

can never be satisfactorily developed. A short time before the change of Government the farmers were penalised because it was alleged that the Government had set themselves to carry certain taxation which the majority of members of this House thought inadvisable, and the Government said, "Very well, then; farmers are no friends of ours, and we will put on the terminal charges once more; we will increase the rates on manures and many other classes of freight." They did so, and in so doing imposed a severe wrong upon the farmers and set up a deterrent to that class of immigration which we had hoped to see setting in. The Government that have just gone out have done a great deal to retard immigration and land settlement; not intentionally, but that has been the effect of their administration. In view of the desire of the new Government to encourage immigration and land settlement, I commend to them the desirability of greatly reducing freights. Of course this will reduce our railway income. But why has this country adopted as a policy the monopoly of transit in the hands of the Government? Simply because the Government, as owners of the public estate, desire to use the railways as an instrument of land settlement. Well, then, even though a considerable amount of railway income may thus, for the time being, be lost, let the Government study the settlement of the land, assured that every settler will be a producer of revenue in countless ways. I hope the Government will study the question of how far can we reduce freight in proportion to distance, and open up all the lands of the State to profitable settlement. I wish the Government all success in the very heavy task they have undertaken.

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

House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 20th September, 1916.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Papers in connection with the construction of the Esperance-Northwards Railway.

By the Attorney General: Amendment to the rules under the Legal Practitioners Act, 1893, relating to the Barristers' Board.

By the Minister for Agriculture: Albany Government Cold Stores—Cool Storage charges.

QUESTION—FREMANTLE HARBOUR, DEEP DREDGING.

Mr. CARPENTER asked the Minister of Works: 1, In view of the steps now being taken in other States to provide a depth of 40 feet at their chief ports for the accommodation of deep-draught shipping, is it the intention of the Government to make early provision for similar accommodation at Fremantle? 2, Is the dredging plant now employed in dredging the Fremantle Harbour capable of dredging to a depth of 40 feet? 3, If not, what steps have been taken to secure the necessary plant?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The matter was under consideration by the late Government and is now being gone into by the Minister for Works. The expenditure contemplated runs into one and a-half million pounds, exclusive of cost of new plant. 2, The dredges we have are not capable of taking depths up to 40 feet. The "Parmelia" could be altered but the engineers advise against it. 3, The estimate for a suitable dredge is approximately £100,000, in addition to which docking facilities would have to be provided.

QUESTION—ROTTNEST ISLAND HOSTEL.

Mr. CARPENTER asked the Attorney General: Did the Minister controlling the Tourist Department, when visiting Rottneest Island a few months ago, authorise the renovation of the State Hostel? 2, As this work was not proceeded with, by whose authority has it been deferred or delayed? 3, Does the present Minister intend to have the Hostel ready for use by visitors during the coming holiday season? 4, How many of the summer cottages, authorised by the Minister during the visit referred to, have been constructed to date? 5, How many men are now employed on the work of their construction? 6, How many of the cottages will be ready for occupation when the next season opens on November 1st? 7, Seeing that a number of returned soldiers are now seeking employment, cannot this work of construction be expedited by the employment of these men, or of others? 8, What portion of the sum paid or to be paid by the Federal Government for the restoration of Rottneest Island has been expended for that purpose?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, No. Owing to military occupation the condition of the building is such as to preclude it being reopened until very considerable repairs have been effected. Moreover, during such military occupation it was found necessary to remove a portion of the furniture, which was utilised for the time being in the State hotels. 4, One (1) has been completed, and two (2) partly completed by prison labour. 5, The work being done by prison labour, number fluctuates. 6 and 7, These matters are now under consideration, and reply cannot be given until the policy is determined. 8, To date about £200. Total to be expended will depend upon decision arrived at, *vide* answer to 6 and 7.

QUESTION—STATE IMPLEMENT WORKS, BALANCE SHEET.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Minister for Works: Will he publish the balance sheet of the State Implement and Engineering Works at an early date before audit in accordance with the promise made by the Pre-

mier through the Press regarding trading concerns balance sheets?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: Yes; they are in the hands of the Press now.

QUESTION—ESPERANCE NORTHWARDS RAILWAY, COMMISSION.

Mr. WALKER asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Will he place upon the Commission to inquire into the qualities of the mallee soils on the track of the authorised Esperance Northwards railway two *bona fide* mallee settlers? 2, Will he place one or more experts in the chemistry and bacteriology of soils upon the said Commission?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, To do so would prejudice the inquiry; the Government therefore does not purpose making such appointments. 2, It is not intended to place scientists upon the Commission, but they will be asked to give evidence. Practical men have been appointed, who will collect all the evidence necessary to frame an exhaustive and complete report.

Mr. WALKER: I have my doubts.

RETURN—STATE TRADING CONCERNS, RETURNS.

On motion by Mr. ALLEN, resolved that a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing the position of all the State trading concerns, the return to set forth the following: (a) Capital account of each concern; (b) result of trading for each year; (c) result of trading from inception to the 30th June, 1916, showing aggregate loss or profit; (d) any charges against concerns, such as interest, etc., not allowed for in balance sheets.

BILL—SALE OF LIQUOR REGULATION.

Introduced by Mr. Thomson and read a first time.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day—Amendment.

Debate resumed from the previous day on motion for the adoption of the Address-in-

reply and on amendment by the Premier that the following words be added:—"We beg to assure Your Excellency that we will give the most careful consideration to measures that will promote the welfare and prosperity of Western Australia."

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [4.42]: In submitting the amendment to the Address-in-reply last evening the Premier delivered a long speech which became very wearisome to hon. members and evidently tiring to himself. This is due to the fact that practically the whole of his matter was a repetition of what we have heard in this Chamber time and time again for the last year or two. Particularly does this apply to the trading concerns. It is true that he altered a few figures and substituted others, but speaking generally all that we got last evening in connection with trading concerns was simply a repetition of what we had heard from him whilst he was in opposition. Up to date, it is evident that the Government have not been able to get anything new. Previously those hon. members now forming the Government criticised without knowledge and stated that things were not exactly happening that were thought to be going to happen, and now, as Ministers, they are continuing that parrot-like cry without having justified anything they said whilst in opposition and without certainly having justified anything they said whilst on the Treasury bench.

The Premier: They have happened exactly as we prophesied.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The fact remains that the Premier has not given any evidence of happenings that he had previously outlined. If he has any evidence, he did not give it to us last night. His statements were purely a repetition, as I have said before, of what we received from him when he was sitting in opposition. All this goes to prove that the statements he made last evening, and previously, were not in any shape or form correct ones. Again, he devoted a considerable amount of his time as usual to the clap-trap which we have had from him for many years. As a matter of fact, we have had the same old cry ever since he entered Parliament, namely, the question of the change of Government for the restoration of confidence, the squandering of State

funds, and the mismanagement of the State's business. And so it goes on year after year that we get from this hon. gentleman clap-trap about financial drift. As a matter of fact it is quite interesting to look up the attitude adopted by the hon. gentleman when he sat in opposition, and was then criticising the policy of his present chief, Sir John Forrest, and it is also interesting to find that the references he makes to-day in regard to the financial administration of Mr. Scaddan are almost identical with the criticism which he levelled against Sir John Forrest when that gentleman was Premier.

The Premier: You prove my consistency.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Let us take certain remarks of Sir John Forrest in regard to the present Premier and see how well they apply to-day. In the early days the present Premier criticised Sir John Forrest's administration of the Treasury.

The Premier: What year was that in?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I think it was in 1897 or 1898. I have here a quotation from *Hansard*, and I am just going to read it to show what Sir John Forrest thought of the hon. gentleman in those days and the value of his criticism. Speaking on Sir John Forrest's public works policy, Mr. Wilson said—

No Government has a right to take the public funds of the community and to enter into commercial undertakings which may prove disastrous to that community. It appears to me that the ills we are suffering from just now, small though they may appear to the Right Hon. gentleman, have to a very great extent been caused by this speculative spirit which has actuated the Government. I say that they launched into such a lavish expenditure on public works, they launched into such great extravagance, and I will go further and say, wastefulness of public moneys in carrying out these works, that it has brought us into the condition we are in. Sir John Forrest dealing with that speech made these remarks—

If it is the wish of the people that I should retire, then I say I would hail the morning on which that retirement occurred—if the people are willing, though I know they are not; that they are not

yet ready to entrust the Government of this country to the hon. Mr. Wilson and his private enterprise and contractor friends. When the people are ready no one will be more pleased than I to hand over the affairs of the country to them.

In those days he accused Sir John Forrest of embarking in State trading and entering into competition with private enterprise, and we find that he then raised his voice on behalf of private enterprise and his contractor friends exactly as he did last night.

The Premier: What is the conclusion that you have come to?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I will tell the Premier directly. Then again we have Sir John Forrest dealing with the hon. gentleman's criticism in regard to private enterprise, and Sir John Forrest spoke as follows:—

The hon. member, Mr. Wilson, has had a great deal to say in his time about private enterprise, and he seems to be the advocate for private enterprise and for contractors. Everything should be given to private enterprise according to Frank, and everything should be left to contractors; but the hon. member, Mr. Wilson, knows well what that means. I am not opposed to private enterprise, although he would lead people to believe that I am not in favour of private enterprise at all. If it were a necessary work, and the people wanted it, I should not object to private enterprise doing it; but when there is a great national work, and one which the people can afford to pay for, I know the best and cheapest way is to do the work through the Government, because private enterprise means double the capital to start with, and means promoters and underwriters, and a lot of plundering. If we have private enterprise we must put up with these things.

Now we find the present Premier talking in the same wild manner of Mr. Scaddan's administration of the Treasury as he did of Sir John Forrest's. After all these protestations it is difficult to remember that for many years the hon. gentleman has been posing as a financial genius who governed this country better than Sir John Forrest did, and of course decidedly better than did Mr. Scaddan. But it is interesting to know

that in spite of all his appeals to the country he has never yet been elected by the people to the position of the leader of Parliament.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): That will soon be remedied.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The fact remains that up to date he has never made a successful appeal on the policy he submitted to the country. The hon. gentleman claims that the success which he met with at Canning and Northam—and of course he does not say anything about Coolgardie—was sufficient to give him a mandate to go ahead with his financial policy. Another significant point is this, that during the whole of the election campaign, both at Northam and at Canning, not one word was said in connection with the financial policy of the Government. Neither of the candidates, nor did any of the speakers who supported them, outlined one single item as to how they were going to straighten the finances. As a matter of fact the only matters of a financial character that were dealt with were the reckless and grossly extravagant proposals which were mentioned by the member for Canning. He said that he was going to build bridges everywhere and provide tramways in all directions. He also said that he was going to shift the filter beds and that he was going to establish an ocean outfall, regardless, of course, of expenditure. And the member for Canning had the audacity to support these promises of his by means of pamphlets which he distributed broadcast.

Mr. S. Stubbs: Still he beat the favourite.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: But he is bound to be defeated unless he fulfils the reckless promises which he made.

Mr. S. Stubbs: That is his funeral.

Mr. Smith: You have made a few promises in your time.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The only difference between the promises I made and those of the member for Canning is that mine were fulfilled.

Mr. Smith: Oh!

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I defy the member for North Perth to quote one promise made by me which was not fulfilled. The Attorney General received a good deal of eulogy from the Press, and last night from

his leader, in regard to his attitude towards the mining industry and his success in connection with the trouble that threatened the industry some little time ago. I too give him credit for proceeding to Kalgoorlie, and I congratulate him on the success that followed his efforts, but we can hear too much of that sort of thing, and I would advise the hon. gentleman not to cry too loudly until he gets out of the wood. The report of the board which was appointed has yet to be submitted to prove that the action of the Minister will meet with favour on the goldfields. Therefore he should not cry out.

The Attorney General: I have not cried out at all.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: We have to bear in mind that the whole of this trouble, or a good deal of it—

The Attorney General: Could have been settled by someone else.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Would have been avoided if the Premier had taken a different course when he was appealed to by the Labour Government when they occupied the Treasury bench. If the Premier and the members of his party in this and another Chamber had supported the Bill which was introduced by the Scaddan Government we would not have had those aliens in Kalgoorlie to deal with. The attitude adopted then was the cause of the trouble, and while we give the Attorney General credit for having brought about a temporary settlement in regard to the difficulty, his side of the House is wholly responsible for the position which exists to-day.

Mr. O'Loughlen: There are hundreds of them in the South-West.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: No doubt the hon. gentleman will give some credit to the deputation that waited on the Premier, and which brought the magnitude of the dispute under his notice and urged that action be taken. They also deserve credit for having gone to Kalgoorlie and assisted the Attorney General to get the miners to agree to the course advised by them.

The Attorney General: Their suggestions were to intern the aliens.

Mr. Holman: All who employed them ought to have been shot.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: As I have already remarked, the speech made by the Premier last night was a very long one, and he gave the House very little in the shape of definite pronouncements. As a matter of fact it was a constant repetition of submitting this and that to a Royal Commission and this and that to a board of inquiry. It seems to me that we are going to have government by Royal Commissions and boards of inquiry, and in order to get something definite in regard to their intentions concerning the industries of the State we shall have to wait until the reports of those boards and commissions are available. It is an old game, that of submitting things to commissions and boards. It has been the policy adopted by so-called Liberal Governments for years and years in various parts of Australia. As soon as they come up against a difficulty, instead of facing it and taking the responsibility of it, they delay and mark time by submitting the proposal, whatever it might be, to a committee of so-called experts, and the Governments responsible take particularly fine care that they constitute these commissions in such a way that they can anticipate the nature of the reports which are likely to be submitted. The object of the appointment of a commission is to delay matters. What I consider to be the most important of the commissions appointed by the present Government is that which deals with the all-important agricultural industry, but in my opinion the personnel of that commission is open to very serious criticism. If that Commission has been appointed to collect evidence, then they are not experienced in that regard. You could get far better men to collect that evidence and summarise it for the information of the Government. They are not experienced men, consequently should not have been appointed for that reason. Then, again, they are not experienced in regard to the difficulties in those parts of the State where the difficulties are presenting themselves to-day and need rectifying. The main difficulty being experienced to-day is found in our Eastern Wheat Belt, not amongst the stock raising community, representatives of which have been included on this Commission. For instance, Mr. Giles is

a stock authority, is connected with the firm of Elder, Shenton & Co. His knowledge of the agricultural industry is limited, or rather his experience is limited to stock and stock matters.

Mr. S. Stubbs: He has had a long experience in South Australia.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: But I am speaking of experience in Western Australia, and as far as I know Mr. Giles's experience is limited to stock matters.

