,000 which he had given to Government employees by way of reducing the deficit, he also stated that he was pleased there were several secondary industries about to start in Western Australia. This State requires large quantities of agricultural machinery. We have the State Implement Works, which unfortunately are not showing a profit. I regret to state that the machinery supplied by those works is not as popular with the majority of agriculturists as one would desire on behalf of articles manufactured in Western Australia. The Government have indicated their intention to proceed with the development of their land settlement policy, and it is essential, therefore, that large supplies of agricultural machinery shall be available, for without the necessary machinery agricultural development cannot be extended. It will be within the knowledge of members that recently Mr. McKay, of

the Sunshine Harvester Works of Victoria, came to Western Australia with the object of establishing similar works here. No doubt the Government received him with open arms.

The Premier: I did not see him.

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier should have seen him.

The Premier: He should have called upon me.

Mr. THOMSON: He should have done so. At any rate, a Minister of the Crown expressed his pleasure at knowing that Mr. McKay proposed to establish these works in Western Australia. Prior to arriving at such a decision, no doubt Mr. McKay desired to make certain inquiries, and for that reason he approached the unions in Western Australia. He asked the representatives of those unions if they would work here under similar conditions to those under which their fellow workmen in Victoria were operating.

Mr. Panton: What did they tell him?

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member knows very well.

Mr. Panton: They told him that he would have to abide by the laws of the land.

Mr. THOMSON: The Labour Government have put into the mouth of His Majesty's representative the statement I have referred to regarding the encouragement they have given to secondary industries. I do deplore the fact that the Minister for Works was not in the metropolitan area when Mr. McKay was here.

Mr. Sleeman: Would you have him break the law?

Mr. THOMSON: It amuses me to hear some people talk about law and order.

Mr. Panton: Hear, hear! That is what we have been saying for years.

Mr. THOMSON: Some people are prepared to maintain law and order when it suits them. Arbitration Court awards are excellent when they happen to suit some people, and that is the position that confronts us now. Here was a firm desirous of establishing a secondary industry in Western Australia, in order to manufacture locally machines that now have to be imported from Victoria. It would have meant a valuable addition to Western Australian industries, and would have provided work for many men in the establishment of an industry that must have succeeded had it been allowed to be set up here. No doubt

Mr. McKay, in arriving at his decision to come to Western Australia, had weighed up the position. He realised that taxation was much higher in Western Australia than in Victoria, but he was prepared to take cognisance of the fact that the saving of the cost of transporting machines from the Eastern States would make up for the difference in taxation. As Western Australia is the only State in the Commonwealth that is opening up and developing lands in a way that requires the use of agricultural machinery, Mr. McKay wished to establish his industry in this State. Yet, what did the unions do? One would naturally have supposed that the Government, who say they are desirous of supporting secondary industries, would have been willing to countenance workmen here being employed under the same conditions as are the workers in Victoria. If those conditions obtained, the more efficient worker would be able to earn a little more than the man who was not so efficient. I am sorry, however, that the policy of the Trades Hall in Western Australia, and elsewhere in the Commonwealth as well, is such that they do not want men to become efficient. They want the workers to be paid on the same basis.

Mr. Panton: Rats!

Mr. THOMSON: It is not a case of "Rats." It is a fact, and you know it.

Mr. Panton: I do not.

Mr. Marshall: What about the Arbitration Court awards?

Mr. THOMSON: I have simply stated the position as it exists to-day.

Mr. Marshall: You would not get anything if the conditions you suggest were to obtain.

Mr. Griffiths: I would be sorry if the hon. member were not better than you.

Mr. THOMSON: I am sorry that the unions said, in effect, that they welcomed Mr. McKay coming to Western Australia for the purpose of establishing another secondary industry, provided he complied with their conditions.

Mr. Panton: Nothing of the sort. They merely said he must comply with the conditions obtaining in Western Australia.

Mr. THOMSON: What I have set out represents the effect of the answer the unions gave to Mr. McKay.

Mr. Panton: What conditions are they working under?

Mr. THOMSON: The conditions offered were such that the unionists here lost a glorious opportunity of providing more work for men in Western Australia. I have heard the member for Menzies (Mr. Panton) and others say repeatedly that they stand for Australia and that they are Australians first. If conditions existing in Victoria are satisfactory to the workers there—

Mr. Panton: That is why workers leave Victoria!

Mr. THOMSON: —and the men there are receiving higher wages per week on the average than are the workers in the State Implement Works here, I cannot understand why the Government and the unions were so foolish as to turn the proposition down.

The Premier: Do you know that, notwithstanding the tyranny you suggest, McKay is operating here now? Do you know that his firm is already at work?

Mr. Marshall: The member for Katanning knows nothing!

Mr. Sleeman: And if his people support McKay as well as they support the State Implement Works, there will not be much to talk about.

The Premier: The member for Katanning would like McKay to be driven out by the unions! He is sorry that the firm is operating here.

Mr. THOMSON: The firm has been here for some time but is here despite the unions.

The Premier: That is very nice!

Mr. THOMSON: During the course of this session, considerable discussion will take place regarding the financial proposals, and we will be told that the high tariff and other conditions are injurious to Western Australia. If we are to encourage the establishment of secondary industries in Western Australia, it will not be in the interests of the trade unionists, or of the State, if they continue to adopt the attitude indicated recently. They should exercise a little more leniency than we have seen lately.

Mr. Panton: You should talk to the president of the Arbitration Court in that strain. He controls our destinies.

Mr. THOMSON: There is nothing in any Arbitration Court award to prevent a man working on the basis of payment by results. The policy adopted by the unions places a restriction upon the men and prevents that system being carried out. That is the difference. The unions are opposed to piece-work and a Labour Government that can in-

clude such a reference to secondary industries in the Governor's Speech should adopt a different attitude on such a question as that to which I have referred. They should see that those desirous of establishing secondary industries in Western Australia should have an equal opportunity to establish them here, and to operate under such conditions as would enable them to compete with firms operating in other parts of the Commonwealth.

The Premier: We will speak to them about it.

Mr. THOMSON: On the contrary, if we ask men here to comply with conditions that are satisfactory to workmen in Victoria, we should expect the Government and the unions here to accept those conditions.

Mr. Panton: Not necessarily so.

Mr. THOMSON: With reference to taxation imposed in Western Australia, no Treasurer, since I have been in this House, has been in the happy position now occupied by the present Treasurer. He is not in that position because of any administrative actions of his own.

The Minister for Mines: Oh no, of course not!

Mr. THOMSON: He owes his happy position to the assistance rendered by the Federal Government.

The Premier: I have not handled £1 of it yet.

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier said that he had £350,000.

The Premier: I also said that not one shilling had been utilised. Yet, according to you, I am in a happy position!

Mr. THOMSON: What about the £790,000 you received to reduce the liability on account of soldier settlement?

The Minister for Lands: We have not got a penny of it.

Mr. THOMSON: Why not?

The Minister for Lands: Because the Federal Government have to pass the necessary Bill and we have to pass a Bill here.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so, but the Government could have taken advantage of that last year.

The Minister for Lands: No, we could not have taken advantage of it.

Mr. THOMSON: At any rate, I do not want to go into that question now.

The Minister for Lands: Because you do not know anything about it, and that is what you know about most other things.

Mr. THOMSON: Nobody knows anything but the Minister. It is remarkable that,

whenever a point is raised, that is the sort of thing that is said to me

The Premier: You are Sir Oracle! You know everything about everything!

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier certainly told us that he had received £350,000, but it had not been touched.

The Premier: It is in the bank.

Mr. THOMSON: And then he will receive £200,000 this year. The Government say that they desire to assist in the establishment of secondary industries. If that is to be accomplished, then we must place any person desirous of establishing an industry here in a position comparable with that of those who have established industries in Victoria. I hope, therefore, that the Government will advise the House what they propose to do regarding the £350,000 they have in the bank.

The Premier: I am not too sure that we will.

Mr. Marshall: The member for Katanning should write a letter to the Premier, who will tell him all about it.

Mr. THOMSON: As a matter of fact, I understand the money has to be spent with the approval of Parliament, so that the Premier must of necessity submit his proposals to Parliament. I hope the Government will take into consideration the question of reducing our high taxation.

Mr. Marshall: That was the position when your party were in office.

Mr. THOMSON: The taxation is higher now. The Government have received more money from taxation than in those days.

The Minister for Lands: Another $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. will be knocked off this year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is nothing to what will be added to our taxation.

Mr. THOMSON: The Government receive considerably more from land tax and they have exploited other means of taxation as well.

The Premier: We are not doing so. You are really a most reckless individual! Taxation has been reduced. Try and stick to facts now and again.

Mr. Marshall: That is impossible.

Mr. THOMSON: It is within the knowledge of the House that we imposed increased land taxation, amounting to more than double the earlier tax.

The Premier: And we gave it away.

Mr. THOMSON: It is also common knowledge that the valuation basis upon which that tax was levied was increased threefold.

The Premier: The Government did not occasion that increase.

