

court as an offender. It is obvious that in cases of that sort some other procedure is needed.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: What sort of a man brought that child before the court?

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: An inspector. In New South Wales—and the idea comes from America—when children are guilty of very minor offences a letter is written to the parents acquainting them of the fact that this young ruffian of theirs has been guilty of an offence against some petty municipal by-law. He is not served with a summons. A notice is sent, and he is bound by that notice to attend at the Children's Court. At present it is impossible for our Children's Court to do anything but record a conviction if it is shown that the child is guilty. It is not right. In many cases it is not the child, but the parents who require punishment—and in these minor offences it is indeed the parents who are punished, because very often the parents have to pay the cost of the summons and, not only that, but have to lose the time and, I suppose, the money necessary for them to attend the court. Your committee is anxious that the cost of the summons should be saved to those parents, and they recommend the adoption of the system which has been imported into New South Wales from America, namely, the sending of a notice. If that is not sufficient to bring the child to court, then of course a summons must be issued and he must take his chance before the court. The second proposed new clause, Clause 7, provides that—

The court in committing any child to an institution shall have regard to the future welfare of such child and may direct such child to be detained in one of the institutions scheduled in the State Children Act, 1907, or in some other institution as the Governor may approve of, at which such special training and supervision can be provided as may best meet the needs of any special case.

That widens the field of commitment which the court possesses and which the court itself wishes to have widened. Clause 8, again, is giving more discretion to the Children's Court. It provides—

Notwithstanding the provisions of any Act, by-law, rule, or regulation, the court in awarding punishment or penalty upon any child may have regard to the antecedents, character, age, health, or mental condition of the child convicted, and may take into account the nature of the offence or any special circumstances of the case, and such court may, notwithstanding the nature of the evidence adduced, refrain from recording such conviction or from imposing any punishment, penalty, or fine.

That is very necessary. It takes away the system of the court recording a conviction against a child for an offence which may be trivial in the extreme. It enables the court to carry out functions alluded to in the report, functions which should be reformatory instead of punitive, and it is a clause which I think is very badly needed indeed. The other new clause only deals with the amendment I have already alluded to, providing that accounts of wages kept for children by institu-

tions shall be subject to a Government audit at prescribed periods. That is all the remarks I have to make on the Bill. The committee, I think I am justified in saying, took a very great amount of trouble with the Bill and examined a large number of witnesses. They can highly commend certain parts of the Bill, particularly that in regard to the restriction of the ages of various classes of child labour. They think the Bill, more especially if amended in the directions they indicate, will be a distinct advance on existing legislation. As I have said, it was not without a great deal of discussion that the conclusions which the committee are unanimous upon were arrived at, and while the discussions in that connection were very protracted, the discussions on the questions which they did not agree upon were even more protracted. I should like to place on record my appreciation of the work done by the "Hansard" staff in connection with this select committee. It happened on two or three occasions that, after a morning's work, when we had been examining witnesses for two and a half hours, the whole of the evidence was in our hands within half an hour after the conclusion of the taking of that evidence. That is a matter which any "Hansard" staff, more especially one such as ours, which is worked to absolutely the last ounce with Royal Commissions, select committees, and long sittings of Parliament, may well be congratulated upon. This is the second occasion upon which I have had to congratulate "Hansard" on its work, and I have great pleasure in doing so. I beg to move—

That the report of the select committee be taken into consideration when the Bill is in Committee.

On motion by Hon. J. Duffell, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.23 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 26th November, 1918.

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

SITTING DAY, ADDITIONAL.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [4.37]: I move—

That for the remainder of the session the House shall meet for the despatch of business on Fridays at 4.30 p.m., in addition to the days already provided, and shall sit until 6.15 p.m., if necessary; and if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

I think the House will agree with the Government in their desire that the session should be brought to a close before Christmas, and the adding of another sitting day per week will tend towards the attainment of that object. In those circumstances we shall have four full weeks to sit, representing 16 days, during which period the House will be able to get through a considerable amount of business. I may mention that some of the Bills appearing on the Notice Paper, which are likely to cause long discussion, will not be gone on with during this session. At a later stage I shall ask the House to agree to discharge certain Bills from the Notice Paper. I feel sure that hon. members generally, and particularly the leader of the Opposition, are most desirous that the work of the session should be brought to a close as soon as possible, with all due regard to full discussion of the measures which are to be considered; and accordingly I submit the motion with confidence.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.41]: I regret very much that in moving this motion the Premier has not taken the House more fully into his confidence, and has not informed members of the attitude the Government propose to adopt towards the business of the session and towards the long list of Bills appearing on the Notice Paper. After all, it is of no use whatever to increase the number of weekly sitting days unless we achieve the object in view, which is to close the session before Christmas. Even with one extra sitting day per week, I am quite confident the Government will not succeed in rising before Christmas if they purpose going on with the programme now before us. As a matter of fact, there is on the Notice Paper business which would occupy the House for very nearly three months. I was under the impression that the Government, before submitting this motion, would have decided what Bills it was proposed to go on with and what Bills it was proposed to lay aside. But on that point the Premier has not given us any information whatever beyond the mere general statement that later some Bills may be dropped. The House is entitled to more information than that, and particularly is the House entitled to know whether the Government intend to introduce any further Bills.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There are some measures to come from another place.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; two or three. Apart from those, however, we have not any guarantee that right up to the last moment new Bills may not be brought down.

Mr. Troy: There is the wheat marketing measure.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Are we definitely told that no further legislation will be introduced? Otherwise, though I am quite agreeable to assist the Government in an endeavour to get through the business within a reasonable time, I am not content to support this motion unless I have a definite assurance that there is a prospect of our at-

taining the end in view. We do not wish to have Bills forced upon us during weeks of four sitting days, possibly during all night sittings; we do not wish to have new Bills introduced at the very last moment. Whilst I offer no protest at this juncture, I think I am entitled to comment upon, to say the least, the dilatory manner in which the business of the House has at times been conducted this session. For the past three months the House has been engaged practically entirely upon business submitted by the Attorney General and Minister for Industries. I think he is the only Minister who has had a Bill before the House, or has succeeded in getting one through. It is extraordinary that practically the whole of the business falls into the hands of that one Minister. I do not object, of course, but I know he is the most prolix member of the House, and that he succeeds in delaying or postponing the passage of his own Bills. If the Government desire to get through before Christmas, I suggest that at least one or two Bills be taken charge of by other Ministers. That may help us to get the business through before Christmas. If all measures are to be entrusted to the Attorney General, with his long speeches upon every occasion, we shall not succeed in rising before Christmas.

The Premier: There are several Bills of mine on the Notice Paper.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I observe that the Attorney General is in charge of the Wheat Marketing Bill, which I did not expect to find in his hands. However, the arrangement is one entirely for the Government themselves. I merely make the observation because I believe that the Attorney General, as Minister for Industries, will succeed in keeping that Bill before the Chamber longer than probably any other Minister would. Knowing the manner in which our friends on the cross benches are sitting back waiting for that Bill, and knowing the desire of the Minister for Industries to give every possible information, I look forward to many long nights occupied in demands for explanations, and in explanations given by that Minister. I hope that before the motion passes the Premier or some other Minister will give the House some idea of what Bills are to be dropped. The House is entitled to know that when it is asked to sit another day per week. We should also have an assurance as to what other Bills, if any others, are to be introduced before this session closes.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [4.45]: I am desirous that the session should close before Christmas if it is at all possible; but if the list of Bills before us to be gone on with, or even half the number, we certainly shall not close before Christmas. I do not think the holding of summer sessions is wise, but I do not wish to sit four days per week for the next four weeks unless I am perfectly certain that the session will close before Christmas. We have here Bills that ought to be discussed at considerable length, as, for

instance, the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Bill, the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill, the Government Railways Act Amendment Bill, and the Midland Railway Lands Bill. The Roads Districts Bill in itself will probably occupy the whole of the four weeks. Then there is the Traffic Bill, the Coal Mines Regulation Act Amendment Bill, and the Wheat Marketing Bill, while we have the Vermin Bill and other Bills to come from another place. I agree that the Premier should tell us which of these Bills are to be dropped. We got a late start this session, and it has landed us in trouble. We have not done much, and we have still a great deal to do. Hon. members should be told the Government's intention in regard to the settlement of soldiers on the land. The mere passing of the Bill does not in itself mean much. We require to know what the policy of the Government may be. This Bill alone should take a full week, notwithstanding that we have passed the second reading and reached Clause 7 in the Committee stage. I hope the House will not agree to sit on the fourth day until we know what the intentions of the Government are.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [4.47]: I decidedly object to this extra pressure unless I know definitely what we are expected to do between now and the close of the session. Several of these measures seem to me by their titles to be of very great importance, and we cannot possibly deal with them in the time between now and the Christmas holidays. Sixteen days will not clear off the business sheet. The measures are such as might well engage the attention of Parliament if we were commencing a new session and had months ahead of us.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There are several Bills in another place to come here.

Hon. T. WALKER: Quite true. There are there several Bills that have not reached us. When the House was called together, if I am not greatly mistaken, we were promised in the Governor's Speech that this would be a short session, dealing principally with the finances, with the Estimates, and with matters of immediate practical concern.

Mr. Brown: The Estimates are not through yet.

Hon. T. WALKER: Quite so. Whose fault is it that the Estimates are not through? It is not because there has been any factions stone-walling or opposition. The Estimates this session were introduced perhaps later than in any previous session. We are discussing them close upon Christmas. Half the year has passed; and this from a Government that were specially called into being to set straight the finances, to give us a practical illustration of what men of business acumen can do! They have given us a worse example of inefficiency than has ever been served up by any previous Government. For that delay none but the Government are responsible. We have had nothing to go on with. At the beginning of the session we had adjournment after adjournment to enable a Minister to get back from a trip to the East. We were kept here waiting for work to do until the Minister returned.

The Premier: The House was sitting all the time.

Hon. T. WALKER: Not always. The hon. member has a short memory. If he looks back he will find there were adjournments when we could have been working. We had no business whatever provided when the House was called together. Then we had introduced Bills of an academic character that can have no practical result for years to come, or ever, because no money is available and no provision has been made to put them into operation. The House was kept for weeks discussing those measures without any factious opposition and now, practically at the commencement of December, we are asked to put our shoulders to the wheel and work for four nights a week with a programme ahead of us which has six months' solid work in it. There is the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Bill, referred to by the member for Northam. There is the Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill; that is nearly through. But there is another important measure that cannot be slurred, namely, the Government Railways Act Amendment Bill, involving new principles, a matter of extreme concern, not only to every employee in the Railway Department but to everyone using the railways, and indeed to every taxpayer of the State. Are we going to slum that, to just pass it, without due consideration? In other words, are we becoming a non-deliberative Assembly, a mere machine, or are we going to give these measures that deliberation which the electors expect of us? There is the Midland Railway Lands Bill. I do not know the character of that, because we have not yet had the second reading. But we have in the Road Districts Bill a most important measure upon which every local authority in the State has its eyes, a measure that must, of necessity, involve elaborate discussion; and justly so, because on the success or failure of a measure of that kind the country depends. The Traffic Bill we know something of, for we have had a measure of that character before the House previously. Local governing authorities are intensely interested in that Bill, and we may expect lengthy criticism of the measure. Then there is the Land Drainage Bill, and the Dog Act Amendment Bill, which perhaps are not of great importance; but we have the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Bill, which, I suppose, is important. Then there is one affecting a great industry in the State, namely the Coal Mines Regulation Act Amendment Bill. That is of importance to every miner and every consumer of coal, and to the future industries of Western Australia. Then we have the Church of England Diocesan Trustees' Land Bill, the Dentists' Bill, the Navigation Act Amendment Bill, and the Constitution Act Amendment Bill. I am sure we shall never reach those. But imagine asking us, without telling us which of those measures are to be sacrificed, to go to a vote on the motion by the Premier! To come to us from the Council there is the Vermin Bill, the Fruit Cases Bill, and one of extreme importance, which is as debatable as almost any other subject we have had submitted to us, namely, the State Children

Act Amendment Bill. So, in 16 days, we are to get through more than 16 Bills, all of them requiring weeks of discussion, if they are to be treated adequately. The Premier tells us that by-and-by he will inform the House which measures he intends to drop. Now is the time to do it. We should know now what we are expected to do in the four weeks. I am only one member, and can only take my individual part, but I object most decisively to the work of the country being rushed through pell-mell at this season of the year. If there is a time when we should not press additional labours on the House it is in these hot months. In this hot weather which is right upon us we cannot give the mental consideration to important measures which we can in milder seasons of the year. It must lead to disorder, to lack of consideration, to flippancy, and to lack of attention. It is by this method of dealing with legislation that we get on our statute-book imperfect, unworkable measures, which have to be repealed and which create vast mischief to the people at large. When the present Government were appointed, I thought we were going to have an illustration of wise legislative practices, that they were a Government that would show by their business methods how clearly, how quickly, and how accurately they could get through their work. Here is the fag-end of the session and we have done nothing. The session up to date might well be described as barren. No Bill has been put on the statute-book about which any member could boast with pride. We have left it to the fag-end of the session, and in 16 days we are expected to do all the business on the Notice Paper. All the work of the session is left to the last 16 days. On the 26th November we have still the Estimates before us and the whole of the business for which Parliament was called together. The repatriation of our soldiers, the Traffic Bill, the Roads Bill, measures which the country has been asking for for years, are all piled up for the last few days. Then the Government expect to get through by forcing inordinate work upon hon. members. There are times when individual members may justly be called upon to make sacrifices, and when they may, in turn, call upon their reserve energies to the utmost; but this should not be because of lack of diligence, lack of business energy, lack of clear and definite purpose on the part of the Government. It is unfair to ask members to assist the Government through when it is practically their own fault. To sit 16 nights in this hot weather, and possibly all night on many of those occasions, is not conducive to our health or the interests of the country, for we cannot do that and do justice to the measures submitted to us. The measures submitted to us mean the welfare of the people one way or the other. We are betraying the people when we fail to deal with the measures submitted to us in a deliberative manner. No legislator can do his work properly at midnight and after in the hot summer months. It is impossible to bring the brain to bear upon the subjects submitted to us, and give that analysis and criticism which the citizens outside have a right to expect from us. If Parliament is a mere ma-

chine it is of no value; it is simply an incubus upon the taxpayer, and of no service whatsoever to him. Until I know exactly the amount of work we have yet to do, I cannot vote for the motion submitted by the Premier. There may be one or two Bills that we must put through, but it strikes me that if we discuss them as they should be discussed, we are bound to come back after Christmas. If we are bound to come back after Christmas, then by no means force upon this Assembly that physical endurance which is asked by this motion. Let us wait until February, or until such time as the House may come back to its labours after the Christmas holidays, and go deliberately to work, and we shall then effect more good and accomplish more. I would sooner have my endurance tested in that way than by long sittings night after night, when I cannot do justice to myself, the House, or the country. What I have said applies to every individual member here, even to every member of the Government. I would not complain if it had been the fault of any section of the House as a section, or had the Country party blocked the business or the Opposition had done so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Country party have done a little of it.

Hon. T. WALKER: They have had important matters to discuss, and they have discussed them.

Mr. Brown: There has been no stonewalling.

Hon. T. WALKER: There has not been any here.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Oh yes, there has.

Hon. T. WALKER: The delay has come from the Treasury benches. If the time of the House has been wasted at all, it has been wasted by members of the Government. We have had Ministers repeatedly making second reading speeches on every little suggestion which has been made by any member from any side of the House. We have had the spectacle of one Minister getting up and arguing against his colleagues. We have had Ministers answering the arguments of Ministers, and debating amongst themselves on that side of the House, and taking up the time of the House by taking two sides on the Treasury bench themselves.

The Premier: Oh, no!

Hon. T. WALKER: Oh, yes, we have had that spectacle. Only the other night the Premier said he had received no suggestion whatever over the discussion on the motion for the return of the German colonies.

The Premier: Quite correct.

Hon. T. WALKER. He said he had no suggestion from anyone, and we had the Treasurer immediately after, not having heard the speech of the Premier, coming in and saying that the motion was put forward at the request of the Prime Minister.

The Colonial Treasurer: I said I saw that in the Press.

Hon. P. Collier: Oh, no!

Hon. T. WALKER: He did not say that.

The Colonial Treasurer: I meant to say that.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is only one instance of the kind.

The Premier: That motion did not take very long.

Hon. T. WALKER: No, but we have had the Attorney General and the Minister for Works arguing night after night against each other, not once, but repeatedly.

The Premier: No, not very often.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Minister for Works and other Ministers have attacked each other, and have taken different stand-points upon a measure submitted by the Government. Whilst that goes on the House cannot be expected to fall in now with this sudden return to virtue, this rushing on after all this dissipation, and this coming back now to rectitude. We cannot permit that. The House has got into the habit of quietly allowing things to drift. We have been drifting, and playing with work to a large extent. No part of the House is responsible for this except the Government. Therefore, it is that I expect, before a vote is taken, and before we are asked to vote, that we should be placed in full possession of the facts as to what the Government intend to do in the 16 nights available before the holidays. If they intend to accomplish too much, I shall protest, because the measures are of too great importance to be slipped over and machine-manufactured. They require brains for their treatment, and the brains of members must not be heated with the fever heat of mid-summer, and the electrical excitement which comes from long sittings. By over calling upon the powers of nature, the brain becomes feverish, and the nerves excited. I shall myself object to that course being taken.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore—in reply) [5.7]: It seems to me that this session has differed very little from other sessions, and I think the work of the House has proceeded more rapidly this session than in many other sessions that I have had to do with.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The results are not there.

Hon. P. Collier: The session has been amicable, but the work has not gone through rapidly.

The PREMIER: It is satisfactory to know that the work has been carried out amicably, and I think it has been carried out fairly rapidly too. I agree with the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) that it is very unwise to endeavour to carry on Parliament into the summer months. Parliament should endeavour to prevent that. Members cannot do their work in the heat of summer, more particularly when they have other duties to attend to, to the same extent as they can in the cooler weather. There is no desire on the part of the Government to rush these Bills pell-mell through the House. I intended to take the House into my confidence during the week in regard to the measures which the Government thought desirable to proceed with, but in order to relieve the minds of hon. members opposite I am now prepared to take them so far into my confidence as to enlighten them on the

subject of what Bills the Government intend to proceed with. When I say that I am not telling the House anything unusual. I have never known of a session yet when there has not been, in Parliamentary phraseology, a slaughtering of the innocents. There are always many Bills on the Notice Paper which have to be dropped and proceeded with in the following session. It is the intention of the Government not to proceed with the Road Districts Bill, which will take months to consider.

Mr. Broun: People have been waiting 15 years for that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They had one in 1912.

The PREMIER: Neither is it our intention to proceed with the Traffic Bill.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is a matter of urgency.

The PREMIER: Nor the Land Drainage Bill, nor the Dog Act Amendment Bill, nor the Fertilisers and Foodstuffs Bill, nor the Coal Mines Regulation Act Amendment Bill, nor the Dentists Bill. Although these Bills are of importance, they are Bills which will take so much discussion that it will be impossible to deal with them in the time at our disposal. With these Bills off the Notice Paper I think we should be in a position to close very shortly. There will, however, be a Wheat Marketing Bill, and one or two re-enacting measures of a formal character. The Roads Act is to be re-enacted, and there will be a Licensing Act and the re-enactment of the Postponement of Debts Act.

The Minister for Mines: There may be a short Tramways Bill.

Hon. P. Collier: Will there be anything new of a contentious character?

The PREMIER: I trust that the Bills which the Government propose to bring forward will not be of a contentious character.

Mr. Broun: I would like to move an amendment.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Premier has replied, and the hon. member is too late.

Question put and passed.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Premier (for the Minister for Industries) and read a first time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1918-19.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 22nd November; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Mines Department, Hon. C. A. Hudson, Minister.

Vote—Mines, £60,642:

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND RAILWAYS (Hon. C. A. Hudson—Yilgarn) [5.15]: In introducing the Estimates of the Mines Department I do not intend to commit the offence of delaying the proceedings of this Chamber. The admonitions which have been administered during the last few minutes have fallen so heavily upon members of the Ministry that I hope I shall escape.