The Minister for Works: He has a large farm here.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not know of it. No doubt Mr. Giles is an authority on stock. Then take Mr. Paynter, a gentleman never heard of before his appointment on this Commission. I do not know whether Mr. Paynter has had any experience in regard to the difficulties the farmers are up against in our Wheat Belt. At any rate he is a man who has not been prominent. I know him only as a farmer and I understand he is a farmer in the South-Western district.

Member: No, in the Wheat Belt. East of Kellerberrin.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: If, as the hon. member says, Mr. Paynter is a farmer in the Wheat Belt, then he will know that district, and he will have an opportunity of presenting the many difficulties before the Commission. But Mr. Giles is a stock man; Mr. Clarkson is a stock man.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Mr. Clarkson is a large cultivator.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: He is mainly interested in stock.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): No.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I know the country and I know that Mr. Clarkson's farm is situated in one of the oldest settled portions of Western Australia. He has had no experience of the difficulties besetting the farmers in those portions of the State where most of the difficulties have been experienced in recent years?

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Do not we want every branch of the farming industry represented? You have one representative of the dry areas; one representative of the South-West—

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: We have three stock men—Mr. Giles, whose knowledge and experience is stock; Mr. Clarkson, whose knowledge is also stock, but who has had some experience in cultivation, though only in a favoured portion of Western Australia and not in the dry portion where farmers are experiencing the greatest difficulties—

Member: He is one of the most practical men that could have been obtained.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Possibly, but so far as his own knowledge goes he has not had to put up with the bitter experience which the farmers in the Wheat Belt have had. Take Mr. Venn; he is a farmer in the South-Western District, another of the picked portions of Western Australia.

Mr. Thomas: He is also a stock buyer.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. Like Mr. Clarkson, Mr. Venn's land was selected many years ago. The Clarksons selected in the picked portion of Western Australia, and the Venns in another picked portion, and in the case of both, their knowledge has been more confined to stock than to the difficulties of the farmer. Thus, of a Commission of four men, you have only one man who has any knowledge of the farmers' difficulties in that portion of the State where those difficulties are being experienced.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Mr. Venn has one of the largest dairy herds in the South-West District; should not the dairying industry be considered?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes; but the difficulties are not so much in the South-West District. The difficulties to-day and the big losses have occurred in regard to moneys invested mainly in the Wheat Belt, and it is these farmers who deserve consideration and the benefits of any investigation which is to be made. No doubt the settlers in the Wheat Belt are pulling through their troublesome time, but their burden has been too much to carry for the last few years and there has been a gradual but continual loss year after year suffered by those operating farms there. Those who selected their holdings six or eight years ago I refer to particularly. Some of them had money to start with, but now find their funds entirely depleted; and even though some of them have been able to work without the assistance of

the Agricultural Bank, they now find themselves forced to go to the Agricultural Bank to get assistance in order to carry on. Many of them, if the Bank refused to carry them, would be forced on to the Industries Assistance Board. I view with alarm the difficulties these men are suffering under and the fact that so much State capital has been invested in the proposition which is undoubtedly showing a gradual but continual loss. But knowing these difficulties, I think that if the Commission is going to devote its attention to the problem of the agricultural industry, their particular attention should be devoted to the Eastern Wheat Belt. And what report can they bring in? Simply what everyone knows to be necessary—that is, that in the first place they find wheat growing alone is not profitable, and has been showing loss year after year, and that they recommend that wheat growing must be associated with mixed farming; that stock must be introduced on to the farms in the Eastern Wheat Belt. If we are going to assist these people in the manner they must be assisted, if we wish to make their venture successful, there must be more liberal advances made by the State for such matters as water conservation. One of the main difficulties of the farmer in the Wheat Belt is that the advances made by the Agricultural Bank for this purpose are altogether too limited; and a more liberal policy will have to be adopted so as to meet the requirements of the farmers in regard to water. They must have sufficient conservation to guarantee a two years' supply. And after the water question has been settled we must go into the question of fencing, and must be prepared to make more liberal advances for the purpose of providing wire and wire netting. The cost of these commodities to-day is prohibitive, and even those farmers who have developed their holding in recent years to a point which enables them to carry stock are prohibited from doing so owing to the excessive cost of wire and the absolute impossibility of getting wire netting at all. Consequently this Commission can report only on the fact that certain remedies are required and those remedies can only be supplied or made if more liberal advances are made from State funds. That being so, I am inclined to think that the thinking

portion of the community will ask a question as to whether the State is justified in putting more money into the Eastern Wheat Belt. There can be no doubt that the financial position of those institutions which have been advancing to the agricultural industry for the past eight or ten years should be the subject of investigation. Before appointing a Commission which is to investigate the question of doing more in the direction of assisting the industry, it is only fair, both to the community and to Parliament, that we should have the whole of the securities of the Agricultural Bank closely investigated to see whether we are justified in going further into expenditure of that character. The capital invested by the Agricultural Department and other State Departments and still outstanding amounts to about six million pounds, which is a large proportion of our national debt; and in my opinion, before appointing a Commission, to see what further advances may be made we should at once appoint a Commission composed of sound farmers and experienced business men to go into the securities which we now hold. In order to show the justification for an investigation such as this, while advances by State departments have been on the increase on properties in the Wheat Belt the private banking institutions have been quietly but persistently withdrawing advances and investments in these areas. That is, that while the insecurity of investment in the agricultural industry has influenced the banks to withdraw their assistance, the State on the other hand has been forced to render greater assistance in an insecure investment. These are questions which require to be seriously considered before going further. It may be said that the fact that the *personnel* of the Commission has not been criticised by the farmers indicates that the *personnel* has been endorsed in the agricultural districts. I have been through a fair portion of the Wheat Belt since the appointment of the Commission and have met farmers on their holdings who have stated that they disagreed with the Commission and hold the opinion that the Commission is not going to do much good. But they say that the Commission as appointed is better than to leave the industry solely and wholly in the hands of the hon. member for Northam

(Hon. J. Mitchell): that they would rather have anything than allow that hon. member to have full sway again.

Member: Where do they say that?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Right through the Wheat Belt. They say that they would rather have any Commission than allow the hon. member for Northam to have full sway once more. From some quarters I have heard a good deal of criticism, and very trenchant criticism, of the Hon. Premier for not carrying out his undertaking given to the delegates of the Farmers and Settlers' Association that Mr. Mitchell would not be appointed Minister for Lands and Agriculture.

The Premier: You are absolutely incorrect. I never gave any such undertaking.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Then the delegates have undoubtedly misled the farmers.

The Premier: I do not believe they ever said that.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Many farmers have been informed by their delegates that an undertaking was given that the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) would not be appointed Minister for Lands.

The Premier: Did you hear the delegates say so?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: No, the farmers have told me so. However, I am very pleased to get a definite pronouncement from the Premier that he did not give any undertaking that the member for Northam would not be appointed Minister for Lands and Agriculture in the event of the Country party lending their support to the Liberals.

Mr. Green: The Country party frequently said they would not give their support if the member for Northam was to be Minister for Lands.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Whether that be so or not, the past administration of the member for Northam justifies the farmers in being chary of trusting him with any further administration of the Department of Lands and Agriculture. As a sample of that gentleman's administration we have his action in connection with the Industries Assistance Board.

The Premier: He has to clear up your mess.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Within three days of his appointment, and without any knowledge of the internal workings of the board, led apparently by what he had read in the newspapers and heard in the train, he straightway re-organised or disorganised the whole department.

Mr. Munsie: Spoils to the victors. He put his friends on the board.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Let us just glance at the early history of this board which was appointed to look after the "wasters," as the Premier dubbed them last night.

The Premier: Oh no.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I resent the Premier calling them wasters. There are a few inexperienced men on the land who are not making a complete success of it, but nevertheless they are struggling hard, and the fact that they are on the land to-day and were on it when the trouble befell them justified the past Government in assisting one and all. It is cowardly to call them wasters, as the Premier did last night.

The Premier: Are there no wasters among them? I charged you with assisting the waster, and passing over the honest man.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Over and over again the Premier referred to the wasters that were being assisted.

Mr. Holman: According to the Premier, every man assisted was a waster.

The Premier: Oh no, no—and you know it.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: In the first place, all those who were assisted were clients of the Agricultural Bank, and in assisting them we were simply protecting the assets of the bank, apart from the fact that the settlers were thoroughly deserving; therefore these wasters, as the Premier called them, were in the first place assisted by the Agricultural Bank, were men who had been encouraged to go on the land by the member for Northam, who in his pamphlet declared that a man without capital and without experience could go on the land and make a success of it. These men were encouraged to go on the land and were further encouraged by the Agricultural Bank. Then, because the Labour Government came along and assisted them, they and their wives and families are now called wasters by the Premier. It is

true that in some cases one settler will receive more than another, although the one that receives least is possibly the better farmer and possibly has the better security. I might explain that in this way: Where we have a Government institution advancing money the same discrimination cannot be shown as would be shown by a private institution. If a private bank is asked for assistance the manager can refuse, and the applicant cannot demand any reason for it; but if a Government institution refuses to advance, pressure is brought to bear through the representatives in Parliament of the applicant, and the bank officials are asked to explain how it is that Jones, "that most deserving farmer," has been refused assistance. Very often, indeed, one might be inclined to view the application for assistance with the utmost suspicion, but one cannot regard the fine perceptions which might and probably would influence one if he were dealing with his own private money. The Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board have experienced the difficulty of giving to some applicants more assistance than was justified, while possibly in other cases withholding a portion of the assistance to which the applicant was justly entitled. We have quite a number of instances in which the settler has deliberately denied his wife and children of, almost, the necessities of life, certainly of the luxuries, in order that he might keep down the amount of money he was receiving from the Industries Assistance Board, whereas another, denying himself nothing, has secured from the board the last farthing the board would advance. Later on, when a comparison is made, it is found that the one man, not as deserving as the other, has received very much more because he has drawn up his application in such form as to convince the board that he required everything he asked for, whereas the other man applied for nothing more than bare necessities. And the man who received so large a share is the man who, to-day, is agitating for reform, is the man who went to the member for Northam and criticised the administration of the Industries Assistance Board because he knew that he had got all that was possible from the board, and he hoped that by virtue of criticism he could bring about an alteration and

possibly escape being called upon to recoup the board their advances, as the then existing board were endeavouring to make him do. As a matter of fact all the criticism against the board was levelled by men who had received a great deal of assistance from the board, and in a number of cases we had men criticising, not because they were dissatisfied with the board itself, but because they were dissatisfied with the board's determination to get back for the State the money which was owing by those men. Again, let us realise that at the outset the board were not able to review all the applications made. Let hon. members cast their minds back to the time when first we realised that the crops were going to be a total failure, that the drought would make it impossible for the storekeepers to carry on our settlers and that there would not be sufficient fodder and seed wheat. The Government issued orders broadcast to the storekeepers throughout the country to advance the necessary supplies to all farmers in distress. Those farmers came on the books of the board and became the clients of the board. We followed up those clients by taking them from their holdings and removing them to the South-West, and other more favoured portions of the State. In other cases we supplied fodder for the animals and supplied seed wheat and fertiliser. We did everything to enable the farmer to crop his land. Having done that, an interesting position arose, one that was not clearly anticipated. At that time, at the call of Empire, we appealed to all farmers to get as large an area as possible under crop. So well did the farmers respond that we got a very big increase in the acreage under crop. Having got from the Government seed wheat and fertiliser and chaff in order to get their seeding done, the farmers came to the Government and said, "We have this large area under crop, but we have not the machinery nor the horses to take the crop off. You will have to advance us for horses, and you will have to increase our stock of machinery, otherwise we will have to leave the crop." The board were inundated with applications of that sort. Again, having been forced into the position of supplying horses and machinery with which to harvest the crop, we

were then forced to supply wagons to get the crop to the railway station, with the result that the aggregate amount of the advances made was far beyond what was anticipated by Parliament when the Bill was passed. But this was done, as I say, deliberately by a number of farmers in order to obtain from the Industries Assistance Board such assistance as they could not obtain from the Agricultural Bank. Throughout the wheat belt we find to-day numbers of farmers with full equipment of horses and machinery, as the result of the work of the Industries Assistance Board. In fairness to the board I wish to say that the board did not willingly, or wilfully, embark on a policy of lavish advances. The board were forced into that policy by the attitude adopted by the farmers in their desire to obtain full equipment. Therefore, in criticising the amounts advanced to settlers by the Industries Assistance Board, let us not criticise the personnel of the board, but let us realise the great difficulties they had to contend with, and let us bear in mind the little problems which the farmers were able to work out with a view to forcing the hands of the board. Again, it is interesting to note that during the initial stages of its existence the board was composed of Mr. William Paterson, chairman, and Mr. Sutton, and afterwards Mr. Camm. I appointed Mr. Camm, who was an officer of the Survey Branch of the Lands Department, to the board, then known as the Farmers' Assistance Board. In appointing Mr. Camm I gave him definite instructions that he was to be the administrative member of the board; and I pointed out to him the difficulties which had been experienced in connection with the old Seed Wheat Board. I informed him that I needed an officer who would be directly responsible for the general administration of staff matters; and particularly I laid it down to Mr. Camm that I wished him to look after the financial side of the board's operations, so as to give the Government and the country a guarantee that the moneys advanced would be repaid by the settlers if they had a successful year. I am prepared to admit that the affairs of the board drifted into a very bad condition. The men whom I hold responsible for that bad condition are, undoubtedly, Mr. Paterson, the chairman, and

Mr. Camm, the administrative member. I hold them responsible because when, time after time, I got those members of the board to meet me and questioned them as to whether matters were running as was desirable and whether the criticisms levelled at the board were in any way justified—

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Mr. Camm was overworked.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The board consisted of three members, and Mr. Camm never on any occasion made representations that he was overworked. In point of fact, time after time I was assured, in reply to my inquiries, that everything was all right, and that, while there were temporary delays in regard to the answering of correspondence and in regard to the posting of the books, these things occurred only during the rush periods. Those members of the board informed me that their desire was to advance everything necessary to get the areas under crop. They told me that once they got the areas under crop they could straighten up things afterwards with ease. After letting the matter go at that for some time, I found, upon having the board's affairs investigated, that the conditions were not as represented. The result was that the board was re-constituted. It is true that Mr. Camm was retained; but his retention was necessary because he had, or should have had, the internal working of the board at his finger ends. He was appointed for that very purpose. Consequently we appointed to the board Mr. Morris, whom I look upon as one of the brightest administrators in our Government service, and Mr. Oliphant, the vice-president of the Perth Chamber of Commerce, who had had outside experience in this particular class of business. Those three gentlemen were instructed to do what Mr. Paterson and Mr. Sutton were not able to do, namely to devote the whole of their time to the general administration of the board. I desire to pay a tribute to Mr. Morris and Mr. Oliphant for the great work they did. The first thing was a reorganisation of the accounts branch of the board. In this they had the able assistance of the Under Treasurer, who agreed to appoint Mr. Wilson, the sub-accountant of the Treasury, to take charge of the reorganised accounts of the board, in order that every-

thing might be put on a proper basis and brought right up-to-date. I am not going to allow the Premier to cast a reflection on the general administrative capacity of Mr. Morris as chairman of the board, or on the capacity of other members of the Board. I am certainly not going to allow the Premier to cast any reflection on the capacity of Mr. Wilson, as he did by the accusation that the ledgers and other books were not kept written up.

