

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 19th September, 1916.

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

ELECTION RETURNS—EAST AND NORTH PROVINCES.

The Clerk announced the return to writs issued for the election of members for the East Province and North Province, showing that Hon. Hal Pateshall Colebatch and Hon. Vernon Hamersley had been duly elected for the East Province, and George James Gallop Warden Miles had been duly elected for the North Province.

The Honourables Hal Pateshall Colebatch, Vernon Hamersley and George James Gallop Warden Miles took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Reports in accordance with Clauses 54 and 83 of the Government Railways Act, 1904, for the quarter ended 30th June, 1916. 2, Harbour and Light Department, annual report. 3, Industries Assistance Board, report for year ended 30th June, 1916. 4, Government Tramways, receipts and expenditure for quarter ended 30th June, 1916. 5, Municipal Corporations Act, amendment to by-laws, (a) Carnarvon, (b) Fremantle, (c) North Fremantle, (d) Perth, (e) Wagin. 6, Roads Act, (a) amendment to by-laws for motor traffic and standard lights, (b) additional uniform general by-laws for regulating the registration of motor vehicles, (c) by-laws Ninghan board, (d) building by-laws, Queens Park. 7, Health Act, (a) meat inspection and branding, amendment of regulations, (b) model by-laws, adoption by Bunbury Municipal Council, (c) model by-laws, adoption by Comet Vale Local Board of Health, (d) resolution

and by-laws, Dowerin, (e) health by-laws, Perth, (f) amendment of by-laws, West Kimberley. 8, Mining Act, additional regulation. 9, Land Act, amended timber regulations. 10, Albany Water Supply, amendment of by-laws. 11, Derby Water Supply, amendment of by-laws. 12, Education Department, amendment to regulations. 13, Port regulations, amendment of No. 76. 14, Medical Department, amendment of regulation No. 19.

OBITUARY—HON. F. CONNOR.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.40]: In the brief interval that has elapsed since the last sitting of this House death has claimed another of our members. Of recent years the death roll amongst the members of this Chamber has been a very heavy one. In the present year no fewer than four of our members have passed away. We were all of us inexpressibly shocked to hear of the sudden and tragic end of the Hon. Francis Connor, a gentleman who had occupied a seat in this Chamber for many years and who had been a prominent figure in the public life of Western Australia since the introduction of responsible Government. Mr. Connor occupied a peculiar place in the Parliament of Western Australia. At the outset he sat in the popular Chamber as the solitary representative of the mining industry, then in its infancy, but destined so quickly to bring this State into a position of world-wide prominence. Of later years in this House, Mr. Connor was in a special sense the representative of the pioneers of the North-West. That portion of the State owes him a deep debt of gratitude both for his persistent public advocacy of its requirements and for the enterprise with which he, as a private citizen, helped in the development of its resources. By the members of this House, and by all parties he was regarded with great esteem and, I am sure I may add, with deep affection. We all feel that we shall not again have the privilege of sitting with another Frank Connor. His magnetic personality, and forceful eloquence, his imposing figure and singularly attractive features, together

with the impressive gestures and rich brogue with which he illumined and vitalised the tedium of debate will long be held in remembrance by all who knew him. I desire to move—

That a letter of condolence be sent by the Hon. the President to the widow and family of the late Hon. Francis Connor.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [4.43]: As one who knew the late member for many years not alone in this House but in that province which he represented so ably, I wish to add my quota of respect and regret for him who has passed from amongst us. To me in this House the late Mr. Connor always seemed to bring into the somewhat stolid debates which sometimes occur here a breath of romance from the outside world. Although of course he was typically West Australian in his pursuits for many years, he seemed to be a visitor to us, and, as I said, he seemed to bring into the Chamber a breath from the outside world. He was one of a race which I fear is fast disappearing and of whom we have but few representatives left, the pioneers of our Great North-West. The late Mr. Connor did very much indeed to place the North-West on the road to that prosperity which must ultimately come to it, and he goes to his rest knowing that he carries with him the esteem, affection and respect of his fellow human beings not only in this House but throughout that vast province which he so long and ably represented. I desire to second the motion of condolence moved by the leader of the House.