Hon. P. Collier: You are not an offender.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The position of the mining industry is one which requires careful consideration at the present juncture, especially as we find that our gold output is gradually decreasing to such an extent as to become alarming. The gold output up to the end of October last amounted to £137,032,933. During the year 1918 the production was valued at £3,144,602 and compared with the corresponding period of the previous year, there was a decrease of £290,753. The position of the mining industry has been explained from time to time in this Chamber and through the Press, and the reasons given for the decreasing output are that the commodity is a diminishing one and we have not now the number of men employed that were employed during the previous years. During the year 1914 there were approximately 12,000 men employed in the gold mining industry. In 1916 there were about 8,000, and in 1917 the number was further reduced by another 1,000. So that there has been a great falling off in the number of men engaged in the industry. That is one of the reasons for the decrease in the output. The other one, which has had the effect of stopping speculation in mining and has detracted from the interest that is usually shown in the industry, has been the fact that the cost of the commodities and the accessories necessary for the extraction of gold and the working of the mines has greatly increased during the period of the war, and in some cases has become almost prohibitive. That aspect of the matter was referred to during the debate on the Address-in-Reply and complaints were made that the Government had not done enough in the direction of endeavouring to secure a reduction in the prices. I can give the Committee an assurance that the Government have made efforts in that direction. Their principal efforts were directed to endeavouring to secure supplies of the articles themselves. We have had a difficulty in securing explosives, not so much because of the high price, but in the direction of getting regular shipments, and I regret to say that the latest information is to the effect that the price of explosives is not likely to be decreased to any material extent within the immediate future. The ingredients used in their manufacture have been almost exhausted and particularly the commodity, glycerine. Efforts are being made to economise and we are hoping, now that the war is over, that there will be a general decrease in the price charged and that it will be possible to come to the assistance of the industry. I have referred to explosives particularly, because I wanted the Committee to be thoroughly acquainted with the facts and the difficulties which have prevented us from securing supplies, and so that hon. members might not be so critical of the Government as they would otherwise be. Another matter which is frequently discussed with regard to the mining industry, is the fact that whilst the cost of production has been increased, the price received for the commodity has remained the same. There has been a good deal of speculation rife as to

whether or not an effort should be made to bring about an increase in the price paid for gold, and applications have been made to the various Governments to induce them to assist in bringing that about. It is a very complex and intricate subject, and I found on inquiry that it was not possible under war conditions at any rate, to secure an increase in the price of gold. Indeed it was argued that gold might not possibly be required after the war to the same extent as it was required before.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We will have more paper.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That idea has been argued in various magazines and by various authors. I read only yesterday an article by Mr. Knibbs on "Reconstructive effort after the war." Mr. Knibbs dealt with the subject in such a way that I may be permitted to read an extract from his article. He writes—

All debts between nations or peoples, whether war indemnities or interest upon loan, are in the main paid in goods, in fact, the total transfer of metallic currency is relatively almost a negligible quantity. The method of modern civilisation is really a method of equating goods against goods, and the accountancy in connection therewith is a cancelling of counter-credits, as is obvious to anyone who has had anything to do with bills of exchange. All disturbances which have been produced by the concentration of gold holding in certain countries will, no doubt, soon pass away, for probably there is in the world, at the present time, more than sufficient gold for the balancing of exchange. In general, the production of gold beyond currency needs, and for the purposes of the arts, would have the effect only of depreciating gold in relation to other commodities—that is, of raising prices. As soon as currency needs and the general requirements of the arts are satisfied, therefore, a relatively limited production is all that is necessary. Nevertheless, local circumstances may modify this and require local production to meet special circumstances as regards exchange. Moreover, so long as our financial machinery is operated as at present, the increasing populations will require an increasing total of available gold.

That indicates one side of the picture, but the other is depicted in articles in other journals. Those articles of course may not have the same bearing on the question now that the war is over, as when they were written, but the mean may be taken and it may be said that in Western Australia we will be safe in producing as much gold as we can and that the price we will get for it will be the nominal price which we obtained before the war. With regard to the encouragement of mining and the value of the gold won, we have to take into consideration the cost of getting it, and that has a distinct bearing on the development of our low-grade propositions. I daresay hon. members have noticed that in England a committee has been appointed to deal with the subject of encouraging gold mining throughout the world, and that that committee appointed a special committee to deal with the subject of the encouragement of low-grade

propositions. The Government are in close touch through the Agent General with that committee.

Hon. P. Collier: Who are they?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot tell the hon. member the names just now, but Sir Newton Moore is one of them.

Hon. P. Collier: I thought so.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Mr. Robinson is another.

Hon. P. Collier: And Doolette.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Mr. Doolette is on the other committee.

Mr. Troy: Mr. Doolette made the statement a little while back that mining was handicapped by increased wages, whereas, as a matter of fact, there have not been any increases. Statements like that are calculated to mislead the British investor.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I did not see that statement; but I did see a statement that the price of gold should be increased. I did not read the report of the proceedings at the meeting of the Bullfinch Mining Company, and was not aware that Mr. Doolette had made such a statement. However, we are keeping in touch with the committee.

Hon. P. Collier: Do not waste your money on cables.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In the meantime we are dealing with the subject ourselves. There is great concern as to the price likely to be obtained, not for gold, but for base metals. That matter is largely in the hands of the Federal Government. As is known the Federal Government have prohibited the exportation of base metals from Australia and they have insisted on the sale of them to the British Munitions Department at a fixed price.

Hon. W. C. Augwin: Are you going to protest against an extension of that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: At the present time the Federal Government have offered to take copper for three months after the end of the present year.

Mr. Lambert: It is a question as to whether they have the right or authority to interfere with our rights under peace conditions.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Unfortunately we are not yet under peace conditions, but we hope to be so shortly. The Federal Government have now the power of fixing the price and the power also to prevent the exportation of the mineral or the ore.

Hon. P. Collier: What did you say they were guaranteeing?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They are guaranteeing the producer a price for copper equal to the price now being paid, until three months after the expiration of the present contract. That contract expires at the end of the current year. The same difficulty applies to lead. Tin is likely to maintain its price and so are other base metals such as tungsten and wolfram. We are more keenly concerned, however, with regard to copper and lead and the price fixed for their sale. It is encouraging to know that the output of these base metals has increased during the past year.

Hon. P. Collier: The value has.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There has been an increase in the value of lead, copper, tin and coal. With regard to scheelite, we are endeavouring to encourage its production by establishing, as I promised last year, a plant at Coolgardie. This plant will be able to treat that mineral. Hon. members no doubt will remind me of a promise I made to establish a plant for the treatment of molybdenite at Wharriedar.

Mr. Troy: When?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: When there is sufficient ore produced to warrant the construction of the plant.

Mr. Lambert: Does that also apply to Coolgardie?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We are also pleased to be able to refer to the discovery in the Kanowna district of the mineral known as alunite, which contains a large percentage of potash and alumina. The potash is a commodity we are desirous of obtaining in Australia for the farmers and for its alkalis generally. Alumina is readily saleable and in order to ascertain how far the deposit extends, we are making advances against the product and storing it so as to encourage prospectors and eventually discover what quantities are there, so that we may be able to say what market can be obtained and whether it can be produced profitably. The department has also assisted returned soldiers by providing out-fits and, through the Repatriation Board, with sustenance and, in some instances, itself providing such facilities. About 70 prospectors have been sent out during the last few months, and I am pleased to say that a number of them have shown good results. They have been out for some months now and we are expecting reports from them towards the end of the year. Those reports which have been received to date have been most encouraging. The committee which has been appointed to instruct prospectors in regard to their going out deserve some meed of commendation. Mr. Higgins, Mr. Simpson, and the other gentlemen employed on that work have given a good deal of their own time to it, and as a result of their efforts the prospectors have received a store of useful knowledge. With regard to the Estimates themselves, whilst they show a total increase in expenditure of £612, an examination of the items will disclose that there is a considerable decrease in actual expenditure. The heavy item which accounts for the increase in the total expenditure is the one for the Government contribution towards the Mineworkers' Relief Fund. A promise was made some years ago that assistance would be given to this fund but for various reasons—the cash balance was somewhat depleted—it was decided not to make the money available. This has now been made available and it is intended to be used for the relief of widows and orphans. The Chamber of Mines has increased its subscription, the workers also have increased theirs and the Government have increased theirs by nearly £2,500. Contributions to this fund is possibly an item which should not properly have found its place on the Estimates of the Mines Department.

Nevertheless, I think the institution is well managed and is deserving of every encouragement. The men are helping themselves, the employers are helping and the Government are also assisting. The actual revenue received through the Mines Department shows an increase of about £3,000.

Mr. DUFF (Claremont) [5.39]: I desire to preface my remarks on the mining industry with a statement, and I trust that my observations will be regarded in the interests of mining and not be treated by members as personal criticism of past and present members of this House who have discharged the onerous functions which are attached to the office of Minister for Mines. I claim to have an intimate knowledge of the industry, having been closely associated with it in its varying forms for over 25 years. I found the industry a hard taskmaster holding, as it were, fortune or failure in either hand behind its back. Therefore, I trust that my old and esteemed friend, the Minister for Mines, will view my comments as impersonal. My motives aim at the advancement of the industry and the good of the State. I believe the Minister for Mines to be actuated by worthy motives. The outstanding and prime necessity to maintain and develop the mining industry is the appointment of a Commissioner for Mines, some permanent authority directing and continuing a policy of developing and sustaining mining in every branch, a competent and responsible administrator whose sole duty would be to keep a close touch with our most important industry. Some hon. members may consider that the existing service of the Mines Department provides this need. May I here state that I have a good word to say for the Mines Department. I respect its officers and appreciate their public spirit and application to duty. But no matter how efficient and capable a department may be, there is, in the present form of constitutional government, a system that must dislocate and disrupt sound administration. I refer of course to those frequent and unavoidable changes in Ministries. During the past two and a half years no fewer than four gentlemen have held the position of Minister for Mines. After Mr. Robinson took over from Mr. Collier, he took steps to inaugurate a conference of mining men, and I do not suppose there was ever a more representative gathering of mining men got together than attended that conference in Kalgoorlie. I was there representing Westonia, and I think there were some 80 other delegates prepared to give all the information gleaned and gathered during a long mining experience. Everyone worked hard, and the conference sat for five days, and at the end of the conference the Minister, who appeared to be very enthusiastic, when thanking us, told us that we had prepared a brief for him, that he intended returning to Perth and bringing about a new era in the mining industry.

Hon. P. Collier: Which Minister was that?

Mr. DUFF: Mr. Robinson. What happened? Mr. Robinson returned to Perth and a few weeks later he went out and Mr. Scaddan came in. We had Mr. Scaddan as Minister for Mines for about

five weeks, and he then had to go before his electors on accepting a portfolio. He was defeated, and out went Mr. Scaddan and in came Mr. Hudson. I do not propose commenting on Mr. Hudson, or to suggest that he is not putting enthusiasm into his work, but I do say that we should have a mining man in charge, so that the State should not lose the advantages which it should reap from that conference. Many of the suggestions made at the conference would have made a difference in the mining industry, and had they been adopted the industry would not be in the position we find it in to-day. Do not such changes stand in the way of the initiation and the continuance of an efficient, scientific, practical, administrative policy regarding mining? Such a policy would require abilities of the highest order. I am and will continue to be an unwavering advocate of the appointment of a Commissioner for Mines, an officer responsible, if need be, only to Cabinet, an officer placed beyond the reach of any politician, who may be even jealous of his ability, one entirely removed from political influence. He should be paid a salary which would make him independent and ensure the office from jeopardy for a reasonable term. We have a Commissioner for Railways, a Public Service Commissioner, a Price Fixing Commissioner, a Conservator of Forests. Why not a Commissioner for Mines?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How about Commissioners for everything and doing away with Parliament? Your proposition takes away the rights of the people.

Mr. DUFF: If the hon. member who interjected had a little more interest in mining he would not say that. He may have some interest in Parliamentarians, but he has none in mining.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have a State Mining Engineer, what more do you want? Why not hand over the whole thing to the Chamber of Mines; that would satisfy you.

Mr. DUFF: Against my proposition it will probably be urged that funds are not available. I venture to say that the appointment of a Commissioner would amply pay for itself, if only by eliminating the loss caused by the continuous changes in Ministerial control. Would any member, if in control of a large organisation, stand for one moment repeated changes in its management? Mining has done everything for this State, and I am sure the mining industry will again come to our rescue if we only go the right way about it. I have a record here of 11 mines producing 67 million ounces out of a total of 137 millions won; and what I would like to know is what the Government are going to do to replace these mines. Some of them are already dead, two or three are dying, and the others I am afraid will not last very long. I think no one in this Chamber would say that the expenditure of £50,000 in systematic prospecting would not be justified if it resulted in the discovery of one new goldfield. Rigid economy is certainly essential, but it is not essential to starve, dislocate, and discourage our mining industry.

which is languishing to-day mainly owing to the increased cost of labour and everything else connected with mining, due more particularly to war conditions. The mining companies to-day are not spending dividend money. Take the Westonia field, where I have been managing two of the mines. We cannot get dividends—why? The present purchasing value of the sovereign to the mine owner is only from one-half to three-quarters what it previously was. In a cable two or three weeks ago we were told that the British Government had sold to the gold manufacturers a quantity of gold at £5 17s. 6d. per ounce. We do not get the benefit of that. They will not come to our rescue and pay us an extra pound or two on gold won.

Member: Who will not?

Mr. DUFF: The British Government. But they have sold to the gold manufacturers at £5 17s. 6d. This shows how badly we are placed as far as our gold production is concerned. As the Minister has already told us, there is even now sitting in London a conference whose business it is to determine upon methods to stimulate the gold-mining industry again. So far as Yilgarn is concerned, which covers an area of 50 by 160 square miles, there is only one mine in that district to-day which is sinking, that is the Deep Levels mine. I suppose that is due to the absence of prospectors and the heavy mining costs. I ask the Government to provide for the prospector and the mine owner of the Westonia district a boring plant. That would help to get over the difficulties which have to be contended with in that area. The area is covered by a deep alluvial deposit. On the surface there is a heavy overburden, which has to be got through; and then one has to get through the kaolin in order to reach the gneissic rock. Many of our prospectors have spent their time and their money in sinking, and then have been compelled to discontinue owing to the natural difficulties of the ground. If the Government would provide a boring plant and delineate the gneissic rock area, much capital would be brought into the district, and the prospector himself would be benefited. Such action would tend also to help dispel the feeling which exists throughout the State that the Mines Department exists principally for the purpose of collecting fees and imposing onerous conditions on the prospector and the leaseholder. I do not say I share that view to the full, but we do want the department to show some interest in the industry, and this is a suggestion which comes forward not only from myself but from the famous little district of Westonia. I believe the geological branch could be brought more closely into touch with the prospector and the mine owner. We know that large sums of money are annually spent on this branch, and it is considered that the mining industry should benefit more directly from the operations of the branch than it is doing at present. A little reorganisation and overhaul of methods would, I am sure, do much good. True, every facility is given to the prospector and others to send forward samples of ore for testing purposes.

That work is, in fact, done with expedition; I do not think any other department does work like it. But, still, I believe a fair amount of improvement to be possible in the field work of the geological branch.

Hon. P. Collier: The Government are getting rid of some of the best men in that branch.

Mr. DUFF: I am very sorry to hear that, because the work of the branch is very important. There is always unnecessary delay in the publication of the reports of the geologists. In the district of Westonia we had a geologist at work for three solid years before ever a report was published. It is most important that such reports should be made public as soon as possible, especially in the case of districts where there is difficult ground to work. In such cases an expert should be sent along at once to report to the department, and the department should send out the report as speedily as possible. But in the case of Westonia, where the assistance of a geologist was particularly desirable, three years were allowed to elapse before a report was made available. Again, I would like to see the geologist follow closely upon the heels of the prospector, more particularly in the case of new discoveries. It would save much time to those following the prospector, and perhaps the investing public would be saved a lot of money. Possibly some of those booms of ours which burst so quickly would never have come into existence at all under such conditions. I am trying to impress upon the Minister that the geologist should follow closely upon the heels of the prospector, so as to make public the value of a new rush. Copies of the reports of the geologists should be sent to those directly interested, on the fields to which the reports refer, since these men are far away from civilisation and may not be able to obtain such reports otherwise. Again, the ordinary monthly reports of the Mines Department are generally belated, scant, and unilluminative. In a State like Western Australia, where we look for so much from the mining industry, one would think the department would tell off an official to do nothing else but look after the publication of reports coming in through the various centres. But one can refer to any of the departmental papers without seeing a line regarding any of the famous fields. There may be some old mining reports of a couple of months back. I saw one the other day, giving August crushings in October. Such things are of no interest to anybody. The reports should be published in the month following that to which they refer. These things point to an unpardonable lack of official publicity regarding Western Australia's mineral resources. No doubt war conditions explain a good deal of what is now lacking, but much wider publicity should be given to our great national industry. The same remark applies to our secondary industries. Take our first class publications, such as the "Golden West" or the Christmas number of the "Western Mail"; one may search them

in vain for a line of Government advertisement of our resources. That is not right. Before the war many mines in other countries were sold as the result of publicity given in London by the means I suggest. Publicity is no new suggestion. It obtains in South Africa, and notably in Canada, which latter country has come into prominence through nothing but its advertising. Just before the war New South Wales launched out on a big advertising campaign. What is good enough for those countries ought to be good enough for Western Australia, with its sparse population and its wonderful undeveloped resources. Publicity is even more essential to Western Australia, by reason of our comparative isolation. According to all accounts, the Agent General's office contains no official able to give information to inquirers regarding our mining industry. The only records kept in that branch of the Agent General's office are a couple of torn and belated files containing batches of mining notes and reports from this side, all of them very old indeed. Mostly the information, stale and out of date as it is, relates to some crushing on some outback field. More illuminating matter is required if we want to push our mining industry at Home. The Queensland Government publish a monthly mining report, and that is forwarded to the Queensland Agent General and is obtainable on application to that official. Gold is a great magnet, a great immigration agent. We know that in all parts of the world there are unsettled sections of the population ever on the watch for some new discovery to which they may rush in order to make their fortunes. That being the case, why should not we advertise our gold resources more effectively than we are doing it now? We may not unearth any more Golden Miles or Meekatharras or Westonsias, but I am absolutely convinced that we shall get plenty of mines to take the places of those which are declining. Publicity, and better control of the industry, are absolutely essential; and that is one of the reasons why I champion the appointment of a mines commissioner. As regards the soldier prospector, it is a matter of glorious history how the miners and the prospectors of Western Australia rallied round the flag, from far distant parts of the State, from the long galleries of our deep mines, from the surface, and, indeed, from every mining section of this country. They all answered the clarion call of the Empire. Though some fill the graves of heroes in foreign lands, others are with us again, and we hope ere long to welcome back the boys still upholding the flag of liberty and democracy in France, Belgium, Palestine, and Egypt. We look forward to their return, and provision should be made for those splendid fellows. Every opportunity must be afforded them of returning to their old calling. If incapacitated, they must be provided with some occupation equally good but less arduous. Here again, the services of a mines commissioner are required. The Minister has told us that he

has already equipped and sent out some 60 or 70 soldier prospectors.

Hon. P. Collier: But the Commonwealth is finding the necessary sustenance.

Mr. DUFF: Yes, but our Minister is doing the rest. A considerable waste of money is liable to occur in this connection. On the other hand, there are now in Western Australia many old prospectors, and if our Minister were to gather in a few of them and, if they are willing, send them out ahead of parties, much good would result. We do not want these old prospectors hanging about the outskirts of our goldfields towns; we want to have them out looking for new country, prospecting where there is a chance of making new discoveries. As everybody knows, our auriferous belt extends from Ravensthorpe right through to the North; and I am sure there are thousands of miles which have never yet been looked at even. If the Minister were to meet some of these old prospectors at the social gathering to be held on Monday next, he would secure some valuable information. At that gathering there will be some of the old Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie prospectors. I hope the Minister will be there, because the function has been specially arranged for Monday night in order that he may be able to attend. As to abandoned leases, there are many which could be worked at a profit even in these abnormal times. When one comes to think of the early days, which I remember perfectly well, one recognises that leases were abandoned after shafts had been sunk, and very fair prospects obtained, up to the ounce, because the facilities for crushing were not there.

Mr. Foley: Does the hon. member know of a show going half an ounce that is not being worked in this State now?

Mr. DUFF: If the hon. member interjecting will leave the matter for about a week, I shall be able to tell him of two or three. I am not prepared with the information at this moment. Now the war is over, we ought to be able to get mining requisites near the mark, and mining costs should appreciably decrease. We know that colossal factories have been working night and day making instruments of destruction, and that these factories will soon turn their attention from the sword to the plough, or to mining machinery. This will assist us to win from mother earth the wealth that lies hidden in her bosom.

Hon. P. Collier: The average value of ore last year was slightly better than the value in previous years.

Mr. DUFF: I suppose the mines were working the ore known to be of good value, as is the way of mine managers.

Hon. P. Collier: But the higher value of the ore was more than eaten up by the increased cost.