The Minister for Railways: Mr. Wilson is a first-class accountant.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes; and, being a first-class accountant, he would never allow the books to get into a bad state. Besides, he was never denied any assistance that he asked for.

The Premier: Why were not the books posted, then?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not prepared to admit that they were not posted. Mr. Wilson had all the staff he asked for. Mr. Wilson is one of the trusted officers of the Treasury. If the books were behind, it was only a temporary matter—not the important matter into which hon. members opposite would magnify it. By their criticisms hon. members opposite do undoubtedly cast a reflection on Mr. Wilson.

The Premier: I did not mention Mr. Wilson's name.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am aware that the Premier did not mention Mr. Wilson's name, but the fact remains that Mr. Wilson was in charge of the board's accounts after the reorganisation. Therefore, by reflecting on the keeping of the accounts the Premier is undoubtedly reducing Mr. Wilson in the eyes of the public.

The Premier: Only in your estimation. I said the books were not posted up for three months. Do you deny it?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not prepared to take the Premier's word for it.

The Premier: Are you prepared to deny it?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not prepared to deny it.

The Premier: What are you arguing about, then?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I say that in making those remarks the Premier has cast reflections on the members of the board. To

show that there was no reason why the work of the board should fall into arrears except as regards matters of minor importance, I wish to point out that the staff of the Industries Assistance Board was not placed under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commissioner. In other words, if additional staff were required by the board, they could be obtained immediately. Mr. Morris could engage additional staff, and his action would be promptly endorsed. That course was adopted in order to ensure that the staff of the Industries Assistance Board would be fully manned. Mr. Morris took over the work when it had fallen into a deplorable state, and he did good work in putting matters on a sound business basis. And now a reflection is cast on Mr. Morris by his removal; he is held up as a man incapable of general administration. Mr. Morris is being removed as a man found incompetent, and the Industries Assistance Board are back on the man who started as chairman at the very outset, and who was chairman during the time when the board's affairs got into such a deplorable condition. I am not going to hold Mr. Paterson responsible for that, nor will I in any way cast reflections on Mr. Paterson's ability as regards the administration of the board, because Mr. Paterson was called upon to administer the affairs of the Agricultural Bank as well as the board's matters. But I wish to point out that Mr. Paterson was chairman of the board at the time the board's affairs got into a deplorable state; and to-day we find that Mr. Morris, who was called in to put matters right, has been stood down and Mr. Paterson reinstated. That is unfair to Mr. Morris, who took over what was undoubtedly a most difficult task, and performed it to the entire satisfaction of the Government. The reason why Mr. Morris experienced difficulties with the farmers was that he looked after the interests of the State. He was most exacting in seeing that those who were able to repay portion of their advances from the Government should do so. Again, he was pretty severe in seeing that accounts were rendered, and that payments were made when possible.

The Premier: Are you perfectly satisfied with the board's position—

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Further, Mr. Morris was most careful in examining applica-

tions for assistance. He did not do as was previously done—take an application at face value. He went very closely into every application he dealt with, and if he found that an applicant was not deserving, then—I do not say he absolutely refused assistance, but he reduced the amount of the application considerably. It was because of Mr. Morris' continuous personal application, night after night going back to work and checking applications, that he became unpopular with a certain proportion of the settlers; and to-day he is sacrificed because of his loyalty to the State, because of his desire to ensure that only deserving settlers received assistance, and those only up to such extent as could be granted in fairness to the State. Now we find a reflection is cast upon Mr. Morris. He is thrown aside, and Mr. Paterson is elevated as the one man who can administer the board's affairs successfully.

The Premier: Please answer me this question. Are you perfectly satisfied with the position of the board as you left it?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am. In connection with the reorganisation of the board the Government have, from the point of view of expense, appointed a new board. Details have never been given of the remuneration being paid to the new members of the board. We do know, however, that there has been a considerable increase in the staff. Inspectors have been appointed, to the number of 16 or 20, in various parts of the State. These are new inspectors, additional to the country inspectors already representing the Agricultural Bank. Then, district offices have been re-established, and their number has even been added to. Not merely have the old offices been reopened, but new offices are being established and new officials are being appointed. Consequently the administrative cost of the board has increased materially.

Mr. Hudson: Were applications called for those positions of inspectors?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. I consider that the Chamber should be informed by the Minister concerned what the increase in administrative cost will amount to, and whether the country can stand the additional cost, and also whether the increased cost will be charged up against individual settlers.

It must be borne in mind that under the Industries Assistance Act the settlers have to carry the burden of the cost of administration.

The Minister for Railways: How do they carry it?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: They have to carry the cost of administering the board.

The Minister for Railways: It is not charged to them individually.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Undoubtedly it should be.

The Minister for Railways: No; we charge them 6 per cent.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The interest charge on advances is 6 per cent., but the administrative cost of the board is undoubtedly a charge against the funds of the board.

The Minister for Railways: Did you charge it, and how?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: That is the position. I am prepared to admit that up to date the State has not got that charge back. I am prepared to admit that the State is not likely to get it for some years, until things improve. There is no use in booking up all these charges when even the interest cannot be obtained. The point I want to make clear is that, as administrative charges are increased, the burden of the settler is increased, unquestionably.

The Minister for Railways: How do you make that out?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Undoubtedly the settler has to pay.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Who is paying?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The attitude of the Minister is practically that it does not matter how much the administrative costs relative to the agricultural industry are increased, because the general taxpayer has to bear those costs. Is that the hon. gentleman's attitude?

The Minister for Railways: An inspector may save thousands of pounds.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The system of administration by inspectors has already been tried, and has not been found a success. Time will prove whether the Minister's methods of administration are anything like as satisfactory as those of the previous Government. I am convinced that in order to obtain careful and close administration in

matters of this description, there must be centralisation under one head. It is not possible to secure satisfactory and economical administration, fair to the State, by allowing individuals scattered about the country to exercise their individual judgments in regard to advances.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Local control and local supervision are needed.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: We have local control and local supervision quite enough on the part of the inspectors of the Agricultural Bank. There was no need to appoint special inspectors for the board, and time will prove that. There will be friction in various districts. It is not possible to get 16 or 20 inspectors in various districts to administer the Act on exactly the same lines. One inspector will be found taking a liberal view of the situation and advocating advances in excess of what another inspector will recommend in another district, with the results that settlers, on comparing notes, will be dissatisfied. There will be dissatisfaction throughout the State, dissatisfaction greater than we have had so far.

Mr. Heitmann: That is already the case. Settlers can now be heard complaining about favouritism.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: But I am simply making the point. Time will prove as to whether the old administration was not more satisfactory from the State's point of view, and more satisfactory from the agricultural point of view, than this new system will be. There is one other point I want to make, and I think the hon. member for Williams-Narrogin raised it by question to-day. I want to draw hon. members' attention to the effect of it. We have two classes of settlers in our wheat belt. One class of settler is under the Industries Assistance Board—and he is getting all the assistance that can possibly be expected. He is going along fairly comfortably. He does not worry a great deal as to what is going to happen as the food supplies to himself and family are secured. If his crops are a failure the board will have to see him through. But compare his position to that of the other settler who has to battle his way through by assistance from other banking institutions or his own capital. Let us review the situation of the two men. The one man is pay-

ing the Industries Assistance Board six per cent. interest on any advances made. The man who is working on a bank or other financial institution is paying eight per cent. The outside man is at least two per cent. worse off regarding interest. Then, again, the man outside has to pay his interest to the banking institution, but in the case of the man who owes it to the Industries Assistance Board and has not got it to pay, it does not matter at all. Nothing will be done if he cannot pay. But the outside man has to pay his eight per cent. Then again, the man on the Board gets his super supplied, and the interest on the super supplied does not start until the 1st May. This is as a result of representation I made to the manufacturers and distributors. I tried to get it made general throughout the agricultural belt but they would not agree to it. To the farmers under the Board, although they get their super supplied in January, no interest is charged until the 1st May, whereas the other settler who has to battle outside has to pay his interest from the 1st January. This applies in all cases, except that he gets the usual thirty days, and the interest continues until the account is paid; but the settler under the Industries Assistance Board has no interest charged until the 1st May regardless of the time he gets his super. Then there are the stores. The man under the board gets cash every month. He is able with that cash to go to the big shops in Perth to purchase his stores. The man who is operating outside has not the ready cash, but goes to the country storekeeper, and gets a month's credit, with the result that he buys in the dearest market because he gets the month's credit, so that the assisted farmer is living considerably cheaper than the man outside. Then again, with regard to bags, all those farmers outside the board will have to pay from 9s. 3d. to 9s. 6d. The Industries Assistance farmer is in this position: Some time ago, before I left office, while I was in Melbourne, I got information that it was a good time to buy bags. I communicated with the board, and asked them to estimate the requirements of the farmers on the board with regard to bags. We had previously been negotiating with local firms to get jute supplies at a more reasonable and cheaper rate than the previ-

ous year. As a result of my negotiations with the jute merchants we came to an understanding that we could buy at a good time through them at a quote to be given by them, they to do the business at one per cent. We got the quote, and I immediately communicated with the board in Perth, asking them to estimate their requirements and let me know what supplies were needed. They purchased 6,000 bales of bags and they got them at 7s. 6¾d. c.i.f. This did not include the loading charges. I investigated the matter and calculated the loading charges at 1s. per dozen, but reckon that at 1s. 2d., the Industries Assistance Board farmers getting their bags at something like 8s. 8d. a dozen under the administration of the Scaddan Government. We bought 6,000 bales; the estimated requirements were 7,000, but if we do not get rain soon we will not want 6,000 bales.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: I thought by the criticisms that the Scaddan Government had done nothing for the farmers.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The Industries Assistance farmer is in a glorious position. He is buying under the very best circumstances. He is paying less than anyone else is paying for his interest, and, generally speaking, he is absolutely having a time of no worry at all, because if anything goes wrong he is under the Board. But what about the farmer outside the Board? Then again, the Industries Assistance farmer is not only protected from rents and bank interest but has a moratorium protecting him from his other creditors. There you have the position of the farmer under the Industries Assistance Board. What about the farmer outside to-day? He is having a worse time than he has had for many many years. The position is that while he had a good crop last year the cost was excessive—greater than it had been for a number of years—and the payment for his wheat less than he got before. What I want to do is to make an appeal to the Government. If you want to save the man outside the board from disaster you must either make up that other 4d., or throw open to him the assistance rendered to others by the board.

The Minister for Railways: It is very hard to get the money.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I know, but the position is very serious indeed, for these men cannot go on any longer. The position is simply impossible. You must either put them under the board or pay the extra 4d. in regard to their wheat. However, I do not propose to pursue that question any further. I take it we will have another opportunity, because an amendment to the Industries Assistance Act will be necessary, and no doubt some alterations will be made, and we will have an opportunity of generally criticising the administration and possibly to put the thing on a better basis than it has been up to date. I just want also to refer to the question of bulk handling of wheat. I am absolutely convinced after careful investigation that in order to bring down the cost of farming we must introduce bulk handling.

The Minister for Railways: We have already done something in that direction.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I admit it. The point the hon. Premier made was that you were not prepared to proceed with the agreement that had been drafted. After consultation with the Metcalf Co. and the Hon. Premier led me to believe that the terms of that agreement were less favourable than the terms entered into with the company by the New South Wales Government. That was not so; the terms we secured for Western Australia were most liberal. I am absolutely certain on this point. I have compared the various agreements, and the terms we got are better than the New South Wales and South Australian Governments received. Then, again, the reason why I would have liked to see the matter finalised is that I believe in bulk handling we will get uniformity of system as far as Australia is concerned. As far as Metcalf are concerned they are commissioned by a definite agreement to instal bulk handling in New South Wales or South Australia, and the Victoria Government have given them a commission to report on the matter for that State. I wanted to get a reasonable arrangement with the company by which we would get a guarantee that right throughout Australia the system installed would be uniform. The advantage would be that Australian exports from all the States would be conducted on the one system; your machin-

ery parts would be cheaper and generally speaking having a uniform system right through would make the cost of administration less than you would have it if you have different systems. There is just the possibility also that it will facilitate the shipment if you have a uniform system at every port. It is quite possible if you have different systems that the internal arrangements of the vessels would be different. If you have an uniform system, then if a vessel gets to New South Wales to pick up a cargo of wheat she can come to Western Australia with a guarantee that the conditions will be the same. I trust the Ministry before they turn it down do not allow party bias to prejudice them against realising that the previous Government did not rush into it, but went into it because they found New South Wales, South Australia, undoubtedly satisfied, and almost completed the agreement with Metcalf. We tried to come into line so that the four wheat producing States would have an uniform system. Well now, Sir, I want to draw attention to the price that this country is paying for the Liberals to secure the support of the Country Party, and there is no doubt about the Country Party extracting the last shilling in regard to the price for their support. We find already that the freight rates of our railways have been reduced down to a price that shows an absolute loss on the carriage of super, and not only that, but a special rate has been applied now to the carriage of lime.

The Minister for Railways: Was not that so six years ago?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes, it was undoubtedly a loss then. As a matter of fact the amount of the freight that was increased by the Scaddan Government did not show a profit. The Commissioner for Railways has stated that even the increased rate charged by the Scaddan Administration did not show a profit. Then it must be borne in mind that each year, as the area under crop increases, the carriage of fertiliser is also increasing, with the result that the loss each year will show an increase.

Mr. Thomson: I should like to keep losing on that proposition.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: It is a question of whether the State can go on losing in regard to carriage of lime and superphosphates.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You get back loading.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I was waiting for that interjection. The wheat freight is not a paying freight, and it does not pay even with back loading. Where arrangements can be made for superphosphates to go up and wheat to come down on the same trucks a profit can be shown, but where empty trucks are taken from the sea board inland in order to get the wheat across, the amount that that is charged to bring down the wheat does not represent a profit to the railway department. It must be realised that the Railway Department is carrying a burden which it may be found in a short time it is incapable of carrying. To be fair to that enterprise I will say that the Minister for Works (Hon. W. J. George) urged upon more than one occasion that secription it should be given by way of a secription it should be given by way of a treasury vote, and not in such a way as to penalise the railway revenue. In order to ascertain what the State might have to give in the way of a subsidy of this nature it should be given by a treasury vote. The Government have abolished the terminal charge on district railways.

