

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 15th August, 1929.

Address-in-reply, tenth day Page 352

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Tenth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [4.35]: The legislative programme forecasted in His Excellency's Speech is limited to about half a dozen Bills. I presume these will be the most important to be submitted. From the Notice Paper of another place, however, I observe that no fewer than 15 Bills are down for second reading. This being our Centenary year, references have been made throughout the State to the achievements of its citizens; and I think it proper to mention that the residents of the Eastern Goldfields propose to hold some interesting functions in order to mark the occasion of the finding of the greatest goldfield in the southern hemisphere. A monument is being erected in the course of the next fortnight to the memory of the finder of the Hannans field. Eastern Goldfields representatives would be very pleased indeed if any members of this Chamber decided to participate in the celebrations. Those hon. members would receive a cordial welcome. The main functions will take place between the 21st August and the 7th September. My remarks on the Speech will be brief, and limited to two subjects, the first being the redistribution of seats measures relating to both the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. The Government, realising the importance of amending Legislative Assembly boundaries and the necessity of preparing rolls for the approaching general election, called a special session of Parliament in order that the authorities might have at their disposal the necessary time to make preparations, and also to enable the Government themselves to fulfil a promise, made some years ago, of placing representation on a more equit-

able basis. The special session was held, and during it the report of the Commission who reallocated the boundaries as directed by another Act was considered. Last session's Redistribution of Seats Bill, now an Act, gives the metropolitan area 17 seats, whereas is formerly had 12. The measure also reduces goldfields representation from 13 seats to 8, allows the agricultural areas to retain 21 seats, and the North four. In order that the Electoral Department could give effect to the decision of Parliament, they undertook to transfer the names of electors from one district to another appropriately, thus permitting of earlier publication of the rolls. The Redistribution of Seats Act not having been proclaimed as yet, the rolls for the new districts cannot yet be compiled; but we have what are known as provisional lists, in which the names of the whole of the electors are tabulated in alphabetical order. They will subsequently have numbers attached to them. The present Act dealing with redistribution of Assembly seats received only 13 votes from Government supporters in another place. Had it not been for the votes of the present Opposition, the measure would hardly have reached this Chamber. However, we have dealt with the redistribution as it was presented by the three Commissioners in their report. Immediately the measure had passed, I interested myself to check the names on some rolls with which I am acquainted, my object being to test the number of electors to be transferred from one district to another. In two instances particularly, the numbers were wide of the mark; in other words, I could not find the number of electors who were to be transferred, as having been already placed on the rolls. Accordingly I decided to wait until the printed lists were available, affording an opportunity of checking. On final analysis it may prove that the lists are quite all right as regards numbers, but I quote these instances where I had gone carefully through the roll and had been unable to find the numbers enrolled that it was anticipated would be transferred from one electorate to another. The result to date, is that the Electoral Department have compiled a book—here is a copy of it—which comprises the lists of the 17 metropolitan electorates. No numbers are placed against the names of the electors. I have been sufficiently interested to count the numbers of electors with-