Mr. DUFF: The mines that I am looking after cannot make a dividend just now. However, when cyanide and other requisites come down in price, we hope to do better.

Hon. P. Collier: That may be due, not to a fall in values, but to increased cost of stores and requisites.

Mr. DUFF: We know that the values of all the prominent mines have fallen considerably, and that mining requisites and stores are at such a price that we cannot look for dividends. I suggest that the Government should purchase a large quantity of mining requisites and stores and retail them at cost price, plus administrative charges. This would help the plucky mine-owners to keep going, and so would assist the industry and the State. I do not know why there should not be for the mine owners and prospectors some practicable scheme on the lines of the assistance meted out to agricultural settlers. The Government ought to consider a bigger scheme than they have at present for assisting prospectors and small mine-owners. A lot of good could be done by the formation of mining boards, which could be established on lines similar to those of the old progress associations. Hon. members from the goldfields will remember the great good that resulted from the efforts of the progress associations, such as that at Hannans, of which I was once a member. It was the forerunner of the municipal council, and it did a great deal of good. If the Minister would get a capable organiser it would be the easiest thing in the world to establish mining boards, more particularly in places like Marvel Loch and Bullfinch, where they have very little to do on Sunday afternoons, and where they could be got together at that time, and the department could be thus brought more closely into touch with them than at present. They could exchange views.

Mr. Foley: They usually do on Sunday afternoons.

Mr. DUFF: If the Minister desires to find out where he is going to send some of the returned soldiers to open up abandoned shows, the establishment of these small boards would be the first step in the right direction. It is the only way by which the Mines Department can be brought into touch with the outside mining community. After what I saw on a trip I had with the Minister the other day, I am sure it would be a very easy matter to establish mining boards in outback districts. I feel sanguine that the return of prosperity to our State, more particularly in the mining districts, would be brought about by a practical and scientific exploitation of our mining resources. We should show more faith than we are doing in the mining industry. I do not know why we should be faint-hearted.

The Minister for Mines: We are not.

Mr. DUFF: If the Minister will go about it in the way I suggest I am sure prosperity will be our just reward.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [6.4]: With the Minister, I deplore the fact that the gold yield is gradually decreasing. In Western Australia the industry has produced minerals to the value of £139,905,802, and of that total, gold has produced £133,888,331, or within £6,017, 471 of the total mineral wealth produced in Western Australia. Seeing that that is the case, and that, as the Minister pointed out, the yield is gradually decreasing, it behoves the Government to do all they can to assist gold mining.

The Minister stated that the Government had considerable difficulty in regard to obtaining supplies of mining requisites for the carrying on of the industry. I was surprised to hear the Minister declare that although peace was in sight he had no immediate hopes of the price of fructeur being reduced.

The Minister for Mines: That is, on the reports I have had to date.

Mr. MUNSIE: It is in this direction that something could be done by the Government to assist mining. There is not the slightest doubt that when an hon. member states that everything possible should be done to assist mining, the Government also realise that it should be done; but they think it is up to some member to suggest means by which assistance could be given. The member for Claremont has made several suggestions which might result in satisfactory assistance being given to the gold-mining industry. In regard to mining requisites, I honestly believe the Government, seeing that they have done so much to foster other primary industries, would be wise in taking sole control of the importation into Western Australia of the whole of the necessary mining requisites. The member for Claremont suggested that the Government should purchase a considerable quantity of mining requisites and stores and retail them to the prospector at cost price, plus administrative charges. I do not agree with that. I hope the Government, if they decide to assist the prospector in this direction, will cut out the middleman and do their own importing. I do not see why the Government should purchase mining requisites from the middleman and charge his little profit to the prospector.

The Minister for Mines: Do you mean in regard to the consumption by the Mines Department, or generally?

Mr. MUNSIE: I refer to the total requirements of the mining industry in Western Australia. I venture to say that Strelitz Bros., as importers of fructeur and suppliers of dynamite to the mining companies, made tens of thousands of pounds, simply by signing their name.

Hon. P. Collier: And they will resume control of the business again.

Mr. MUNSIE: Now that the war is over there is a possibility of the same firm continuing to make their tens of thousands of pounds simply by signing their name. The Government could do something there. If the State Government find a difficulty in becoming the sole importers of mining requisites that cannot be produced in the State, they ought to endeavour to influence the Federal Government to do it. Personally I believe the Commonwealth Government should be the sole importer of cyanide, zinc, fructeur, and explosives of all descriptions, which are not manufactured in Australia. There is another way in which the industry could be assisted: I am pleased to hear that a number of returned soldiers have been provided with prospecting outfits under the scheme outlined by the Government and the Repatriation Department. But I am informed that the majority of those outfits supplied to the prospectors were pro-

cured brand new from Perth. I am told that certain prospecting parties belonging exclusively to Kalgoorlie and Boulder have been granted the sustenance allowance from the Repatriation Department, and the necessary outfits, and that those outfits have been supplied brand new from Perth or from Fremantle. Seeing that the Government have departmental officers all over the goldfields, surely they ought to be able to repose sufficient trust in those officers to allow them to procure suitable outfits on the goldfields. If there are none ready made, what is wrong with a local firm being given a chance to supply them?

Hon. P. Collier: They can always be bought second hand.

Mr. MUNSIE: And at a much cheaper rate. There is another matter which has been frequently mentioned. As a matter of fact I was one of a deputation which waited on the previous Minister for Mines in regard to this, and I know the objection raised by the Mines Department. Let me explain. There are innumerable instances of the formation of small syndicates to take on old shows. Successive Governments have been fairly generous in granting assistance to small parties of this kind. But this is where a difficulty crops up: if one of those parties abandon the show they are working on, and some old gold miner comes along prepared to put his capital and labour into the abandoned show, he has to agree to take on the liability of those who have been working it. I hold that such a man should be allowed to take up the show and work it without being required to take on the liability of those who have abandoned it.

Mr. Foley: Provided precautions are taken to prevent their coming back again.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. MUNSIE: It may be asked where we stand in this matter. I realise that we have to be careful, inasmuch as some people may play on the facilities offered by the Government, get assistance from them and by some means get out of the show, and still hold an interest in it in some underhand way. Each individual case will, of course, have to be treated on its merits. Seeing that the Government are prepared to assist other industries in the State I would suggest that a fair thing would be for the Government, in the case of a party coming along and taking up an old show on which the Government had a lien, to express their willingness to allow those people to take it up on the condition that, after paying all expenses and allowing themselves ordinary wages on the Arbitration Court scale, the Government should be entitled to say that they will then take a percentage of the profits over and above that in order to recoup them for the advance made upon the show to someone else.

The Minister for Mines: That is the practice now.

Mr. MUNSIE: I have heard of a case in which it has been done, but the Government

unfortunately are very strict in compelling people who desire to take up a holding to sign some sort of agreement, making themselves liable for the lien held by the Government.

The Minister for Mines: Only under certain conditions.

Mr. MUNSIE: I think that in some cases the Government percentage is too high. With regard to the agricultural industry, abandoned holdings have been taken up in connection with which the agriculturist has a much better deal from the Government for the money owing than the miner can get if he is desirous of taking up a mining holding to-day. If it is a good proposition in the case of the agricultural industries and the Agricultural Bank, it should be a good proposition in the mining industry for such reasonable terms to be given. In my opinion the percentage is too high and the conditions are too strict.

The Minister for Mines: Otherwise the practice is as you suggest.

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes. I was interested in the statement made by the Minister in connection with the committee with which the Government are keeping closely in touch, with regard to the system of subsidising the gold output or increasing the value of gold. There has been a good deal of discussion in regard to the subsidy of £1 an ounce on the gold produced. I do not favour the suggestion. It is a fairly big bonus to the already rich company and not much inducement to the prospector to go out to find new gold mines, or to the struggling mines. Instead of giving a pound per ounce the Government should go a good deal further and give a pound for pound subsidy for genuine developmental work. The cases would have all to be treated on their merits. Where there are large companies which have declared dividends to the extent of thousands of pounds, even millions of pounds, I would not say that they should receive a pound for pound for doing developmental work now, but I do say the Government can assist mining materially by helping the genuine prospector, the small syndicate, and the new company. They can do this by giving a pound for pound grant to developmental work. If the Government went in for such a system I believe it would do a great deal towards restoring mining in Western Australia. The member for Claremont said that mining requisites and the cost of the mining and of labour had gone up 50 per cent. The increased cost of labour in connection with the mining industry is practically infinitesimal in this State. I admit that the Federated Miners Union cited a case before the Federal Arbitration Court—

Mr. Duff: In connection with the Edna May mine.

Mr. MUNSIE: And the men got the enormous increase of one penny per day.

Mr. Mullany: That has been practically no increase.

Mr. MUNSIE: There has been practically no increase so far as the employees in the mining industry are concerned.

Mr. Harrison: What class of work was done by these men?

Mr. MUNSIE: The increase was given in connection with underground work. The cost of mining per ton in Western Australia in 1913 was 19s 6d., and for the year ended 30th June, 1917, the cost had increased to 23s. 4d. per ton, which means an additional cost of about 4s. That increase was brought about principally owing to the increased cost in mining requisites, and to the increased depth of the principal gold producing mines in this State.

Mr. Duff: And the reduction in hours.

Mr. MUNSIE: I dispute that. I contend that the reduction in hours of work by men underground has not been responsible for this increase in the cost. The mines are getting deeper and are more difficult to work, and the increase in the cost of mining cannot be attributed to the employees. The average output per man employed above and below ground has greatly increased since 1913, although the total value of the ore produced has decreased.

Mr. Harrison: Is that the result of better conditions?

Mr. Green: They have been speeded up.

Mr. MUNSIE: It has been brought about by the men doing extra work.

Mr. Harrison: Is there plenty of ventilation and is the dust being laid, etc.?

Mr. MUNSIE: On page nine of the annual report of the Mines Department members will find comparisons for the last two years. The average production of gold for every man employed above and below ground in the mining industry in this State in 1916 was £453.78, whereas in 1917 it was £471.67, an increase of £18 per man.

Mr. Green: Is that for underground men?

Mr. MUNSIE: That includes every man employed in the industry. The extra cost of mining cannot be attributed to the employees.

Mr. Green: The directors are mopping up the money.

Mr. MUNSIE: The men have done their share in the output of gold. On the Golden Mile the average per man employed above and below ground panned out at £638 during 1917. I undertake to say that the average wages for the men employed in getting that gold, excluding the mine managers but including all other bosses, would not average £5 a week. Much as I realise what mining has done for Western Australia, and much as I would like to see mining prosper in this State and new fields found, if the discovery of another Golden Mile in Western Australia was to be attended with the disaster to the men employed in it, as was the case with those employed on the Golden Mile, I would pray that such another Golden Mile should not be found in this State. Undoubtedly there was a difficulty so far as the Golden Mile was concerned. The managers were allowed to go on in a haphazard way without any proper regulation governing the industry, or without any proper supervision over the employees working in that industry, and it has only been of late years that the con-

ditions have improved at all so far as the employees are concerned. It is a fairly doleful picture when we come to find the number of accidents, fatal and serious, which have happened. We realise then what the mining industry has done to the life and limb of the miners of Western Australia. But that is not the worst feature. Let hon. members get the medical and health report and peruse that. The latest I have here is that of 1916 and some startling figures are given in it. Dealing with the matter of tuberculosis, the medical authorities quote the following facts: during 1915 the number of cases of miners phthisis reported was 336 and in 1916 the number was 511. The unfortunate part about it is that the same report gives the number of deaths for 1915 as 233 and for 1916 as 225. Those are not all. If hon. members would take a trip to the sanatorium at Wooroloo they would see more patients in that institution who were there as the result of working in the mining industry than the number from all the other industries in the State put together. It behoves us to do something even at this late stage for the benefit of the health of those employed in the existing mines, and certainly in the new mines. I am perfectly satisfied that the industry can bear better means of inspection than we have up to date. There has been an agitation for a considerable time for the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the conditions of mining generally in Western Australia. The agitation has lately gained force and special stress was laid upon it by reason of the creep which took place on the Golden Mile some 12 or 18 months ago, and in connection with which the Government appointed the Chief Inspector of New South Wales as a Royal Commissioner to make investigations. The scope of that gentleman's inquiry was limited to the cause of the creep. He was not empowered to inquire into the general conditions of mining or even ventilation, which I want to emphasise as being an important matter so far as the inspection and the conditions of employment underground are concerned.

The Minister for Mines: He dealt with the safety of the ground.

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes. I want to refer to one or two statements by this gentleman in his report. I cannot understand why he made certain suggestions in the report he submitted. The report in my opinion contradicts itself even with regard to the safety of employees. I would draw the Minister's attention to pages 3 and 4 and particularly paragraph 4 which is headed "System of Mining Employed, Flat-back with filling; Rill with filling; Shrinkage." He is dealing with the three systems of stopping and he says—

It is scarcely necessary for me to discuss the relative merits of flat-back and rill stopping. This has already been done in many standard mining text books. Generally speaking, having regard to the conditions obtaining in the mines, I consider

they can be scarcely worked by either system, always provided that filling is kept up as close to the back as the exigencies of mining will permit and sufficient temporary support is given by tightly wedged bulks or tomes.

Then he goes on to contradict himself—

I view adversely the proposals which have been made to fix by regulation the height of the stopes.

In the interests of the men working underground, it is a great pity that the Mines Regulation Bill as introduced by the Labour Government which provided for the regulation of the height of stopes was not passed into law. The Royal Commissioner distinctly says that stopes must be kept filled to a convenient height, and in the next breath he deprecates the idea of fixing by regulation the height of the stopes.

Mr. Duff: So long as they leave the pillars, what is the difference?

Mr. MUNSIE: They do not have pillars in stoping. So far as leaving a pillar in connection with stoping, that is unheard of.

Mr. Foley: The hon. member has worked in a mine where they did leave pillars in stopes.

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes, they worked around the pillars. There is just one other matter to which I wish to refer, and which to my mind is extraordinary. The Royal Commissioner is dealing with the possibility of the discovery of gas in the mines on the gold-fields. It was reported pretty freely that that earth movement or shock or whatever it was on the Golden Mile was caused by an explosion of gas. The Chief Inspector from New South Wales ridiculed that, and he went on to state distinctly what was the cause of the supposed earth tremor or shock. Then he goes on to comment that gas has been discovered in these mines. I would like to read what he says—

In those coal mines where the gas issues from the coal and adjacent measures in large quantities, explosions do not occur behind the rock causing it to fly out into the workings. It is certainly desirable that some care should be taken by miners working in those Kalgoorlie mines where gas has been known to occur, when approaching with a light, rises or cavities in the back of the workings where this lighter-than-air gas is likely to accumulate.

Fancy the Chief Inspector of New South Wales reporting in the way he did to the Minister for Mines in this State on the cause of that explosion, which was fairly generally believed to be the outcome of gas, and he himself admitting that gas has been discovered in these mines. Then, instead of warning the mine manager or the Government inspector to be careful, he warns the miners. I want to know who is the man who is responsible? Who should take care if it is not the Government inspector or the manager himself? Why warn the miner only? In that portion of his report, in my opinion, the Royal Commissioner is verging on the ridiculous. If he had issued a strong warning to the managers to take precautions and

to the State Mining Engineer to see that the mining inspectors took every precaution, he would have been doing something in the interests of the men working underground. The average man who is working on the Golden Mile, unfortunately, is working on the contract system, and he gets to work as soon as he can and works as hard as he can to make ends meet. After dealing with these two items in the Royal Commissioner's report, I want to have a word or two to say with regard to certain expenditure which took place in 1908 or 1909 when the then Government sent Mr. Mann, the Government analyst, to Kalgoorlie to inquire into the deleterious effect of the explosives on the men working underground. If such an investigation was wanted at that time it is needed a hundredfold more at the present juncture. The Minister for Mines told us tonight of the great difficulty being experienced in procuring an adequate supply of explosives, and in view of that I trust he will insist on the Government analyst again going to Kalgoorlie to repeat the experiments which he carried on 10 years ago. As a fairly old and experienced miner, I want to emphasise the fact that one can walk down the streets of Kalgoorlie and Boulder to-day and by the actual appearance of the miners' faces pick out those who are carrying on development work in the deep mines. Their appearance is a result of the putrid fractureur they are compelled to use, and they are doing nothing less than committing suicide. That is a positive fact. I realise that there has been a difficulty in getting good stuff, but it should not be difficult now to get an improved explosive, seeing that experiments have been carried on the world over for the purpose of making an explosive perfect for the destruction of human life. Surely to God we can do something now in the direction of providing better explosives for our men to use underground. I trust the Minister will do something in that direction. I can assure him that the report issued by Mr. Mann on that occasion proved beneficial in many ways. That report outlined certain conditions under which fractureur was not to be used. It also gave a resume of the best methods of using fractureur from a health standpoint; and if it was necessary then, it is a hundredfold more necessary now, seeing the bad fractureur the men have to use. While I am prepared to admit that in some respects the conditions underground to-day are better from a ventilation standpoint, there is room for considerable improvement, even now so far as the ventilation of mines is concerned. With all due respect to the Chief Commissioner, in my opinion, from all the evidence I have been able to gather from men on the spot, he did not take sufficient evidence from the practical miner working underground. He took too much notice of the Chief Mining Engineer, the underground bosses and the mine managers, on the Golden Mile. There is an agitation for a Royal Commission, upon which all sides shall be represented, for the purpose of inquiring fully into the conditions of mining as it exists in Western Australia to-day. We had a Royal Commis-

sion in 1904, and let me say that they point out many beneficial objects so far as the working of our mines is concerned; but, unfortunately, the Governments of this State have not been able to give effect to the recommendations of that Commission of 1904. The Labour Government came into office in 1911. In 1912, and again in 1913, that Government endeavoured to give effect to many of the proposals and suggestions of the 1904 Royal Commission. Unfortunately, the other branch of the Legislature point blank refused to allow those proposals to be placed on the statute-book. I am with those men every time in advocating and agitating again for another Royal Commission, or for an investigation into the conditions existing to-day under which those men are compelled to work. The report of the Health Department warrants some such action being taken in the interests of the men themselves and in the interests of mining generally. The Minister, during the course of his remarks, stated that he had agreed to maintain the present price for copper until three months after the expiration of the existing agreement, which terminates on the 30th December this year. I want to give him credit for doing that.

The Minister for Mines: I did not say that I had agreed. I did not take any credit.

Mr. MUNSIE: I want to give credit to whoever was responsible for the making of that arrangement; but as the Minister has pointed out, it is applicable to copper only. I do not know why, but within the last fortnight I have met three different men who have come from Ravensthorpe, where they have been tributing for a considerable time. I met those three men separately and I did not ask them for the information, but strange to say all made exactly the same statement. Briefly, it was that, under the conditions prevailing and the cost of smelting charges at Ravensthorpe, it was impossible to make an existence on the grade of ore they are mining. Those three men also made the statement that if the whole of the restrictions were lifted and they were allowed to export the raw material to the Eastern smelters, they could make more than wages. I think it is a scandalous state of affairs that ore can be mined at Ravensthorpe and shipped round to the East at a greater profit than ore can be mined and treated at Ravensthorpe. There is something wrong with the conditions. I point this out as one of the reasons why mining at Ravensthorpe does not pay. I do not profess to be an expert on copper. I do not know the cost of treating copper, but there is one aspect of this matter to which I shall refer. I was in Ravensthorpe some 12 to 15 months ago and no matter where I went or whom I met, or whether those to whom I spoke were working ore, or what occupation they were following in connection with copper mining—whether they were getting out ironstone for flux for the smelters, or in the bush cutting fuel, they have to pay some of the royalty or tribute. I want to know how or why it is that Neil McNeil practically owns Ravensthorpe, which is a mining centre. Surely there are some means under our mining laws whereby he can-

not own Ravensthorpe as a mining centre unless he is prepared to work it. He is not working it properly, but is living on the labour and sweat of those who are prepared to do a little towards the development of the mining industry at Ravensthorpe—even to the extent of taking tribute from firewood getters, as well as from those who are taking ironstone off Government lands. Even were he the best employer in the world, that does not alter the fact that he has no right to hold up a mining industry such as that at Ravensthorpe, if it can be overcome. I hope that the Minister when replying will give us, if he can, some reason why such a state of affairs exists. The Minister dealt with the Mine Workers' Relief Fund and said that the Chamber of Mines had agreed to increase their contribution, that the workers had agreed to increase theirs, and also the Government by some £3,500 per year. That is a laudable act but, in my opinion, a mistake was made by the Legislature of Western Australia. When the Labour Government was in power they passed a Bill through this House making miners' phthisis an industrial disease, which it should be. This could be done without placing one penny extra on the expenditure of the mining companies. Members will probably ask, how. It may be done by the State taking over workers' compensation and insurance under the Workers' Compensation Act. I am satisfied the Government could include industrial diseases in the Workers' Compensation Act and pay the increased amount and still show a profit without increasing the cost to the State. While I laud the attitude of the Government in increasing their small dole to those unfortunates suffering from miners' complaint, I urge upon the Government the necessity for making each industry in this State responsible for the diseases caused by employment of men in those industries. With regard to the ventilation of mines, a subject to which I referred just now, the Labour Government succeeded some three years ago in passing a small amending Act for the purpose of appointing workmen's inspectors; and I want to say now that the workmen's inspectors who have been appointed to date have been the right men in the right place and they have given first class service to the men employed underground and to the State as a whole.