Mr. Thomson: Quite right, too.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: This represents the price of the arrangement made to bring the Country Party into line. The charge on railways under construction had been reduced from a losing proposition previous to the Scaddan Government taking office. The charges made for operating railways under construction for farmers produce never showed a profit. We reduced it 50 per cent. and showed 50 per cent. loss. Now this Government have brought it to the level of the working railway rates, with the result that the loss will be greater still.

The Minister for Works: Do you say there has never been a profit made by the Public Works Department on lines under construction?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I say that the charges have never been profitable to the department.

The Minister for Works: Then you have not a full knowledge of the circumstances.

Mr. Angwin: We got £13 from one line and it cost £100 to run it.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am prepared to admit that the charges made on railways under construction on the goldfields are profitable. The railways under construction in the agricultural areas, however, have never been profitable because of the small amount of freightage carried upon them.

The Minister for Works: I think you are mistaken.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: If so, I have been misled by departmental officers.

Mr. Angwin: They have done better this year.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I was given to understand when investigating the question, as a result of criticism in Parliament, that the old rate was not profitable and though it was reduced 50 per cent. we were showing a loss on the operation.

The Minister for Works: That is a pardonable mistake.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: On the reduction of superphosphate rates, the abolition of the terminal charge, and the reduction in the rates on the lines under construction, we will show a loss in revenue of at least one hundred thousand pounds a year. Where, I ask, is that money going to be made good? How are we going to square the finances if we are going to sacrifice our revenue to this extent? The only way that we have been told that the lee-way is to be made up is by a tax on amusements. At the best, such a tax would only bring in from £20,000 to £25,000 a year. There, on the one hand, we have a tax to raise £25,000 a year, while on the other hand we are directly giving away revenue to the extent of £100,000. If this is done in regard to agricultural railways, how will it be with the other railways of the State? How do the Government propose to make up the deficit?

Mr. Thomson: How did you propose to square the deficit?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Our deficit has been increased by these hon. gentlemen, because they have given away revenue that we were receiving. Are they going to make

up their deficiencies and this loss by retrenchment and by reduction in wages? I should also like to ask them if they are a party to the move which has been made in parts of Australia for the importation of Maltese labour in order to bring about a reduction of wages within the Commonwealth?

The Minister for Works: That is too absurd.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The fact remains that Maltese labour is being imported into Australia to-day.

Mr. Heitmann: Surely not with the consent of the Federal Government?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: This labour is being introduced into Australia, and I want the Government to understand that if this imported labour comes to Western Australia they will undoubtedly have trouble. Western Australia will not allow this consideration to be extended to one industry to enable the Government to make up the lee-way in finances by penalising the workers and commercial community in other parts of the State. According to the Premier, the only way the Government can make up this lee-way is by imposing a tax on amusements, but that is not going to make up the difference. The only way, therefore, that he can make up the difference and square up the finances is either by means of retrenchment or a reduction in wages. If I am wrong in my supposition, how is it that we have not heard from the Premier on the point?

The Minister for Works: Do you charge the Government with either favouring or bringing into the State Maltese labour?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I would not put it past the Government, or put anything past them. I only made reference to the matter. Maltese labour is being introduced into Australia to-day, and I only wanted to say that it must not be extended to Western Australia.

The Minister for Works: It is only another red herring dragged across the trail. You know it is not true.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: We want to hear what the attitude of the Government is towards the industrial concerns, which have a practical bearing on the cost of living and

a practical bearing upon the lives of the working or consuming population of the metropolitan area and other industrial centres. We find that so far as expenditure upon the agricultural industries is concerned, the Government are lavish and careless as to the amount of revenue which they write off. But when they come to tackle trading concerns which have been operated to the advantage of the consuming or labour population, they go to the other extreme. They are guided by consideration for one section of the community against the other. They extend consideration to one section but not to the other. There are many of these State Trading concerns which, if not directly profitable, have undoubtedly had a wholesome check upon the exploitation of the consumers by private enterprise.

The Minister for Railways: Meat has never been so dear as since the establishment of the meat shop.

Mr. Mullany: You have never had the same experience to go through as you have now. Meat is cheaper here than anywhere else in the Commonwealth.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Let us examine for a moment some of the State trading concerns, more particularly those which were dealt with last evening by the Premier. Upon some of these trading concerns he gave a definite pronouncement as to what the intentions of the Government were. He dealt for instance with State steamships. He said he would sell these vessels, and particularly mentioned that the Government were prepared to sell the State steamship "Kangaroo." It must be borne in mind that the "Kangaroo" was purchased for a definite purpose, in order that the Government might have available, when the Wyndham freezing works were completed, a boat suitable for the carriage of frozen meat to the different ports of the world. All that had to be done with her to make her suitable for the trade was the insulation of her holds, and the Government would then have had a boat capable of carrying meat overseas. There was great difficulty in getting a boat to call in at Wyndham, and in order to ensure that the Works would be operated when completed it was necessary to have at hand a vessel ready to carry the produce of the works to the markets of the world.

When the Premier talks of selling the "Kangaroo," he must bear in mind that he will have difficulty at the Works if he is not in possession of this, or some other vessel.

Mr. Mullany: He will not sell it.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Do you think the "Kangaroo" would be suitable if she were fitted up?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Undoubtedly.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): She is too big.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Not at all.

Mr. Mullany: She is not big enough.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The determination of the Government to sell the steamers is a fact worth putting on record, as being a determination completely out of step with the attitude adopted by other parts of the Empire. We have only got to look at England to-day. She is to a large extent controlling shipping. The Commonwealth Government, too, only recently purchased a number of ships, and have therefore taken up State steamers.

Mr. Mullany: The British Government have taken over all the coal within the last few months.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am only speaking of steamships at the present time. The New Zealand Government decided to purchase a fleet, and we find in other parts of the world that Governments are going into the question, and are realising that the State in order to get the best results for their producers must not only operate the railways, in order to carry the goods across to the seaboard, but must also operate on the sea in order to secure reasonable rates for the producers. And yet we find in Western Australia where we have got established a fleet already and where we pioneered the question of the establishment of water carriage by the State, that the Government are making this retrogressive step of selling the fleet already in existence.

The Minister for Works: Surely you are not proud of that fleet?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am, and proud of the fact that we established that fleet. The only vessel with which we had any difficulty was the "West Australian." I will admit that she was a sad experience, and that those responsible for her purchase did not do justice to the State. We overcame that

difficulty, however. We have the "West Australian" operating now at a profit, and the other vessels of the fleet are undoubtedly suitable for the work they are called upon to do. Generally speaking the conditions along the Nor'-West coast are satisfactory and far more so than they would have been under private enterprise. Operations along that coast are conducted at a much cheaper rate than on any other coast in the world. Freights have not gone up as they have gone up elsewhere. Instead of reducing the operations of the State steamers the Government should be increasing them, and instead of selling the vessel they should be buying more. If the Country Party would only realise that the primary producers are going to get the very best results from their products by this very trading concern they would tackle the question just as keenly as they have tackled the question of getting cheap railway rates. There is no question but that the operations of the State steamers and the establishment of State butcher shops have undoubtedly kept down the price of meat in the metropolitan area. It can possibly be said that we have not shown a great profit, but there has not been a great loss in connection with the State meat stores. These State meat stores have had a mighty influence upon the price of meat, and in Subiaco and Midland Junction where the shops have been closed down the price of meat will immediately go up to the consumer on account of competition with private enterprise having been removed. I regret very much that the State butcher shops have been closed in these centres.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 until 7.30 p.m.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Before tea I was expressing my regret at the action of the Government in closing the butchers' shops at Midland Junction and Subiaco. I pointed out that, in my opinion, there would be an immediate increase in the price of meat to consumers in those centres, as the result of the closing of the Government shops. I sincerely trust that before any further closing is done the Government will observe the effect at Midland Junction and Subiaco. The State butcheries are not

concerns from which large direct profits should be expected. They were established for the purpose of regulating and controlling the price of meat to the consumer. They have served their purpose, and served it well, and without any great loss, if with any loss, to the State. The shops usually just got round. There are two trading concerns with regard to which I desire to mention the reasons which actuated the past Government in establishing them. I single out those two concerns because the Premier specially dealt with them. I refer to the ferries and the brick works. Let us examine the position as regards the ferries when the Government took them over. Just about the time when we took office, there were operating between the Barrack-street jetty and South Perth two ferry companies in competition. The result of that competition was reasonable fares to those who patronised the ferries. However, just before Christmas the company controlled by Mr. Copley bought out its competitor, and immediately increased fares, with the result that a great agitation arose and that an appeal was made to the Government for protection. It is true that the request made to the Government was that users of the ferry should be enabled to municipalise the undertaking. This proposal the Government did not view with favour, because we thought it desirable, judging from the experience other Australian States had had of private enterprise operating ferries, that the Government control should not be limited to a particular portion of the river, but should extend as settlement progressed. Immediately on taking control, we reduced the fares, and we also gave better facilities. It is true that after a while we were obliged to reduce the service in some directions; but that was done only after the residents of South Perth had realised that the Government had made an honest effort to give the best possible service. The traffic, however, and the inducements did not justify the continuance of the full service. The ferries, as the Premier has pointed out, were run at a profit for some time. The hon. gentleman claims that because there has recently been a loss it is evident that the State control has failed. Plainly, the Premier anticipates going back to the con-

trol he favours, private enterprise. I wish to point out, however, that the profits earned by the ferries were due largely to the attraction of the zoological gardens, and that of recent times, especially during the last 12 months, the attraction of the zoological gardens has not been so great by reason of the counter-attraction of Blackboy Camp.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Yet the receipts were greater than the year before.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: That may be so, but there was a falling off also in the previous year. The fact remains that the traffic to the zoological gardens is not so great as it used to be before the war, and that the people who do travel prefer to go to Blackboy Camp, where they have relatives or friends. That is the counter attraction. Consequently it is unfair to judge the value of the ferries during war time. Their value should be estimated as in the conditions prevailing when private enterprise controlled the undertaking. Taking that view, it will be realised that, in the interests of all, the State should maintain control of the ferries. Let us remember that the State did not embark on the undertaking because the Government desired to do so; the Government intervened at the request of the users of the ferries.

The Premier: But you will admit that you made a failure of the ferries?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: No. The hon. gentleman is always as unfair as he possibly can be. To be fair, he should have said last night that the loss on the ferries was due, not to the fact that the boat which had been obtained was unsuitable, but to the falling off of trade and patronage. Owing to these factors the patronage accorded to the boat was less than anticipated when she was built.

The Premier: A loss of £42,000.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Because of the war people have not travelled to the same extent. The fact that the ferries proved profitable in ordinary times shows that the hon. gentleman is unfair now—

Mr. SPEAKER: I must ask the hon. member to withdraw that remark. I want to draw his attention to the fact that it is unparliamentary.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: This is the first time I knew, Sir, that to accuse an hon. member of being unfair is unparliamentary.

Mr. SPEAKER: I pointed that out last night.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am aware of that, Sir. It was the first time I knew that the expression had to be withdrawn. I will withdraw it.

Mr. SPEAKER: An hon. member may say that a remark is unfair, but not that an hon. member is unfair. The latter means that the hon. member referred to is never fair.

The Premier: That is what the member for Guildford intended to convey.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: In the matter of the ferries the Government intervened at the request of those who were users of the ferries when controlled by private enterprise. Similarly, I wish hon. members to realise that the late Government did not enter upon the erection of brickworks simply because they desired to control brickworks. The late Government embarked upon the erection and equipment of brickworks because that course was absolutely essential in the interests of the State. I desire to give hon. members, in this connection, one or two experiences I had as Minister for Works in regard to the purchase of bricks. When I was a member of the Daglish Ministry it was proposed to erect a large extension of the asylum at Fremantle. In order that we might obtain the necessary bricks at the cheapest possible rate, I, knowing that we had to deal with the brick combination, decided to call tenders for one million bricks. Tenders were duly submitted, but it was evident that the tenderers had got their heads together, because the prices quoted were higher than those at which I as a contractor could have bought bricks in comparatively small quantities. It was very significant, too, that Mr. Coombe was not amongst the tenderer. The brickworks controlled by Mr. Coombe was one of those producing the very best class of bricks. Just about the time tendering, Mr. Coombe was absent in the Eastern States, or at all events away from the metropolitan district. Later, a Municipal party were inspecting the proposed

route of the Jandakot-Armadale railway. When we arrived at Armadale we were invited by the residents to have a look round the district, and amongst other things shown to us was the brickworks controlled by Mr. Coombe. At the works Mr. Coombe pointed out to us a huge stack of bricks, and, doubtless influenced by political feeling, said that the trade had fallen off to such an extent—the Labour Government were then in power—that he could not sell his bricks. I said straight off to him, "How much will you take for one million bricks, with a fair percentage of face bricks and a fair percentage of others?"

Mr. S. Stubbs: How long was this after he had been asked to tender?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Almost immediately after. Mr. Coombe quoted a price. I was accompanied by Mr. Jull and another officer, and I at once turned round to them and said, "I have got this price from Mr. Coombe; now you fix up and settle the deal." After the transaction had been closed, I asked Mr. Coombe how it was that, the Government having called tenders for one million bricks, he had not tendered. Mr. Coombe turned to his manager, who said that he had not seen the advertisement. However, those who did tender must have known that Mr. Coombe was not going to compete, because the prices quoted were largely in excess of that at which we ultimately bought from him, and he had not tendered. The incident demonstrated to me that an understanding was operating to the detriment of the State. Let me give another experience. Later, I had occasion, owing to the industrial conditions prevailing in brickworks, to organise the brickmakers' employees. The organisation met the employers, and eventually secured from them an industrial agreement giving the employees somewhat better conditions than those obtaining before the organisation was formed. The better conditions and the increased payments granted were equivalent to about 1s. per thousand on the price of bricks. Immediately afterwards the employers raised the price of bricks by 5s. per thousand, thus giving their employees 1s. and taking 4s. to themselves. No doubt, in dealing with customers the employers

justified the increase in price by the increase in wages and by the improved conditions granted to the employees. Let me give yet another experience. When the Scaddan Government, on taking office, proposed to erect workers' homes, tenders were again called for the supply of, I think, one million bricks. The object we had in view at that time was to get the price for bricks down, so that we might make available a certain quantity for Government purposes and distribute a further quantity for the erection of workers' homes. The lowest tenderer on that occasion was Mr. Law, and he submitted a sample of the bricks for which he quoted. A number of Mr. Law's bricks—I am speaking from memory in this matter again—went to the asylum for a job to be done there. The first lot supplied by Mr. Law were, I think, fairly satisfactory; but later the quality deteriorated considerably, becoming so bad that the matter was reported. Mr. Law's attention was called to the fact that the quality of his bricks was below the standard of the sample which had been submitted. The attitude he took up was that the quality he had supplied was the best he could do, and that if we did not like the quality he could not do any better. The result was that the contract which had been entered into was broken; he would not fulfil it. I was under the impression that his deposit was forfeited, but I have been informed this evening that it was not. I am convinced that the alteration in the quality of the bricks was introduced for the special purpose of breaking the contract; it was broken because it became known that we were going to use these bricks in connection with the building of workers' homes.