in the respective boundaries of new districts, and I am about to make a remarkable disclosure. The actual enrolments in the 12 metropolitan seats—that is, according to areas up to the 31st December, 1928—was 111,027. The actual enrolments for the 17 new seats are indicated on the provisional roll as 112,300, showing an increase of 1,273, which may represent the natural increase of population, together with the placing on the new roll of electors who were not formerly enrolled, but who submitted claims as cards were posted out by the Electoral Department. The report of the Commissioners, when submitted, fixed the quota for the metropolitan area at 6,531. There was a minimum of 20 per cent. less than the mean, equivalent to 5,225, and also a maximum of 7,837. Thus there was a marginal allowance of 1,306. Now, the present Leederville electorate is represented by the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Millington; and that electorate has been roughly divided into two electorates, namely, Leederville and Mt. Hawthorn. According to the Commissioners' report, which I am quoting, Leederville was 6,684 above the quota. Therefore the Commissioners transferred from North Perth to Leederville 350 electors, and transferred to the Maylands electorate—not from it—1,293 electors. Then the Commissioners transferred to the new district of Mt. Hawthorn 6,070 electors. In their report they say that the anticipated enrolments from Leederville were 6,202, and he anticipated enrolments from Mt. Hawthorn 6,070. Those figures can readily be checked by taking Leederville with an enrolment of 13,215, and adding 350, thereby making a total of 13,565, and then transferring to Maylands 1,293, leaving a balance of 12,272. Transferring 6,070 to Mt. Hawthorn leaves 6,202 for Leederville, as indicated in the Commissioners' report. I have gone carefully through the whole of the book of about 112,000 names, and I have discovered that the Leederville electorate has 8,620 electors. That is one half. In the Mt. Hawthorn half there are 4,071 electors. Therefore the Leederville electorate has 100 per cent. more electors than its former half, which represents the new electorate. In other words, the Mt. Hawthorn electorate has 2,000 electors less than the quota fixed by the redistribution Commissioners.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And Leederville has 2,000 more.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The particulars are all set out in the printed volume. There is a difference of 2,000 electors. There are 2,000 short for one district, and 2,000 additional for the other.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Does that mean that the lists have been wrongly prepared?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I do not say that. Later I am going to ask the Minister to indicate to the House how the discrepancy has arisen. If the 1,293 electors that were transferred out of this district into Maylands were added to the present enrolment it would total 5,364, which would be just 139 over the minimum of 5,225. The electors of Leederville and of many other districts also were astonished when they discovered that the Minister representing that district, who lives in the heart of Leederville, had transferred his allegiance to Mt. Hawthorn, where he does not live. Obviously he transferred himself from 8,600 electors to 4,000 electors, which might be termed a pocket borough.

The Honorary Minister: Do you suggest that he knew that?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I suggest that some other people knew something about this before I did. I have discovered this for myself. Of course in my surmise I may be quite wrong. But I will say that after I discovered it I checked my figures and then went along to the newly appointed Chief Electoral Officer, quoted the figures to him and asked him what he thought of it. He said the figures were correct. As I was getting away by the train that day, I asked a friend of mine to call on the Commonwealth Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Way. Mr. Way was not in the least bit perturbed. He said, "Of course there are a few there." Following the interjection of the Honorary Minister, I suggest that someone did know and that maybe there is a conspiracy of silence on the part of the Government to say nothing about the huge discrepancy that has arisen in the preparation of the rolls.

The Honorary Minister: That leaves quite a nasty inference.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I do not put it forward as a nasty implication. I think the hon. member would not say there was no member of the Government who until to-day was unaware of the discrepancy in the rolls. Surely that cannot be, for the officers of the department all know of it.

The Honorary Minister: Can you suggest how it could have been avoided?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I suggest the boundaries were not properly lined out by the Commissioners, or that the Commissioners may have made an error. They may have been given wrong information.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: If the Minister for Agriculture discovered a pocket borough, you would not blame him for jumping into it, would you?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: No. I might even do the same thing myself if the opportunity offered. But my opportunities in that direction seem to be very limited, for when the redistribution of seats for the Council comes along, I understand there will be a big change of the province I represent being eliminated, and I may be eliminated also.

The Honorary Minister: Are you suggesting that the Minister for Agriculture knew of this discrepancy?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: No, but I suggest he might have known of it before I did. At the moment it is a matter for conjecture amongst thoughtful people as to how this position has arisen.

The Honorary Minister: The Commissioners would be very interested in hearing your remarks.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: My remarks, I take it, will be reported in "Hansard," where the Commissioners can read them. I do not think there is in my remarks anything for the Commissioners to be offended at.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Whatever the explanation, you are merely stating a fact.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: That is so. I say it requires thorough investigation on the part of the Government in order that they may tell us how this position has arisen. Moreover, the 212,000 electors of the State have a right to ask the reason why this has occurred.

Hon. J. Cornell: We are told that in the Yilgarn electorate there are some 1,200 electors over the mark.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Just now I am dealing only with the metropolitan seats. If these figures are to stand, the redistribution of seats is not as equitable as we considered it to be. I do not know whether such a thing has happened before. Possibly none of us has been sufficiently interested to go through the names of so many thousands of electors and check them over.