Mr. THOMSON: That was a considerable increase. We also know that there was levied upon the people—and I supported the proposal—an amusement tax which the Premier stated recently represented an additional £10,000 that could have been added to the returns for this financial year. It is useless for the Premier to say that taxation has not been increased. There was a field of taxation that was evacuated by the Commonwealth and entered by the State. Generally speaking taxation is heavier all round and it is useless for the Premier to contend otherwise.

The Premier: There is not a word of truth in that.

Mr. THOMSON: The Premier cannot say that taxation has not been increased. I opposed the increased land tax, but I supported the proposal of the Honorary Minister that the amusement tax which the Federal Government were foregoing should be collected by the State.

The Minister for Lands: That was earmarked for a certain purpose.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so—for hospitals, but it meant a saving to the State of that amount. Even so, the Government had not sufficient money to meet the demands of all our hospitals. I repeat that our taxation on incomes is too high. In Victoria the maximum rate on incomes derived from personal exertion is $6\frac{1}{2}$ d., and from property 1s. $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the pound. Here the maximum is 4s. $3\frac{1}{2}$ c., which high rate is certainly not conducive to the establishment of secondary industries. Neither does it lead to the retention of capital within the State. It is well known that large sums of money have been taken from Western Australia and invested in Victoria. I hope that one of the uses to which the Premier will devote the £350,000 received from the Federal Government will be materially to reduce the income tax. Under the heading of "Migration" the Speech states—

My Ministers realise that an active policy of migration is essential to the development of the country. Arising out of the new agreement finalised between the Imperial Government and the Commonwealth Government in April last year, and a new agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the State Government in October last, a proposal for an expenditure of £6,000,000 on land settlement (including the present group settlements) and £4,612,388 on public works, was submitted. The

Commonwealth Government propose to appoint a commission to report and advise on these projects, and also upon schemes submitted by other States. My Ministers, however, anxious to proceed with the prompt settlement of migrants and the construction of necessary public works, have obtained approval for an expenditure of £629,000 as a preliminary advance. A supplementary agreement has been signed embodying terms in respect to the existing group settlement scheme which are retrospective as from 1st June, 1922.

It is satisfactory indeed that we are to obtain that money at 1 per cent. for the first five years. It is the first time that money has been made available to the Treasurer at such a rate. Provided it is spent wisely so that it gives a fair return to the State, considerable benefit must result. Unemployment, unfortunately, is always with us at this season of the year. The weather prevents the continuance of outside work, and is responsible for a certain amount of the unemployment.

Mr. Hughes: It is the system.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope that wise expenditure of public money will enable the Government to overcome the difficulty. Let me now deal with the group settlement policy which involves an expenditure of six millions of money. The Government should give the House at the earliest possible moment a detailed statement of the money actually expended on group settlement. I had the privilege of visiting some of the groups—

The Minister for Lands: And caused a lot of disturbance on them.

Mr. THOMSON: Nothing of the sort. I did not cause any disturbance on any group I visited.

The Premier: I see you have an organiser down in the Nelson district.

Mr. George: You have one down there also, have you not?

The Premier: There would not have been any groups if you had had your way.

Mr. THOMSON: On the groups I met some of the finest people that it has been my privilege to meet anywhere.

The Premier: I hope the Press will publish that statement. There are votes in it.

Mr. THOMSON: In visiting the groups I merely exercised the privilege of any Parliamentarian. Even though a man is living on a group, he should not be debarred from receiving visitors representing any section of political thought.

Mr. George: You need not be afraid of that.

Mr. THOMSON: We realise that the representatives of other sections have visited the groups, and though the hope has been expressed that politics would not be introduced, nevertheless those men and women have the same privileges attaching to the franchise as have the people in the cities.

Mr. Wilson: Who said otherwise?

The Premier: That is a profound statement. Tell us now that two and two make four.

Mr. THOMSON: I offer no apology for having visited the groups, and I offer no apology for having endeavoured to organise the group settlers to support the movement with which I am associated. Similar steps have been taken by our friends on the Government side.

Mr. Marshall: But you have spoilt your chance now.

Mr. THOMSON: It is the sincere wish of my party and of the association I represent that the settlers who are worthy should remain on the groups. It was only from that point of view that we, as a party, after discussing the matter, waited on the Minister for Lands with a desire to assist him.

The Premier: And made awful fools of yourselves.

Mr. Marshall: That would be impossible.

Mr. THOMSON: We pointed out what we considered would be a sound method of administering the group settlements. With all due respect to members of the House who are jeering at me, I maintain that if there is one section who can honestly appeal to the group settlers, it is the section I represent, because our main plank is to assist those who are endeavouring to make a living from the soil.

The Premier: Although you yourself are not making a living from the soil.

Mr. THOMSON: Let the Premier make a little inquiry before offering a statement like that. I have probably more interest in the soil than has the Premier.

The Premier: I do not profess to be representing them.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not make professions. I wish to deal impartially with the group settlement question and offer a suggestion which would be in the interests of the settlers as well as of the State. At a meeting of the Country Party a resolution was carried dealing with the limitation of earnings on the groups, and stressing the necessity for contract prices based on estimates of the group field officers, or by cal-

ling tenders among the groupies without any limitation being placed on the earnings. We were not permitted to go very much further. The Minister was very courteous, but he gave us a long speech which occupied a good deal of space in the newspaper.

Mr. Griffiths: You can't beat an old dog for a hard road.

Mr. THOMSON: As a matter of fact, the Minister has altered that twice. Let me draw a comparison. The Labour Party stand solidly for day labour.

Mr. Wilson: They don't.

Mr. THOMSON: They do; the policy of the Government is that the whole of the public works under construction shall be carried out by day labour.

Mr. Wilson: The coal miners have been piece workers all their lives.

The Minister for Lands: What has that to do with group settlement?

Mr. THOMSON: When a man is engaged to construct roads or railways, day labour is the only policy that the present Government will adopt. When it comes to opening up and developing land, the Government say that the day labour policy is unsound.

The Minister for Lands: What has that to do with group settlement.

Mr. THOMSON: Day labour, in the opinion of the Government, is a sound policy when roads and railways and bridges are being constructed, but not for land settlement work. The Government are not consistent. When the Minister introduced the particular clause against which the settlers protested—and rightly so—he said he would not allow them to earn more than £3 per week.

The Minister for Lands: I said nothing of the kind.

Mr. THOMSON: That is what the Press credited the Minister with having said.

The Minister for Lands: I do not care a hang what the Press said. I do not believe you saw that stated in the Press.

Mr. THOMSON: Either what I have stated is common sense, or there has been something wrong in the administration of our group settlement policy. If land which originally cost from £15 to £20 per acre to clear—I am moderate in my estimate—

The Premier: You are moderate, if not modest.

Mr. THOMSON: And the foreman in charge had declared that the Government could get that land cleared at £9 an acre, it seems to me a sound proposition to encourage those on the groups to work harder

so as to keep the cost of clearing within that figure. What matter how much they earn so long as they give value to the State. The Government are of opinion that the settlers clearing this land at £9 per acre have been making too much money. But have they not been working a great deal in their own time? If in the opinion of the Government £9 per acre is more than the work of clearing should cost, how in the name of common sense are the Government going to levy a charge of from £15 to £20? The Government should be satisfied to have the land cleared at £9 an acre.

The Minister for Lands: You are talking bunkum.

Mr. THOMSON: I am dealing with a subject in which a million pounds is involved and in which the prosperity of the settlers is at stake. Have we not told them that they are sure of a means of living? Therefore, we must see that justice is done to them, and we have that duty to perform. I am drawing attention to the position that the Government have placed themselves in by limiting the earnings of the settlers. What I am telling the House is what was told to me by group settlers that I met.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: By those who cleared out.

The Minister for Lands: There is only one of your party who knows anything about the subject, and he would not go with you.

Mr. THOMSON: We went to the Minister with a sincere desire to do something. Unfortunately I believe the Minister thought we were trying to make political capital out of it.

Mr. Wilson: You are not doing that now.

Mr. THOMSON: No; I am dealing with the position as we found it. Another matter that we brought under the notice of the Government was the necessity for giving security of tenure at the earliest date. I will read to the House a letter that I received from a group settler—

I regret this week we are losing one of our best men with four boys. I can stake my life on these people being absolutely genuine farmers. How long this kind of thing is going to last, I do not know. We are losing the cream of England's best men. They are fine fellows who I know are triers. No one with a family of five to support could live on 6s. 2d. a day. I know that those who have worked with me on sustenance have done more than their duty towards this great land settlement scheme. It has not been my luck to be with them on the last pay, because of sickness. I assure you I could do better in Perth. I have been educated in horticulture and agriculture with some of

the finest men Britain ever produced, and even so I can see failure before my eyes. I cannot see on this group many who are going to make a success. We have lost some fine fellows, yet at this juncture I must not move for fear of losing my spare time efforts and the money that I have laid out, by being put off. We are only occupiers of the land.