The Minister for Works: Why was the deposit returned?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not sure that it was returned; I have only been informed that it was. In my opinion the contract was broken because we were buying the bricks wholesale to retail them out to those who were going to build homes for themselves.

The Premier: I do not for one moment believe that Mr. Law made bad bricks for the purpose of breaking the contract.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I repeat that he supplied bad bricks. The hon. gentleman knows that Mr. Law was making two classes of bricks, and those that he supplied to us were not up to the sample on which he tendered. We found that the position was so unsatisfactory that I, as Minister, was convinced that something would have to be done. The officers of the department were dissatisfied. The price for the best class of bricks was unduly high, and we arrived at the stage when there was only one yard that could supply bricks up to the standard required for Government purposes. They were able to dictate their own prices. It was essential, therefore, to erect State works in order to maintain the supply of bricks at a reasonable rate, and from experience we found that there was a combination in existence to rule the prices, and that the small consumers and contractors were suffering in consequence. The Premier told us that he is going to lease or sell the State Brickworks because there has been a loss of £1,000. As a matter of fact there has not been a loss at all. We have supplied to the State no fewer than 1,700,000 first class bricks and we supplied them at the rate of 40s. per thousand, whereas just before the establishment of the State Brick Works we were paying 63s. for the same class of brick.

Mr. Nairn: What was your contract price with Mr. Law?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I forget what it was.

Mr. Nairn: But that is very important.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: It is not. As I have stated, just before the State Brick Works were opened we were paying 63s. per thousand for first class bricks. The State came in and supplied them at the rate of 40s. and up to the 30th June the total supplied, as I have told hon. members, was 1,700,000.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): The 63s. bricks were specials.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The bricks I am referring to were first class bricks, not specials. We had been paying 65s. for specials. We also charged more for special bricks. The bricks to which I have been referring are those used in Government buildings, and the total supplied by the

State Brick Works were first class. To be fair to the brick works we have to realise the advantage that has accrued to the State by their establishment. If we take the difference between 63s. and the amount the State works supplied them for, covering the 1,700,000 bricks, we can soon arrive at the sum that we would have had to pay private enterprise at the higher cost. Thus hon. members will see the State saved considerably more than the £1,000 to which the Premier referred as the loss incurred. When the works got properly under way we were making bricks for something like 32s. per thousand and we were getting 40s. for them. From experience we knew that a combination existed in the brick trade and in order to relieve the State and the private consumer from paying an excessive price because of the existence of that combination, it was decided to establish the State works. That had the effect of reducing the price of bricks to the general consumer and it undoubtedly made a vast difference in the cost of building operations carried out by the public departments. What do we find to-day? Regardless of the fact that bricks were being produced at 32s. the present Government increased the price of them by 5s.

The Minister for Works: Why? Because they cost more than 40s. to make.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The cost was 32s. so the management informed us, and there is no reason to believe that the management would deliberately misrepresent the position. If the hon. gentleman was informed that the cost was 40s., then two different tales have been told by the manager.

The Premier: He is wrong.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am prepared to take the manager's figures.

The Minister for Works: You would not take the accountant's figures, I suppose.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes, if given to us in detail and the manager was allowed to comment on them; then I would be satisfied.

Mr. Green: To whom are you selling the bricks? I suppose you have a gang you are selling them to. You are the wreckers.

The Premier: You can come in, if you like.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Since the present Minister for Works has assumed control he

has increased the price of bricks by 5s. per thousand. That has been deliberately done to allow the outside brick yards to raise their price and I have been informed that this has taken place already. It is true that they did not put up the price immediately, but private enterprise, in order to get established again, kept to the price that had been dictated by the State brick yards, but having got control of the trade once more owing to the Minister for Works removing the competition of the State, they increased the price and now it will be found that it will go up to the general consumer 4s. or 5s. per thousand.

The Premier: The same thing was said in regard to fish.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The price of fish was reduced by the establishment of the State fish stalls. It was controlled by a gang of Greeks and Italians, or practically all Greeks, and it was to prevent the combination of these people from exploiting the community that the Government fish stalls were established, and the establishment was justified.

The Premier: But you did not stop them, that is the trouble.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The fact remains that the public of Perth can get a supply of wholesome and fresh fish at a reasonable rate.

The Premier: Not a penny cheaper.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Undoubtedly the price of fish has been reduced as a result of the competition. It is a remarkable thing that the Premier would sell the brick works which have brought about a reduction in the price of building in and around the metropolitan area, but he would not get rid of the ferries, nor the State Implement Works, nor the saw mills. All this is significant. The sale of the implement works would affect the Ministerial cross-benches and, again, the disposal of the saw mills would affect the Country party. The Government will not say what they will do in regard to these two enterprises, but anything that concerns the metropolitan area can be closed down.

The Minister for Works: Why did you close down the brick works before we took office?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: We had a sufficient supply of bricks on hand until further

orders came in. I would have no objection to the hon. gentleman closing down the pipe works until the supply of pipes made became exhausted. The Premier does not say that he is going to close down any of these works; he says he is going to sell or lease them. I am not going to deal with the figures which have been supplied by the Premier, because they may or may not be correct. Under the Trading Concerns Act we are to have balance-sheets of all the enterprises, and we can well wait until these are before us before we criticise them. That the figures were beyond the Premier was evidenced by the way he became involved. The tea adjournment helped him out of a great difficulty; he was able during that adjournment to communicate with somebody by telephone, and when he returned to the House he explained that, while he was not able to understand the position before tea, he would then put it before hon. members so that they might understand it.

The Premier: You give us the figures.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I am going to wait for the audited balance sheet. But the hon. gentleman was decidedly more unfair when he dealt with the Esperance land. He repeated what he has been saying, and what the Press has been saying over and over again, that the Labour Government suppressed the report made by Mr. Mann in regard to soil analyses and the presence of salt in the Esperance land.

The Premier: So they did.

Mr. Walker: The analysis of the soil was published.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: In order to demonstrate the unreliability of the hon. gentleman, if I cannot emphasise his unfairness, let us take his attitude towards the hon. Mr. Drew. If the Premier could not be fair to the Labour Government he might at least have been fair to Mr. Drew, and quoted Mr. Drew's speech made in 1912 just after the report came in. He did not do so, however, but instead referred to what Mr. Drew said in 1915, because the remarks made by Mr. Drew in 1912 would not suit his book. He consequently turned them down and quoted instead the speech made in 1915 as a correct record of the remarks of Mr. Drew on this matter. He did this whilst he must have known it to be incorrect—that is, if he made

inquiries, and he should have made investigations so as to be fair. In 1912 in speaking on the Bill for the construction of the Norseman-Esperance railway, quoted in *Hansard*, page 4094, on the 3rd December, 1912—I am dealing with Mr. Drew's speech on the question of the railway—

Samples of the soils were taken and examined, the examination of some being conducted by Mr. Mann, the Government Analyst. Mr. Mann reported that he found in some of the samples a high percentage of salt, and the analysis of further samples disclosed generally the presence of salt.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: There is plenty of salt.

The Hon. J. F. Cullen must have seen the report in order to make an interjection of that description.

The limit of tolerance of wheat for salt is placed by Mr. Mann at .05 per cent.; by Hilyard, the greatest living authority on soils, the limit is placed at .25 per cent.; and by Kearney, renowned in Egyptian and American agriculture, the limit is placed at from .25 per cent. to .4 per cent.

That gives the direct contradiction to the statement repeatedly made by the hon. the Premier that we suppressed the report made by Mr. Mann. As a matter of fact, the report was placed on the Table for hon. members to read for themselves, if they had any desire to follow it up. There is here a definite reference to it in Mr. Drew's speech, and if members were interested why did they not inquire as to where the report was? The fact is the Premier was quite satisfied without inquiring further. In order to show more distinctly how unfair the hon. gentleman is I may say that the very soils themselves which were analysed were taken in a case to the Legislative Council, and each bottle was labelled with the analysis.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): When?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: During the 1913 debate.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): No, certainly not. I was there.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Members of the Legislative Council have assured me they were there, Mr. Drew and others say that

they saw them—it is merely a question of who is right. Will the Honorary Minister deny that the bottles were there as I have stated?

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): They were certainly not there to my knowledge. They may have been under the Minister's seat.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I have proved that Mr. Drew did draw attention definitely to this report by Mr. Mann.

The Premier: He did not; he mentioned merely that analysis had been made.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: He drew attention to the fact of the presence of salt in the soil.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Where is the remark by the then Colonial Secretary that the bottles or exhibits of soil were there

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Mr. Drew has told me that the bottles were there, and that members saw them there, and also that members knew the reason for their being there, namely, to show the analyses of the soil.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): He never drew members' attention to them.

Mr. Nairn: Mr. Mann's analysis of the soil is not quoted; why was that?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: It is remarkable that the accusation against the late Government is that we suppressed the report. In the extract I have just read the then Colonial Secretary makes definite reference to the report, and has stated that the soils were there with the analysis on them—and Mr. Mann's report was on the Table of the House for hon. members to peruse. But merely because Mr. Drew did not read the whole of the report, members opposite now say the report was suppressed, that it was not published. To convince hon. members opposite of the unfairness of their leader—

Member: We are quite convinced on that point.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I know you are. The Esperance Railway League having seen Mr. Mann's report—and where did they get that report unless we had made it public?—issued 5,000 copies of a manifesto, and each member of Parliament was supplied with a copy. There are four or five columns

dealing definitely with Mr. Mann's report and replying to it. The manifesto goes on to give quotations from Mr. Mann's report, and then combats those by information gathered from other quarters. Yet we are told that the Government suppressed the report. The fact is the Esperance railway had to be closed down, and the Government seized upon this as an excuse and have made misstatements in regard to it in an endeavour to justify their action, and the local Press is backing them up.

The Premier: Why?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Because they are opposed to it for political party purposes, and the line had to be closed down for that reason. We know that the hon. gentleman opposite encouraged the farmers in that district to go on to this land. The member for Northam promised that Agricultural Bank assistance would be forthcoming and had sent down to them forms to be filled in for the purpose. He made that promise in writing.

The Premier: Who did?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The Liberal Government.

The Premier: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I have seen letters from the Agricultural Bank, and I have seen also the forms which were sent down to these people to be filled in and signed, after they had taken up their land, and to be returned to the Agricultural Bank in order to secure assistance. But that assistance was suddenly cut off. The real reason of the opposition to the Esperance land does not come from an agricultural standpoint; it is an anti-goldfields opposition. The opposition to the railway was anti-goldfields at the start, and the hon. member has continued it ever since.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): I thought it was an agricultural line.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: So it is. But the opposition to it has not been from an agricultural standpoint. To show the absolute unfairness of the opposition to the Esperance line we might compare the Government attitude on this question of the high percentage of salt with the conditions at Wadderin. Reports of a character most damaging to the Wadderin land have come

to hand. But we did not go on to the house-tops to proclaim their failure and the loss of tens of thousands of pounds of agricultural money invested, the numbers of ruined farmers. We did not do this with the view to damning the agricultural industry; but anything is apparently right which will injure the goldfields by trying to damn the agricultural possibilities of this line. The Esperance settlers have never had a chance, and they never will have a chance under the present Government. The Labour Government gave them a fair chance of establishing a flourishing industry, and they would have done so had the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) stuck to the promise made of Agricultural Bank assistance, and had helped those people with superphosphates, etcetera, in the same way as the settlers in the eastern agricultural belt have been helped. The Esperance land has been condemned because the people were compelled to attempt farming under impossible conditions.

The Premier: Why did you not do something for them; you had five years?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I maintain that no man can make a success of a farming proposition who is placed at more than 15 miles from a railway station. Apparently the Esperance farmer is expected to make a success of it even though he be placed 40 or even 50 miles from a market. In the eastern belt the limit is placed at 12½ miles from a railway; if he is outside that you have to give him all kinds of Government assistance. The hon. the Premier will probably retort that he has appointed a Royal Commission; but what kind of a Commission is it? Why was it necessary to go to Mr. Dempster, who is known to be not strongly in favour of the agricultural development of the district, he being a pastoralist? Why did the Government not go to Grass Patch and select as a member of the Commission the manager at Grass Patch, who has been struggling with his proposition for years? Why did they not select men who knew something about the agricultural industry?

The Premier: What is the average per acre?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: What is the average in the Mount Marshall district?

The Government in selecting its Commission should have secured the services of some of the settlers in the mallee country. Instead of doing so they have appointed a commission composed of Mr. Dempster, who is certainly not favourable, and Mr. Padbury, who knows nothing about the country. The Premier expects to get from that commission the class of report that will suit him—but I am certain a report which will condemn one section of the country to be sacrificed will not suit the people of this State.

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The Liberal Government placed those settlers there.

The Premier: We did not.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: You took their cash and sent them on to the land. As a matter of fact the results obtained at Esperance compare favourably with results obtained at Mt. Marshall and Lake Brown, yet Agricultural Bank assistance has been rendered to settlers there and, while practically all in that area have abandoned their holdings, the area has not been condemned. But because the people of Esperance have had no assistance, and no opportunity for using superphosphate, the Esperance land is condemned without giving them a chance at all.

The Minister for Works: Did not you render them assistance?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes, during the drought, that was all.

The Minister for Works: They got the money, then.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: That was only during last year. In previous years they received no Government assistance.

The Minister for Railways: You know very well that they did.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not propose to pursue the matter any further. I have said sufficient to show that the Premier was unfair when he declared the report had been suppressed. It was not suppressed. It was made public and was replied to in a leaflet a copy of which was sent to each member. It was well known that Mr. Mann had issued a report. Mr. Mann made a serious mistake in regard to the sedative salt. It has been explained to me by the highest

authority in Western Australia, an authority equal perhaps to any in the Commonwealth, that there are two salts to be found in certain soils, one being sodium carbonate of salt, and the other sodium chloride of salt. The percentages which Mr. Mann worked upon are about the highest percentages of sodium carbonate which the soil can contain without injury to plant life; in the case of sodium chloride of salt, the percentage can be four or five times as high without detriment. The mistake made by Mr. Mann was in assuming that this was sodium carbonate, when, as a matter of fact, it was sodium chloride. The hon. gentleman is not prepared to put an expert soil analyst on this commission of investigation.