The Honorary Minister: I do not think the hon. member has had time to do that in this instance.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I can assure the Minister that I did go through the lot. Moreover, I went through half of them again, and then handed them over to a friend of mine to check the sections in which I found the discrepancy. After he had done so, he told me that my figures were right, and I then went to the Electoral Department. The Act has not yet been proclaimed and so whatever the discrepancy, it cannot be amended until after its proclamation. I understand the Act is not going to be proclaimed until after this session of Parliament has closed. Now there is another amazing feature, regarding the boundaries. They are determined as outlined in the Commissioners' report, which is indicated by a plan of the electorates attached to each of the provisional rolls, and in the plans at the back of the Commissioners' report. The dividing line between Leederville and Mt. Hawthorn electorates, I am assured by residents who live there and who traversed with me the route following the subdivision of the boundaries, runs straight through the Home of the Good Shepherd. That is a very remarkable thing. I think our three good shepherds, the Commissioners who drafted this, have led us astray and have themselves wandered from the path. I do not know how that might be accounted for.

Member: You mean to say that one-half the Home of the Good Shepherd is in one electorate and the other half in another electorate?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: That is so. It is customary to have the boundaries following rivers and roads, but not to go through buildings. Yet I am assured that in this case it does pass through that building. By the way, electors are enrolled for where they live; that is to say, where they sleep. So one elector sleeping at one end of that building might have a vote for Mount Hawthorn, while another elector sleeping at the other end of the building would have a vote for Leederville. Furthermore, the boundary line between the Leederville electorate and the Subiaco electorate runs through the centre of the St. John of God Hospital.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is a coincidence.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: It is indeed a coincidence. There is the Home of the Good Shepherd on one side of Leederville, and the St. John of God Hospital on the other, and the boundary lines run through them

both. A friend of mine who knows the district rather intimately has given me this explanation: He said, "According to this report, the boundary line should run along Salvado Road. But some years ago a portion of Salvado Road was closed and the land was vested in the city council. Subsequently that land, or part of it, was vested in the hospital authorities, and since then some buildings have been erected on it." Therefore, it would look as if the boundary line were made to follow a road that has ceased to exist. I am assured that it is so. This raises a sidelight that might interest some of those who contested the Labour selection ballots in the Leederville and Mount Hawthorn districts. I understand it can be said that, roughly, the unionists in that Labour stronghold would be fairly equally divided between the two districts, and I have been assured that only those residing within the boundaries, as indicated by the plan, were allowed to vote in each of the selection ballots. It would therefore seem that there was a two to one vote in the Leederville electorate, as against the number in Mount Hawthorn, because of the disparity in the numbers between the two electorates.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Why talk rubbish like that?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The hon. member cannot side-track me so easily. If there are 8,000 electors in the one district and 4,000 in the other, and if you say to the unionists, "If you are inside a certain boundary you will vote there," we must have some voting in the 8,000 electorate and others voting in the electorate with only 4,000.

Hon. E. H. Gray: But if you were in the hospital—

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am not talking about those in the hospital, but about those who are out of it, and the hon member knows it. Possibly he may be able to explain this, but I have never known it happen before: When selection ballots are taken by the Labour Party they announce the results secured at the respective ballot boxes, but in this instance—whether it was to suppress the information I do not know—there was a mere announcement that John Smith had won this seat and Bill Jones another. That was the only information pub-

lished in the Press when the results of the selection ballots were given.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Certain figures were given.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The total figures were given in one or two instances, but in others the results at the respective boxes did not appear.

The Honorary Minister: Of what interest would they be to the hon. member?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I do not know that they would interest me more than to see the curiosity that might be aroused among the defeated candidates. Do not forget that we have had the drama of sliding panelled ballot boxes before to-day.

Hon. G. Fraser: Not in this State.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: No, but what has happened in this State can equal anything that has happened elsewhere. I suggest that those interested in the ballots, when they discovered the discrepancy in the boundaries might be very keen about it and set about demonstrating that had that section in the adjacent district been in the other electorate, as it should have been, the result might have been quite different.