We are faced with a very serious problem and the House, as well as the Government, will have to grapple with it. What I have read is not an isolated instance; scores were brought under our notice. The position is that when a man goes on to a group he is given the right to occupy it. There are men of the type of the writer of the letter I have just read who have gone on the groups with a genuine desire to make good. They have done their part and they have cleared land in their spare time. Some have even used up their own capital in effecting improvements, and yet the position to-day is that if they have a row with the foreman they are liable to be turned off. Of course we know that the Minister has provided a Board of Appeal. A settler may perhaps offend a foreman and is then suspended. Such a thing has happened; I am not quoting a suppositious case. Some of the group foremen have pals and they can make it so uncomfortable for a settler who has an improved property, that that settler will not stay on it. Then the foreman's pal may be put on the block.

The Minister for Lands: A foreman's pal on the group cannot go on it.

Mr. THOMSON: The foreman may have a friend whom he may desire to work in.

The Minister for Lands: That is not true. All changes are made at the head office and not at the groups.

Mr. THOMSON: I am going to tell the House what a group settler, who is a thinker, told us. He said, "What is my position here? I am not to do any more spare-time work." I said to him that his attitude was rather foolish because the more he did the better it would be for himself and his block. He replied "I thought so too, but it has been stated in the newspapers on the authority of the Minister that there would be some failures and that if there were failures it would not matter because others would come along to take their place."

The Minister for Lands: Is that not true?

Mr. THOMSON: The settlers declare that they are merely being made use of in order to prepare the country for others who are to follow.

Mr. Sleeman: You are actually making the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) laugh.

Mr. THOMSON: The remarks I have quoted were made to me by an Englishman who went from the boat straight to the groups, and he has never been off his block since he started on it four years ago. He has effected many improvements on his property and told me that he had no money now. He had a little capital of his own but had spent it all. He had also done a considerable amount of spare time work, but that his neighbour was merely doing just exactly what he was obliged to do under instructions from the foreman. He added, "I realise that when my block comes to be valued and my neighbour's block is valued, they will distribute the cost. His block and mine may, for the sake of argument, be worth £1,800, but we know that that amount will be considerably reduced. It has been stated that that will be so if the scheme is to be a success—the capital cost will have to be reduced." When that man's block is valued the holder will be told that the value will cover clearing, departmental supervision, fencing, and the house, and the value will be written down to say £1,000.

The Minister for Lands: Very few have cost £1,800.

Mr. THOMSON: The Royal Commission reported that the farms were going to cost that amount. I am referring to blocks when completed. This group settler said that when his block was being valued, the authorities would take into consideration the fact that he had 30 acres cleared. The group settler argued that the authorities would say that his land was more valuable from the Agricultural Bank point of view, and that they would be able to get another £300 or so for it if it was put on the market. That man, according to the group settler, would be penalised to the extent of about £300 or £400 in respect of his property.

The Minister for Lands: Have I not told you a score of times that they do not take the spare time effort into consideration.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not dealing with the first valuation made by the Government, but with the position to be faced when the writing down of the blocks takes place.

The Minister for Lands: How do you know it will take place?

Mr. THOMSON: Of course it will, and the sooner it is done the better it will be for the State.

The Minister for Lands: It has nothing to do with this question in any shape or form.

Mr. THOMSON: At any rate, that is the statement made to me by a man who has been on the group ever since he came here.

The Minister for Lands: Could you not have advised that settler that they would all be placed on a footing of equality?

Mr. THOMSON: Under the administration of the present Minister, the Industries Assistance Act has been amended and the Board has been given power to write down securities. No one knows better than the Minister that there are scores of parallel cases to that referred to by the group settler, that have taken place in connection with the Industries Assistance Board.

The Minister for Lands: I know nothing of the sort.

Mr. THOMSON: I know there are such cases because they have happened in my own district.

The Minister for Lands: You seem to know the best of the lot!

Mr. THOMSON: At any rate, seeing that this took place in my district, no one should know better than I.

The Minister for Lands: You also know that it was your duty to tell the group settler that the spare time effort would not be taken into consideration.

Mr. THOMSON: I could not make the statement because I had no authority to do so.

The Minister for Lands: You could have made the statement.

Mr. Griffiths: At any rate, you have the statement now.

Mr. THOMSON: Our great trouble regarding group settlement here is—

The Minister for Lands: That I would not buy land at Katanning.

Mr. THOMSON: I will deal with that point later.

The Minister for Lands: I would like you to give us the truth.

Mr. THOMSON: I am giving the truth and also advice that is in the best interests of the group settlers, and of the State.

The Minister for Lands: I will take no advice from you.

Mr. THOMSON: Of course not! The Minister prefers to be blind! He prefers to lose men who should be retained on the blocks.

The Minister for Lands: The group settlers will get better assistance from me than they will ever get from you.

Mr. THOMSON: Apparently the policy of the Government is to allow men with dependants, men possessed of energy and ability, to leave their blocks.

The Premier: This has all been got up for the benefit of the Nelson and Sussex electorates, as well as others. It will be in print there next week.

Mr. THOMSON: That is the position we are faced with regarding the group settlement scheme. It is in the interests of the State that we should give the settlers proper security of tenure.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: They have got it.

Mr. THOMSON: They have not, and it is nonsense to say that they have.

The Minister for Lands: Tell me how you would do it.

Mr. THOMSON: If a man has land under conditional purchase conditions or has a homestead block, it is his, provided that he complies with certain conditions. His land can be mortgaged. The Country Party offered a suggestion to overcome this difficulty in all sincerity.

The Minister for Lands: You offered no suggestion; you could not do it.

Mr. THOMSON: At any rate, the Minister has said he would take no notice of it.

The Minister for Lands: I did not say that. I was speaking about you.

Mr. THOMSON: We went to the Minister as a deputation. We endeavoured to show why the Government were losing the type of settlers that should be retained on their blocks. I want to see the scheme a success. I want to see the settlers given every encouragement to work. That is not being done at present.

The Minister for Lands: It is.

Mr. THOMSON: I say it is not. After all, it is a matter of opinion.

The Minister for Lands: The position is that I know, and you do not.

Mr. THOMSON: There is another phase of the work which was placed before the Minister. We suggested that an effort should be made to secure the equity of group settlers in their holdings as a result of their spare time work or of private capital expended on their blocks. If a man goes on a group settlement and performs his part to the satisfaction of the supervisor and has done a considerable amount of work in his spare time, he should, if he desires to leave

the group, have an equity in regard to his spare time effort.

The Minister for Lands: That would encourage people who do not intend to stay on the blocks to get additional money.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Government are getting value for the work done, it is all right.

The Minister for Lands: I am doubtful if we are.

Mr. THOMSON: Under Agricultural Bank conditions if there is an equity over and above the liability, the settler is entitled to reap the benefit of that equity.

The Minister for Lands: No man under Agricultural Bank conditions has had as much assistance as have the group settlers.

Mr. THOMSON: The group settlement scheme is before us, and we desire to make it a success.

The Minister for Lands: The State has to be protected.

Mr. THOMSON: I want to protect the State.

The Minister for Lands: No, you don't.

Mr. THOMSON: I am making these suggestions because I want people of courage and ability to stay upon their blocks. Such people are leaving their holdings to-day.

The Minister for Lands: There is only an odd one or two leaving now.

Mr. THOMSON: There is another case that I can quote to illustrate what has been going on. When the Industries Assistance Board was established first, large quantities of chaff were bought. In my electorate there was a settler who required chaff, and a neighbour agreed to sell him his requirements at the rate of £5 or £6 per ton, provided he helped to cut the chaff and supplied his own bags. The man did so, and naturally concluded that the Board would charge him £6 per ton for the chaff. Then the Board levied a flat rate of £14 per ton for chaff, and although this man had secured his supplies at a cost of £6 per ton, he was rendered an account at the higher price. That was brought under our notice when we were travelling through the district. Again, one settler had permission to purchase a cow, and it cost the department nothing to get it because it was driven to his farm. When his account was rendered he was charged £2 for overhead expenses.

The Minister for Lands: In one or two cases that mistake was made, but the mistake was rectified as soon as attention was drawn to it.

Mr. George: I had one or two instances and they were put right straight away.

Mr. THOMSON: I am simply drawing attention to the policy of flat rate charges. A third proposal put before the Minister by the Country Party when they waited upon him was the following:—

To support the policy of the provisional erection of silos to be paid for by the settlers per medium of advances from the Agricultural Bank. To be available when suitable crops are grown. The policy of comprehensive installation of silos by contract if suitable crops are available meets with the approval of the Country Party, and that one plant for carting and elevating silos be provided for each group.

It seems to me that the Government should give serious consideration to this question.

The Minister for Lands: I am going to see a silo on Friday afternoon next. It is being constructed now.

Mr. THOMSON: I am glad to know that. If we are to give the settlers the opportunity to carry on successfully we must furnish them with additional funds to enable them to erect silos so as to maintain continuity of fodder supplies.

The Minister for Lands: We cannot do everything at once.