The Premier: I am prepared to have you send all the experts before the commission.

Mr. Walker: Why have you not sent down an expert?

The Premier: Why have the crops there not grown?

Mr. Walker: Why did they not grow in the wheat belt in that year? They were killed by rust in your established wheat areas, and they were so treated in the Esperance district also.

The Premier: They have never grown there.

Mr. Walker: They have.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Mr. Mann made a very great mistake and has done a great injury to the area under consideration, and he should be called upon to explain why he did not investigate further before publishing his conclusions.

The Premier: Why did not you call upon him to explain?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: We were satisfied that Mr. Mann's conclusions were incorrect, but the present Ministers have condemned the whole of the agricultural belt in consequence of having accepted Mr. Mann's report as being correct. We, knowing that the report was incorrect, did not take the matter seriously. Ministers have talked a great deal about suppressing Mr. Mann's report. Why has not Mr. Sutton's report been published?

The Minister for Railways: You are quoting from it.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: No, I have never seen it. I called upon Mr. Sutton to reply to the report of Messrs. Richardson and Cook. Before leaving office I asked him if his report was complete. He said it was then almost ready, and I now want to know why it has been suppressed.

The Minister for Railways: It has not been suppressed.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Why has it not been made public? You have condemned the industry by quoting Mr. Mann's report: why not give Mr. Sutton's reply if you have it?

The Minister for Railways: We have suppressed nothing. The file, as placed on the Table, was not in any way mutilated.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Well, we have the papers on the Table and I will not pursue the subject any further just now. Briefly, I wish to deal with the subject of finance, as laid before the Chamber last evening by the Premier. The hon. member declared that the deficit is to be funded. We all knew he would take that course as soon as he got the chance. It is one way of brushing aside the difficulty, and in 12 months time he will declare that he wiped it out. In order that he might have for himself as clean a sheet as possible, he has a dragnet committee at work endeavouring to bring to account every possible item which might have been brought to account in June last. This, of course, so that while he is funding the deficit he can make it as broad as possible.

Mr. S. Stubbs: What is wrong with that?

The Premier: Do you want me to carry your debts? Will you justify your items in last year's accounts?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I was not Treasurer, but I will willingly explain all that concerns me. If Mr. Scaddan were here he could reply to every item, and much more comprehensively than I am going to do. However, there are one or two items which I know something of, and I will recount them as samples of what the hon. member is doing. Bear in mind that the Auditor General investigates all accounts that are not brought to account on the 30th June. When the hon. gentleman went out of office in 1911, declaring that he had a credit bal-

ance of £13,000, the Auditor General said that he had to bring to account £50,000 which should have been paid by the 30th June.

The Premier: He did nothing of the sort.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: It is in his report.

The Premier: It is not, and I defy you to prove it.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: We will have a discussion later on the projected Bill, and we will then see.

The Premier: You know you are making an incorrect statement.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The Auditor General said that the hon. gentleman had not paid all accounts due on the 30th June, 1911.

The Premier: You have never done it.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I merely say that you have not done it.

The Premier: These accounts were paid, but were not charged up.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Let us take one item for which the hon. member was responsible. He stated that £10,000 odd in respect to the raising and strengthening of the Victoria Quay, at Fremantle, was not brought to account on the 30th June. Just before he left office it was decided to expend £80,000 in raising and strengthening that wharf, and the Under Secretary pointed out that it was unfair to saddle the revenue of one year with the total expenditure on that work. Thereupon it was decided, with the approval of the hon. member, that a suspense account should be created, and that only a given amount should be charged up each year against Consolidated Revenue until the whole amount was wiped out. In pursuance of this there has been £15,000 odd brought to account each year. In the year 1915-16 we debited Property Trust Account with £15,000; next year the £10,000 should be debited, but the hon. gentleman says we neglected to do it last year. Did he want us to debit £25,000 last year?

The Premier: Will you be surprised to hear that you have made an absolutely wrong statement, that I never approved of the suspense account, and that you yourself approved of it; that I never inaugurated the system but that you yourself inaugurated it? The file is here to prove it.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Will the hon. member deny that he was responsible for starting it?

The Premier: I did not start it?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Then who did?

The Premier: You did it yourself.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Then my memory is much at fault.

The Premier: On a point of order, may I read my minute, just to put the hon. member right?

Mr. SPEAKER: Not unless the leader of the Opposition agrees to give way to you.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: You may read it, certainly.

The Premier (in explanation): I wish to prevent the hon. member misleading the House as he has been doing all along, although perhaps not intentionally. This is the only minute I ever wrote in connection with this matter. It is dated 25th February, 1911, just prior to my departure to the Coronation in London. It is in reply to the minute the hon. member has referred to, and it reads as follows:—

It seems to me we shall hardly be able to expend £30,000 on this work during the remainder of the present financial year. However, whatever money is expended must be charged under Treasurer's Advance against the current year's Consolidated Revenue. When framing the Estimates for next year we can then take the question of further provision into consideration. Generally speaking, the suggestion of spreading a large expenditure of this sort over a number of years is a good one, and I shall be glad if power can be taken in the new Audit Act for this purpose.

The hon. member defied the Act.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The minute satisfies me. The Premier, when Minister for Works, did not oppose the suggestion.

The Premier: I did. These are the words.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: He has read the minute. He said it was a good suggestion but questionable whether it could be done.

The Premier: I did not say it was questionable. You are twisting again; do keep straight.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The minute clearly conveys that the Premier did not oppose the suggestion.

The Premier: I did.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: And that he was going to get the necessary legal authority. After further investigation, we found that it could be done and had been done previously.

The Premier: It had not been done previously.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: There had been a suspense account before.

The Premier: It has not been done previously.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not suppose that particular thing had been done previously. The hon. gentleman knows that the practice—and he says so in his minute—of spreading a large expenditure of this sort over a number of years had a lot in its favour, or something of that sort. Consequently it was a practice which had been—

The Premier: No, it had not been.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The Premier knew perfectly that it had been, and if he had remained there he would have found it out. He investigated as to whether it could be done, and as a result of further investigations on our part we introduced the system.

Mr. Angwin: This was in February.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I know, that was a long while before. The point I am making is that the suspense account was created, that year after year Parliament has endorsed it by the fact that on the revenue estimates we brought to account some £15,000 per annum as a result of the creation of this suspense account in order that it might gradually be wiped out.

The Premier: You created it yourselves.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Last year we brought to account the £15,000 mentioned. The Premier in order to mislead the public tried to discredit Mr. Scaddan, and tried to make out that the late Premier had neglected to bring to account the proper amount.

The Premier: So he did.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: As a matter of fact it is not due until next year.

The Premier: It is due and was expended last year.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The £15,000 which was due last year was brought to account and was debited to property trust account, and the £10,000 would have been

brought to account in the same way. The Premier has put out a drag net. He has gone out looking for every item he could find in order to make out that the deficiency is larger than that shown by Mr. Scaddan. He has endeavoured to show that a greater deficiency existed than really does exist in order to give himself a clear run when he starts out upon his own financial matters. We have this protection, however. He has yet to introduce his Bill, and will then have to justify the amount he proposes to pay. I appeal to that hon. gentleman to be fair for once in his life, and to bring down the report of his Advisory Committee.

The Premier: I really must protest, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must withdraw.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I withdraw, but I ask the hon. gentleman to be fair.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member withdraws, and then repeats the statement.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Surely I can——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have called attention to the statement to which exception has been taken. Surely the hon. member can find other language besides that which he is now employing.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I appeal to the hon. gentleman to let Parliament have the report of the committee that he has appointed to investigate the financial matters of the State. He says he has appointed the Auditor General, the Under Treasurer, and the Commissioner of Taxation to go into these questions, and I trust that when he introduces his Bill he will furnish to members the report of that committee.

The Premier: You certainly shall have it. It will be published.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Then we shall have an opportunity of closely scrutinising the various items which he proposes to bring to account.

The Premier: You shall have the file containing your own minute authorising the creation of the suspense account, which you charged us with having created. Why not accept that statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am going to insist that the House shall respect my call to order when I call order. I am not going to call order continually, and have members

talking across the floor of the House and ignoring my call. There is altogether too much in the way of interjections to-night.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Having got the assurance that we will have this report of the board placed before us we can well leave the discussion on this matter until the Bill is introduced. It is an important matter and one which members will require to go closely into. I trust that all the reports will be carefully scrutinised before members agree to the funding of the deficiency of the amount that the Premier desires. The question of the over-use of the authority to issue Treasury bills is not a matter of great magnitude, although the Premier tried to make out that it was a matter of grave concern. It is a common matter to issue Treasury bills.

The Premier: In excess?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: In excess.

The Premier: Never. It has never been done before.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Suppose it had never been done before, the fact of Treasury bills being issued, not exceeding the authorised loan authority, is not a matter of grave concern. So long as Parliament gives authority to issue a loan it does not matter whether it is done by Treasury bills or in other ways so long as that authority is not exceeded. It is the first I have heard of Treasury bills being issued in excess of authority passed. Does the Premier propose to only introduce the Bill to put right the fact of the excess now, or does he propose to make it possible to extend it to the extent it has been exceeded for the future?

The Premier: I told you what I proposed to do, and do not intend to repeat it.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The hon. gentleman said he was going to introduce a Bill to put right the action of Mr. Scaddan in exceeding the authorisation of Treasury bills. Is he going to frame his Bill so that he can issue Treasury bills to the extent issued by Mr. Scaddan? Is he going to make his Bill apply to Mr. Scaddan's operations and is it going to extend into the future?

The Premier: I have told you what I intend to do.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Then we shall have to await the Bill. I had intended to deal briefly with some of the Bills which the Premier proposed to introduce but we shall of course all have an opportunity of voicing our opinion when they come along. There is, however, one thing I desire to say. We are told that a Bill will be introduced for the purpose of effecting a redistribution of seats and dealing with electoral matters. We trust on this occasion that the rights and privileges of the people to voice their opinion in respect to the government of the country will not be interfered with to any great extent. Their privileges should be increased and not reduced. I hope the Premier will on this occasion recognise the right of the people to voice their opinion as against property or vested interests. It is desirable to get as nearly to the population basis as possible. This side of the House does not want an absolute population basis, but we do take strong exception to any grave departure from that basis. I trust the Bill will be nearer to the population basis than was the scheme brought in by the Government with which the Premier was associated some years ago.

The Minister for Railways: Were these not your own proposals?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: We were absolutely satisfied with our own proposal, namely, that to appoint a non-political board to go into the question of the framing of the electoral boundaries. We gave certain directions in regard to the quota which they could go above or below the population basis, and we have no objection to the Premier going as far as that. We would support a Bill of that description. I question very much, however, whether the new Bill will be as fair to the electors as was our Bill.

The Premier: Very much fairer.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I view with a great deal of fear the introduction of the Bill, having the experience I had in the previous Bill of the action of the Liberals in this regard.

Mr. Green: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I would like to emphasise the fact that the present Government were put into office on one question, namely that of squaring the finances. The

papers, the Liberal organs, were loud in their condemnation of the financial drift and policy of the Scaddan Government, and said that a change of Government was justified on that score. Up to date no reform has, however, taken place. As a matter of fact, all that we have been told is that taxation will be introduced in regard to amusements, and that the taxation will be introduced to cover the £100,000 per annum which it is proposed to contribute towards wiping out the deficiency. Apart from that, nothing has been proposed. The £100,000 is accounted for and the taxation will be absorbed by the funding of the deficiency. The amusement tax will not raise more than £20,000 to £25,000, and yet the Government are giving away revenue to the extent of fully £100,000. I leave it to members on the cross benches to realise what this means to our straitened finances, and call their attention to the fact that unless they are careful the Government will be introducing other methods to square the finances which may not meet with the favour of their electors, even though it does with that of other electors. The electors of the country districts are as anxious to see the industrial community of the State receive a fair deal and that the workers get all the work they want as any other members in the House. Consequently country members want to make sure that in the squaring of the finances they are not going to get all the consideration for their industry whilst the rights, privileges, and requirements of the remaining industrial and commercial communities of the State are absolutely sacrificed. In conclusion, I will say that the Premier's references to the noble deeds of those who are fighting for our rights and liberties at the front are endorsed absolutely by myself and the party to which I belong. We will encourage the efforts of the Government to the fullest extent in any measure they may introduce for the purpose of serving the interests of and assisting returned soldiers. What we want, and what we regret exceedingly not having gone far enough in, is that more should be done for the dependents of those soldiers who have fallen at the front. It is a grave reflection upon Australia if we do not take upon our shoulders the charge of looking after the dependents

of those who have done so much to keep secure our homes and our liberty. We look with the gravest anxiety upon the position, and trust that the Government will assist us in our endeavours to see that the Federal Government bring taxation into force to deal with the repatriation of soldiers, and that we may have some guarantee that the dependents of our soldiers are permanently looked after, and that when the war is over and charitable contributions cease these persons will not be left to the tender mercies of the general public. If this happened it would be a poor return to those brave men who have sacrificed their lives at the call of the Empire. We can assist those also who return safely to our shores in establishing them in various industries. Let us give these liberal conditions, but at the same time, for God's sake, let us do more for the dependents of those who have given their lives at the front at the call of the Empire.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [8.45]: We have listened to the Premier and the leader of the Opposition. It must be gratifying to every member of the Chamber and to the State as a whole to see the progress which has been made since 20th July by our soldiers at the front and the Allies of our Empire. The progress which has been made must be gratifying to us all and must stimulate us in Western Australia to do our part in the way of stiffening our backs and helping the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth to send assistance to those who are already fighting so bravely for our homes and country. I think the first essential for every one of us here is to win this war. Then, as the leader of the Opposition has said, our second essential is to look after the dependents of the men who leave the shores of Western Australia. As a member of the Country Party I shall do my level best to guide legislation towards that end. How can we best prepare for our boys when they come back? If this war continues for, say, another three months, the Commonwealth will have spent close on one hundred millions of money for military purposes. We have got near to that amount already. Are we doing what we should with that expenditure? Are we careful, and are we economising? Are we saving against the day when the military expenditure will cease, when we shall have