Hon. W. J. Mann: We may not have had ballot boxes with sliding panels in this State, but have we not had boxes disappear altogether?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: We have had some very interesting incidents. There are 33 more rolls to be compiled. I mention this so that members in another place may hear of it, for as late as this afternoon I learnt that in the Greenough electorate the quota will be considerably exceeded. Though the roll is not yet available, the folk in the district say there will be a big number of electors over and above the quota, and even above the maximum.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Did the Country Party make the investigation?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I believe they did, and with very good results, equal in fact to mine. I am told also that the Beverley district will exceed its quota by a large number, whilst in the York district the figures will be considerably below the quota. There, I understand, it will take them all their time to reach the minimum.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Whom do you blame?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I want the Government to tell me; they cannot blame

Edgar Harris, thank God! If there are such discrepancies in the compilation of the Assembly rolls, we shall find ourselves in a similar position in regard to the provinces.

Hon. J. Cornell: There must be a discrepancy there too.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: That is what I am pointing out.

Hon. H. Stewart: It should be a good thing to allow the boundaries to remain as they are.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am going to ask the Chief Secretary directly when it is proposed to introduce the Bill, and from what date it is intended it shall operate.

Hon. J. Cornell: Are you very anxious?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: No, because I shall not be a candidate next May. If we have any regard for what has happened in the past, then if anyone should feel anxious, it should be the Chief Secretary. If there is anything in the suggestion that is floating about, the North Province which, for many years, has boasted of only 400 or 500 electors, will be brought down to the vicinity of Wiluna. But if we have regard to the redistribution of the Assembly boundaries, it looks as if the province I represent will be limited to two Assembly electorates, pocket-handkerchief electorates they might be called, a square mile in extent. I ask the Chief Secretary whether it is the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill to permit of the early compilation of the rolls for the Council elections to be held in May? It was necessary to give ample time to the Electoral Department to compile rolls for the Assembly. We are now in August and there are 17 Bills on the Notice Paper of another place, but there is no reference whatever to the one relating to the amendment of the Council boundaries. If 12 months is to be allowed for the compilation of the Assembly rolls, and bear in mind that enrolment there is compulsory, how much more necessary is it for us to have ample time for the preparation of our rolls after the boundaries have been altered? I suggest that some members of this House will probably have half their provinces taken from them, and perhaps they may have other provinces thrust on them. How important is it, therefore, that there should be adequate time for the preparation of rolls, and to move about the altered pro-

vinces. If it is intended that the Bill shall operate from the next elections in May, I say that there will not be time to permit that to be done. That is why I suggest to the Chief Secretary, as one interested in the forthcoming elections, that he should agree to the postponement of the proclamation of the Act, after it passes, for a period of two years.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Better make it four years.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: If the boundaries are amended, the members of this Chamber should have extended to them privileges similar to those that were accorded to members of the Assembly. Members of another place have had 15 months to prepare for the election and by now all are familiar with their new boundaries. If the Bill is rushed through during this session, we shall have barely six months in which to make ourselves familiar with the altered boundaries.

Hon. J. Cornell: We shall have barely three months.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The representatives of the South and the North-East Provinces should know what is going to happen, because five Assembly seats on the gold-fields have been lost, and that number has been added to the metropolitan area. It looks as if one of those provinces will be eliminated, or perhaps the two will be amalgamated. Should that be so, we shall be confronted with the position that further centralisation of representation will take place if the metropolitan area has another province added. I await with interest the presentation of the Bill having for its object the redistribution of the boundaries. I think it will interest members of this House even more than the redistribution of last session interested members of another place. I wish to make a few remarks with regard to the mining industry. Anyone who has recognised the value of the mining industry for itself will admit that it has been the means of attracting capital and population. The industry has experienced a very trying time in recent years, and the story we hear from day to day is that high costs is one of its chief troubles. A higher grade of ore has had to be treated, thus lessening the value of ore remaining in the mines. In 1927 the State's average value of ore treated was 49.32s.; in 1928 the average

was 51.18s. On the Eastern Goldfields, where 70 per cent. of the gold is produced, the average value treated in 1927 was 53.47s. and in 1928 it was 56.64s., the highest we have had for very many years. Whilst much has been done to assist the industry, we have failed to arrest the decline of gold production. Referring to the considerably increased costs, I might quote a recent statement made by the Premier who admitted that the costs were too high and who added that the Commonwealth was living on its primary industries. The "West Australian" in a leading article said, "Primary production is the rock of our economic foundation and Australian prosperity has always been dependent on its primary producers." Those words are true.