The Minister for Mines: They have been re-elected.

Mr. MUNSIE: But I cannot understand the attitude adopted by the Government with regard to the further employment of workmen's inspectors. I want to deal with two cases. The first is that of the inspector in the Laverton district. When that inspector was first appointed the radius over which he could inspect was eight miles from the Laverton post office. That included the two then existing mines in the Laverton district. But since his appointment there has been another mine started, the Childe Harold. This mine when working previously was known to be very dangerous. The conditions underground were very unsatisfactory, and since then the mine was allowed to fill with water before the

company again opened it up. The union organisation applied to the Government to increase the limit of the boundaries of that inspector from eight to 13 miles, so as to include the Childe Harold mine. To have done this would not have cost the Government one-half-penny, but it would have given those employed in the mine the benefits and advantages of the workmen's inspector. Strange to say, the Minister has turned that proposition down. I do not know why, nor can I understand why. I have the file here containing the whole of the correspondence in connection with the matter, and from what I can see the Under Secretary for Mines gives absolutely no reason why that request was not granted. One very significant point does occur on the file. When dealing with the question of additional workmen's inspectors, the Under Secretary raised an objection and gave a reason for that objection. He said that the present system of workmen's inspectors was only on its trial and had not had a sufficient trial to warrant any increase in the appointments. That to my mind is a significant statement. On the one hand the department limits the area over which a workman's inspector can travel to inspect a mine, and they refuse to make any further appointments of workmen's inspectors because they claim the system is only on its trial. That, to my mind, is a very significant statement indeed. On the one hand, the area over which a workmen's inspector can travel within his district to inspect a mine is limited. The Government refuse to appoint another workmen's inspector because, they say, the system is on its trial. On the other hand, they refuse to increase the areas of the workmen's inspectors already appointed, and for what reason? Why? I do not like to impute motives, but I say there can be only one reason. If the Government want to make a success of the system of workmen's inspectors, and if that system is still on its trial, then it is up to the Government to give the workmen's inspectors ample scope for the inspection of every mine.

The Minister for Mines: It would be only fair if you told the Committee that in some cases the boundaries of workmen's inspectors have been extended.

Mr. MUNSIE: I am prepared to admit that, but I hope the Minister will inform us why in this particular instance, where there has been a great deal of correspondence, and where not a halfpenny of extra expense to the State is involved, the workmen's inspector was refused the right to inspect that particular mine. Again, as regards the appointment of additional workmen's inspectors, the unions controlling the mining industry of Western Australia have for some considerable time been endeavouring to get an additional workmen's inspector appointed for the Coolgardie, Yilgarn and Westonia goldfields. There is ample room for a workmen's inspector in the Yilgarn field alone; that is, including Westonia.

Mr. Duff: There is an inspector there, Mr. Crabbe.

Mr. MUNSIE: I am prepared to admit that. But Mr. Crabbe is the Government

inspector. I do not wish any hon. member, however, to take my remarks as in any way derogatory to Mr. Crabbe as a Government inspector. But in existing circumstances Mr. Crabbe is being asked to perform utter impossibilities in looking after the safety of the mine workers over such a vast area of country.

Mr. Harrison: There is a workmen's inspector at Westonia also.

Mr. MUNSIE: Nothing of the kind. There is no workmen's inspector at Westonia.

Mr. Harrison: Not for Westonia alone?

Mr. MUNSIE: Nor for the Yilgarn field. The file shows that the first letter written to the department on this subject by the organisation was addressed to the member for Boulder as Minister for Mines. The reply to that letter, however, was furnished by the present Attorney General, then holding the Mines portfolio.

Mr. Duff: Mr. Crabbe is taking a fairly keen interest in Westonia, though.

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes; but when he has to inspect the whole of the Coolgardie goldfield, and the whole of the Norseman goldfield, and Bullfinch, and Marvel Loch, and right out to Mount Jackson, it is plainly a matter of impossibility for him to give fair inspection to Westonia as well. It is not practicable for any inspector to traverse that area of country and do justice to the men underground, or to the companies either, in the way of fair inspection. I trust that the Minister, although, according to the file, he has turned down the proposal for an additional workmen's inspector, will reconsider the matter. Westonia is practically a new field. There are possibilities of many new mines opening out at Westonia. I urge upon the Minister the absolute necessity for up-to-date inspection of those mines, in order to prevent them from getting into the condition in which the Golden Mile finds itself to-day. For the sake of a paltry few pounds—I do not care if it costs another £5,000 a year, or even £50,000 a year—let us not go short of efficient inspection in the interests of the mine employees. I have read carefully the replies of the department whenever a protest has been made or a request put forward in this connection. There is always some side tracking of the business. First, the Chief Mining Engineer was then at Westonia, and the matter could not be considered until he had made a report. The report was made, and after it was made another definite request for the appointment of a workmen's inspector was submitted. The latest we have is, I think, on the 23rd of last month, when the Government finally turned the proposal down.

The Minister for Mines: The last was when I met the union about a fortnight ago.

Mr. MUNSIE: I was not aware that the Minister had met the union, but I am very pleased to learn it. I trust the union used such arguments as induced the Minister to agree to the appointment of an additional workmen's inspector. I hope, too, that the Minister, if he cannot agree to the appointment of a workmen's inspector, will not fail to appoint another Government inspector, be-

cause the district is altogether too large for any one man to look after.

The Minister for Mines: I have relieved Mr. Crabbe already of part of his work, and have removed him to Southern Cross, so that he may be easily available for Westonia; and the union have accepted that for the time being.

Mr. MUNSIE: That is probably a step in the right direction. But, although the union have done that, and although I am a pretty ardent unionist and a strong believer in majority rule, I do not know whether this phase of the question was put before the Minister—that while the department have agreed that the inspection of Westonia will be better served if Mr. Crabbe's headquarters are fixed at Southern Cross, Norseman is being placed at a very grave disadvantage by Mr. Crabbe's removal to Southern Cross.

The Minister for Mines: Could not Norseman be served equally well from Kalgoorlie?

Mr. MUNSIE: Not as well from Southern Cross as from Coolgardie. I hope the arrangement which has been made will not take away any of the inspectors the Minister now has in Kalgoorlie and Boulder. There is not one too many in those centres now. Not one can be spared from Kalgoorlie and Boulder. The people of Norseman would soon complain bitterly if anything should happen there in the way of a fatal accident. I do not wish to say that the Westonia accident could have been avoided even if an inspector had been stationed at Westonia. But I do say that if a field like Westonia will not stand a Government inspector to look after it in conjunction with the Yilgarn district, it is time for us to give up Government inspection of mines altogether. I do trust the Minister will give consideration to the union's request for the extension of the areas of workmen's inspectors. In the case of Laverton we ask that the area be extended from eight miles to 13 miles from the Laverton post office, and this for the express purpose of taking in one mine which now employs 30 men. The workmen's inspector at present is absolutely refused the right to inspect that mine. The Government inspector has allotted the ground over which the workmen's inspector can travel, and the latter is not permitted to go outside that area. The mine in question is inspected by the Government inspector, but not by the workmen's inspector. I think it must be realised that any mine which the Government inspector recognises as needing his inspection should also be inspected on behalf of the mine workers by the workmen's inspector. The proposition is only a fair one; and I hope the Minister will relax the hard and fast rule he has apparently laid down as regards the Laverton district, and I also hope the Minister will agree to the appointment of a workmen's inspector for the Yilgarn district.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [3.28]: There are many phases of the mining industry on which one could touch in connection with these Estimates, but hon. members appreciate that there is very little new that one could say. It is no use going over the old ground again. Since the introduction of the last Mines Estimates, however, conditions have

altered. There is now a prospect of peace. That being so, there is something which the Government of Western Australia should do in the interests of Western Australian mining. The first question asked by every member who represents mining is, what can be done? Each member has put forward some suggestion, no matter how small, for the fostering of the mining industry. Before I touch upon what I contend are fair proposals in this direction, let me refer to that question of inspectors. We mining members are not split on that question. If there is a split on other questions, there is none as regards looking after the welfare of the miners; absolutely none.

Mr. Davies: Or of any other workers.

Mr. FOLEY: True; but I am sticking now to the one subject of mining. I like to deal with one subject at a time.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What does Mr. Hedges think of the inspectors?

Mr. FOLEY: Irrespective of what any other member may think, or what any gentleman in this State may think, on the subject of inspection, I want to put forward my ideas. I have seen the Government inspectors at work and have also seen the workmen's inspectors at work. If the Mines Department think that the system of workmen's inspectors is still on its trial, then they evidently require a very long apprenticeship to be worked before they will admit a success. As a proof that it has been a genuine success, I may say that the Government inspectors have in every instance worked amicably with the workmen's inspectors. When the appointment of the workmen's inspectors was being discussed, the bogey raised was that there would be insurmountable differences of opinion between the two classes of inspectors. This, however, has not been so, and the appointment of workmen's inspectors has been an unqualified success, as well in regard to the conservation of the interests of the workers, as in respect to their supporting the work of the Government inspectors, and this, too, without in any way hampering the work of the mine. I am sure that if a vote were taken among the mining companies it would be found to be in favour of the system of workmen's inspectors. I was glad to hear the member for Hannans on this question, because he is a practical man in mining. I am entirely in favour of the system of workmen's inspectors. From the opinions of practical men at Kalgoorlie—I am not referring to inspectors, some of whom are always after the ears of members of Parliament—it is clear that the system of inspection has been very good indeed, that it can be made even better, and that there is necessity for another workmen's inspector in that district if no other Government inspector is appointed. Regarding Westonia and all that country eastward, I believe that if any more duties are put on the Government inspector, it will be impossible for him to do justice to his work. The Minister said that an alteration had been made regarding the

district of that inspector. I trust that if, when a little experience shall have been gained, it is found that the district of that inspector is not getting the necessary inspection, the Minister will see to it that a workmen's inspector is appointed. Apart from the alteration made, I believe it is absolutely necessary to appoint a workmen's inspector for Westonia in order to do the district which Mr. Inspector Crabbe is to be asked to do under the new system. I see from the Estimates that there has been a reduction made in the field geologists. When the last Estimates were introduced I understood that there was to be no let-up in field geology. We had in the State recently a mining chemist in the person of Dr. McLaren. Unfortunately he remained here only long enough to prove to us that many of our mines would cut out in the near future. He did not stay here long enough to explain more clearly to us that wherever there is to be found the class of country rock that obtains where mining is successful in this State, further gold would be found. Had he stayed here he could have shown us what has been proved in chemical science, namely, that in the event of certain classes of greenstone being found among the country rock, it was certain that gold also would be found. Another point: Many of us have reckoned for years past that the richer companies should put aside a certain percentage of their profits for the purpose of discovering new shows. The Gwalia mine was putting aside £5,000 per annum, for the purpose of sending good men out in the endeavour to find new shows, but the Taxation Department stepped in and taxed them double on the £5,000.

[Mr. Munsie took the Chair.]

The Minister for Mines: But that has been altered now.

Mr. FOLEY: I am glad to say that from the point of view of the Taxation Department it has been altered, but I believe the alteration does not go far enough, and that mining has been hampered by undue taxation.

The Minister for Mines: It has not gone so far as we intended it to do.

Mr. FOLEY: Income tax assessments in regard to mining propositions are made, not by a mining authority, but by a gentleman who would not know a mine from a hole in the ground. Mr. Scaddan endeavoured to introduce a very good system, namely, that in the compiling of the income tax assessment, an allowance should be made for any money put back into the development of the mine. That system would be a great improvement on the present one, and I trust that when we get back to normal times the Government of the day will put that or some similar scheme into effect. Another way in which mining could be assisted is this: The Commonwealth law has intervened in regard to the formation of companies to work shows. I am quite sure that every mining member would gladly

welcome the formation of companies to develop our mines; but under our company law, when a company has to be registered, first of all it is necessary to get local work done. There is taxation on that. Then it is necessary to go to the Federal Government; and the taxation is again put on. And not only is it imposed on the money put into the show, but the Commonwealth comes in again on the mining proposition and takes the capital which has been put in for development. In this the Federal Government have done a great amount of harm to mining in Western Australia, and in my opinion the State Government should tell the Federal Government that as they have left us our domestic legislation it would be well to leave to us the administration of that legislation. If the Commonwealth Government would agree to that, the State Government would be able to assist mining to the greatest possible extent, that is, by giving encouragement to those who propose to put money into legitimate mining. Several hon. members have referred to old leases over which the Government have a lien. I believe there are dozens of those leases that could be opened up to-morrow and new parties put in to work them. The leader of the Opposition, who was previously Minister for Mines, knows that there have been in this State cases of application for leases over which there have been liens, and that under the existing system there is more room in this for the worst class of mine jobbing and swindling than in any other form of mining. At the same time, so long as each case is taken on its merits, there are shows well worthy of trial. The member for Claremont says that there are dozens of unworked shows up to an ounce. I should like to know of one unworked show going even half an ounce. If there were such a show it would be worked to-morrow. Personally, I do not know one show in this State that will go eight weights and which is not being worked.

[Mr. Holman took the Chair.]

Mr. Teesdale: There are miles of ounce stone in the North-West.

Mr. FOLEY: We would not be members of Parliament very long if we knew where there were miles of a reef going an ounce to the ton.

Mr. Teesdale: There is any amount of it.

Mr. FOLEY: I doubt if there is one of these shows which will go eight dwts. to the ton. With regard to the question as to better condition for the men working underground, I have been speaking to men who have been working in the various tunnelling corps at the Front. They told me that there had been fractureurs and explosions there that they contended were about ten times as strong, and in some cases 20 times as strong, as the ordinary fractureur which is used in the mines in this State. If that is so, every State Government in the Commonwealth should, with the assistance of the Commonwealth Government, make every possible investigation to see if fractureurs of that description cannot be put to industrial

use here. This would bring down the cost not only to the mining companies but to the State generally, as I will show. The effect of the smoke and fumes from the fractureurs now being used is responsible for three-fifths of the deaths and pulmonary diseases that we have amongst miners to-day. If we can reduce these unfortunate results, and can get a stronger explosive, very much good will be done. The miners will not have to bore such big holes and therefore the dust trouble will be minimised, and they will also be able to get that fractureur into a smaller place and there will be fewer fumes for the miners to work in. That is a matter which is well worthy of consideration. When I was in Victoria recently I went over the cordite works, and saw the highest explosives being made by Australian workmen from Australian goods and under Australian conditions. Cordite can be produced there as cheaply as in any place in the world. Next door to the cordite factory there had been an ammunition factory, which was closed down. The manager of the ammunition factory proved to me that they could make an industrial fractureur equal to anything which was produced anywhere in the world. This fractureur can be put into a smaller compass by one-third than anything else known in Australia to-day. Even if we do not use the same fractureur which has been used at the war, we can at least get a fractureur from Victoria if sufficient inducement is given to the manufacturers to turn it out, and we can then use it as it is made in Australia. If we can do that, we will prevent a man in some other part of the world, who has not been well disposed to Great Britain and whom many of us would have been glad to have put somewhere where he could not do much harm during the past four years, from making a fortune. Then there is the question of the American fractureur. I want to pay a tribute to the Minister for Mines for his work in regard to the explosives for our mines. There is one portion of Australasia that needed much fractureur for its mining. The fight that the Minister put up with the Commonwealth Government when they wanted to take that fractureur away was worthy of any previous Minister who had ever held that portfolio. I am glad to know that he was partially successful, and the only reason why he was not wholly successful was on account of the pull from the Eastern States being so strong. When we get down to bedrock so far as mining is concerned, we can show, as we can do, that those people are not in it so far as the cost of mining is concerned, and I hope the time will come when we can make fractureurs in Western Australia, seeing that we have the best clays available for that purpose. To revert to the praiseworthy action of the Minister, there was a fractureur coming from America. Men on the fields said they did not want a German fractureur but, the moment an endeavour was made to put an American fractureur on the market, it was found that there was something wrong with it and it was withdrawn. There was a big outcry, not from the men working on the mines, but from some of the men on the gold-

modity. The Mines Department showed some backbone in the matter and that fractureur was kept off the market. It was not because they did not want the American fractureur, or because there is anything wrong with it, but just when the inquiry was being made by the chief inspector of explosives there was an attempt to put the fractureur on the market. I am thankful it did not get there. I hope that as many opinions as possible will be obtained and experiments made first as to the explosives and fractureurs that were used at the war, and secondly as to the explosives that it is possible to make in Victoria. If we cannot turn them out ourselves, so long as they are made in Australia let us have them. I believe we will then be doing a great turn to Australia as a whole. There has been one question which has affected Western Australia during the past few months. That is in connection with soldier prospectors. I know a great deal has been done, and I do not know of one returned soldier who has put in an application for assistance to the Minister for Mines who has been turned down.

[Mr. Munsie took the Chair.]

The Minister for Mines: If he is qualified.

Hon. P. Collier: That is no concession and is not a new policy.

Mr. FOLEY: No applicant has been turned down. I contend that soldier prospectors in this State are being turned down by the Commonwealth Government, or will be turned down, if their present system is carried into effect.

Hon. P. Collier: Has anyone been turned down outside a returned soldier?

Mr. FOLEY: During the occupancy of the portfolio of Minister for Mines by the leader of the Opposition, I have never known him to turn down a genuine application for assistance in the way of a turn-out. Men, however, have been turned down. The £5,000 which the Commonwealth Government have set aside is only set aside as an experiment. If a man has a show and has worked it up to the present with the plant or turn-out, which has been given to him by the State, he has also had assistance from the Repatriation Department given to him by the Commonwealth Government. If a man likes to sit in Perth and go out every day he can get his pension as assistance money made up to £2 2s. per week. If a man wants to go out prospecting and is willing to take the same amount of assistance, it is questionable whether he could get it. That being so, Parliament should endeavour to force the hands of the Federal Government to disgorge, if only up to the amount it will cost to give a man a bare living. Not only are we going to assist mining in that way, but we are going to help to separate the unemployed from the unemployable, so far as our returned soldiers are concerned. I am glad to see that there are some men who have found shows that are likely to prove very beneficial to the State. Their good work has not been confined to one district. I am not of the opinion expressed by many hon. mem-

be sent out back. Why should he be sent out back? There are three classes of prospectors—the man who goes out back, the man who takes up an old show, and those who form a company which is willing to work some old show. Irrespective of whether a company is large or small, or whether it is an individual who is working an old show, or a prospector who is working a new one, all are entitled to assistance from the Government. There are many old shows in the State which men would take up, but that the conditions are too harassing. There are also many other mines which will take a great amount of capital to work. We have several low-grade mines in a very big way. If there are any mines in the State which have been working all through the war, even if they have been working without profit, irrespective of whether it is a big company working or a small company or a party of men, I contend that the Minister will be doing a great deal if he can keep these people going and prevent the necessity for the mines being closed down. If such a mine is closed down the chances are it will not be possible to open it up again. I was once working on the Paddington mine, which was a very good low-grade proposition but which had to be closed down. I am afraid it would take many hundreds of thousands of pounds to re-open it now. Before that mine closed down, the State should have gone to its assistance and put a good man in charge of it, and paid him a good salary to look after it, and charged that salary as well as the overhead charges to the company that made profits out of it after successfully working it. That is the manner in which the mining industry should be assisted. I have heard it said that the cost per ton of ore broken has been greater during the past year than it has been for a considerable time. The figures certainly show that, but when we take into consideration that there has been little or no development work done during the war period, we can use that fact as a set-off against the amount of ore broken per man. It has cost a great deal more to break the ore during the war period than ever it did before. The labour we have had during the war period has not been as efficient as it was before. The best miners, the men who were making records, went to the Front and they did so because they were physically the strongest men, and they were the men who were required to go. They knew the work of mining from A to Z and they went. When they return many of them will go into the mines again and then we shall have the costs reduced to a great extent. If anything can be done by way of improving ventilation in mines and conditions generally, it should be done, and better results will undoubtedly follow. When we remember at what cost a lot of our gold has been won, and how appalling the figures are, it is wonderful that the results have been so good. In 1900, six per cent. of those engaged in the industry succumbed and in 1916 the percentage was increased to eight. Between the years 1911 and 1915 there were no fewer than 957 cases of tubercular disease

reported amongst miners and in addition to that, right up to the present time there have been many killed. Appalling as the figures of the war were for the first two years, it is still more appalling to find that since the beginning of the mining industry we find that up to two years ago 6,900 men made the supreme sacrifice as the soldiers of industry in the mines of this State. We do not want that state of affairs to continue. We want to see the conditions improved so that the men may work underground with a greater degree of safety. The men who have served their country at the Front will shortly be returning. Those men may be said to rank amongst the bravest that God ever made. In mining too, great bravery is needed in many positions in which the men find themselves. The danger is often brought about by neglect on the part of the companies themselves, and on the part of the Government in not seeing that adequate inspections are made. Let us hope that in the future greater care will be exercised in the matter of inspections and let us have a greater number of inspections so that there may be no doubt about this. I contend that whenever a good case is made out the Government should take notice of it. We can alter and improve the conditions and by so doing we can render the work of mining much safer than it has been. We will then have a healthier community and that general contentment which money cannot buy. If we can by these means get that which money cannot buy, it is worth while doing everything we can to make the conditions of mining and the lives of those engaged in it better than they are at the present time.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [9.8]: It will be generally admitted that mining has played a very important part in the development of Western Australia, and that at the present time it is intimately connected with the welfare of the other industries of the State. The difficulty in the past has been, and it continues to a great extent to-day, that we have never had laid down anything like a definite policy in connection with the development of mining. For instance, we have never had a policy similar to that which has existed in connection with the development of the agricultural areas. If there had been more of the speculative element connected with mining, and less conservatism, and vice versa so far as the agricultural industry is concerned, the financial position of the State, I am confident, would be infinitely better than it is at the present time. We find that when the question of assistance to mining arises, the most conservative attitude is taken. But when it comes to a question of assisting the agricultural areas, however speculative it may be, we find that the policy is just the reverse of that adopted towards the mining industry.