to pay interest and sinking fund in respect of that expenditure? This will represent a further heavy burden on the shoulders of the people of the Commonwealth. We are told that the primary industries are to be encouraged to the fullest extent. A suggestion has been made that a conference of all interested in the mining industry, one of our leading sources of wealth, should be held with a view to making active the latent riches of this State by bringing into renewed activity the mines now silent. It would be one of the best things for this State if that end could be achieved, and if the prospector could be stimulated to bring about new developments. Then we have been told of the Royal Commission on the agricultural industry. If ever there was need for an inquiry of that description, there is need of it in Western Australia today. No matter what the personnel of such a body may be, some people in the State will be found to object. But should we not wait with our objections until we have the report of the Royal Commission before us? It has been stated that the Royal Commission will have full liberty to call what evidence they choose, and to get experts to give evidence. On the other hand, it has been suggested that experts will not be able to testify with regard to the Esperance lands. In view of what we have heard, I think the Royal Commission should get any one they can to give evidence. As the leader of the Opposition has said, we have in the Eastern wheat belt a very serious problem. One of our greatest difficulties today, if we are to assist the farming industry, if wheat farming is to be profitably continued, is the charge for water supply. If the farmers are to make a profit out of mixed farming, if they are to carry sheep and other stock, they must have water in larger quantities and at lower rates. I trust that the Minister for Water Supply will bear this matter in mind and go into the figures which were presented some 12 months ago. Let the hon. gentleman see whether something cannot be done in that direction. References have been made to the railway system, and it has been suggested that the Country party have been purchased. I resent that suggestion. I say that the Country party are out for the best interests

of the State in the way of primary developments. The fertilisers freight reduction, it has been said, is only a small matter. If all the concessions granted were added together, they would represent something very small as compared with the effect on production. As the result of the efforts of the Industries Assistance Board there has been three million pounds' worth of development in wheat. Such expenditure is good. It is keeping Western Australia alive. It is keeping an industry on which so much depends, in a much better condition than it would have been in had that assistance not been forthcoming. The farmers give the State the benefit of their knowledge and industry, and pay back the money lent to them by the State with 6 per cent. per annum interest. The farming industry is at the base of the tree on which we are all depending. The farming industry is the root system of the national tree. With regard to bulk handling of wheat I asked a question on the 10th August, 1915. I asked that question with the object of ascertaining what saving could have been effected on the 1913-14 harvest in respect of jutes, assuming the price of bags to be 7s. per dozen. The Minister for Works, on behalf of the Minister for Agriculture, replied that, estimating the amount of wheat exported as wheat at some seven million bushels, requiring some 2,400,000 sacks, those sacks at 7s. per dozen would cost some £70,000, and that the amount received by the producer in exchange for these sacks would be about £14,000, leaving a difference of nearly £57,000. That amount, I wish to point out, capitalised at 5 per cent., would represent a million and a half sterling. The wheat yield this year was about double that of the year 1913-14; and thus the loss on sacks, capitalised at only 5 per cent., would represent over two and a quarter million sterling. If a saving of that amount can be made in jute alone, surely it is worth the expenditure of a system of bulk handling for Western Australia. In reply to an interjection, the Premier has said that he did not think anything could be done in the coming season. I am sorry that reply was given, because it is desirable that the facilities should be available at the earliest possible moment. Now that attention has been drawn to the

matter, I hope the Government will endeavour to see if some of the value that is leaving the country in the shape of bags cannot be saved. If we are to go in for bulk handling, why not let us do so at the earliest possible date? Not the one industry alone will benefit, but every industry. By assistance to agriculture we fructify every walk of life throughout the length and breadth of the land. The Royal Commission on Agriculture are also to go into the question of dairying. While I do not pose as an expert on dairying to be brought before the Commission, I do think we have been trying to develop dairying in a part of this State where its development is necessarily too slow. The response to the efforts to stimulate dairying in the South-West has not been commensurate with the energy expended. Within the last fortnight the Agricultural Commissioner for the South-West has been inspecting the Greenough Flats, and he speaks of that district as being more suitable for dairying than he thought there was in the whole of Western Australia for that particular purpose. Last session I drew attention in this House to the Avondale Estate, which has two rivers running through it. I think it possible the Government might dispose of that estate by cutting it up into small areas suitable for cultivation by families. With employed labour it is difficult to maintain dairying, because of the necessity for working seven days a week. The dairying industry, to be successful, will have to be worked on land prepared beforehand and partially cultivated—land brought to a certain stage of reproductiveness—because settlers on virgin country in the South-West in particular are involved in too much capital cost and are faced with too long a delay before they can obtain any return for their labours. Mention has been made of the Esperance land. The members of the Country party were solid in their support of the Esperance railway. We stated that men engaged in agriculture, no matter where they might be situated, were entitled to communication with their market and their natural port. I shall watch with keen interest the report of the Royal Commission investigating the question of the Esperance land. If it is impossible for the settlers on the Esperance lands to

carry on farming profitably, even when the railway is built, it would be far better to move them to some other district; say, to place them on some of the improved properties which have fallen back into the hands of the trustees of the Agricultural Bank. Thus the Agricultural Bank's assets would be kept alive, and the settlers would be given a fair start on improved properties. I understand that there were not more than 60 settlers in the Esperance district and that there are not more than 40 there at the present time. If it is true that there are only 40 there now it shows that the position of farming is precarious, and it is not right that these people should be assisted to remain there. If the land can be proved to be satisfactory, without too much salinity in the soil, well and good, but I would like other reports to be obtained on it and have them compared with that of Mr. Mann. I would also like a comparison made between the Esperance soil and that east of Kellerberrin, near the salt lakes. It should be remembered that we are not out to advance one industry; we are out to do the best we can for the State. If in this particular district the farmers can do well with the assistance of a railway let them have it. But if it is not warranted from the agricultural point of view the State should certainly not go to the expense of constructing it.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): After a four years' trial one settler declared that, railway or no railway, the land was no good.

Mr. Green: Nothing of the kind.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): That man was not biassed. He spent £4,000 of his own money in the four years and then walked off the land.

Mr. HARRISON: We want the evidence of more than one witness. The fact remains, however, that if the land is no good we should remove the settlers from that part of the State.

Mr. Walker: Then you would have to remove many from the wheat belt as well.

Mr. HARRISON: I am aware that there are some portions of the wheat belt on which farmers have not been able to make good. If the Commission which has been appointed is going to be of any value they will

have to investigate the condition of the industry thoroughly. It is necessary that they should find out what are the chief burdens of to-day. First of all we have an excessive tariff, and we should know how it presses on the agriculturist, and how burdens in other walks of life compare with those which are imposed on the farming community. The tariff which the farmer has to bear weighs very heavily on him, much more so than the tariff on any other section of the community. As we all know the duty on farming machinery is 25 or 30 per cent., and that machinery lies dormant for at least 40 out of the 52 weeks. We know too that the average life of farming machinery is five years. Therefore, if it were in constant use, its life would be reduced to a period of eight months. It is totally different from flour milling and mining machinery, which is in constant use and lasts for many years. Where is the fairness, therefore, in the high tariff which the farmer is expected to pay?

Mr. Bolton: Is not the Liberal Government going to alter all that for you?

Mr. HARRISON: We want that brought forcibly forward, so that the Federal Government may realise the enormity of the burden which the farmer has to carry and which is preventing the agricultural industry from making the advance it should do. The Commission will also prove of value because of the fact that throughout the Commonwealth and also throughout the Empire they are expecting us to use our endeavours to settle repatriated soldiers on the land. In return for what these brave men have done are we going to provide land for them from which it will not be possible to make a good living for themselves and their families? These men are to be given a reward for what they have done for their country, and not to be made to undergo penal servitude on the land. There is some talk of providing poultry farms for soldiers, but it should be pointed out it is not every man who can make a success of that industry. There are quite a number of instances where men thought they were going to make fortunes out of poultry raising, but they soon found out their mistake. It is really only an expert who can make a success of this. I do not know whether members realise the importance of the Royal Commission which has

been appointed, but I consider that if by adding to its personnel its conclusions will carry more weight with the Federal Government or with our own State Government, others should be asked to sit on it. So far as I am concerned I am satisfied with it as it is at present constituted.

Mr. Green: There is not a Labour man on it.

Mr. HARRISON: When we remember that we shall have to pay interest and sinking fund on the huge sum of money which is being expended on the war, it is up to every man in the State to do his level best for the country he is living in, just as our noble soldiers are fighting our battles at the front and as the pioneers of Australia worked in years gone by.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara), [9-12]: I desire to make a few remarks on this address, and as it is some times usual, I desire to offer a few congratulations. I congratulate the Ministers on their re-election to office; I desire to congratulate the new member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert); I desire particularly to congratulate the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) on the military honours won by his son. I might add that that son is one of those trades hall people whom the Minister for Works classed as Germans. I desire to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on the fact that you are in the Chamber. It appears to me that there are quite a number of members in this House who are desirous of giving you a job. I do not desire to curry favour, but I want to say that for the present you will do me.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Hon. Minister): That settles it.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The hon. member is settled. Since the House last met we have had a somewhat strenuous election, and there are one or two matters that I want to refer to. Members of this party have been slandered and their loyalty doubted. For instance, a person named W. J. George, speaking in the theatre recently, characterised the people from the trades hall as Germans. I want to say to that gentleman that he is a liar and a mongrel.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am going to ask the hon. member for Pilbara if he was

referring to the Minister for Works when he made that remark.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I am referring to a report in the *West Australian*. I believe it was the Minister for Works who made the remark.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member is referring to the Minister for Works he must not speak of him as a liar and a mongrel. He must withdraw the remarks.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I will withdraw.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am sure that the hon. member did not make those remarks in cold blood. I ask him to apologise as well.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I apologise. I want to say that when a man calls me a German, or suggests that I am one, I would like to meet him outside of this House. I am not allowed to use in this Chamber an expression such as I should like. A man who would make the statement that the people from the Trades Hall are disloyal, when thousands of them have given up their lives, and tens of thousands are still at the front, merely to the sake of getting office and of getting a few odd votes, is despicable. We have heard a good deal of talk of Germans lately. We have heard the name of the Hon. J. Scaddan coupled with that of Strelitz. I want to tell the House and the public of Western Australia that Mr. Scaddan made the acquaintance of Strelitz through an introduction from the Hon. Frank Wilson, who introduced Strelitz to Mr. Scaddan as a personal friend.

The Premier: I did not say anything about his being a personal friend.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: He came to Mr. Scaddan and said, "This is a personal friend of mine; he is in trouble, and I want you to help him." When the Canning election was in progress Mr. Scaddan's name was coupled with that of Strelitz, and Mr. Scaddan lost votes because it was said he had done something for Strelitz. I want to tell the House and the country that the office of the member opposite (Hon. Frank Wilson) is in Viking House, a building owned by Strelitz Bros. I want to tell the people of Western Australia, too, that when a caucus meeting of the Liberal party was held for the purpose of electing a Government that meeting was held in Strelitz's

building. I do not care much whether a man be a German or of other nationality ; but I want to say that if I went to another man and said, "This is a personal friend of mine," I would be careful that that man did not lose votes because of that.

The Premier : I deny that I ever used such words. I introduced Mr. Strelitz to Mr. Scaddan as Premier, and asked him to listen to Mr. Strelitz's tale.

Mr. Bolton : You asked for his help and protection.

The Premier : I knew him, you all know him ; there is nothing but good known of him.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : Talk about fair play ! The action of the hon. the Premier in this matter would be a disgrace to Germany—that fine old English gentleman, born in Sunderland and educated at Oxford. One other gentleman who talked about Germans is the Hon. the Colonial Secretary. He talked thus, "Merz," "Strelitz," "fine old Anglo-Saxon names." I know many fine old Anglo-Saxon names—Philip Collier, Frank Wilson ; but Hal Pateshall Colebatch !

The Premier : Merz, is that Anglo-Saxon ?

Mr. UNDERWOOD : No ; but it might originate in some other country than Germany ; Pateshall Colebatch is pure German.

The Premier : Your Government engaged Merz.

Mr. Collier : We engaged him on the strength of his connection with the British Admiralty by whom he is still engaged.

The Premier : You dealt with Germans, you entered into a contract.

Mr. SPEAKER : Order !

Mr. UNDERWOOD : I do not care whether a man was born in Germany so long as he is a man. There have been good men born in Germany just as there have been good men born in Australia ; but I want to say that those who would come along with their German friends and introduce them to Mr. Scaddan, and afterwards use the fact against him in order to lose him votes, are unworthy of respect.

The Premier : I never used the fact.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : Strelitz is a co-director with the hon. the Premier in a Collie coal mine ; the hon. the Premier still rents an office from Strelitz, and the Liberal

party still hold caucus meetings in Strelitz's buildings.

The Premier : Is he a co-director of mine now ?

Mr. UNDERWOOD : He was.

The Premier : He was a shareholder before the war, but he is not one any longer.

Mr. Collier : The Federal Government cut him out as a shareholder, not you.

The Premier : They did nothing of the sort.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : As a matter of fact, I believe Strelitz is still a shareholder by way of a dummy, and I should not be surprised if the dummy were the Hon. Frank Wilson.

The Premier : I must ask that the member withdraw that statement as to dummyness.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : I withdraw.

The Premier : And you should be made to apologise.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : I repeat there is no reason why members on this side of the House should be considered disloyal ; I think even those who use the argument should themselves know that much. But it is not the sort of charge one takes lying down. In regard to the coalition recently entered into, we find that the Country party have made a deal with the members on the other side. I desire to say that, as far as I am concerned, I do not intend to say much in opposition to the arrangement. Those on the other side of the House reckon they can run the country better than we, and personally I am quite prepared to let them have a try. I am quite prepared also to go to the country—

Mr. Nairn : So are we.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : You have your opportunity. If the Government are game to go to the country, I will be quite pleased. On the other hand, if they think they can run the country I am prepared to let them have a fly. Last evening we heard the hon. the Premier deliver what should have been a policy speech ; but the hon. member, it struck me, had forgotten for the moment that he was Premier and thought he still was leader of the Opposition. His speech was simply a rehash of his criticism of the late Government. I want to point out to the Premier that his position is now not that of a critic but of a constructor. He

criticised numerous actions of the late Government, but did not tell us what he was going to do himself. I asked, by way of interjection, what the Premier was going to do with the Implement Works; and he started to talk about sawmills. I asked about other things, and he talked about yet other things. I will tell the House what the hon. the Premier is going to do. He is going to scrape through the present session as best he can and next March will appoint himself Agent General and go back to the country from which he came, the country of fair play.