Mr. THOMSON: We realise that. I sincerely regret the untimely death of the Controller of Group Settlements, Mr. Richardson. The State has lost the services of a valuable officer who had been carrying on his shoulders the burden of one of the biggest schemes ever launched in Western Australia.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: In the world.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret he was not permitted to live to see the completion of his work. As a party we went to the Minister for Lands on the occasion I have referred to, without any political object in view. Our only purpose was to protect the interests of the State and to see that settlers had a more reasonable chance of success than they have under existing conditions.

The Minister for Lands: You wanted us to pay them for every hour they worked. That is what you asked for.

Mr. THOMSON: We did not ask for that, but what we did ask was that if land that originally cost £14 or £15 per acre to clear, could be cleared for £9 an acre, work at the cheaper rate should be encouraged and the settlers should not be limited respecting their earnings. It would be a

sound proposition not to limit the settlers' earnings.

The Minister for Lands: If it is worth £15 an acre they get paid £15, and not £9.

Mr. THOMSON: No, they do not.

The Minister for Lands: A lot of trees were left on the blocks at first.

Mr. THOMSON: There is partial clearing that was estimated to cost £25 an acre.

The Minister for Lands: The position is different now from what it was at the outset.

Mr. THOMSON: I know that there is some difference.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. THOMSON: Before tea I was dealing with group settlement and with the limitation of earnings. Let me read this letter from a settler on Group 26, a letter that appeared in the "Primary Producer"—

I am sending you a list of cows and particulars, as supplied by the Group Settlement Department, asking you to publish in the "Primary Producer," for the benefit of all subscribers. This matter refers to Mr. Angwin's sliding scale, *re* reducing 30s. per month from cows on the settlers' holding. I suppose Mr. Angwin is led to believe that a settler is obtaining profit, *i.e.*, despatching cream from these great cows or "tamma rats," as one settler calls them. I have four cows and, according to the scale, I shall be reduced £6 per month. My earnings, or loans will total £13 10s. per month from this large loan I have to exist upon. There is no hope at all in remaining here after struggling for nearly three years. My location, No. 8221, is 116 acres. 32 have been cleared, 25½ laid down in P. pasture, remainder for intense cultivation, fenced, and half a house, total cost (not quite sure) about £1,100. If all goes well, I, on my own, with no assistance whatever, will clear 25 acres on contract for £285, and buy my own gelignite. Herewith the cost and production of my stock:

Cows—

No. 2373.—Ayrshire and Jersey; price £21 18s. 2d.; dry in calf.

No. J 672.—Shorthorn, price £15; dry, believed barren.

No. J 740.—Shorthorn, price £14; produces five pints per day.

No. J 763.—Ayrshire and Jersey, price, don't know; produces nine pints per day.

Horse, aged.

Two calves (heifers)—Cow No. 740 supplies milk for these.

Three pigs.

The cost to me for the above, without interest, is approximately £10 per month. Where does my family come in, wife and three little children? I think Mr. Angwin, through his officials, has studied the stock before the settlers' family.

I have a great deal of sympathy with the Minister, who is carrying a very heavy responsibility, and I have also sympathy for the settlers, who are working under very difficult conditions. The State should face the position and put the group settlers on a sound footing, giving them at least a reasonable chance of success. It is of no use our saying from an accountant's point of view that we have cleared so much land and that the settlers owe us so much money, if there is no chance of those settlers paying that money. Last year we passed a Bill that, in my interpretation, provides that the Agricultural Bank shall value those properties and take them over.

The Minister for Lands: Where did you see in that Bill anything about valuing?

Mr. THOMSON: I had from the Minister an assurance that it was so.

The Minister for Lands: You are thinking of assessed value.

Mr. THOMSON: It is the same thing. If you assess a man's block at £2,000 and he is not in a position to pay, it is of no use charging it up against that man. We have a precedent in what has been done in respect of the clients of the Industries Assistance Board. There were debited against those men large sums of money, imposing upon the settlers a load they could not carry. The result was that the Agricultural Bank or the Industries Assistance Board had to tell those clients to get off their holdings, and afterwards had to accept a price by public tender. So the department had to face a considerable reduction in the debt capitalised on the various holdings. Now we are faced with the same position in respect of group settlement, and the sooner we make a proper valuation of the blocks and put the men on a sound financial basis, giving them a chance of success, the sooner will those settlers be in a position to pay the State interest and some portion of their capital liability, and so it will be the better for all.

The Minister for Lands: There is a great difference between the Industries Assistance Board and group settlement.

Mr. THOMSON: In point of principle, there is none.

The Minister for Lands: To begin with, the Industries Assistance Board did not assist for improvements.

Mr. THOMSON: As we had to write down the value of our securities in respect of Industries Assistance Board clients, so we have now to face the same position in respect of our group settlers. In the interests of

the State, the sooner it is done the better. It would be more satisfactory to have only half the groups going, and know that the settlers are in a fair way to achieve success, than to have the full number of groups, but with half the settlers overloaded beyond hope. If we grapple with the position just as the Minister grappled with the Industries Assistance Board position, it will be greatly to the benefit of the State. If we have to write off anything, let us do it quickly.

The Minister for Lands interjected.

Mr. THOMSON: Not altogether. There was departmental supervision and insistence upon methods. In my own district there were Industries Assistance Board men who had to put in wheat, notwithstanding that practical experience had proved that it meant disaster. Yet under the policy of the Government that was the only method by which those men could get assistance.

The Minister for Lands: It is strange that 2,000 or 3,000 I.A.B. clients paid off everything.

Mr. THOMSON: I admit it. But quite a considerable number of I.A.B. clients had to leave their holdings, after which a considerable sum was written down. The Government met the position with commonsense methods, and I say the same thing ought to be done in respect of group settlers, so that we might keep the men on their holdings.

The Minister for Lands: I am glad you admit the Government did it. When speaking at Bunbury, you said you had done it.

Mr. THOMSON: I said nothing of the sort.

Hon. G. Taylor: The "Primary Producer" said you had made a mistake.

Mr. THOMSON: It did not appear in the "Primary Producer."

The Minister for Lands: It is the one paper I do read.

Mr. THOMSON: It is certainly worth reading, for it contains some good matter.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And some that is not good.

Mr. THOMSON: In the Speech, under the heading of "Land Settlement," we find this paragraph—

Land settlement returns indicate a continued active demand for agricultural lands. The areas selected during the year, exclusive of pastoral leases, totalled 2,023,236 acres, an increase of over 400,000 acres on the total area selected during 1924-25.

Under the head of "Production" we then get this paragraph—

The area placed under crop for wheat for the 1925-26 season constituted a record for Western Australia. Unfortunately, dry weather during the critical growing period prevented the fulfilment of the estimated record harvest. The area under crop this year represents a further substantial acreage increase and, with a continuance of favourable weather conditions, a record harvest is assured. Authorisations by the Agricultural Bank were issued during the year for clearing 293,380 acres, involving an expenditure of £365,636.

I congratulate the Government on their continuance of what is the only policy possible for Western Australia. While Ministers may do all they can to encourage secondary industries, I hope they will not adopt the form of encouragement that the unions exhibit towards land settlement. According to the "Statistical Register," wealth created in this State and sent overseas last year amounted to £14,664,548. It will be illuminating to those members who hold that the primary producers are of little value to the State to learn that the wool exported last year was of the value of £3,736,700; hides and skins, £477,437; bark, £40,136; wheat, £5,158,020; flour, £968,501; beef, £99,052; fruit, £245,534, or a total of £10,725,981, or approximately three-quarters of the total wealth created in Western Australia. Of course, timber, pearl shell, sandalwood, tin and gold were also exported, but I repeat that of the £14,664,548 worth of wealth created and sent overseas to bring fresh money into Western Australia to help carry on industry here the purely primary products produced practically three-fourths. Certainly we have something upon which to congratulate ourselves.

The Minister for Lands: When you say "we," I suppose you include all members of this House?

Mr. THOMSON: We are the only party who claim to be the direct representatives of the primary producers.

The Minister for Lands: No doubt you "claim" to be.

The Premier: Of course the Leader of the Opposition never represented the primary producers!

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And never did anything for them!

The Premier: Never! These "Johnny-come-latelys" are the only ones who did!

Mr. THOMSON: There are people who claim a certain amount of credit for the

land settlement policy of this State, but Lord Forrest was the first to introduce it.

The Minister for Lands: He was the first Premier.

Mr. THOMSON: And that policy has been continued by successive Governments. Each Government has carried out a land settlement policy, because it was the only policy possible for Western Australia. I give credit not only to the present Government but to previous Governments who fostered land settlement and development. In 1915 the Primary Producers' Association at its conference laid down certain conditions for the successful settlement of people on the land. The policy then prepared and enunciated is in operation to-day.

The Minister for Lands: And was in existence years before that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I never heard of it.

Mr. THOMSON: That the men who framed that policy had a thorough knowledge of land settlement is evidenced by the fact that the Governments since then have given effect to it, and to-day it is the law of the land.

The Minister for Lands: There has been no alteration of the policy for years.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Leader of the Opposition desires it, I shall supply him with the date on which it was adopted.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It reminds me of Pickering on groups.

Mr. THOMSON: The national debt is approximately £172 per head of population.