Mr. Maley: Why draw these comparisons?

Mr. LAMBERT: The hon. member will, perhaps, appreciate better the comparisons I intend to make at a later stage for his edification. Unless the policy to which I have referred is changed, we will find that the mining industry will practically fizzle out.

I am not holding the present Government to blame any more than I am convinced that previous Governments were also responsible for what took place. If assistance had been rendered to the mining industry it would not be in the parlous position we find it to-day. Without aid from the Government those engaged in the industry have been compelled in the past to gouge out the richest ore in sight and take it to the nearest battery. In that way, of course, they bolstered up the State battery system, which was not altogether an unmixed blessing. We have to admit that the State batteries have done a good deal towards the development of the surface areas of the State, but they have practically cut off the permanent development of our fields, and therefore reduced the mining prospects of the State. The position has been, and is still, that if a man has a mine he is compelled by necessity to gouge out the rich ore in sight and send it straight away to a battery to be crushed. Then, when he gets down to a level which is not workable by one or two men, he is forced to abandon the property. Why not develop mining in this State as they are developing it in America and other countries? If we had a fund from which the Minister, or a board, could advance money to continue the development of a mining property on business lines, the chances are that considerable success would follow. It should be the function of the Government to continue to advance funds so long as the owner continued to develop the mine on proper lines and so open it up ready for crushing machinery. It is easy to understand what the result will be if a man is compelled to take out of a property the more readily worked lenses of ore. In nearly every instance we find that the failure to develop a property is attributable to that one cause. It is impossible for prospectors to develop a mine and crush as they go along.

Mr. Davies: Do you mean we should legislate against it?

Mr. LAMBERT: We should give due recognition to the importance of developing a mine on sound scientific and practical lines.

The Minister for Mines: The first thing to do is to find the money.

Mr. LAMBERT: If the Government can find money for other industries in this State, it is their duty to find it also for the mining industry. The Minister should tell Parliament and the people that so far as he is concerned he is occupying his present position with the pockets of the State closed against him and his hands tied behind his back. The position to-day is that we must either assist the industry or let it drift out of existence altogether. There must be no further humbugging. We must face the position courageously. If mining is admitted to be of any service to the State we must recognise the fact that it has to receive sympathetic treatment. I do not say it should be coddled, and we should not indulge in over-speculation in assisting it, but the same practice and the same principles should be applied to the

scientific and practical development of mining as are applied to the development of other industries of the State. And if the Minister for Mines would formulate a policy upon that basis he would have the support of the House and of the people of Western Australia in his effort to assist the mining development of the State. I believe the Minister for Mines after his long residence on the fields, and with his knowledge of the mining industry, will agree that if he can do that he will be doing something of infinitely greater benefit to the State than has been done by either the Agricultural Bank or the Industries Assistance Board in trying to bolster up the farmer when his affairs have reached such a stage when it is absolutely no good either to the farmer himself or to the permanent prosperity of the State to assist him any longer. The member for Greenough (Mr. Maley) probably knows some of the difficulties affecting a big element in his constituency at present, and he will appreciate the fact that unless the mining industry in his district can get intelligent and sympathetic treatment from the Government that industry will peter out. I should like the Minister to give us an idea as to whether he is prepared to make an endeavour to have mining supplies brought to this State at a cheaper rate than they are at the present time. If this were done, I believe we could do much to lessen the difficulties and the hardships of the mining companies and of the mining industry generally. Until they can achieve the more common sense idea of co-operation, it is necessary for us to point the way for the relief of the industry. I ask the Minister to see whether he cannot get early shipments of mining material, so as to lighten the burden on the mining industry. One of the big difficulties that the mining industry has been up against for some considerable time has been the cost of machinery. It is a regrettable fact that most of the mining machinery in this State has got into a few hands, and not only the machinery but also many of the leases upon which the machinery is erected. I am not mentioning names, but a number of mines have closed down for one reason and another—lack of funds, water difficulty, and such like—and the machinery has got into the hands of two or three firms and the holdings also. I hope the Minister will appreciate the fact that in many instances bodies of working men would take up and work those mines, but before they may do so they must be prepared to pay the extortionate royalty asked for them. The position of the industry to-day is that we have very few mines actively operating in this State, and seeing that many of the big mines in Kalgoorlie are considering the question of letting their holdings on tribute, it appears to me obvious that some departure is required in the tribute legislation of this State. It is neither fair nor reasonable to ask men to develop a mine under conditions which compel them to hand over practically 50 per cent. of the gold won. If it is the desire of the Government to assist mining and to assist the tributer, the conditions should be altered.

The Minister for Mines: So long as the leases are manned nothing can be done.

Mr. LAMBERT: But the tribute agreement has to be registered, and the Minister should have the power to refuse registration if he thinks fit. I do not suggest that the Minister should depart from the general terms under which mining leases are granted, but if it is the desire of the Government to have the big areas of Kalgoorlie developed, there must be some alteration in the tribute system. This problem has been tackled in Victoria, and although it has not been the full success desired, what has been done there has been of assistance both to the men and to the mining industry. If the Minister does nothing else, so far as his Mines administration is concerned, than improve the tribute conditions, he will earn the respect and goodwill of a big body of men who are dependent on tributes for their living. I trust that the Minister will in the course of his reply indicate what the Government intend doing, and I can assure him that he will have the active support of every member of the House who has at heart the interests of the mining industry. There have been cases of favouritism in the granting of tributes in this State. Men have given valuable tributes to their friends—whether they are interested or not I do not know—but the system is obtaining to-day in which certain persons are in a favourable position and others have to take what is left, and work the leases on exorbitant royalties. I desire now to refer to the question of the revision of the gold standard.

The Minister for Mines: That is a very intricate and more or less abstract question.

Mr. LAMBERT: I agree. It is a strange thing that only once since the twelfth century has the world been faced with a revision of the gold standard. In 1257 the first standard of gold was made; in 1546 the standard was placed at 833 fine; in 1640 the present standard was struck at 916 fine. It seems peculiar that in the whole revision of the commerce conditions of the world, with the altered and altering economic conditions, we have never been faced with a revision of the gold standard since then. I agree with the Minister that it is a serious handicap so far as the gold mining industry of this State is concerned. It seems to me that it would be just as useful to put the standard at 800 as at 916. It is difficult to give any authentic reason for adhering to the standard that was the arbitrary standard agreed upon in 1640. The State Mining Engineer should have some knowledge upon this subject, and I trust the Minister will see that steps are taken to have representations made to the Imperial Government setting out that as a gold producing State we desire a revision of the gold standard. To-day the banks and the Governments of the world, particularly the Imperial Government, have possession of virtually the whole of the current gold, and unless this opportunity is seized for a revision of the gold standard, it is possible it will never occur again under such favourable conditions as exist at the present time. For this reason, that instead of the private individuals getting

the benefit of any revision, the Government will benefit.

The Minister for Mines: You mean that the gold is not in circulation.

Mr. LAMBERT: Yes. The standard to-day is fixed at 916 fine, and if that were reduced to a standard of 800 fine, the Imperial Government and the Australian Government would gain to the extent of some millions of pounds. Gold as an instrument of exchange is not affected whether the standard be fixed at 800 fine or 916 fine, but if it be placed at 800 you correspondingly increase the price you are paying for it. And it is the gold producing countries of the world, including Australia and Africa, which would benefit. Therefore, now is the time when representation should be made. Silver stands at a big price just now and we have a lessened profit on the minting of silver. We would have a corresponding increase on the minting of gold if we had a revision of the standard value of gold. I believe that even 700 fine would meet the case and the coinage would be of the same value as an instrument of exchange as if the sovereign was 916 fine as at present. I believe the Minister for Mines would be well advised to consult other Ministers in the Eastern States and see whether representations cannot immediately be made to the Imperial authorities on the lines suggested. Our mint in Western Australia is established by charter and has nothing to do with us. It is controlled by the Royal Mint of England and is subsidiary to it and answerable to it in connection with all its operations here. A deal of good could possibly be done by drawing attention to the hardships which exist under present conditions on account of the present standard of gold which was struck in 1640 which has never been altered since. I congratulate the Minister upon his decision to establish a concentrating plant in Coolgardie. I hope because of the fact that it is in my own district I shall not be accused of taking a parochial view of this matter. We have a plant with sufficient boiler and steam power to operate the necessary machinery and the position is a central one. When the concentrating plant is established I think we can considerably assist mining in respect to many of the minor minerals that exist on the Eastern and other goldfields of Western Australia. I do not think sufficient importance has been attached to minor minerals in this State. It is regrettable that they have not been operated to a larger extent than is actually the case. Little or no attention has been paid to them and little or no assistance given. Take magnesite for instance. We have millions of tons of that mineral equal to the best Italian magnesite. It extends practically from Bulla Bulla to Menzies and there are enormous quantities of it. Let us look at the expansion in regard to this mineral in the United States during the course of three years. In 1913 there was produced in the United States 9,632 tons of magnesite. In 1916 the Californian development leapt to 154,052 tons of crude ore. While to-day we possess the finest deposits of magnesite in Australia, there has only been produced so far as I know a paltry 300 tons for use in the other States. The Minister, filling as he does the dual positions of Minister

for Mines and Minister for Railways, can assist many of the minor minerals which require cheap freights. Practically on account of the small industrial development in this State these minerals are being used almost exclusively in the Eastern States. There is magnesite and many other minerals which require cheap railway freights, before they can be used for commercial purposes in the Eastern States. It is very regrettable that millions of tons of valuable minerals of a minor nature should be lying idle in Western Australia on account of the high rail-age costs to our seaboard. Unfortunately most of those mineral ores lie inland and these deposits of a more or less useful nature are situated hundreds of miles from the railway. Cuming, Smith & Co. for example can carry pyritic ore containing three units of copper and 25 to 30 units of sulphur at one farthing per ton from Yulliminna. If that concession were not granted to them it is problematical whether they could manufacture sulphuric acid in sufficient quantities in Western Australia to make superphosphate. I hope the Minister for Mines will appreciate the fact that it is necessary to not alone give cheap freights in the case of the carriage of pyritic ore for Cuming, Smith, & Coy., but it is also necessary to give the same conditions on the same basis for the encouragement of developing the minor minerals, and so absorb a considerable amount of labour. I hope the statistics which I have given will convince the Minister of the absolute necessity for doing something in this direction. I trust that the plant in Coolgardie will be more or less of a scientific nature and will be controlled on practical scientific lines as well as going in for experimental work so far as our low-grade sulphide ores are concerned. I believe this affords a big field and a big scope for investigation. The oil flotation process has assisted the mineral industry of the United States and put it on an altogether different basis. I hope he will lay down and endeavour to foster a policy of investigation as far as these low-grade ores are concerned. We have millions of tons of low-grade sulphide ores worth anything from 10s. to 20s. a ton on the Eastern goldfields unprofitable to-day. If by investigation—I do not say altogether by means of oil flotation—we may keep in line with the metal producing countries of the world, Western Australia will greatly benefit. We should recognise the fact that oil flotation is to-day an established metallurgical practice. It has gone beyond its experimental or speculative stage and is undoubtedly an accepted practice and one of the most successful metallurgical practices so far as it has been adopted to deal with low-grade sulphide mines, that has ever been employed. We have in this State extensive areas of salt lakes. I believe something should be done by the Government to exploit them. I am surprised that some of the officers of the Mines Department who have the necessary knowledge have not done so up to date and have not tried to utilise our big salt areas by the application of electrolysis in metallurgy.

Mr. Troy: They are all leased.

Mr. LAMBERT: Many of the areas are not leased. In the Minister's own district there is one of the finest salt lakes in the State. I suppose he has the best arseno pyritic ore at the Transvaal mine that exists in the State. We are giving the management of that mine cheap water to concentrate their ore, but they send their concentrates to Victoria, however, and treat them there by means of chlorine gas. By the proper application of electrolysis and the electrical decomposition of sodium chloride from the lakes, all the chlorine necessary can be produced to treat the arseno pyritic ores in the State and there will be no need to go elsewhere for the treatment.

The Minister for Mines: Once they arrive at the proper treatment, I think it is their intention to establish works here for the complete treatment of the ore.

Mr. LAMBERT: It is no use anyone trying to blind me in that direction. They have been for years treating their arseno pyritic ores, and so far as the treatment of arsenical pyrites is concerned that was settled 20 years ago.

The Minister for Mines: There is always something new.

Mr. LAMBERT: So far as they are concerned they are operating on account of the high price of arsenic, which is about £60 a ton. In normal times it is sometimes impossible to give it away. This concentrated ore contains about 50 per cent. of arsenic, and it is therefore very valuable, and it pays to ship this ore to the Eastern States for the purpose of extracting the arsenic from it and the gold as well. Instead of the small mining plant having to work under the present cyanide treatment of ore, it would be very much better if some simple process of electrolysis such as that worked by the Mt. Morgan mine in Queensland could be adopted, only on a more limited scale. If this were possible we should not have men complaining about the excessive cost of mining supplies. I believe that the officers of the Mines department would take this matter up with considerable interest. Undoubtedly there are good men in that department, particularly in the Geological department, in Mr. Simpson and those under him. In many respects these officers are doing a lot of unselfish work which, because it is not known, is not generally appreciated. We have officers who are prepared to assist in discovering means by which economy could be practised and by which scientific methods can be employed in mining, and these men should be engaged on the work. If the Minister is willing to give them a lead in this direction a considerable amount of valuable data could be obtained which would not only be of service to the mines of the State, but to many of those subsidiary industries which will develop later on in Western Australia. I should like to say a word or two on ore smelting in Western Australia. I regret the position as pointed out by the member for Hannans, namely, that the prospectors in Ravens-thorpe say that it will pay them better to

send their ore to the Eastern States than to have it smelted at the Government smelter at Ravensthorpe. I am sorry that the smelter was sold to private individuals, and I believe that the Government are leasing it to-day. The price of smelting there is to a large extent due to the geographical position of the place in which the works are situated. I believe the Minister is well aware of the factors which mainly contribute to the high cost of smelting.

The Minister for Mines: I hear enough about it.

Mr. LAMBERT: We will have to face this position in Western Australia. So far as our State steamers are concerned we shall have to utilise them on lines similar to those in which our railways are utilised, namely to assist mining. If we once arrive at that definite policy we shall also probably have to erect a central smelter controlled in one central position in the State and in all probability that will have to be established at Fremantle. I am speaking so far as copper and gold ore smelting is concerned. As a matter of fact there are considerable quantities of copper ore along the North-West coast.

Mr. Troy: Inland, north of Peak Hill.

Mr. LAMBERT: While the water jacket furnaces originally put up by an English company at Fremantle were altogether too big and unwieldy for the class of work in this State, a small blast furnace centrally situated, so as to cope with all the better and higher grade gold ores, with copper ores utilised as carriers, would pay. In few countries does not find copper smelting alone. In many cases copper is used as a flux and a carrier for the smelting of higher grade concentrates, or of high grade gold ore. By the establishment of a central smelter, fed by the utilisation on a business-like basis of our State steamers, fed either from Ravensthorpe in the south, or from the North-West, with copper ores, and fed with the higher grade gold ores from the Eastern Goldfields, the problem would be solved. Those higher grade gold ores are now going to the Eastern States and until latterly they have, unfortunately, been going to Germany exclusively. I take it the Government now in power will not encourage any further shipments of ore to Germany. Side by side with that decision, I hope they will see whether our copper ores and our gold ores cannot be smelted in one central position.

Mr. Maley: And lead.

Mr. LAMBERT: And lead. As regards lead, I do not think Mr. Montgomery, the State Mining Engineer, with all due respect to the knowledge which he undoubtedly possesses, bears in mind that if there is a sudden fall in the price of lead to-day, our valuable lead fields adjacent to Geraldton will be absolutely closed down. I think Mr. Montgomery's failure to appreciate this is due to his somewhat conservative turn of mind. However, it is for the Minister to say whether that industry should continue or not. The Minister, while he remains in

office, will find that the fate of lead mining in this State, and particularly the prospects of lead mining in the Geraldton area, are in his hands. It is for the Minister to decide whether or not the lead industry of Western Australia shall continue. We can conclude that lead will fall in price to somewhat near its pre-war level. When that fall occurs, unless we are prepared to conduct lead smelting on proper lines, that is to say immediately adjacent to the mines, the whole of that now valuable field will probably close down. I hope that, seeing we have to face that position, the Minister will consider it worth while to adopt the suggestion which I have made, that a thoroughly comprehensive report should be obtained setting forth the amount of ore available, and the price at which up to date smelting, with an up to date smelter, can be conducted at a central port like Geraldton. I trust that, for the sake of that very important branch of metalliferous mining in this State, the Minister will call for such a report, wherefrom he may readily ascertain that instead of assisting a smelting company to make dividends, as the prospectors and mine owners are doing to-day, he will assist the metalliferous industry of Western Australia. I believe the Minister will, if he finds that he has sufficient backing in this Chamber, spend some little money in that direction. Hon. members more intimately connected with this phase of the mining industry than I am, will undoubtedly speak upon it; but I hope the point is emphasised that this Committee will not tolerate the closing down of those lead mines if it is possible to keep them working. In conclusion, let me say that I hope note will be taken of the point raised by the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie), and that greater consideration will be shown to the lives of the miners in this State. It is a regrettable fact that too light and too little has been made of the life of the miner, and of the conditions under which he should work. All our big mines to-day should be properly ventilated, and should be systematically sprayed by proper germicidal agencies, so as to kill many of the germs existing there. It is doubtful whether any of those mines uses a germicidal spray in any direction.

Hon. P. Collier: All those mines just use ordinary water.

Mr. LAMBERT: In Africa, where black labour is employed, all the mines continually use a germicidal spray, reducing the possibility of the blacks contracting any disease of a contagious character. I hope, too, that for the good of mining in this State we shall have some continuity of policy. I agree largely with the member for Claremont (Mr. Duff) in his maiden effort here. By the establishment of a board, or a commissioner of mines, we should achieve greater continuity of policy than has characterised past administration. Undoubtedly we have had some rapid and wild changes in the tenure of the Mines portfolio recently. I do not know whether that process of change is likely to continue; possibly it will continue. I consider, however,

that the mining industry ought not to suffer from the whims or the possible idiosyncracies of some electorates. Some continuity of policy should be laid down, and particularly do we want a continuous policy as regards the development of mining. If we desire to assist mining systematically and sympathetically, we must first develop a policy. If the Minister finds that he is without cash, without backing, without sympathy, I think it is for him to tell the Committee and the country that his position as Minister for Mines is untenable. His position there can be held with credit, justice, and respect to himself, only if he carries out some sympathetic, practical, useful policy, and that policy should have the financial backing of the Government with which the Minister is associated. I hope that a broad and common-sense view will be taken of this and other subsidiary industries, and that for the good of the people of Western Australia, and for the general welfare of the Commonwealth in which we are so much interested, we shall have that sympathetic treatment for mining which has been extended to other industries in this State.