Hon. W. T. Hasheem: We have been saying that for the past 25 years.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Awards have been given in some of the principal industries but not in all. On the Eastern Goldfields, where 70 per cent. of the gold is produced, we have reached the stage when the basic wage of £4 7s., declared by the court, cannot be sustained.

Hon. H. Stewart: Why?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Because the industry cannot afford to pay it. In a salubrious climate like that of Albany, where the hon. member comes from, the basic wage is £4 7s. a week, but on the goldfields it is £4 5s., even as far as Wiluna. It looks as if very soon there will be no one working in the industry, and then gold production will go out. An unparalleled situation has arisen regarding the basic wage. In pursuance of the Arbitration Act of 1925 the court is under an obligation to determine and declare on or before the 14th June the basic wage to be paid to adult male and female unskilled workers others than the aged and infirm. For the years 1926-27 to 1928-29 the basic wage was fixed for males at £4 5s., which is 14s. 2d. a day, and £2 5s. 11d. for females, to apply throughout the State. On the 5th June, 1929, the court declared the basic wage to be, for males £4 7s., equal to 14s. 6d. a day, and £2 7s. a week for females and a new departure was brought in by the proviso which reads—

Provided that in the following areas,—Yilgarn, Coolgardie, Broad Arrow, Dundas, East Coolgardie, North Coolgardie, North

East Coolgardie, Mt. Margaret, East Marchison goldfields and Northampton mining districts; Marchison, Yalgoo, Peak Hill, and Gascoyne goldfields, the basic wage to be paid to adult male and female workers shall be as follows:—Adult males, £4 5s.; adult females, £2 5s. 11d.

The Court indicated that an inquiry would be held as to what was considered a fair basic wage for the goldfields, as they are entitled to do, and they are still conducting their investigations on those lines. The Miners' Union on the goldfields cited the companies in an endeavour to secure increased wages in 1927 and the question whether the industry could afford to pay a higher rate was investigated. As a result, the prevailing rates at the time were continued and they obtain to-day. I propose to quote some remarks by Mr. Justice Dwyer on this point. After referring to the fact that the Court had to satisfy itself regarding the financial position of the industry, he said—

In pursuance of this, Inspector Jeffery of the Audit Department went to Kalgoorlie, and after investigating thoroughly the accounts of the mining companies, submitted to the court a very able report as to their financial condition. It is not the intention of the court to publish his report. It will be sufficient to say here that it satisfied the members of the court that no increase in the present wage could be granted, and no improvement in the present conditions involving increased expenditure by the mining companies could be made, without causing injury to the industry, which would be undoubtedly reflected in loss of employment to workers on the mines, and incidentally, loss of employment to workers in various other avocations in Kalgoorlie and Boulder. Therefore, in the interests of the industry and of the workers and of the people of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, and the community as a whole, the court decided to accept Mr. Hamilton's suggestion, and to embody in its award, with a few slight modifications, which will be referred to subsequently, the wages and conditions now obtaining.

That is what the President said when delivering the Miners' Award in 1927. Mr. Somerville, the workers' representative on the Arbitration Court bench, concurred in what the President said, and in the course of his remarks we find the following—

We have to decide what is best to do for the present and future. The union ask in their application that wages be increased by approximately 25 per cent., and the confidential report which the court has obtained from a competent and impartial public official, convinces me that to agree to the union's appli-

eration would immediately make something like 1,400 members of the Miners' Union unemployed Judging by our experience in the past as to the numbers of people whose sustenance depended upon each miner, I give it as a conservative estimate that to accede to the Union's request for an increase of pay would deprive 8,000 people of their means of living The rank and file of the men have heard these companies for so many years raising the cry of "wolf" when there was no wolf, that they may now believe the present threat of financial collapse is as empty as it was 20 years since; but I assure them it is not so, and that an unwise decision in this case would put 90 per cent. of them amongst the unemployed.