The Minister for Lands: And it will be bigger by the time we build all the railways that are wanted.

Mr. THOMSON: So long as the railways are reproductive, there will be no cause for complaint. Only by pushing out railways into the virgin land can we foster settlement. We are not in the happy position of States that have valuable rivers capable of being utilised to transport produce to market. The only possible way to open up our State is by adopting a bold vigorous policy of railway construction.

Mr. Mann: Is not motor transport playing a part?

Mr. THOMSON: Of course it is, but the only way in which we can effectively open up this country is by grid-ironing it with railways, and the sooner that is done the better. The Agricultural Bank has been doing excellent work. It has been stated that

this institution is not interfered with by the Government, but it seems to me that some instructions must have gone forth, because there is now a greater insistence upon the payment of interest due to the bank than there was formerly. I have one or two instances of men having been forced off their land owing to the demands of the Agricultural Bank.

The Minister for Lands: The only instructions the bank received are laid down in the Act of Parliament. The trustees did not have any instructions whatever from the Government.

The Premier: Have you not a letter from some client?

Mr. THOMSON: Then it is a remarkable reversal of attitude on the part of the Agricultural Bank. In the past the trustees have given clients all possible consideration. I recognise that interest should, and must, be paid when men are in a position to pay it, but there have been instances in which more consideration should have been shown. At least two instances occurred in my own electorate.

Mr. Marshall: Did you make personal inquiries into each of those cases?

Mr. THOMSON: Before tea the Minister said that one of the reasons why I was against the groups was because he had not purchased land in my district for group settlement. I regret that the Minister should have made such a statement. Let me deal briefly with a proposal which was placed before the Government. When Sir James Mitchell returned from England, he said it was his intention to plant 10,000 acres of vines. Naturally, the people in various districts of the Great Southern desired closer settlement in their localities, and they submitted proposals to the Minister. In my district a committee composed of practical men prepared a scheme, which was submitted to the then Premier. Unfortunately, nothing was done.

The Premier: Unfortunately, nothing was done so far as you are concerned in another matter also.

Mr. THOMSON: When the proposal was placed before the present Minister for Lands, he said he was not able, under the existing migration agreement, to consider the purchase of land for closer settlement purposes. The then agreement provided that migrants were to be settled on Crown lands. When the new agreement was signed, I, at the direction

of the vigilance committee at Katanning, placed before the Minister the following proposal dated the 2nd May, 1924.

The Minister for Lands: That was not under the new agreement.

Mr. THOMSON: The proposal was set out thus—

In compliance with your request to the vigilance committee for data in regard to group settlement in this district, I have been asked to give you all available information. As you are aware this district has already proved itself in the industry of viticulture. Mr. Morris Trimming, of Trimming Brothers, Woodanilling, has been growing currants and sultanas for the past nine years. This he started to do in the first place as a hobby with two acres. His vineyard has extended until to-day he has 12 acres under currants and sultanas, with 10 acres in bearing. His fruit has proved of such good quality that he has always been able to dispose of it locally at full market rates. Last season's crop, which averaged over a ton to the acre, was sold, currants at 6d. per lb. and sultanas at 1s. per lb., or £56 per ton for currants and £112 per ton for sultanas. For this season's crop Mr. Trimming has been offered £5 per ton over market value for his produce.

We have still further proof in our district of its suitability for viticulture. In June of last year the committee had a visit from Messrs. Heighton and Bolton, who were at that time employed as foremen by Barrett-Lennard's, in the Swan area. Both Mr. Heighton and Mr. Bolton had been there for over two years. Mr. Heighton's experience extends to practical experience in England and France, and he is an expert viticulturist. These gentlemen were very satisfied with the land here, and finally settled and set to work immediately to put in a 50-acre vineyard of currants and sultanas. They commenced planting in August, and did not finish till October. We have had only 78 points of rain in this district since that time, and the enclosed photograph is the most convincing proof that vines grow and flourish here under most adverse conditions.

After careful study the committee have come to the conclusion that a settler would require at least 100 acres of land to carry on effectively—twenty acres of this to be used for vines, and the balance for growing fodder and running fowls, cows, and a few pigs. The settler would not get any returns from his vines till the third year of planting. During that period of waiting he could, with three cows, 40 fowls, and a few pigs, and by growing his own vegetables, be pretty well self-supporting. There would be a ready market for his cream, as a company for a butter factory has been floated here.

Costs.—These have been taken very fully to cover every possible need of the settler, but as shown when dissected many of them would not be required for immediate use, and could possibly be bought by the settler himself at a later date.

Land, 100 acres at £6 per acre—£600.

House—£250 first year.

Cows (3), £25 first year.

Fowls, 40 at 2s. 6d.—£5 first year.

Horse, cart, and harness—£50.

Plough, chains, and harness—£12 10s. first year.

Trays (drying), 200 at 3s.—£37 10s. third year.

Stables and sheds—£50 first year.

Cultivator—£25.

Full cost of planting, including extra labour and vines—£240.

Fencing (outside), at £30 per mile—£45.

Trellis—£120 second year.

Water conservation—£75 first year.

Total—£1,530.

Land.—The price placed on the land is the average for cleared land. The actual prices of land offered to the committee are £4, £5, and £6, the biggest portion (6,000 acres) of which can be bought at not higher than £5 2s. 6d. In the majority of offers most of the land is cleared, fenced, and watered, so that the price is not excessive when compared, say, with the Swan district, where one has to pay from £30 to £60 per acre uncleared. The cost could be capitalised and spread over several years.

House.—Will be essential, and the price is about right.

Cows and fowls.—These items go to make the settler self-supporting. As there is a butter factory to be started here in the near future, ready cash can be obtained for the settler's cream which, allowing for two cows in milk at a time, should return him £1 per week. Fowls, allowing that he has a return of 24 eggs daily from 40 fowls, which would not be very hard in a small place where time is given to them, would return 14s. per week. These two items alone would reduce the cost of living greatly, beside which he could grow his own vegetables.

The point I wish to stress is that a practical scheme was submitted to the Government in 1924, and no notice was taken of it. After considerable insistence I received the following letter from the Minister for Lands dated the 23rd June, 1926—

Your letter of the 4th March, re purchase of Areas for viticultural propositions, has again been reconsidered by the Agricultural Bank trustees, who have given the matter the most careful consideration. They state that serious losses have been incurred by the bank on viticultural propositions, and further risk of this nature cannot be undertaken.

On the 27th I received a letter from Mr. Jazo, Secretary to the Minister, in the following terms—

In reply to your letter of 25th inst., I am directed by the Hon. Minister for Lands to reply that he has not done anything much in the matter of your recommendations respecting viticulture. Many of the blocks at present worked under the Soldier Settlement Scheme will need considerable writing down owing to fruit values having decreased in the fruit markets of the world. He is doubtful whether

it would be advisable to purchase land for viticulture under the Group Settlement Scheme owing to the prevailing conditions.

The proposal was a practical one. The land was cleared and adjacent to the town. Hospital accommodation was close at hand where the group settlers could be accommodated if necessary. It has been demonstrated by the production of wine in the district and of currants and sultanas that the proposition is a paying one. These men have shown that they could produce currants and sultanas of a value equal to anything grown in Australia. The land had cost only £6 per acre. No irrigation was required, the rainfall is ample and the district is suitable. These men have shown what can be done, but when they ask for assistance from the Agricultural Bank their request is turned down, because in the opinion of the department it is not a business proposition for the bank to undertake.

Mr. Lutey: Have not some of the old settlers rooted up their vineyards in that district?

Mr. THOMSON: One vineyard was uprooted. Messrs. F. & C. Piesse had a vineyard. The port wine made from the Katanning vines was the best produced in Australia. That statement was made by the manager for Penfolds, who ought to be an authority on the question. The reason why the vineyard was uprooted was that the family did not desire to be connected with the business, and allowed the vines to go to ruin. It was not a question of this not being a paying proposition. The Lands Department, however, said it was not in the interests of the State that money should be advanced for the encouragement of viticulture. This statement was made over the signature of the Minister and of his secretary. If it is not a sound business proposition to do this why do we employ a viticultural expert?

The Minister for Lands: No Government would interfere with the bank trustees.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is one thing sacred from you.

Mr. THOMSON: That is all very well. What are the Government doing in connection with the Public Works Department when they insist that all work should be done by day labour?

The Minister for Lands: No Act of Parliament says that.

The Premier: You have already spoken about that, but of course there are now a lot of your friends in the gallery.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Government policy was to encourage viticulture, I am sure the bank would make advances on the propositions placed before it, as it is doing with regard to fruit and other industries.

The Minister for Lands: You know the Government have no right to lay down a policy for the Agricultural Bank trustees. Parliament has done that by statute.

Mr. THOMSON: It has been laid down by the Government that no advances are to be made to any client of the bank who is outside the radius of 12½ miles from the railway line.

The Minister for Lands: That has not been laid down by the Government.

Mr. THOMSON: We know it is the accepted policy of the Agricultural Bank.