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [9.55]: The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) in his concluding remarks has thrown a somewhat heavy responsibility on the Minister for Mines as regards the future of the lead-mining industry, which I represent. I think the hon. member's remarks are quite justified. From the report of the Mines Department for the year ended the 31st December, 1917, I observe that the output of lead for that year was valued at £143,925, representing an increase over the preceding year of no less than £33,053. Another year is drawing to a close, and I think that during it the ratio of increase has been maintained, if not exceeded. The close of next month, I think, will show that the production of lead in this State has exceeded the £200,000 mark. These increases are most gratifying; but the lead-mining industry of Western Australia has now reached a stage when grave anxieties are experienced, more particularly by the prospectors who have not the financial protection and the connection which companies have. The prospectors feel very grave doubts indeed as to the future of the industry here. The leading prospecting mine in the Geraldine area is, of course, the Surprise mine; and the owners of that mine have assured me that if lead falls below £20 per ton they must close down.

The Minister for Mines: If they cannot carry on with lead ore valued at £20 per ton, who can?

Mr. MALEY: Undoubtedly they can carry on if the costs are reduced by means which are well within the control of the Government. However, owing to the termination of the war there is a serious position to be faced. That position can be met to a considerable extent. It will, however, be a case of the survival of the fittest; and it is only the higher grade mines that will be able to carry on when the shoe pinches. In the Geraldine area the added cost, owing to the lack of railway facilities, will probably mean the difference between a profit and a loss.

The Minister for Mines: What do you suggest the Government shall do—keep the price of lead up to £20 per ton?

Mr. MALEY: No. The gravest anxiety of the prospector is whether, in the event of circumstances causing a sudden fall in the lead market, the same treatment will be meted out to the lead industry as apparently is being granted to the copper industry. The prospectors of the lead industry want to know whether they will be protected for the same period after the declaration of peace as the copper producers are to be protected. The relative proportions of the two industries are disclosed by the figures of the Mines Department for the year ended 31st December, 1917, when the total copper production for that year was valued at only £98,711, while the production of lead ore figured at £143,925. It is reasonable to expect that the whole of the activities of the Mines Department will be used towards assuring that the best possible terms are made for the prospectors of lead mining, either by agreement between the State Government and the Fremantle Trading Company, or between the State Government and the Metal Exchange, or with the Munitions Department in Melbourne. Every possible effort should be used by the Minister and the department to secure for our lead industry the same treatment as pertains to the copper industry. The House knows from the notices of motion which unfortunately are still on the agenda paper, and which, I suppose, will be amongst the slaughtered innocents at the conclusion of the session, that two suggestions have been made, one by the member for Geraldton and the other by myself, in regard to the assistance from two points of view to the lead industry. But what I particularly wish to emphasise is that the industry cannot expand to-day under the crushing levies which are imposed upon it.

The Minister for Mines: Under existing conditions they cannot live; is that what you maintain?

Mr. MALEY: They are living at the present time, but the existing price is approximately £28 or £29 a ton. I stand to be corrected on that point by the Minister, but the particular levy I am going to outline is that the Government by agreement with the Fremantle Trading Company have exacted an overhead charge apart from the smelting charges of ten per cent. for every ton of ore raised in the Northampton district, and when we take into consideration the fact that many of the prospectors are also paying a royalty of 7½ per cent. to the owners of the old mineral freeholds in the district, we cannot wonder that the industry, because of the terms under which the men are engaged in it and the exactions they have to pay, apart from the ordinary cost of mining, is not a paying one, and that in the near future the burden will be too heavy for those interested in it to bear. Their contention is that they will not be able to carry on if lead drops in value to below £20 a ton. The Minister cannot deny that.

The Minister for Mines: What did they do when it was down to £14 a ton?

Mr. MALEY: In the old days the industry existed by means of the cheap freights which prevailed. The ore was taken to the old country as ballast. It was carried free in sailing ships. I want the industry to expand. It is the policy of the Government, and the Premier has enunciated it frequently, to produce, produce, produce. And the only way to help mining along is to keep the prospectors ahead of the already established mines, and so enable them to bring into production new properties.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Government cannot find millions for agriculture and millions for mines as well.

Mr. MALEY: The one industry depends on the other. What I particularly want to emphasise in regard to the prospectors is that they should not be hampered in the way they are hampered to-day, by reason of the fact that the leases are held under what is known as the old Imperial mineral freeholds. When I spoke in the House two months ago, I was proceeding to read a report issued by the State Mining Engineer after that gentleman entered on his duties in the State, and at which time he had some of the zeal which is usually to be found amongst newcomers. The State Mining Engineer's report was issued in 1908, and there were certain recommendations to the Minister for Mines of the day which, in my opinion, would have solved the position in regard to the mineral freeholds, and made the position easy for the prospector if those recommendations had been adopted. The prospector at any time is a person who does not want to be restricted or hampered. He wants to be fancy-free to roam about at his sweet will, and if he happens upon a discovery it should be the policy of the department to make the way easy for him. I shall read the concluding portion of the State Mining Engineer's report, as it was issued in 1908—

The private ownership of mineral lands in the Northampton district is the greatest obstacle to the prospecting necessary to bring about a revival of the mining industry, and in my opinion very little progress will be made unless this difficulty is grappled with comprehensively by the Government. The procedure laid down in the Mining Act for opening these lands to mining seems very fair in principle—if it is first conceded that the State can properly take steps to force mining upon private lands against the will of the owners—but it is obviously too slow and expensive to give satisfaction to prospectors and their supporters, especially when they are accustomed to the very easy conditions of obtaining possession of areas for mining on Crown lands. It seems to me that in order to revive mining in this field the conditions of taking up mining leases must be made approximately as easy as in the case of Crown lands, and I can see no way of doing this except by the Government intervening to make all the preliminary arrangements with the private owners, which now have to be made by the prospective miner. How best to effect this is a matter on which there will doubtless be much differ-

ence of opinion, and which will be better discussed departmentally, and possibly in Parliament, than, at this stage, in a report such as the present one, which is intended for publication.

The Minister would be wise if he immediately called a conference of the owners of those mineral freeholds and make the way easy for the prospectors to embark on the work of prospecting and arrange terms, perhaps on tribute or royalty with the owners, in the event of any lodes being found in the holdings. I have nothing further to say in regard to the Estimates generally, except to express regret that the gold production of the State is declining. We all sincerely hope that this is only temporary and that by increased attention to prospecting a revival will come about in the near future and that the industry will maintain the place it gained when some years ago it raised the State from obscurity.

[The Chairman resumed the Chair.]

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [10.10]: I do not think any member who is interested in gold production in Western Australia or interested in mining in any capacity would be able to express great satisfaction after a perusal of the Estimates, for I find that apart from the amount provided for the payment of salaries there is not one penny on the Estimates for expenditure in connection with development.

The Minister for Mines: The amount appears on the Loan Estimates.

Mr. TROY: When the Loan Estimates came down last year the amount provided was an infinitesimal sum indeed. The amount which has been expended during the past few years since the present Government came into office, with their cry of produce, produce, produce, has been comparatively small, and to-day nothing has been done in regard to production in any form whatever. Neither in regard to gold production nor any other production have the Government given the lead. One does not say these things because of party differences. One does not want to say such things, but it is an unmistakable fact that the State to-day is decadent. The Government have no policy and they give no lead to the people of the country. It is not pleasant for members to condemn the Government. It is not pleasant for members to do anything which might embarrass the Government, but if the State is going to get out of its difficulties, if we are going to do anything worth doing, the Government should have some definite policy, and give the people a lead. I am speaking the views I have held for some time, and this is the opportunity I have for expressing them. When I move about the country I see stagnation obtaining. The mining fields are decadent, and the same thing applies in the agricultural districts. Wherever one goes, in fact, there is evidence of depression and stagnation, and when I return to the House and find that no definite proposals are put forward, no policy submitted, it makes me despair. The time is coming

when, if the Government have not the money, if they cannot put forward a policy because of the want of money, the whole position should be reviewed. If the State is so handicapped that the Minister cannot assist the industry he has been elected to foster and assist, he should review the whole position, and he should assist in bringing about a state of affairs which will put the responsibility of the development of the country on the shoulders of the Commonwealth Government, who have the opportunity and the money. The Minister is not unsympathetic, but the member for Coolgardie, in my opinion, put the position very pertinently, when he said that if the Minister, whose duty it is to conserve and to advance the interests of the mining industry, finds himself handicapped by lack of sympathy in the Cabinet, his place then is outside the Cabinet. If the Minister is unable to give a lead because of being embarrassed or handicapped, then it is plainly his duty to tell the people that such is the position. I have no doubt that the want of encouragement as shown in the Estimates is due to the fact that the Government have no money. But it has been pointed out that money is being provided for expenditure in other directions, for expenditure in experimental propositions, is being frittered away in the encouragement of industries which are not possible under present conditions and which, if brought into being, could not possibly exist because of the competition with industries better established in other localities close at hand. If the Government are out to assist the country in its difficulties they ought to encourage those industries already established, for the growth of those industries will bring in its train secondary industries, and when those secondary industries are thus established it will be on a prosperous and sound foundation. The member for Claremont (Mr. Duff) expressed the opinion that the mining industry could be fostered by the appointment of a commissioner, that it ought to be removed from political control and be placed under a board or commission which would supervise the whole of the industry. He believed that this would bring about greater development and progress. I do not agree with the proposition. If the industry were removed from political control the commissioner, even if he had the industry at heart, could not do any material good, because he would not have the money which is provided by Parliament. This government by commissioners is an absurdity. The policy of the Commonwealth Government is government by commissioners. They have commissioners by the hundreds. I do not believe that government by commissioners is a good thing at all, because the commissioner, being responsible to nobody, carries out his duties in a way that pleases himself. I do not think it would be to the advantage of those in the industry that it should be handed over to a commissioner.

The Minister for Mines: What would be his duties?

Mr. TROY: Only such as laid down by Parliament, and if he had a mint of money he still might do no good but much harm.

The Minister for Mines: I am looking for the job; that is why I am asking.

Mr. TROY: The commissioner would be a department in himself. I feel sure that this question of control by commissioner would not be put forward by any member who understood thoroughly what it means. A commissioner could bring about no advantage unless he was an extremely gifted man and had vast sums of money at his disposal for the giving of immediate help to the industry. This question of control by commissioner has been put forward from time to time by agricultural members. It has been proposed that the Agricultural Bank should be removed from the control of Parliament and placed under a commissioner. It would be a very bad thing for the farmer. Nobody would more gladly accept the proposition than the present manager of the Agricultural Bank. If Parliament did not interfere, the Agricultural Bank would not be in the position it is to-day, and the settlers would not have received the money that has been paid to them. So in my opinion the people who put forward this proposition do not thoroughly understand it; they have not considered the results, which I believe would be very unsatisfactory to themselves. So, too, in regard to the mining industry, a commission of control would not mean anything except that the commissioner could take up any attitude he pleased; he could be sympathetic where his leanings were concerned, and unsympathetic where they were not concerned. The system is a fallacy. We have commissioners governing almost every department of the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And they are extravagant, at that.

Mr. TROY: The system is not only extravagant but it is vicious, and is dishonest in addition. In my opinion it was organised for the purpose by the present Federal Government. The only way in which the mining industry can be assisted is by the expenditure of money. It is the duty of the Minister to insist that the men engaged in the mining industry shall have an equal call on the purse of the country with men engaged in other industries. I can speak as one representing the mining industry and representing also the agricultural industry. When agriculture was suffering under most adverse conditions in this State I went to my constituents and urged them to give their support to the agricultural industry because, as I told them, the position of the agriculturist was a most difficult one and it was of very great importance that he should succeed. The mining industry to-day is heavily handicapped because of the high cost of production and of mining requisites. It is the duty of the Government to give equally fair consideration all round. The only way in which the mining industry can be fostered is by the expendi-

ture of money in the helping of men to prospect the country, in maintaining prospecting parties and in giving them facilities to develop their properties when found. I do not despair of the mining industry in Western Australia. A State which possesses a large area of mineral country, stretching from Ravensthorpe in the south to Kimberley in the north, cannot have been fully prospected, and in my opinion not all the gold has yet been discovered. I have no doubt the time will come, as it has come in the Eastern States, when there will be very great mining development in Western Australia. We need it very badly. But all that must come about by the giving of assistance and encouragement. If Western Australia is so seriously handicapped, can the Government give us any immediate hope that this position of affairs is going to be remedied in the near future? We have waited two or three years for the Government to assist this industry, and we should like to know from the Government is the time approaching when money will be available for the development of mining? If not, then I say the time has arrived when we ought to consider the position of the State in relation to the Commonwealth. If the Commonwealth Government can invade every avenue of revenue and extort from the people, by taxation and other means, huge sums of money to be spent extravagantly, as is being done, we ought to consider the situation; because this State cannot be developed if the people are impoverished and if all the money is centralised in the Federal Government.

Hon. P. Collier: And they are not concerned about our worries and troubles.

Mr. TROY: I am becoming a little despondent about this Parliament. We come here and do but little of value. I do not think that ever a Parliament has had such barren results.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think we should disparage ourselves.

Mr. TROY: The Government ought to take the bull by the horns, face the situation and, if the country can be developed by any other means than by the present Parliament, then let it be done. If the country cannot produce the revenue necessary for its development, we ought to see about getting it by some other means. No one is in a better position to give a lead to the House than are the Government. The Government know the position of the country, they know what moneys they can lay hands upon, they know how the progress of the country has been handicapped; and it is the duty of the Government to come to Parliament and say the position is such and such and the only feasible alteration is an alteration by which the people will get the necessary assistance. We have to provide for the return of large numbers of soldiers, not all of whom will go on the land. Some will look for other avenues of employment. But what other avenues of employment are there outside the land, to which of course a few will go? Even going on the land means a time of struggle. The

soldier settlers will not escape the difficulties that other men have had to put up with.

Mr. Brown: Neither will they if they go in for mining.

Mr. TROY: That is so. We cannot have a great body of men coming back to this country to find a situation such as exists to-day. The Estimates show that there is no money available for the development of the State. This cannot go on.

Mr. Teesdale: It does not apply to the returned soldiers. They can be fitted out by the department.

Mr. TROY: But only for a short time, and in any case it is not very satisfactory to a returned soldier who is a married man.

Hon. P. Collier: And it is only for prospectors.

Mr. TROY: That is so. We are handicapped in all our industries by the want of money. I do not see any possibility of the State getting any money for some time to come. The "Monthly Abstract" shows the position of the State. I do not see why we should bother about a Parliament such as this, unless the Government can show some means by which we can get out of our present difficulties. The Commonwealth Government have a monopoly of all the money of the States, and have no responsibility. They can impoverish the States. We are endeavouring to carry on and maintain our bankrupt sovereignty.

Mr. Harrison: That is not correct.

Mr. TROY: We are going back every month. We find our industries are in a stagnant condition and the country is stagnant. Go to the back country and see it for yourselves. I want the Government to give some lead; I do not care what it is so long as it is a lead that gives us some hope. Then I am with them and will do what I can to help them. I would rather hit out than sit and do nothing. Unless the Government gives a lead, the country cannot progress. I do not want to say one word against the interests of the industry, but there was one statement of the Minister I could not help noticing when he said that the industry had been greatly handicapped by the increased cost of wages.

The Minister for Mines: The increased cost; I did not say by the increase of wages.

Mr. TROY: This cry of increased cost of wages is always raised, and in my opinion the people who make those statements are of no benefit to the country. I desire to draw the Minister's attention to a remark recently made by Sir George Doolette at a meeting of shareholders in London. He stated that the industry in Western Australia had been handicapped by the demands of the miners in regard to increased wages, and that these increases had seriously embarrassed the industry. That statement is absolutely incorrect, for no increases whatever have been given in the mining industry during the course of the war. If there is one body of men who have been most patient and who have never asked for any increase of wages on account of the high cost of living and the increased railway rates, it is the mine workers. Such statements being untrue

are mischievous and calculated to do much harm.

Hon. P. Collier: They are worse than mischievous; they are grossly untrue. The Agent General should be instructed to make an official contradiction.

Mr. TROY: I repeat that the Western Australian miner has been most patient. I do not know of one instance in which wages have been increased to the mine workers, and nobody can deny but that if the cost of living has increased anywhere, it has increased more in the outback districts of the goldfields than anywhere in the State. In those districts they have had to bear the higher cost of living, and also the increase in the railway freights. That statement about the increased cost of wages is too often put forward. The whole trend of some people's argument is to put forward the statement that owing to labour troubles they cannot carry on. If they have been guilty of dishonesty or if they have been guilty of mismanagement, the blame is always laid on the worker. The so-called captains of industry and newspapers are very prone to make such statements. One newspaper, the "Daily News," has been absolutely notorious for its references of that character. There is no question in my opinion, but that market ragging and the taking down of people engaged in the mining industry has been more responsible for the discouragement of the industry than anything else, and if the authorities will but put their finger on that danger to the industry, they will do well. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) made an excellent speech, but some of his references were prejudicial to the State battery system. It may be true in some instances that prospectors have taken out the richest portions of the mine, but I would point out that two-thirds of our gold producing mines would not have existed at all had it not been for the prospectors. It will be given to the prospector through the State battery system.

Hon. P. Collier: We would not have had Meekatharra.

Mr. TROY: We would not have had Meekatharra or hundreds of other fields but for the prospectors who were helped through the battery system. I repeat that the State batteries have been a great help to the mining industry and that on the whole the State battery system has justified itself. It is unfortunate that in certain instances the charges were not sufficient to cover the cost of treatment. My only regret is that we have not more and I trust that in the future we shall endeavour to secure the erection of additional State batteries, and I believe the time is coming when we shall have to increase the number. A proposal has been made to put the Warriard battery in order for the treatment of molybdenite.

The Minister for Mines: There must be a sufficient quantity of material available to justify the erection of a mill.

Mr. TROY: I am not going to ask the Minister to put the battery in order if there is not some justification for doing so, but I would ask him to state definitely what supply he wants so that the prospectors who have the properties may know what he wishes.

The Minister for Mines: The mines are held up at present.

Mr. TROY: Many of the mines are held under option by Mr. A. E. Morgans. I understand his options expire early in next year. Will the Minister say that the battery will be put in order for the treatment of the molybdenite ore, so that the prospectors may know that if they work their leases they can treat their ore on the spot? This will immediately give them the lead. Instead of giving Mr. Morgans, or any other person, a renewal of these options, the prospectors can say, "You have had the options long enough. If you do not want to exercise them, give them back, and we can then work the mines and get the ore treated."

The Minister for Mines: I am awaiting a report in connection with a recent visit to the district.

Mr. TROY: What amount of ore does the Minister require before he will put the battery in order? Will he give the prospectors a clear understanding as to the needs of the department? If this information is given, and the prospectors do not fulfil their obligations, they cannot then blame anyone else. I rather suspect that the gentleman who has the option over these leases does not propose to exercise it.

The Minister for Mines: You would be very clever if you knew what he intended.

Mr. TROY: I understand that molybdenite ore is there in considerable quantities. If the Minister will tell the prospectors definitely what the needs of the department are, I feel sure they will work these leases. I think they are pretty full up of the leases being held by another gentleman who will not say what he proposes to do.

The Minister for Mines: He will not say whether he proposes to put up a plant or not.

Mr. TROY: If the Minister does not know what the value of the ore is, let him send a quantity of it away for treatment in order to ascertain this. We should not humbug these men who have gone out there to take up the leases. They are willing to work them if they have the opportunity. The battery is there, and requires the expenditure of a fair sum of money to put it into order, and into such a condition that it would be enabled to deal with molybdenite ore. I should like to have the Minister's proposal as soon as possible. I have not found him unsympathetic in the matter.

The Minister for Mines: You appreciate the difficulty which has occurred since I made the promise?