Subsequently he said—

So as the workers' representative, I find myself face to face with a grave problem which may be summarised as follows:—The confidential report from a competent and impartial Government official convinces me that the p'ien of inability to continue working the mines if costs are increased, is not the bluff the men believe it has been in the past, but is an imminent probability. The financial position is such that at any time all but a few of the men may find themselves unemployed.

The court unanimously turned down the proposal for increased wages. The basic wage has been increased by the court to £4 7s. for every other part of Western Australia except the goldfields and the north-eastern district of the Murchison, where the basic wage, for the time being at any rate, is £4 5s. That court practically told the Miners' Union that unless the financial position alters, it cannot grant any increased wages.

Hon. H. Seddon: Can you tell us why the court is holding the inquiry now?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: No. The Act says that the court shall make an inquiry once a year and declare the basic wage. The court held the inquiry, but did not include any basic wage. The question of wages is determined by the statistical figures that apply to the goldfields area. It is remarkable that the court should hold the investigation 11 months before their decision can come into operation. Either the court is 11 months too early or else it is one month too late in making the investigation. If such an inquiry were held in Perth in August to determine the wage to operate from July of the following year, I venture to assert that industrialists in the metropolitan area would have something drastic to say regarding the holding of an inquiry so far ahead of the time when the determination could

operate. Yet that is the position regarding the workers on the eastern goldfields! They made application to the court for a revision and the court found that the costs imposed upon the industry were such that they could not give the men the consideration they were entitled to. Of course such a decision affects not only those engaged in the mining industry but the whole of the workers employed on the goldfields. The court pointed out that fact. The basic wage decision for the time being has affected all the men working on the railways in that particular part of the State, and also men engaged by the Government and private people in various directions.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It must come back to that sooner or later. The endeavour has been to pay the men for what they eat and wear, not for what they earn.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: We are getting back to the consideration of what the industry can pay in this instance. Apparently we have reached the stage at which skilled and unskilled workers will leave the industry and seek positions in connection with secondary industries, where increased costs can be passed on. In the primary industries the amount paid to skilled men represents their margin above the basic wage.

Hon. W. T. Glasheen: Do you think the rate sought could be paid if piecework were universal?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I should say that 85 per cent. of the men employed in mining are on piecework. On the other hand there is a clause in the industrial agreement that provides that should any of the men engaged in the mining industry employ a man, that man shall be paid not less than the basic wage. It is a pity that skilled men will be forced to leave the industry because they cannot be paid an adequate wage. That is an unenviable position for such men to be in. If a man is a competent worker but the industry cannot pay him the wage he is entitled to and give him fair consideration, that worker will be compelled to seek employment in other industries. It is also interesting to note that from time to time the members of the Arbitration Court have expressed a desire for further information. They have complained of the paucity of industrial statistics that will enable them adequately to fix the basic wage. They are

now bound by the figures issued by the Commonwealth Statistician. That has been the method adopted ever since the appointment of Mr. Justice Dwyer as President of the Court. Here is an extract from the "Industrial Gazette" in which Mr. Somerville, dealing with this point, said—

This complaint, as to the paucity of industrial statistics, is now being voiced by all whose duty it is to investigate industrial questions. So soon as the mere fringe of the subject is penetrated one enters a region of mystery and obscurity.

After making further references to the subject, Mr. Somerville concluded—

I hope I have made my contention clear. The trade unionists will not, I hope, delude themselves with the belief that by sufficient search the information on these two subjects—productivity and at what age does a child cease to become a partial charge against the parent's earnings—could have been obtained. The information does not exist, or if it can be said to exist, it is not at present available. Before it can be available legislation is necessary as well as increased collections, tabulation and analysis. The interests of the trade unionists and the community require this to be entered upon without delay.