The Minister for Lands: Not that of the Government.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister says he does not interfere with the policy of the Agricultural Bank, but that policy is dictated by the Government.

The Minister for Lands: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. THOMSON: It is so.

The Minister for Lands: That is not correct. The policy is laid down by the trustees. You have been playing bluff on your electors.

Mr. THOMSON: The Agricultural Bank is supposed to assist people who desire to establish themselves on the land in various industries. It is now claimed that the Agricultural Bank, in view of the serious losses it has incurred, will not make any advances to encourage viticulture. Why are we importing into the State thousands of pounds worth of wine a year? If the Government think it is right to assist group settlers, supply the whole of their requirements, and assist settlers in the wheat belt, in wool growing, potato growing, fruit growing and in other directions, this industry of vine growing is also entitled to the same consideration. The settlers I refer to have a right to demand it. It is only common justice that they should receive it. The men in my district have suffered privations, and are entitled to assistance to tide them over their difficulties.

The Minister for Lands: You know the Government have no right to lay down the bank's policy.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Government said it was their policy to assist people in all classes of agricultural industry, I am convinced that this application for assistance would immediately be granted.

The Minister for Lands: And you would be the first member to cry out against the Government for doing it.

Mr. THOMSON: Not at all.

The Minister for Lands: You would say we had no right to do it.

Mr. THOMSON: If the bank fulfilled its functions in assisting settlers on the land, the men who have demonstrated that viticulture is a success in my district would also be assisted. This fact had previously been demonstrated by Trimming Brothers of Woodanilling. The members of the Vigilance Committee were generous enough to come forward and state that this was a reasonable chance for men who could not take on the laborious work of group settlement, or making a living only by milking cows, and that this was a scheme that would appeal to men who were in a position to take it on.

The Minister for Lands: There are too many schemes for the money we have to advance.

Mr. THOMSON: I wish to voice my protest against this.

The Minister for Lands: Voice it to the Agricultural Bank trustees.

Mr. THOMSON: I am told that they are above political control. I have already voiced my opinion there, and am exercising my right as a member to voice my protest here.

The Minister for Lands: Did not the letter say the question was referred to the trustees?

Mr. THOMSON: That is correct.

The Minister for Lands: Well, that is the position.

Mr. THOMSON: I have read the letter. I am not trying to alter anything. The blame lies with the Government.

The Minister for Lands: The Government have nothing to do with the policy of the bank.

Mr. THOMSON: I am glad to know the Government are re-valuing various blocks under the soldier settlement scheme, with a view to writing down the capital to a reasonable amount for the settlers to carry. The Commonwealth Government in this respect have been exceedingly generous. The

Premier refers to these things as doles. I regard them as a fulfilment of the promises made by them to assist the State in establishing soldiers upon the land. They honourably carried out their undertaking when they made a grant of £790,000 to the State. This will give those who were unfortunately placed on land which has been proved to be over-capitalised, and in some places unsuitable for the purpose intended, a reasonable chance of success.

Mr. George: It is only giving us our own money that they have robbed us of.

Mr. THOMSON: I am discussing the position as we find it. I am glad that Mr. Moran has been engaged by the Agricultural Bank to re-value the South-West. I hope the £790,000 will be agreed to by the Federal Parliament. If the soldier settlers are brought down to a reasonable basis of capitalisation they will have a better chance of making a success than they have under present conditions. I am indeed pleased that the Government have provided water supplies in various parts of the dry areas and that the goldfields mains have been extended. That represents a sound policy. However, the water is not a gift to the residents, who have to pay for the supply, and are quite willing to do so. I mention this because some members of the Chamber consider that agriculturists are always trying to get things free. I note that a sum of £205,000 is to be expended on drainage in the South-West. It is essential that the group settlers should have drainage, in order that they may carry on successfully.

The Minister for Lands: There is more money than that to be provided.

Mr. THOMSON: I know that a total of about £500,000 is to be expended on this drainage work eventually. In respect of part of the expenditure, levies are to be made upon those who will benefit from the drainage. I presume the proposal is to put a percentage of the cost on the group settlers, and a percentage on the owners of private lands that will benefit. In this connection I trust that private owners will be afforded an opportunity to protect their interests. The private owners ought to be consulted on the question if levies are to be imposed on them. With regard to forestry, it is satisfactory to learn that this State exported last year £1,500,000 worth of timber. Unfortunately the export is principally in the form of sleepers going to South Africa and India. I am afraid we are not in a position to export much of our scantling and

other small timber. Both the State sawmills and the private sawmills find themselves faced with an unfortunate position. Our economic position is false, owing to the Navigation Act having forced quite a number of ships off the Australian coast. In the Commonwealth Parliament it was recently stated as a reason for demanding a considerable increase in the tariff on timber that it costs 2s. per hundred super. more to bring timber from Tasmania to Melbourne, a run of 16 or 18 hours across Bass Strait, than to bring softwood from the Baltic or California to Melbourne. This fact shows the unsoundness of the economic system that is being built up in Australia. I shall not deal with the question of how the administration of the Federal Government affects us, because that can be done when the Premier brings forward his motion. I am glad to note that for the first time our forest resources are assuming proportions that will render our timber asset one of great permanent value. I congratulate the Government and the Conservator of Forests on that policy, and in this respect I also give credit to the Lefroy Ministry and its Minister for Forests, Mr. R. T. Robinson. As a result of the policy then initiated, we have the excellent news appearing in the Governor's Speech.

The Premier: The policy started further back. It started when I appointed Mr. Lane-Poole Conservator of Forests.

Mr. THOMSON: In my opinion a grave injustice has been done by the previous Government, and also by the present Government, to the late member for Sussex, Mr. Pickering, who was chairman of the Forestry Royal Commission. The evidence taken by that Commission was most valuable, and the chairman should at least have been recouped for the expense to which he was put in visiting the Eastern States.

The Premier: How can you blame this Government for that?

Mr. THOMSON: The present Government should have done justice to Mr. Pickering, who rendered signal service to this State as chairman of the Commission.

The Premier: We should have done something that the previous Government refused to do! That is good.

Mr. THOMSON: It is natural that the Government should endeavour to stabilise the goldmining industry. I trust that the Government's suggestion for a central power

station will materialise, and that it will prove of great benefit to an industry that is languishing. Such a movement must be highly beneficial in reducing costs. The member for Yilgarn (Mr. Corboy)—who I regret to see is not present—congratulated the Government on the good things which they have done. When sitting on this side of the House that hon. member debated at considerable length the action of the late Minister for Mines, Mr. Scaddan, with regard to people interested in the mining industry at Ravenshorpe. For my part, I congratulate the present Government upon having appointed a Royal Commissioner to inquire into the mining industry, though up to the present we do not seem to have derived much benefit from the Commissioner's report. Some people go so far as to say that the Commissioner learnt here more than he was able to teach those engaged in the Western Australian mining industry.

Mr. Marshall: What Commissioner are you referring to?

Mr. THOMSON: Mr. Kingsley Thomas. With regard to the Ravenshorpe smelter case as exposed in the law courts—

The Premier: Those people have had an organiser at Yilgarn too. He is roaming all round the place.

Mr. THOMSON: The position is not creditable to the Government, as regards those interested in the case.

The Premier: You do not know anything about it.

Mr. THOMSON: I propose to give the Premier something he does not know.

The Premier: You are going to read a lot of stuff you do not understand, stuff which has been prepared for you. I can see it is typewritten.

Mr. THOMSON: I have here a copy of a circular sent to all members of the House on the 12th December, 1922. The matter was fully debated, and a case was put up by the member for Yilgarn, who said that the action of the then Government was absolutely immoral and that they were not doing justice to the people concerned in the case.

The Premier: The people who have supplied you with a brief.

Mr. THOMSON: The Ravenshorpe smelter case initiated with the Scaddan Government, when Mr. Hudson was member for the district.

The Premier: That is not so.

Mr. THOMSON: Mr. Hudson was at that time a strong supporter of the Labour Party. The revelation of the manner in which the business of these works was conducted—

The Premier: Whose statement are you reading now?

Mr. THOMSON: A statement from people who are interested in Ravensthorpe and in this particular case.

The Premier: This is an *ex parte* statement.

Mr. THOMSON: The disclosures in the Supreme Court, in the opinion of these people, are disgraceful.

The Minister for Mines: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is not making his own speech; he is reading from a statement.

Mr. THOMSON: How do you know?

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member has a paper in his hand, and is reading to the House somebody else's statement. If it is his own statement, we will accept it. If not, we cannot accept it in a speech of this character.

Mr. SPEAKER: In the practice of this Chamber, speeches written outside cannot be delivered to the House. The hon. member may make quotations, giving his authority, but he cannot read a speech of others to this Chamber.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not reading a speech prepared by others. I am simply reading a statement. I have quoted other statements.

The Premier: You have been quoting for the last five hours.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the hon. member questioning my ruling?

Mr. THOMSON: No. I am merely emphasising my position.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not read a statement from outsiders on a matter that is sub judice, unless he gives it as a quotation and states his authority.

Mr. THOMSON: I am giving this as a quotation.

The Premier: From whom are you quoting?