Member: Won't you be glad to get rid of him?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: No; I do not think we would get anything easier. I desire to make a few remarks with regard to the arrangement made by the Liberals with the Country party. The Liberals sold themselves and their political principles holus bolus to the Country party. They have given away all the Country party asked, and recognise that they must in the future continue to give away whatever the Country party demand. In regard to the Country party itself. This party is controlled not by a conference or congress but by a little clique of tea-and-sugar-bush-rangers, commercial brigands, Alec Monger, Prowse, McGibbon—everyone of them bush-rangers. They tell the Country party how they shall vote; and I want now to draw attention to the attitude taken by the Prime Minister of Australia when the Trades Hall people told him how he should vote. He defied them. Those people, Monger, Prowse and the others, are not to be defied. Mr. McCabe, after he was beaten, pointed out that all the motor cars running in Northam at election time were provided by agents and storekeepers, who were the natural enemies of the farmers. We have heard a good deal of criticism in regard to the losses made by the late Government on certain undertakings. We are told that the loss on the State steamers amounts to £60,000, on the brickworks £1,000 and so on. But the present Government come into office on the understanding that there is going to be an absolute dead loss of £30,000 on conveying fertilisers over our railways. Time and time again the Commissioner of Railways has laid down the proposition

that to carry a ton of stuff over the railways costs a penny per mile. The Government are going to lose £30,000 a year on that. When we are running a business of that description we should charge up the cost or carrying the stuff. If it is necessary to assist the farmers by means of lower freights, let us vote straight-out a sum of money from the Treasury to recoup the railways.

Mr. Thomson: Why did you not do that?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: We charged the freights, but you are going to lose £30,000; yet you grizzle like smacked kids about a paltry loss on two or three fish shops.

The Minister for Works: Why did not you do it with Collie coal?

Mr. A. A. Wilson: You leave Collie coal to me.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I do not desire to speak at length with regard to the stoppage of the Esperance railway. It is immaterial to me whether it is stopped or not. I have never been a strong supporter of the railway, and I do not think I would die if I never heard any more of it. It is for the Government to stop it if they think it is not warranted, and take the responsibility of stopping it.

The Minister for Works: That is what we are doing.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is what you are shirking. You do not take the responsibility of stopping it; instead, you come along with a cock and bull story about salt. You can get a higher analysis of salt out of my land at Tammin than you got at Esperance.

Mr. Holman: It was a question of sugar at Bullfinch, was it not?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Not sugar; some people call it palm grease. The Government say they are going to stop the Esperance railway because of salt. That is only a blind. In regard to wheat-growing, we have to find out, not whether Esperance land will grow wheat, but whether any other part of Western Australia will grow it. I have put a few hundred pounds into wheat land, and I cannot see it coming back again. If there is no rain next week, there will be another failure this year. That will make three out of five, and no country can run on three failures out of five tries. I want

the Government not to worry about dodging their responsibility in respect to Esperance, but to go more fully into the more serious question of whether it is possible to grow wheat at a profit in any other part of Western Australia except Esperance. To me it is a serious proposition, one that is likely to cost me a few hundred pounds. Of course, possibly I could get the Government to take over my land for closer settlement, just as they did the Avondale estate and one or two others. We are up against a very serious proposition in regard to wheat-growing in this country, and I do not think the people of Western Australia appreciate the enormous amount of money which has been sunk in the industry by the State. The Scaddan Government spent, I forget how many millions, and nearly all of it was spent in the wheat-growing area. I am very doubtful if it is going to pay. In addition to the huge sums of money lent by the Agricultural Bank, the Industries Assistance Board has put up over a million pounds. I am convinced that 25 per cent. of those assisted by the Industries Assistance Board will fail. The Agricultural Bank has 600 or 700 farms on its hands. The bank has loaned money essentially for clearing. Most of us know that cleared land, if left untilled, grows scrub again, and has to be cleared once more; and so the money lent on these farms has gone for ever. The Agricultural Bank is down from £500,000 to a million—there is no denying that. What do the Government propose to do about agriculture? They propose to appoint a board to inquire into it. That will do till the Agent Generalship is open. The Government are employing four experts at a salary of about £800 a year each, yet they go outside those experts and pick men who have had no scientific training whatever. We hear of the Colonial Secretary speaking of higher education and saying that we must have schools where the farmers' sons can be educated in the science of agriculture; yet when we come to deal with the question, we pass over the paid experts and put on men without scientific education. Either those experts are capable of advising the Government or they are not worth the money that is being paid to them, and if passing them over the Government should go still further and sack them.

Mr. Heitmann: What about the member for Northam? He knows all about the question.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I do not wish to speak to-night about the member for Northam and his political pal, Cook, who has been shoved into a position on the Industries Assistance Board. There is no question whatever that the Agricultural Bank is down at least half a million; yet the present proposal is to take the lame ducks from the Industries Assistance Board and put them on the bank also. Except the Government get out pretty soon or learn sense, the Agricultural Bank is going to bring a disaster on Western Australia. On the subject of agriculture I have nothing further to say, other than that in the wheat shipping scheme it has been arranged that the people of Western Australia shall pay 4s. 9d. per bushel for their wheat. If one wants wheat for his pigs or his fowls he can buy it on trucks at Perth at 3s. 3d.; if he wants it to feed his wife and children he has to pay 4s. 9d. We are using about two million bushels this year, and so the consumers of flour in Western Australia will have paid the farmers £150,000 as a bonus. Yet the farmers still yell that everything they want must be free and everything they sell must be charged up. Outside the wheat growers—who send their wheat to the mill, where they have it gristed for their own use, and so do not pay the 4s. 9d.—everyone in Western Australia is paying 4s. 9d. while we can buy it for our pigs at 3s. 3d. And all the time there are a million bushels of wheat at Fremantle which will have to be carted out to sea. On the top of this, the farmers say we are doing nothing for them.

The Minister for Works: Do not the same prices apply in the other States?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Exactly.

The Minister for Works: Well, what have we to do with that?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I would not suspect the hon. member of having to do with anything. The price we are paying for flour means that we are giving the farmers of this State a bonus of £150,000 this year. Yet the farmers say we have done nothing for them. They want fertilisers—£30,000 dead loss. There is a sum of £150,000 which the consumers are paying

them. There are the terminal charges, representing £40,000, and then they come along—

Mr. Thomson: Do you think those are just charges?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: And want bulk handling of wheat, which will cost another couple of millions.

Mr. Thomson: Do you think the terminal charges are just?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It has yet to be proved to me that wheat growing in Western Australia is a paying proposition. I wish to say a word or two in regard to State enterprises, and more particularly in regard to State steamers. We are told by the Premier, and his statement is not too accurate, that we lost £60,000.

Mr. Angwin: Last year.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Last year. As a matter of fact if he had reckoned up to date he would have found that there was practically no loss on these ships. If we had lost £60,000 the experience we have got would have been well worth it.

Mr. Hardwick: It is no news to you, then.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Not when the hon. member is there. We are coming back. As a matter of fact, on that North-West coast we have many difficulties which do not apply to other parts of the world. In so far as the mining industry is concerned, there is a decided lack of firewood for fuel. There is no coal on the coast and the ships trading between Fremantle and Derby or Wyndham have to carry sufficient coal to take them over almost a 5,000 miles trip. Therefore, coal-driven ships are bound to be enormously expensive, whereas with oil-driven ships we can carry less than a tenth of the amount of fuel, reckoned in space, and thus ensure the existence of more space for cargo. It has been shown by internal combustion engines that mining is possible in the North-West and that without them it is not possible. Just as internal combustion engines have enabled mining to be carried on in the northern portion of the State, so will internal expansion engines make freights reasonable along that coast. The late Government proposed to have constructed one ship of special design, oil-driven. The Legislative Council chopped out our vote. If the vote had stood we

could have had the ship built and running to-day.

Mr. Male: No, you could not. It is absurd.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes, we could. We could have had that ship going to-day. As a matter of fact, almost the next week after that vote was struck out the embargo of the British Government against the construction of merchant ships was withdrawn, and had our order gone forward the ship could have been built, and would have been built, and been trading on the coast to-day. But that is past. In regard to the future it is urgently necessary to provide two reasonably fast oil-driven ships for that coast. The people on that coast are just as much entitled to assistance as the farmers at Northam or along the Midland lines. We can cut down £30,000 a year on the carriage of superphosphates for poor struggling farmers like the Hon. V. Hamersley, the Hon. Jas. Mitchell, and others, and we should undoubtedly endeavour to give some facilities to the people who are pioneering the North of this country.

Mr. Nairn: But you did not keep the boat on the coast?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: What does the hon. member know about them? The hon. member for Swan is repeating a statement which has been contradicted half a dozen times. I have pointed out several times that this statement has been contradicted and would advise the hon. member to read *Hansard* at the point where I spoke about it, and he will then find that the "Kangaroo" was never bought for the coast and is not suitable for the coast.

The Minister for Works: We have just been told that she was suitable for the freezing works.

Mr. Angwin: That is a different matter to saying that she was suitable for the coast.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is absurd to say that we bought the ship for the trade. We did no such thing, and we never said so. We have contradicted that over and over again inside and outside the House.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Other members opposite have said she was bought for the freezing works.

Mr. Collier: That does not mean she was bought for this coast.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : I would point out that the Wyndham Freezing Works is one port and that we have a dozen ports on the North-West coast. The "Kangaroo" is not suitable for the general trade along the North-West, and no one in the Scaddan Government ever said she was.

The Minister for Works : It was said tonight.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : If the hon. member says that again, I will tell him what I told him once before ; he knows what it was.

The Minister for Works : That is what was said.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : It was not said.

The Minister for Works : That was what we understood the leader of the Opposition to say.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : The hon. member is mad. He is putting up one of his drivelling old jokes and misconstruing what has been said. I defy him or any one else to show that there has ever been a statement made by this side of the House that the "Kangaroo" was purchased for the general North-West trade.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister) : To take kerosene from America to Brisbane and put up the price for the poor.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : The remarks of the Premier in regard to the freezing works were characteristic of him and were to be expected from his ignorance of the position. He tells the House that the works are too large, that the district cannot grow the stock to keep them going. He is speaking absolutely in ignorance. There is actually room for another freezing works in the Kimberley area besides those at Wyndham. There is not only room for freezing works at Wyndham, but for others at Derby, and there is ample country to grow the stock with which to feed them. Here a few points in regard to the freezing works. The Premier has told us that he is going to sell the brick works. He has not told us what he is going to do with the State steamships. Possibly he may be inclined to sell the Wyndham Freezing works. Notwithstanding all the extravagant statements which have been made about the cost of these works, I undertake to say that if the Government want to sell them, Vestey Bros. will give them £100,000 on the deal now.

The Minister for Works : Send them along to-morrow and let them put their offer in writing.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : Mark Reuben might be willing to take them on too. The Wyndham Freezing Works are well situated. This State enterprise compares very favourably indeed with private enterprise in that connection. We have the works going at Wyndham and are making fair progress. At Darwin we see private enterprise at work. Vestey Bros. have expended already at least half a million pounds on freezing works at Darwin and as yet they have no water supply. They have their works nearly completed, but find that they have no water. That is private enterprise. There is an attempt, and it is one which is well worthy of consideration, to monopolise the whole of the meat raising country in the northern portion of the State. Mark Reuben is buying all the stations he can get hold of in my electorate. At the present time he owns two or three million acres of land, and is still a buyer. The result will be that we shall have stations with managers in charge, single men with no encumbrances for preference, and a few black gins to do the work, the pioneering squatter will go out, Mark Reuben will draw his dividends in England or America, and the country will never be settled. Mark Reuben owns practically the whole of the beautiful De Grey River. It is a fine country and there are many worthy Western Australian pioneers left there, but Mark Reuben has his manager upon it. Mark Reuben, however, is only a circumstance compared with Vestey Bros., of the Northern Territory and Kimberley. Vestey Bros. own leases of about 30 million acres in extent. They have bought leases from the Catherine River, and the territory right away back to the Margaret River in the South-West, a continuous run of country of 500 or 600 miles.

Mr. Heitmann : Nineteen hundred and twenty-eight did not scare that crowd.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : No. Sir William Vestey is reported to have left England to become an American citizen in order to avoid the war tax. That is what has been going on in the Northern portion of the State. The only means of safety for us in this country is to people the North. While Mark Reuben and Vestey Bros. are

getting hold of it with their single men as managers and their few niggers to work the stations, we are not going to people that country. It is a most prolific country, and will carry an immense population, if it only gets a chance. If there is one thing above all others that the people of Western Australia have to guard against it is the Mark Reubens and the Vestey Bros. I do not think it is necessary to speak at any further length. I do not appreciate the methods adopted by the Minister for Works in allowing a pressman to have the full run of his office, to pig-root through his files and endeavour to find something which may be discreditable to his predecessors.

The Minister for Works: Can you prove that?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes.

The Minister for Works: I do not think you can.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Certainly I can.

The Minister for Works: I am certain that you cannot prove it.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Who was it went out of the back door the day I was in?

The Minister for Works: I will tell you about that later.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I think, after all, a pressman could be kept out. If the Minister has not sufficient intelligence to discover the failings of his predecessor without the assistance of a pressman, he should say nothing about them. He should not get a pressman to help him to search for those failings. I am not afraid of any pressman poking his nose into my department. He would not find anything there. No ashes even were found in our departments when we left office; but, when the Scaddan Government came in, the fireplaces were filled up with the ashes of burnt papers. The Minister for Works, with the aid of his Press sycophant, found that there was a powellising agreement. I have a recollection of hearing of that paper previously. I have a recollection, too, that all papers in connection with that powellising agreement were laid on the Table of this House. There was only the miserable subterfuge of the hon. gentleman in pretending that he had found something, that he had made a discovery. He said he had made the discovery that Mr. Short had not been consulted.

The Minister for Works: I said that?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: No; the pressman said that. There was a minute on the file showing that Mr. Short had been consulted. However, all that was spread out by the pressman, all he had found on his own—spread out by him like a printer's devil. In regard to powellising, all I wish to say is that on the Port Hedland-Marble Bar railway there are powellised sleepers, which have been down for about six years. There has been no renewal whatever of those sleepers. They are to-day in splendid condition. Without the powellising process, that line of railway would have had to be relaid a year or two ago. Powellising has saved the relaying of the Port Hedland-Marble Bar railway. I will say that all across this State. There is no telling how good the powellising process is or how long its efficacy will last; but from absolute, positive experience we can speak of those particular powellised sleepers, laid in the worst white-ant country to be found in this State. Those sleepers are still down; there has been no trouble with them, and no attempt to renew them. In conclusion, I desire to congratulate the Government once more, and to express the hope that they will get along from those devious little ways, and come out as men and do their work.

On motion by Mr. Thomson debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10-6 p.m.

Legislative Council,

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