Mr. TROY: I understand that, but I should like to have the Minister's pronouncement as early as possible. In connection with check inspector appointments, and the manner in which the scheme has worked out, I would remind hon. members that when the present leader of the Opposition was Minister for Mines he introduced an amending Act providing for the appointment of check inspectors, and this met with opposition both in this Chamber and in another place. The scheme has, however, worked out most satisfactorily. I do not think

the Minister can point to any one case where there has been any undue friction between the check inspector, the Government inspector, or the inspector in the mine. Some time ago I had the greatest difficulty in prevailing upon the Minister to appoint a check inspector to visit the Youanmi mine. Eventually he agreed to have Youanmi included within the scope of the Murchison check inspector. I have a letter here from the secretary of the union, who tells me that the proposition has worked out very well. He said the Government inspector reported that things were all right on the occasion of each of the visits that he made, but that when the check inspector first visited the place he found the mine in anything but a satisfactory condition. Although the check inspector has only made three visits to that centre, it has been reported to me that there has been a wonderful difference in the conditions appertaining to the whole mine. This shows conclusively the need for check inspectors. Despite the fact that check inspectors have brought about much improved conditions in the mines, this has been effected, to my knowledge, with an entire absence of friction. The provision for the appointment of check inspectors, which was severely commented upon by the Chamber of Mines, and by the opponents of the Labour party, has proved successful beyond a shadow of doubt.

Mr. Munsie: Even the mine managers have admitted that the provision is a good one.

Mr. TROY: Much good has been brought about without any friction whatever between the check inspector, the Government inspector and the manager of the mine.

The Minister for Mines: You are speaking of Youanmi?

Mr. TROY: I am speaking generally now. I regret the great decline that has taken place in the industry. People hardly realise that during the last few years there has been a decline in the gold production to the value of one million sterling. That makes a great difference to this country. There is a great necessity for the Minister taking some action to overtake that loss. I feel that many of the young men who are coming back to the State will again return to the industry in which they have served the better part of their days, and that this fact may make a great difference to the stability of the industry. But a great many of these men will not return to mining. The industry is not one to-day which attracts any man. The conditions are such as to discourage men from seeking employment in it. It is not a healthy industry; it is a very unhealthy industry. If the Minister wants to encourage the return of young men to the industry, he can best serve his purpose by putting on the Loan Estimates a sum of money to encourage men to go out prospecting, so that they may be able to find mines for themselves, and work them while they are shallow, because then the danger is not so great. I conclude my remarks by expressing my disappointment that no provision is made on these Estimates for the development of the mining industry.

With the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) I say that if the Minister finds himself embarrassed by being unable to secure money from the Government, and that if owing to want of funds he is unable to encourage the industry, his place as a representative of the mining industry is not in the Cabinet but outside it.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [10.52]: On the introduction of the Estimates last session I had to call attention to the omission from them of any provision for the oil industry. In his introductory speech this session the Minister made no reference whatever to that important phase of mining. Of gold mining we have heard somewhat discouraging accounts from hon. members on the other side of the Chamber, and I regretted to learn from the member for Greenough (Mr. Maley) the probability of the lead-mining industry proving unpayable. In connection with the oil industry there are one or two points to which the Minister might well give attention. The Mining Act makes no provision for security of tenure of oil titles. Anyone desirous of embarking capital in the oil industry would invest at great risk, since existing legislation provides merely for a tenure of 18 months. I understand the Minister has a Bill ready to introduce in this connection, but the matter is one of extreme urgency. I desire to bring to the attention of the Committee an extract from the London "Daily Mail" of the 20th September, 1918—

There is something for the men in the motor-omnibus to ponder over in the fact that Lord Cowdray is applying his great abilities and is prepared to devote a large sum of money to experimental boring for oil in England. To the majority of his fellow countrymen Lord Cowdray is better known as Sir Weetman Pearson, the distinguished engineer. Why is it that he in the midst of the world crisis should be troubling himself to discover home sources of oil supply? Every engineer knows why. It is not only because every gallon of oil is urgently needed for the Army and the Navy and for transport services, but it is because oil is the new source of power that will govern the future industrial development of the world. The late Mr. Westinghouse, the famous American engineer, was not understood two years ago when he declared that the greatest change the world has to look forward to was the approaching substitution of oil power for steam power. The invention and development of the internal combustion engine, he realised, had opened out a source of industrial power far more efficient and economical than the steam power derived from the combustion of coal. Though many of us have not perceived it, his provision has been progressively justified. The submarines, the airships, the tanks, the familiar motor-omnibuses are his witnesses of the efficiency of oil power beyond the possibilities of steam. In the age that is unfolding itself we must have oil or see our great industrial organisations perish. The "Daily Mail" is informed that machinery for drilling for oil for the Navy is being rapidly erected by Lord Cowdray on two sites near

Chesterfield, Derbyshire, and operations on the first bore will be commenced by U.S. experts in a few weeks. The oil required by the Navy is to be used instead of coal in the furnaces of the steam boilers and as the fuel for the heavy oil-driven engines in submarines and other craft. It is hoped to get from the Derbyshire bores a crude oil heavily charged with benzine (motor fuel, paraffin, clear lamp oil) and other valuable by-products which will be "drawn off" (distilled) before the heavier product is sent to the Admiralty. The "Daily Mail" understands that Lord Cowdray considers the success of the venture to be of such national importance that he is prepared to spend £1,000,000 on his own account before a failure to obtain oil will lead him to abandon the scheme.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What was the result of the American investigation?

Mr. PICKERING: On my particular portion of the electorate there have been two reports from two different sources—one entirely favourable, the other not. The favourable report was from an independent source; the unfavourable report was from the Vacuum Oil Company, who it is scarcely reasonable to suppose would be anxious for the development, to their own detriment, of oil properties in Western Australia. The oil question is one of such vital importance not only to this State but to the British Empire that the Government would be well advised to offer a bonus for oil discoveries and to amend existing legislation so as to permit of capital being invested in the oil industry here.

Hon. P. Collier: But the value of the discovery would be so great that the discoverers would not need any bonus. They would all make fortunes.

Mr. PICKERING: The object of offering the bonus is to encourage efforts to make discoveries. Mining members have appealed to the Government to grant bonuses for the encouragement of gold discoveries, but oil discoveries would be of much greater value to the State.

Hon. P. Collier: For oil prospecting purposes 105 square miles have been taken up in this State.

Mr. PICKERING: I am quite prepared to believe it.

Hon. P. Collier: Bearing in mind that stretch of country, one would say that somebody is looking for oil in Western Australia.

Mr. PICKERING: The Act should be so amended as to prevent the holding of such huge areas without the prospecting of them being enforced. I desire to impress on the Minister the need for promptly amending the Act on the lines of the Bill which I understand he has in preparation, and also the need for encouraging oil discoveries by the offer of a bonus. Obviously, petroleum is one of the greatest factors in modern industrial life; it is coming every day more closely in contact with our commercial life. The effect of the discovery of petroleum in payable quantities in Western Australia would be for a start to wipe off any deficit the State might have.

Hon. P. Collier: The matter is really one for the Commonwealth. An oil discovery here would benefit the East more than the West.

Mr. PICKERING: I do not see that. If there is anything that could put this country in a better position than discovery of oil, I do not know of it. The prospects of oil discoveries here are, I understand, better than those in any other part of Australia.

Hon. P. Collier: Round about Busselton.

Mr. PICKERING: There are good indications in the neighbourhood of Busselton. That remark draws laughter from the leader of the Opposition, but the importance of the subject—

Hon. P. Collier: According to the Minister for Industries, it would not be worked if it was there.

Mr. PICKERING: I doubt the propriety of treating a matter of such importance to the State with hilarity. I trust the Minister will give serious consideration to this very vital subject.

Hon. P. Collier: When I was Minister I subsidised a party in that district—to the extent of £200, I think. Their operations were quite close to Busselton. The party gave it up.

Mr. PICKERING: That may be so. The amount is too insignificant in comparison with the vital nature of this industry to be worthy of serious consideration. I will not detain members, although the question is of the utmost importance. I trust the Minister realises its importance.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [11.0]: During the past 14 days we have entered on a new era since the armistice terms were dictated to Germany. Western Australia is particularly interested in those terms on account of the State's latent wealth which requires development. This fact is emphasised more in Western Australia than in any other part of the Commonwealth and the Government ought to at once move, because the matter so vitally concerns the further development of the mineral resources of Western Australia. Looking through the report of the Mines Department we find two large maps, and a casual glance at them shows that something will have to be done to derive some advantage from the wealth we possess. I am not so pessimistic as to say that we have not the wealth. It is wrong to take a pessimistic view, seeing that last year in connection with our primary industries we showed an increase of 1½ millions sterling in wool and also an increase in stock of a million sterling. If we can now by some means develop the mineral wealth of Western Australia, so much the better will it be for the State. Hon. members have already referred to the excessive costs in connection with the mining industry. Those costs have been brought about as we know through war conditions. Is it not possible now for the Minister through the Agent General or through the Prime Minister who is at Home to see whether a reduction cannot be brought about in the costs of materials which are so necessary in connection with the development of the mining industry in this State. Western Australia can claim that she has done her part during

the war, and we can point to the fact that while in 1915 there were 12,000 men engaged in gold production, last year the number had dwindled down to 7,000. It is simply impossible to expect to get the same return from the labour of 7,000 men as from that of 12,000 men. There is no doubt that the cost in some directions can be reduced, and this matter should be attended to at once. The Commonwealth is looking for direct revenue from the tariff returns. We should look for direct revenue from the development of our resources and in view of the high costs of mining material, I claim that the tariff affecting that material should be removed. On every occasion when the Mines Estimates have been before this House during the past three years I have never failed to hear some member draw attention to the value of the franchise used. The quality for some time past has been very inferior and the Minister ought to take steps to see that it is now brought back to the condition in which it was prior to the war. This would not materially affect the Estimates, but it would affect the result of mining operations because the greater combustion would materially affect the economical working of the mines. There are one or two other matters which should receive consideration at once. Representations should be made at the Peace Conference as to how Western Australia stands. The Commonwealth will be represented, but it is not certain that the Commonwealth will be able to sway the various opinions of the others, and we should use every effort in the direction of bringing about our further development by a reduction in the tariff. Australia is purely an exporter at the present time and her development rests on her primary wealth. How do our secondary industries compare with our primary industries? Our progress is being retarded by the high tariff which has been in existence for some years, and I am certain this is the time to move in the direction of bringing about a reduction. Then there is another point worthy of consideration. Our future depends upon our ability to commercialise scientific research; we cannot carry on development unless we stimulate as far as possible our School of Mines, making the very best use of education in the direction of developing the brains of our youth, so that they may be able to take advantage of local conditions and the mineral wealth around them. If anything can be done by the Minister and his officers in that direction by way of offering a reward or by way of scholarships, it should be done at the present juncture. The expenditure of money in that direction will certainly bring about material results, and if we are going to keep our place where we should be, namely, in the forefront, we should not miss the opportunity of doing what I have suggested. Let us stimulate the students in the School of Mines so that they may take positions in this new development. We have not one line of wealth, but quite a number, and if we want to achieve success, we should take steps to make known throughout the world what we

possess. We should let the world know what our resources are and if it is possible by any means to secure assistance for the development of those resources the Government should do so. We should take time by the forelock at once. The district I happen to have the honour to represent has already been referred to by a former speaker, but I would not be doing my duty if I did not bring certain facts under the notice of the Minister. I had the privilege of travelling through the district by the courtesy of the Minister a little while back, and I went not only through the mining portion of my own electorate but also through the Yilgarn gold-field. We have mines in the Yilgarn district that are of low-grade and unless we have up to date appliances for the treatment of those low-grade ores, we cannot expect the mines to come out on the right side. I visited one mine which had up to date machinery on it, but only 24 hours before I was at another mine, the development of which was held up by reason of the fact that it did not have a modern equipment for the treatment of the low-grade ores. If we are to get the best results from the ore bodies, we have to reduce the cost of production. How are we going to do it? One can only conclude that it is not possible under existing conditions. It has been stated here tonight that the wages of the men on the mines have not been raised during the war period. If the Minister can reduce the costs in other ways he should do so.

Hon. P. Collier: What would you suggest in regard to that mine which is not equipped with good machinery?

Mr. HARRISON: I do not see how the Government could interfere. But it seems to me that our lower grade propositions are not going to be materially developed unless they are equipped with modern appliances.

Hon. P. Collier: The difficulty is the finding of the capital.

Mr. HARRISON: I believe they have been working on their own capital, and I understand they declined to sell at a certain figure. They are still working ahead and they hope to have the necessary appliances some day. Not only in mining, but in agriculture we have been retarded by the increased tariff. It is right against Australian welfare.

Hon. P. Collier: You say that after all our war experience?

Mr. HARRISON: Certainly.

Hon. P. Collier: Without our secondary industries we should be at the mercy of the world.

Mr. HARRISON: The secondary industries will come naturally. Stimulate the primary industries and the secondary industries must follow. I merely ask that the barrier preventing the development of the primary industries shall be withdrawn. Our very freightage from overseas markets is quite sufficient protection. This tariff, we were told, was merely to stimulate natural production. Where is our natural production? But what I am asking the Minister to do is to see that these obstacles to our production are removed. Our resources can be developed only when such restrictions

have been withdrawn, for we have so wide a field and the distances over which the material has to be conveyed to the coast are so great, that those low grade propositions cannot compete with similar propositions in other parts of the world, unless we look carefully to every small item of cost.

Hon. P. Collier: The Prime Minister of Australia has argued on totally different lines.

Mr. HARRISON: I am entitled to my opinions, just as is the Prime Minister of Australia. In regard to that development in my own electorate, which has created a good deal of interest in the speculative world of finance, I believe there is further wealth of gold still there, and from what I have heard I believe that money could be profitably spent by the Mines Department in the assistance of prospectors. If an underground survey could be taken by means of bores, it would assist the development of that area. If the Minister, with his officers, will do the best he can for the development of our mining resources, I feel certain we shall discover further mineral wealth in Western Australia. I am convinced that the gold found at Coolgardie in the early days was not there just from some blow on the surface without there being greater wealth underneath. It has not been proved at any depth, but I believe that some day it will be found. I am convinced also that there are large fields of wealth elsewhere in Western Australia, if only we could locate them. The leader of the Opposition, an ex-Minister for Mines, ought to be able to give the Minister material help in the direction of assisting prospectors. It is possible that a system of assistance would result in the finding of large stores of wealth. I should be glad if this mining industry, which has stood second to none in Western Australia, were again stimulated into increased activity. Now is the time to let our mineral resources be known to the outside world.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [11.17]: The members for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) and Greenough (Mr. Maley) have emphasised the necessity for the giving of some guarantee that the mining of lead in this State will be encouraged. The Minister has said that he has been successful in fixing up an agreement in regard to copper for three months after the expiration of the present agreement. I should be glad if he would give us an idea of what steps he may have taken, or what likelihood there be of finality being reached, so that those people working in the lead mining industry may know whether it is safe to continue in the business or whether it would be better to shut down until such time as costs shall have been considerably reduced. At present, although lead is at £30 per ton, the total cost of production is about £22 10s. If the people concerned cannot see that they are going to get that price for it, they will have to close down.

The Minister for Mines: They are peculiar people to deal with.

Mr. WILLCOCK: They say that at present, owing to the high costs, they cannot produce ore.

The Minister for Mines: They ought to be put right in their statement.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Apparently, they waited upon you and explained the position. They do not want a guarantee of any fancy price. The Minister may say he cannot guarantee that the price of lead will be greater than it was in pre-war times. We know that the average price for wheat during the five or six years preceding the war was nothing like 4s. a bushel, and yet it has now been guaranteed at 4s., and in some cases over that. These particular people want to be guaranteed that they will not be working ore that, in four months time, when the price is settled, will not stand at some figure at which it will not pay them to mine it. If for instance, the price is to be reduced from, say, £30 to £20 per ton, the result will be that they will only work that portion of their mines which will give them ore upon which they can make a profit at the particular price at which the lead stands. I do not know if the Minister can give them any encouragement in the direction of saying that the price of lead will be at a certain figure, say, in four or five months' time, as they sell at the London price four months after assay.

The Minister for Mines: I have promised to give them an immediate answer as soon as I have their statements in writing.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Indicating what the Minister thinks the price will be?

The Minister for Mines: Yes.

Mr. WILLCOCK: In view of that assurance I am prepared to leave the matter in that way. In reference to the coal deposits at Irwin, about seven months ago, with a great flourish of trumpets, it was stated that in that district we had coal of better quality than Collie coal. A certain amount was granted to a man to prospect these fields, but I understand that nothing has yet been done.

The Minister for Mines: The matter has not been left idle. The Government cannot be expected to go on boring without some further particulars.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I thought the Minister might have made some mention of what has been done in this connection.

The Minister for Mines: If we went over the whole gamut, we would be here all night.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The matter is of sufficient importance to justify the Committee in seeking a statement from the Minister as to the future possibilities of the deposit, and as to the conclusion arrived at by the State Mining Engineer upon the matter.

Mr. HOLMAN (Murchison) [11.25]: This is one of the questions which should be entered into without any party feeling. The mining industry affects the welfare of Western Australia to a greater extent than any other industry. Had it not been for gold mining this State would never have risen to the prominence it has attained to-day. It is a matter for extreme regret that the industry has declined, and we, as representing the interests of the State in Parliament, must endeavour to prevent this decline from extending. The mining industry is of such importance that every possible effort should

be made to stem the tide, and foster and encourage it in every way. Ministers as a rule do not appear to take any notice of what is said in this Chamber upon the subject. One of the main reasons for the decline of mining here, and one which has to a large extent been responsible for the reduction in the production of gold, has been the indiscriminate exemptions which have been granted from time to time. Almost anywhere in the gold mining districts there are people who, by the exercise of some influence, have been able to obtain exemptions year after year. I have already asked the Minister questions concerning some individuals. Take the case of Mr. de Bernales. In all probability that gentleman owns at present thousands of acres of idle gold mining country in this State. I dare say, too, he owes hundreds of pounds to the department in connection with these leases. It is a standing disgrace that this state of affairs should be allowed to exist. I know of a property which has been held by Mr. de Bernales, and a co-called company, for many years, and not a stroke of the pick has been made upon any of the leases. At Wiluna he holds between 100 and 200 acres and practically the whole of that area is lying idle to-day. Not a penny has been spent upon it.

The Minister for Mines: Action is being taken to make such people show cause why they should not forfeit their leases. The first case will be heard during the first week in next month. This will be some relief to those who are interesting themselves in the subject. The reason why the case has not been heard before is that the warden, who was on his way to Wiluna to hear the case, was taken ill, and has not yet recovered; and we are sending someone else to do the work.

Mr. HOLMAN: I am glad to hear that. It is because I realise the extreme importance of this matter that I have brought it before the department. Leases have been held in liquidation for a number of years, and wages and dues have been owing during the whole of the time. It is a matter which should be taken up with a firm hand. The man has not even paid his wages or his charcoal bills. He has even robbed the poor old charcoal burner. It is a disgrace that the man should be allowed to interest himself in mining properties here. There are many other persons who have for years been a blight upon our gold mining districts. Not only has Mr. de Bernales interested himself in properties at Wiluna but also at Meekatharra, where he has adopted the same line of action as he adopted at Wiluna. I should like to have some explanation from the Minister in regard to one matter in particular, concerning which I asked a question some time ago. Mr. de Bernales held some leases at Meekatharra, and an application for forfeiture was lodged. The warden imposed a fine of £10 in the case of each of the three leases. The fine is very small indeed. The leaseholder has saved hundreds of pounds on those leases, simply through keeping them idle. Yet other men are willing to work those leases.

The Minister for Mines: There was no application for forfeiture prior to this one.

Mr. HOLMAN: No, because in respect of so many of de Bernales' leases applications for forfeiture have been made unsuccessfully. In some cases he was fined, and in other cases forfeiture was recommended; but the Mines Department in Perth never exacted payment of the fines, nor have they ever carried out the forfeitures recommended.

The Minister for Mines: No such case has occurred since I have been at the Mines Department.

Mr. HOLMAN: But there has been reduction of fines.

The Minister for Mines: Only in one case.

Mr. HOLMAN: For days and weeks one has to hang about a place waiting to make application for forfeiture, waiting until the warden's court meets, and incurring a great deal of expense; and then, after all, a fine of a few paltry pounds is inflicted.

The Minister for Mines: The applicant for forfeiture need not necessarily be unoccupied while waiting for the case to be heard.