Mr. THOMSON: That is my business.

Mr. Premier: The Speaker says not. The Speaker says you have to give the authority.

Mr. THOMSON: I reserve to myself the right of—

The Premier: You cannot quote a statement here and not let the House know from whom it is.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is correct. An unknown person cannot get possession of the ear of this Chamber through an hon. member.

The Premier: Or through a gramophone.

Mr. THOMSON: I have here a pamphlet which was distributed to all members of the House, and I maintain that I am entitled to draw the attention of the House to the action of the Government in not finalising a certain matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not the point. The hon. member is quite entitled to criticise the Government in any way he pleases. The point is that he is not allowed to introduce into this Chamber utterances, statements, or letters of any kind without acquainting the House with the authority. The hon. member must make his own speech, and not allow others to make it for him.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not quoting anybody's speech at all. I am just quoting facts as they are.

The Premier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I submit that the hon. member is now prevaricating. He began by saying that he was going to quote a statement which had been submitted to every member of this House some years ago. Then he proceeded to read the statement. When he was asked for the authority that wrote the statement, he declined to give it. Now, when you have ruled him out of order on those lines, he calmly and unblushingly states, "I am not quoting at all, but I propose to give some facts." I submit that it is an affront to the House for the hon. member to attempt to evade your ruling in that manner.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member knows he is abusing the privileges of the House by doing what the Premier has pointed out, stating that he is quoting a statement and then immediately proceeding to continue with that statement, saying it is his. That is a contradiction of terms, and I trust the hon. member will either disclose the origin and authorship of the statement or cease to quote it to this Chamber.

Mr. THOMSON: I am dealing with a matter which has been held up for some considerable time, and in which an amount of about £50,000 is involved. A decision has been given by the Courts, and a promise has been made that the money would be paid. I am criticising the Government's action in not fulfilling that promise. The

position is that some Ravensthorpe settlers were keenly interested in mining and put a certain amount of money into auriferous copper ore in connection with the Ravens-thorpe smelters. They claimed £33,600. The case, I repeat, has been dealt with by the court. In fact, the Chief Justice practically said that he considered the money had almost been stolen by the Government. That is the statement made by the Chief Justice. Mr. W. F. Sayer definitely stated that he at once approved of the recommendation that a reply should be sent that the Government would not stand on their legal rights in the way suggested, but would observe the spirit of the judgment of the court, whatever it might be. This has been going on since 1922 and it is not fair to the men who put their copper ore through the State smelters. It is only fair and reasonable that the Government should not stand upon legal quibbles. It would be far better for the Government to be at least generous, and to finalise the matter.

The Minister for Mines: Do you know the facts?

The Premier: He does not know anything about them.

Mr. THOMSON: I do know the facts as they have been presented to the public and as they were presented to the Court.

The Minister for Mines: You do not know anything about them.

Mr. THOMSON: The facts are that the case was dealt with by the Supreme Court and was taken on to the High Court. The Government have wasted more money in law expenses than is involved in the Court's decision, concerning which they are quibbling.

The Minister for Mines: I will give you the facts. The Government are willing to pay the Court's judgment, but the people concerned will not take the money.

The Premier: That is so. We are willing to abide by the Court's judgment and pay the amount involved, but they will not accept it.

Mr. THOMSON: That is news to me.

The Premier: Of course it is.

Mr. THOMSON: This is a most remarkable thing. I understand that the Government are threatening to take the matter to the Privy Council.

Mr. Corboy: The hon. member knows that I fought this case in the House, and the reason why I have not brought it for-

ward again is that the parties concerned will not accept the Court's decision.

Mr. THOMSON: That is contrary to my information.

Mr. Corboy: Then your information is wrong.

Mr. THOMSON: I have had the information from several sources.

Mr. SPEAKER: This shows the justice of the hon. member discontinuing quotation from incorrect authorities.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not admit that I have been quoting from inaccurate authorities. I accept the information placed at my disposal as correct. I would not quote from authorities that I considered inaccurate. I will never do that. If I did not believe that the people at Ravensthorpe had a just claim I would not bring it forward here.

The Minister for Mines: Why did you not come to the Government and get their version?

Mr. THOMSON: Why does the Minister not give it to the people?

Mr. Corboy: Twelve months ago the money was offered to the people, but they would not take it.

The Premier: You are in deep water. Swim out!

Mr. THOMSON: I am not in deep water judging by the way the Government are attempting to block me from dealing with the question.

The Premier: Blocking you, indeed!

Mr. Corboy: As a matter of fact, the people concerned are prepared to accept the Court's decision and take the money, but no man will not agree to do so and he is blocking the rest.

Mr. THOMSON: The member for Yilgarn (Mr. Corboy) is far out in his guess.

Mr. Corboy: I know more about this matter than you do.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member will have to guess a few more times before he will ascertain from whom I received the information. There are people in Ravensthorpe who resent the action of the Government and are not paying what the Court decreed.

The Premier: That is not correct.

Mr. Corboy: It is not.

The Premier: The money involved in the verdict of the Court has been waiting for them for over 12 months, and they will not collect it. This kerbstone information of yours is not correct.

Mr. THOMSON: The people who came to me regarding this question can certainly do

with the money, and it is amazing to think that they will not, as has been suggested, collect it from the department.

Mr. Corboy: I challenge the hon. member to name one individual, apart from Dunstan or his tributor, who will not take it.

Mr. THOMSON: I can do so.

Mr. Corboy: I doubt it.

Mr. THOMSON: I can do so, but I will not.

Mr. Corboy: You cannot do so, and I am in touch with every one of them.

Mr. THOMSON: If I am to judge from the trend of the discussion and the attempts to block me, the Government are not anxious to have the matter discussed.

The Premier: You are talking nonsense.

Mr. THOMSON: At any rate it is gratifying to elicit the information that the money is available for those desirous of taking it. I will have much pleasure in informing them that all they have to do is to go to the department and collect their money.

Mr. Corboy: They have had the information for over 12 months, including Dunstan, who gave you the information.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member is wrong.

Mr. Corboy: No, I am not.

Mr. THOMSON: If the hon. member continues his guesses, he may in time name the right party but so far he has been wide of the mark.

The Premier: Get on to a subject you know something about.

Mr. Corboy: Again I challenge the hon. member to name anyone apart from Dunstan or his tributor, who is not willing to accept the money.

Mr. THOMSON: Apparently my references have caused a ripple over the political waters.

Mr. Corboy: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. THOMSON: Dealing with railway construction matters, I am pleased to note that the Government propose to introduce several new railway Bills, including one that will authorise the construction of a line from Boyup Brook to Cranbrook. That line has been promised for many years past.

The Premier: That line will be in the Nelson electorate.

Mr. THOMSON: And part of it will be in my electorate. Despite the wide sources of his information, the Premier does not know everything. I regret that no provision has been made for the classification of the land from Newdegate to Albany. I would like to

know that the Government intend to give serious consideration to a promise made to some settlers prior to my entrance to this Chamber. In 1912 or 1913 the settlers in the Needilup area, some 20 miles beyond Ongerup, were promised the construction of a railway extension in the then immediate future. Unfortunately for those settlers, the Ongerup district proved a failure for wheat growing, but the settlers in the Needilup district have demonstrated amply that wheat can be produced there profitably. Last season a considerable quantity of wheat had to be carted 20 miles to the Ongerup siding. I hope, therefore, that the Government will give serious consideration to the position of these settlers. I do not propose to deal with road construction matters now, because they will receive attention at a later stage. I wish to reiterate my contention that the tramways, water supply and electricity services in the metropolitan area should be handed over to the local authorities, because those who are finding the money should be in charge of the utilities named. I hope the Collie power scheme will prove successful. It is a bold scheme. I trust, however, that the Collie and Bunbury people will fully satisfy themselves before they finally embark upon the undertaking, that it will pay. To generate electricity at the source of supply should be a good proposition. I wish to deal briefly with the Arbitration Act. It is gratifying to learn from the Government that excellent work is being done under that measure, but it seems to me that the Arbitration Court has developed into a persecution court.

Mr. Hughes: Because a few employers have been prosecuted!

Mr. THOMSON: No, but because the court has concentrated recently upon a large number of trivial cases, arising out of which people have been fined small amounts for not complying with some provision or other.

The Premier: Those cases have arisen under the Act that was passed last session.

Mr. THOMSON: Regarding the Government's policy in relation to preference to unionists, it has been reported that there are more paid organisers at the Trades Hall collecting dues from unionists than there are taxation officers in the Taxation Department.

The Premier: Whoever reported that?

Mr. THOMSON: Seeing that it is the policy of the Government that no man can obtain work on a Government utility unless

he is a unionist, I would advise the Trades Hall authorities to curtail their expenditure on organisers. The Government have been appointed by the people to administer the affairs of the State, and I believe I am right when I say that when Ministers took their oath, they swore to do justice to all men. They are not doing justice to all men and the Government have no right to lay down a condition that no man can work on a Government activity unless he is a unionist. In doing so, the Government are breaking the terms of the Constitution. It has often been stated in this House and elsewhere that when Magna Charta was signed at Runnymede, the people were protected against the tyranny of kings and that thenceforth the people had control of their own destinies. What is the position to-day? I raise my voice in protest against the actions of the Government.