That was the statement made by Mr. Somerville in the course of the declaration by the court regarding the basic wage inquiry for 1928-29. The court made an appeal to the Government to provide some statistics whereby the court could more adequately fix the basic wage than was possible under conditions that obtained at that time. So far as I know the Government have done nothing to give effect to the desires of the court. The Government claim to represent the section of the community that is crying out for this reform. It is time the Government indicated why they have not acceded to the court's request. The costs imposed upon the mining industry have been such that it was impossible for the companies to pay the basic wage. The flotation process seems to be the only possible salvation of the industry, and I understand that the process is to be demonstrated in a practical way on a big scale at Wiluna when the plant is erected there, and also when alterations are made to the existing plant at the Lake View and Star Mine. Every assistance that can possibly be given to the industry should be extended. Under the heading of "Miners' Phthisis," there is a brief reference in the Governor's Speech to the amount of money spent in assisting

men suffering from that disease. Dealing with that subject last night Mr. Seddon commented on the unfortunate position of men who had worked in the industry for 20 years but had not worked for an employer. Those men are not entitled to compensation. I regard that as most unfortunate; those men should be entitled to receive some compensation. There is one point that I do not think Mr. Seddon made quite clear. I refer to the differentiation between the self-reliant worker, the man who will go into the bush and work on a mining area for himself and who does not rely upon wages but seeks to make a livelihood in that way, and the man who always relies on an employer for work. Should the former type of man reach a stage at which he cannot continue, he has no protection under the existing law. He cannot secure compensation, whereas the man who always leans upon an employer is in a much more fortunate position.

Hon. J. Cornell: And that man is not in a position to engage in prospecting.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: He is prevented from going on a mining lease at all. One pleasing feature of the departmental reports is indicated in the review of the statistics regarding men suffering from miners' phthisis. The figures indicate a smaller percentage of men affected during the last year or two than formerly. Perhaps that is an indication of the results following upon the removal from the mines of men suffering from the disease. Naturally we are delighted at that. Another subject under that heading refers to the prospecting of the Kimberley country. I have not much knowledge of what has happened beyond the few paragraphs published in the Press, which contained very limited information, but it seems that the Minister has agreed to parcel out the whole of the Kimberley district in huge areas by granting concessions to some person, company or syndicate for prospecting purposes. The terms under which the concessions were granted and whether the public had an opportunity to know they were being thrown open for the purpose, I know not. In 1923, when Mr. Scaddan was Minister for Mines and he only suggested taking the auriferous area of the State, cutting it into sections like a draughtboard and giving a person the right to prospect anywhere

in the area for a limited period, there was a storm of disapproval. Members who comprise the present Government expressed themselves as being strongly opposed to what they termed a monopoly. It would be interesting to know the exact terms under which these concessions—if they are concessions—have been granted in the Kimberley district. I hope the Minister will give us some information. It is stated in the annual report that Dr. Stillwell, a highly skilled Federal officer who was loaned to this State, has completed a geological survey and submitted a valuable report on the Golden Mile. In the ordinary course of events his report would be embodied in the annual report of the department and would not be published for another 12 months. If it is available, I ask the Chief Secretary to have it laid on the Table of the House in order that members interested in the mining industry might have an opportunity to peruse it now, and not have to wait for another year until it is included in the department's annual report. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.33 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 15th August, 1929.

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

QUESTION—WYNDHAM MEAT WORKS.

Live-stock manager.

Mr. COVERLEY asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary: 1, Do the Government intend to call applications for the position of live-stock manager at the Wyndham Meat Works? 2, If so, how will the vacancy be advertised, and what qualifications are needed by prospective candidates?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, It has not been considered necessary. 2, The General Manager has already made a recommendation and among the qualifications considered necessary are knowledge of stock and of the business side of pastoral pursuits.

BILL—MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: There is no need for me to say a great deal in justification of the Bill. It comprises two clauses and the principles dealt with are vital. The first amendment seeks to include in the Mines Regulation Act provision for what has been the practice of the mining industry for many years. I refer to the 44-hour week for work underground. The Mines Regulation Act contains a section which prescribes that the working week shall be one of 48 hours. I have been in Western Australia for 32½ years and during the whole of that time the 48-hour week has not been worked in our mines. For practically the whole of the time I worked in the mines 47 hours were recognised as a week's work. We had five shifts of eight hours and on Saturday one shift of seven hours. On the 1st March, 1918, the Arbitration Court issued an award covering the whole mining industry and it included a provision for a 44-hour week.

Hon. G. Taylor: Did that apply to surface hands.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. I admit that at the time it was stated the altered period to constitute a week's work would cause great inconvenience in the mining industry. It is possible that at the