Mr. HOLMAN: The Minister is talking nonsense. If a man is applying for forfeiture, he cannot go away somewhere else and settle down to do something pending the hearing of the case. Anyone with any common sense will recognise that. The applicant is awarded so much or so little for costs—not nearly enough to compensate him for his loss of time and his expenditure. Then the Mines Department in Perth reduces the fine. The Mining Act should be amended so as not to allow any person to have two leases under exemption at one time, whether the two leases are situated in one part of the State or in different parts. One exemption should be quite sufficient for any one man. There was a time when one could travel from Peak Hill through Coolgardie to Wiluna and all the way encounter leases held by de Bernales under exemption. The Minister, let me point out, does not treat all men in the same way. He allows de Bernales to hold leases without paying rent. I venture to assert that de Bernales at the present time owes the Government hundreds of pounds for unpaid lease rents and unpaid fines. That is not the kind of treatment which the Minister has extended to prospectors, men who have battled in this country for years, doing good work, when they have happened to fall on evil days and to find themselves in need of extension of time for payment of rent. What does the Minister do in such cases? He tells those men that unless their lease rents and fines are paid immediately—though he did grant a couple of months exemption in one or two cases—he will forfeit the leases. That is the treatment for the legitimate prospector, the man who devotes years of his life to opening up and developing this country, not engaging in purely speculative enterprises after the manner of de Bernales and other blights attaching to the mining industry of Western Australia. For the sake of a paltry £12 or £13 the prospector is threatened with forfeiture of his lease. In these cases the prospector is generally working his lease all the time, but owing

to want of crushing facilities finds himself unable to pay the lease rent. Then he is threatened with forfeiture in default of immediate payment. The Minister will not even wait until the prospector has had a crushing. I do not now whether the Minister's attitude towards prospectors is due to the difference between the political opinions held by those men and the opinions held by him. Possibly there is a vendetta against these men, as there is against myself. To my mind that is a feasible explanation.

Mr. Hickmott: Have the leases of the prospectors been forfeited?

Mr. HOLMAN: No; but the latest information is that they will be forfeited unless the rents are paid forthwith.

Mr. Hickmott: The Government threaten all hands with that sort of thing.

Mr. HOLMAN: But this is the final word.

Hon. P. Collier: It is interesting to note the attitude of the farmer. He takes no notice of threats.

Mr. HOLMAN: The position of the farmer is altogether different from that of the prospector. In all probability the farmer is into the Industries Assistance Board for a few hundreds of pounds, and likewise into the Agricultural Bank for a substantial amount; and he knows very well that his holding will not be forfeited. On the other hand, the prospector has worked his lease for a considerable time.

Mr. Hickmott: But the lease is of no value to the Government when it is forfeited.

Mr. HOLMAN: But it is of value to somebody else then. That interjection of the hon. member brings my argument to the very point I wish to make. If the lease is one of no use to the Government when it is forfeited, why should the Government threaten the holder with forfeiture after perhaps twelve months' work, with stone waiting to be crushed? The man has unfortunately not been able to get the crushing done, and really for that he is threatened with forfeiture. Why is it done? There must be some motive behind. I want to know why legitimate prospectors are threatened in this fashion whilst men like de Bernales are allowed to hold hundreds of acres without working even one acre. There must be some influence. Either it is the persuasiveness of "the Count," or it may be some moral influence, or possibly some worse influence, is being used when de Bernales gets the whole of his leases exempted, and thus is allowed to go scot-free for years. His tributing system, under which he exacts extremely high percentages from the tributers, has kept him going for years. I trust the Minister will take this matter into his most serious consideration. I speak from an experience of over 25 years in the gold-mining districts of Western Australia, and I can to-day point to many leases which would have been working had it not been for the fact that they were held under exemption for years. By the time they were abandoned, the men who were really prepared to work them had drifted away. The sooner we compel the working of leases, the better; and the sooner we treat the legitimate

prospector with a little bit of consideration, or indeed with all the consideration we possibly can, the better it will be for the mining industry of Western Australia. Closer attention should be paid to the granting of exemptions. If exemptions were granted only where absolutely necessary and when legitimately earned, the industry would make better progress. The abandoned leases I refer to will possibly never be worked now. Had the men who were prepared to work them been allowed the opportunity of doing so, the result might have been the opening up of some other good, payable mining districts. Another matter that should receive the Minister's consideration is the fact that time after time, when a new discovery is made, we see the whole of the countryside pegged out, the genuine prospector thus being prevented from putting in pegs and taking up a lease and doing a little work in the way of opening up and development. Time after time do we see that occur. I have been on fresh discoveries where men have had good prospects, but as soon as these men discovered anything worth taking up the whole countryside was pegged out and held with never a tap of work done. The Minister himself knows full well that this is the case. Whenever a new discovery is made, one cannot get pegs in within miles of the place. That state of things does not give a new district a chance. Areas should not be held simply until such time as the legitimate prospector has done a bit of work. If that work does not turn out successful, the other holders put in no work at all. Genuine prospectors are thus driven away, and the district gets no chance whatever. Eventually all the leases are simply abandoned. We should compel a person who takes up a mining area to do a certain amount of legitimate work. Another matter of interest to prospectors and leaseholders is the fact that they do not get that consideration at the State batteries to which they are entitled. I have received many complaints in regard to the Wiluna State battery, and the Minister should see that those who are in charge of these batteries give that assistance to prospectors which is expected of them. There are men who are 70 years of age who are battling in those distant goldfields, and when they proceed to clean up they are left to do everything themselves. That is not right. The silver is short or it is put in in too great quantities and the result generally is that a certain amount of gold is lost. The battery managers should be made to understand that they are expected to give all the assistance possible to prospectors and leaseholders. If we can only give mining a fillip we are in for a prosperous time, but if the industry is allowed to drift I cannot see much hope of improvement. As the representative of a mining district I realise the importance of inducing people to go out prospecting. I am pleased to say that the suggestions I made three years ago in connection with the assistance that should be given to returned soldiers have to some extent been adopted by the Mines Department. I have given several returned men letters to the Mines Department and in every instance those men have been

given some help to go out prospecting. I hope that policy will be continued, because if we can encourage and assist men of that description we can expect good things for the future of the industry. Now that the war is practically over there will be a good deal of clearing up to be done. I hope that the Minister will give some consideration to that portion of my electorate north of Peak Hill. Just before the war the State Mining Engineer and the Inspector of Mines and I had a trip through that country, and the State Mining Engineer made some recommendations. Unfortunately, the war broke out and everything had to go by the board.

The Minister for Mines: I am told some returned soldiers have made important discoveries out there.

Mr. HOLMAN: One cannot go through that country without being struck by the possibilities which exist there. There is not only gold in that part of the State but other valuable minerals as well, and I hope the Minister will himself take the opportunity of making a trip through the district with the State Mining Engineer at the first available opportunity. I would like to get that promise from the Minister because while there are many other districts in Western Australia, the outlook of which is bright, I do not think there is any more promising than that which I have the honour to represent. They have actually discovered silver there, but whether it is in payable quantities I cannot say. The time is not far distant when a railway will have to be constructed to join that portion of my electorate with the electorate represented by my friend the member for Roebourne. There are splendid opportunities in that part of the State for prospectors, but, unfortunately, the isolation which surrounds them prevents them from going out there with any chance of success. With the promise of a railway, however, from the end of my district towards that of the member for Roebourne, eventually extending to the northern pastoral areas, great benefit will follow to the State. We have not yet asked for the railway, but if we can get copper fields opened up and the iron deposits worked, some consideration should be given to the suggestion to construct a railway. There are many other matters about which I could speak at some length but I am afraid at the present juncture no good would result. I take exception to the manner in which the Minister is meting out treatment in connection with exemptions, and the sooner this question is taken in hand seriously the better it will be for the industry and for the State. That class of the community who are always securing exemptions are no good to the country and never will be. A mining council was appointed some time ago to do something in connection with mining, but as I have already stated in this House while its personnel includes some of its present members it will not be possible for that council to do much good. There are some who are on that council merely to secure some glorification from the fact of being members of it. I trust above all that the Minister will

extend sympathetic consideration to the legitimate prospector. There are some who may owe small sums of money, but men like de Bernales owe the State hundreds of pounds, and what I would like to know is why a man like de Bernales is allowed to pay in instalments. I would also like to know whether he pays interest on what he owes. He always gets off very lightly, and while there are others who are anxious to secure the leases which are in his name, he should not receive so much consideration from the department, especially when we know that he owes money for charcoal and other things. I will not deal with other phases of mining, because they have been already touched upon by other members. I have brought forward two or three matters in order that the attention of the Minister might be drawn to them. I hope the Minister will take my remarks in the spirit in which they were made. So long as things are going right, there is no other subject than mining which so lends itself to non-party treatment; because, if mining is to go down, we can look forward to a very difficult time for many years to come. With proper encouragement given to the men returning from the Front, and a little more consideration given to the legitimate prospector, together with the putting out of the industry of those holding properties for speculative purposes alone, I am sure we can expect a more prosperous time. If I can possibly do anything towards furthering the interests of the industry, the Minister has but to command me.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. C. A. Hudson—Yilgarn—in reply) [11.52]: I thank the hon. member for his last few cheerful words. I agree that the indiscriminate granting of exemptions would work to the disadvantage of the industry, and I venture to say there is not so much of that as the hon. member suspects.

Mr. Holman: There is more of it than you suspect.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have acted in cases where I had a suspicion that one law was being used to evade another, and while that matter is before the court it would be injudicious and highly improper in me to deal with this subject. The hon. member made pointed reference to my reducing the time of a lease which Mr. de Bernales was interested in. The warden said there was merely a technical breach of the labour covenant, and that the lease had not been idle very long. This was admitted, and the warden made a recommendation that there should be a fine of £30 in connection with the three leases, and that the amount should be awarded to the applicant as compensation for his being deprived of the leases. Not approving of that, I amended it to a fine of £20, allowing the amount to go to the applicant to cover reasonable expenses to which he had been put. The principal point made in the discussion to-night was that we have no real policy in regard to mining. Both the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) and the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Troy) said that when

they said it was a question of money. But these Estimates are the Estimates of the Mines Department, and do not relate to the policy of the Government. That policy will be enunciated when the Loan Estimates come along. I can give the Committee the assurance that I have succeeded with the Treasurer in securing an amount on those Estimates much larger than has been devoted to the development of mining in any of the last five previous years. What that amount will be is not yet definitely decided, but it will be considerably larger than that of last year, and last year's amount was greater than the amount in the previous year. A question of oil has been mentioned. I may say that I contemplate the introduction of a Mining Bill giving the Legislature an opportunity of determining the title and the terms upon which oil leases may be held. The Legislature has never yet had that opportunity, and I think it should be given. Mineral leases may be granted for shale mines, but for petrol leases at present there are no fixed conditions. They are held subject to conditions imposed by the State, one being that the holder shall be subject to any legislation to be passed during the currency of the present tenancy. I was glad to hear commendations of the educational side of the work of the Mines Department, particularly the work in the Geological Survey Branch by Mr. Simpson, and the work done by Mr. Mann in the analyst's department. The work of the School of Mines in Kalgoorlie is also worthy of admiration. I had intended in the course of my remarks on the Mines Estimates to point out that in my opinion at the School of Mines more might be done in the way of providing experimental plant in order to give the students an opportunity of experimenting and keeping pace with the times in relation to treatment. I propose to provide money for the erection of that plant during the current year. Coal was mentioned by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) and, as I said by interjection, a further examination has been made by the Government Geologist to determine places most suitable for bores to test the depth and width of the coal seam. I am awaiting a report from that officer, and on its receipt further action will be taken. In regard to the price of lead, efforts are being made to get the price of minerals put upon a staple basis. I have pointed out the difficulty in this connection, the uncertainty that obtains as to what the future holds. The subject has not been neglected. In regard to stores, I admit that not a great deal has been done with a view to any reduction in prices, because our efforts have been mainly directed to securing the stores at all. I listened attentively to the remarks of the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie) when he criticised the work of the Inspector General of Mines of New South Wales in his inquiry. That investigation was made at the instigation of the unions of Kalgoorlie, and the report was submitted to them. Recently they wrote to me stating that it was not satisfactory, and asking for a Royal Com-

mission. I wrote requesting to be told in what respect the report was not satisfactory. I am awaiting a reply. The position will be dealt with in due course. At present I am not disposed to grant a Royal Commission, but the points elaborated by the member for Hannans will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Munsie: Their dissatisfaction is, not from the standpoint of what he was inquiring into, the real argument, but with the general conditions.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am awaiting a reply, because I think it is due to me and to him that they should state in what direction they are dissatisfied. I gave the Committee certain promises on the last occasion of the Mines Estimates being before them, and I claim to have carried out those promises as far as possible. With regard to ventilation and the other conditions of miners, I give way to no one in my desire to see that the miners are properly protected. I am in accord with the system of check inspectors. Even if I were not, it is my duty as Minister to carry out the law as I find it. The law provides for check inspectors to be appointed, and whilst they may not be appreciated in some localities, I think when they get more into their stride, and become better known, their activities will be of benefit to the industry and to the men engaged in it, and will impose no handicap upon the management of the mines.

Mr. Munsie: Can you afford us an idea as to why the department has refused to extend the area of the boundaries laid down for check inspectors?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I will inquire into the matter. If the facts are as set forth by the hon. member, I see no reason why the boundaries should not be extended.

Mr. Munsie: Nor do I.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If a check inspector is in a certain locality, I do not see why he should not examine the mines there, but I am not agreeable to giving check inspectors indiscriminately here and there. If there is necessity for an increase in the number of check inspectors, such as may arise by the increase in depth of the mines in Westonia, the staff will be increased. I have been invited to go to Ravensthorpe and deal with the vexed question of smelters there. I get more kicks than halfpence over the position.

Mr. Munsie: What is wrong with the smelter there?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is old and somewhat obsolete, and the cost of getting coke from Sydney to Ravensthorpe has gone up from £4 to £7 a ton. The cost of firewood is double on account of the distance it has to be carted. The boilers are eating up more, and are not working as satisfactorily as they might be. What is wanted is a gas producer plant and further improvements, or else a new smelter erected on the coast.

Mr. Munsie: The smelter is too big for the quantity of ore treated.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

Mr. Lambert: The same mistake occurred at Fremantle.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. When the smelters were put up there was sufficient ore to keep them going full blast. I am

grateful to members for receiving the Estimates in the way they have done, and for their efforts to assist me in my work in connection with the mining industry.

General debate concluded. Votes and items discussed as follow:—

Item, Inspectors of Mines, £3,449.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Has the Minister a full complement of inspectors on the Eastern Goldfields? Owing to deaths and resignations, and absence at the war, the staff has been more or less undermanned during the last year or two. During the last year I was in office I think I made provision for ten inspectors instead of nine, but the extra man was cut out. The inspector who was appointed because of his particular qualifications in regard to health matters has died, and whilst I understand that one man possessing similar qualifications was appointed, he has resigned. To-day we have no man on the Kalgoorlie and Boulder mines, so far as I am aware, who is regarded as a specialist in ventilation. I would stress the need for increasing the staff, because, during the last two years, the staff has frequently been short.

The Minister for Mines: There are not so many miners employed just now, and some of the mines are not working at great depth.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The number of miners has decreased somewhat, but the mines are all working at great depth. Is anyone to be appointed to take the place of Mr. Price who has recently resigned?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I intend to keep the full complement of officers at Kalgoorlie. If there are any vacancies they will be filled. If it is possible to secure the services of a man who is a specialist in ventilation, I think he should be appointed. I have no intention of doing otherwise than carry on the existing conditions.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope the Minister will not overlook this matter. I accept his assurance that it will be borne in mind.

Item, Government Analyst and Chief Inspector of Explosives, £600.

Mr. MUNSIE: Some nine years ago analytical tests were carried out by the Government Analyst with regard to the fractureurs that were being used on the Golden Mile. There is necessity for something being done in this direction with regard to the fractureurs now being used there, in fact, greater necessity than ever. What is the opinion of the Minister on the subject? I think the Chief Inspector of Explosives might have some tests made with regard to the effect upon the men working underground of the present fractureurs. If he does, some pretty startling revelations will result as to the effect on the health of the men who are, to some extent, compelled to inhale the fumes.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is well known that the quality of fractureur used during the war period has not been equal to that used prior to the war. Indeed, I believe the regulations have been slightly relaxed in order to permit of the use of this fractureur, so that the mines might continue working. The coming year, however, will be an opportune period for such an examination as that suggested by the

hon. member. At this stage it would be rather early to condemn certain of the explosives, as that course might prevent the working of the mines. When the present stores of explosives, however, have been used up, and better fractureur is obtainable, it will be the department's duty to see that nothing but the best fractureur is used.

Mr. Munsie: But if the Government Analyst made the tests now and found that the fractureur is deleterious to health, would not that be a stronger reason for urging the adoption of a better quality of fractureur?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know that there is any pressing hurry for it.

Mr. Munsie: There is. One can pick out in the street the men who use that explosive.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: To some extent the trouble lies in the working of the Explosives Act, which measure needs amending so as to give greater power to the department in connection with the actual use of explosives. The Act enables storage to be regulated, but does not empower the department to guard against deterioration between importation and use.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The geological branch has recently been somewhat reduced.

Mr. Munsie: There is a reduction of one geologist this year as compared with last year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; and prior to last year there have been reductions owing to enlistments and possibly owing to retirements. I do not assert that the staff is smaller than it ought to be; and whilst it has not been my practice to raise in this Chamber a discussion in the interests of any particular officer I would on this occasion say that whilst I understand a particular officer is retiring this year, I believe there are others on the staff who, having regard to the interests of mining generally, could be better spared.

The Minister for Mines: Do you refer to the man who has had notice to go at the end of the year?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. I speak not from personal friendship in any sense, but I formed a high opinion of this officer's capabilities from my experience in the department. Whilst not desiring to reflect on other officers, I am confident that there are some whose loss would not be so severely felt by the department and by the mining industry as would the loss of this particular officer. I hope the Minister will look into the matter. I speak quite disinterestedly. I have not been approached in the matter. In fact, I have not seen an officer of the department since I left it two years ago, except when I have had to speak to a Mines officer on public business. I refrain from visiting the Mines Department except when it is absolutely necessary that I should do so. I prefer to do my business with the department by way of correspondence.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: When I proposed last year to reduce the staff of the geological branch, no complaint was made by the Committee. Indeed, it was generally conceded that the work of some of the field geologists had been completed, the greater part of the State having been planned out,

and that thus there was no necessity for keeping up so large a staff. Accordingly, I decided upon the reductions which have been shown in the Estimates, and to which the leader of the Opposition has referred. One gentleman has had notice of retirement, but Mr. Maitland, the chief Government Geologist, since then has fallen ill, and has been away on sick leave and long service leave. He is expected to return to duty about the middle of next month. Thus we have been compelled to keep on one officer more than otherwise we would have done. In making the selection of the men to be retired, I did not act upon my own knowledge, since I know only one or two of the officials closely. I left the matter to the recommendation of the chief officer, subject to the approval of the Public Service Commissioner. I quite agree with the leader of the Opposition that the gentleman who has notice of retirement is deserving of consideration. As these Estimates provide for his services until about the end of next March, I shall have time to consider the position. Since these Estimates were last before the Committee, there has been a change in the department. I think I have attained my object of stirring up the department, of getting things done a little more practically and a little more quickly, and therefore more satisfactorily. The effect has been to advertise the department, and to bring it into closer touch with public requirements; and the public have taken advantage of the opportunity to make certain demands upon the department. Possibly those demands may involve the necessity for the retention of the officer who has been alluded to by the leader of the Opposition.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Mines Department.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—VERMIN.

Returned from the Legislative Council with amendments.

House adjourned at 12.21 a.m. (Wednesday).

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 27th November, 1918.

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

[For "Papers Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT.

Order of the Day for the third reading read.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.35]: I desire to move without notice—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to permit of the passing of the Bill through its remaining stages at this sitting.

The explanation is a simple one. The Bill is down for the third reading, and in the ordinary course it would be put through that stage and passed, and returned to the Assembly. But if we pass it now it will go back to the Assembly with Clause 7 reading in a manner which I am sure hon. members do not desire. Clause 7 originally provided that prosecutions for the offence of having unlawful carnal knowledge must be begun within six months, and for the offence of attempting to have unlawful carnal knowledge within three months after the offence has been committed. By an amendment the clause was made to read that both classes of prosecutions must be begun within three months. Subsequently the Bill was recommitted and the clause was restored to its original form. The Bill was again recommitted for the purpose of reaffirming the previous decision of the House, which was reaffirmed by a substantial majority. I was under the impression that the clause had been restored to its original form by the amendment; that is to say, that in relation to both offences a prosecution must be begun within three months. But it appears that the form of the actual amendment was that "three" be inserted in lieu of "six" and so the provision now reads:—

A prosecution under this section must be begun within three months after the offence has been committed, and for the offence of attempting to have unlawful carnal knowledge, within three months after the offence has been committed.

I have discussed the question with Mr. Kingsmill and he agrees to treat it as a consequential error, but he properly holds that the error cannot be rectified except in Committee.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [4.40]: I support the motion for the reasons given by the leader of the House. All hon. members agree that it is absolutely necessary that no amendment should be made in Bills except by the Committee of the House.