Mr. Sleeman: You did not raise it when the scabs were on the wharf at Fremantle!

Mr. THOMSON: I protest against the action of the Government when they insist upon a man contributing to a union and to their political funds before he can earn his living. No Government has a right to force any such condition upon a man. Last year when discussing the Labour Exchanges Bill I was laughed at by the Minister for Works who said my imagination was wonderful to conceive. He ridiculed me because I suggested it was not in the interests of the workers. He laughed at me when I suggested that it would not be a good thing to have a Government labour exchange only, if the Government were to see that no one secured work unless he was a unionist. Yet it was reported in the Press the other day that at the Labour Bureau, as one man stepped forward to ask whether there was a job for him, Mr. Butler demanded to see his union ticket, and promptly pushed him though the window. No Government have the right to demand that, before a man gets a job at the Labour Bureau, he shall show his union ticket. It is taking away the liberties of the people. Now, under the latest ruling in the Education Department, apparently it is the policy of the Government that no man in that department shall have promotion unless he be a unionist. I am speaking for myself and my children, for whom I demand the opportunity to earn their living, irrespective of any union. What would the Premier and his party say if a National Government took up the same attitude and declared that there

should be no work for any man who did not subscribe to the Nationalist Party's funds?

The Premier: Your funds come from more doubtful sources.

Mr. THOMSON: We do not compel people at the point of the bayonet to contribute to our funds.

Mr. Sleeman: But at the point of the bayonet you stopped men from earning a living in Fremantle.

Mr. THOMSON: To-day men are not permitted to work on any Government activity because nine years ago those men did their duty to the State; even after all these years they are denied the right of earning their living. Members opposite boast of liberty, while denying their fellow men the right to earn a living. Hon. members opposite cry "No victimisation"; yet no party victimises their fellow men more than do members sitting on that side of the House. I am pleased to see that the Government have finalised an agreement with the Y.A.L., under which boys will be placed in country districts and looked after. I have no doubt the league will thus render excellent services to the State. Again, I join issue with my friends opposite in their support of the union policy of limiting apprentices in various trades. We find Mr. Chandler putting forward an excellent scheme in an endeavour to get our boys out on the land, and now we have this later scheme propounded by the Y.A.L. and accepted by the Minister. But what is to become of our boys who cannot go on the land? Where are we going to get tradesmen if the present policy is persisted in? The damnable thing about it is that we are penalising our own boys.

Mr. Lutey: You have been talking all this while, yet you are not talking facts even now.

Mr. THOMSON: I am talking facts. The policy of the unions is restriction of apprentices, one apprentice to every three men. Where are our tradesmen to come from? And, as I say, the most damnable thing about it is that we are thus forcing our own boys into dead-ends, compelling them to drive bakers' carts and the like, refusing to allow them to become artisans and so earn decent livings.

The Minister for Lands: Where are the industries to support all your apprentices?

Mr. THOMSON: A union representative haled the firm of Hill and Son before the court for having four apprentices, the object being that one of the boys should be dismissed, or, alternatively, be paid the full

adult wage. The policy of the unions in this respect is altogether wrong, and I commend the Y.A.L. on their endeavour to find employment for lads in country districts. I shall always raise my voice against the attitude of the Government and the unions in hampering our boys in the earning of a living.

Mr. Panton: In this State we have the best system of apprenticeship, the ratio being decided by the Arbitration Court.

The Minister for Lands: Where are the industries in Western Australia to support the apprentices?

Mr. THOMSON: Let me turn again to the Education Department. Prior to the present Administration, the driving allowance was open to practically everybody. However, in the opinion of the Government some men were taking undue advantage of it, men who the Government held were in a position to pay for the driving of their children to school. Some of us waited as a deputation on the Minister, and he then stipulated that any man with an income above £400 would not be granted the driving allowance.

The Minister for Lands: A man with £400 per annum can pay for the driving of his children to school.

Mr. THOMSON: On a very low estimate, the cost and maintenance of horse and sulky for driving children to school represents at least £30 per annum. Children living along the railway lines are picked up by the train and taken to the nearest school. I agree with that. An instance brought under my notice concerns a man who, although his gross income is £400, enjoys an income of only £130 in the eyes of the Taxation Department. Nevertheless, he is told that he is imposing upon the Education Department and must, in future, provide for the driving of his children to school, even though it costs him £30 per annum. I wonder if Ministers know how many settlers have left their farms and come to live in the city for want of facilities for getting their children to school.

The Minister for Lands: That would happen even if we had schools in every little locality.

Mr. THOMSON: To withhold the driving allowance from some, whilst permitting it to others, is altogether wrong, and I hope we shall be able to rectify it next March.

The Premier: You might not be included; you might have to write again, begging to be taken in.

Mr. THOMSON: I am sorry Mr. Munsie, the Honorary Minister looking to the Health Department, is not here. He is one of the best Ministers for Health we have ever had. He is keenly interested in his department, and I want to give him every credit for it. He has paid the utmost consideration to those of us who have to provide hospital facilities in country districts. It is only fair to commend the Government for their bold hospital policy, which is one of the outstanding features of their administration. I do not propose to touch upon State insurance at this stage, but will be prepared to express my views when the question is brought before the House. I am pleased that the Government contemplate providing central markets, and I hope that the control will be on the lines of the amendment I moved to the motion of the member for Perth (Mr. Mann), namely a trust on which all sections, including the primary producers, will be represented.

The Premier: We have adopted your views!

Mr. THOMSON: That shows great wisdom on the part of the Government.

Mr. Mann: But I do not like the tone in which the Premier said it.

Mr. THOMSON: I regret that one particular measure is not mentioned in the Speech—

Mr. Hughes: You mean the Fair Rents Bill?

Mr. THOMSON: I refer to the Dried Fruits Bill.

The Premier: There are other things that are dry—speeches, for instance.

Mr. THOMSON: Members are cognisant of the position of the dried fruit industry. Considerable trouble has been occasioned through the sending of our fruit to the Eastern States, and I am satisfied that unless we adopt legislation similar to that operating in Victoria and South Australia, there will be still further trouble in store. People interested in the dried fruits industry have asked for the measure, and I trust the Government will give the matter serious consideration. On the financial proposals of the Commonwealth, I shall defer my views until the motion dealing with the matter comes up for discussion. When I made my criticism of the Premier's action, the Press did me too much honour by stat-

ing that it was the opinion of the Country Party. I stated clearly that whatever views I expressed were my own. I thank members for the patient hearing they have given me this evening. There have been no interjections and I have had an excellent hearing. Seriously, though, whatever matters I have discussed have been brought forward in the honest belief that my information was correct. I claim the privilege of expressing my views equally with members on the Government side of the House. Thank God members opposite cannot gag us, though if they had an opportunity, they might do so.

The Premier: You take yourself altogether too seriously.

Mr. THOMSON: I am glad to have had the opportunity once more to speak on the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.5 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 5th August, 1926.

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

RESIGNATION OF THE PRESIDENT.

The Clerk read a letter as follows:—

Perth, 4th August 1926. The Clerk of Parliaments, Legislative Council, Parliament House. Sir, I have the honour to tender my resignation as President of the Legislative Council and shall be obliged if you will in

form hon. members accordingly. In order that the Council may not be inconvenienced by the absence of a President, and also allow time to select a successor, this resignation will not take effect until the expiration of Monday, the 9th inst. I have the honour to be, Sir, Yours faithfully, (signed) E. J. Wittenoom, President.

QUESTIONS—(9) MINING.

Miners' Phthisis Act—Examinations.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Honorary Minister: 1, On what date did the medical examination of miners, under the provisions of the Miner's Phthisis Act, commence? 2, On what date is it expected that the initial medical examination of all miners who come within the scope of the Miner's Phthisis Act will be completed? 3, Is it intended that unprohibited miners who have undergone the initial medical examination and have continued working in metalliferous mining, shall be subject to further periodical medical examinations; if so, at what stated intervals? 4, What form of medical examination has any person outside the scope of the provisions of the Miner's Phthisis Act, at its proclamation, to undergo before securing employment, or recommencing employment in metalliferous mining?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: 1, 14th September, 1925. 2, Approximately the end of September. 3, Yes. The question of the periods at which examination will be undertaken is now under consideration, certain points having to be adjusted with the Commonwealth Government, and in regard to which correspondence is now proceeding. 4, The Mines Regulation Act now requires that no person shall enter a mine for the purpose of working therein unless he shall have submitted himself to a medical practitioner for examination, and obtained a certificate that he is free from tuberculosis.

Miners' Health, Statistics.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Honorary Minister: Are any returns available showing—1, The total number of miners medically examined, on or before 30th June 1926, under the provisions of the Miner's Phthisis Act? 2, The number of miners prohibited from further mining work on account of—(a) tuberculosis complicated by silicosis, fibrosis, or pneumoconiosis; (b)