Hon. J. M. DREW (Central) [4.45]: I rise to endorse the graceful tribute paid by the Colonial Secretary to the memory of the late Hon. F. Connor. Politically, Mr. Connor and myself were strong opponents, but personally we were old and sincere friends. There was perhaps no one in this Chamber who more severely attacked the party to whom I am attached than did Mr. Connor, but although his remarks were frequently heated yet I can say—and I have had a pretty lengthy experience with him—that they never left a wound or a sting behind them. We shall certainly miss him from amongst us. We shall miss his striking personality, his fine character, his

beaming geniality, which showed out behind even his stormy eloquence, and we shall miss the wide and deep experience which he brought to bear upon all his discussions. The tragic end of Mr. Connor cast a gloom over members of all parties, and his death is deplored by all sections of the community. Our hearts go out in sympathy to his sorrowing widow and family. I support the motion.

Question passed, members standing.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day—Amendment.

Debate resumed from the 20th July.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.47]: For reasons that will readily suggest themselves to hon. members I do not propose to traverse matters dealt with in the Governor's Speech. At the close of my remarks I intend to submit a very brief amendment to the Address-in-reply, and I hope this amendment will meet with the approval of members of the House. In the meantime, it is my duty to outline as briefly as I can the immediate intentions of the Government. I know that at a time like this, a time of great local difficulty and national danger, I can confidently appeal to members of this Chamber to give sympathetic consideration to those proposals which the Government may deem it desirable to place before them. Since our last sitting the Honorary Minister, Dr. Saw, has been called up by the Imperial Medical Department and has now left for the front. We regret very much the loss of Dr. Saw's services, but we join in congratulating him upon having been chosen for this work which we know he was only too anxious to perform. Further, since our last sitting there have been some most strenuous political campaigns. Two of our Ministers were opposed, the Hon. James Mitchell for Northam, and Hon. R. T. Robinson for Canning. In each case the Ministers were successful by a very large majority in record polls. Their success we interpret, rightly or wrongly, as an indication of public confidence in the Administration and in the proposals submitted to the people by

the Premier in his Policy speech delivered at Busselton a few weeks ago. If we desired any other indication of public confidence I think we have had it in the return by a large majority the other day of my friend and colleague, the Hon. V. Hamersley, who, prior to the assumption of office by the present Government, was able to win his seat only by the casting vote of the returning officer, but who, after this Government had been in power for a few weeks, long enough to make their proposals and intentions known to the country, was returned on a record poll by a majority which, I have no doubt gives him, as it gives me, the greatest satisfaction. We interpret these expressions of public confidence as a desire on the part of the country that this Government should go ahead with those things which they have undertaken to carry out, that they shall endeavour to adjust the finances of the State, and at the same time provide for the sound administration of the Government departments. Our aim will be to restore the confidence of the people, to encourage investment of capital in our industries, and in our commercial pursuits, and to give the people, so far as we can, security of tenure and an assurance that they will be immune from unjust State competition in any legitimate private undertaking that they may have put in hand. Every possible assistance will be given to all our primary industries. In regard to the mining industry it has been regretted, not only by members of this Chamber but by the general public, that of recent years there has been a lamentable decline in the gold production, and that whereas ten or twelve years ago the gold production was worth eight and a half millions sterling there is reason to fear that for the current year it will not exceed four and a half millions sterling. The Government do not believe that this is due to the exhaustion of our gold resources, and we are extremely hopeful that by legislation and administrative encouragement something may be done to stem the decline in our gold production which threatens to interfere so seriously with the prosperity of the State. We must all be mindful of the fact that gold mining gave Western Australia its first opportunity, and we should all

deplore it if this decline in the gold yield continued. Recently, as members are aware, there has been some trouble on the goldfields which threatened to have a serious consequence and throw out of employment approximately 4,000 men. I think the Government, particularly the Minister for Mines, are entitled to some credit for the prompt and apparently satisfactory manner in which the trouble has been settled. So far as the future proposals regarding the mining industry are concerned, the intention expressed by the Minister for Mines to call together a conference of those interested in the industry has met with the warm approval, not only of the Chamber of Mines, but also of the employees of the mining industry, and there is good reason to believe that some satisfactory results will accrue. In regard to our pastoral industry, it is necessary that, in order to give security of tenure, leases which expire in 1923 should be dealt with. New leases must have a full term to run; otherwise they will not be taken up, and lessees will not incur the heavy expenditure which is necessary in order to bring their holdings into a state of profit. This matter is being inquired into, as is also the question of the limitation of pastoral areas to be held. In order to encourage the small pastoralist and cattle grower and make our pastoral country carry as large a population as may be possible, the adjustment of rents of pastoral leases in proportion to the distance from shipping ports and the class of land and water supply available will also be taken into the fullest consideration. Our agricultural industry is to-day perhaps the most important of our industries and the one from which we feel we have most to hope. The Government realise that our farmers have passed through a distressing time through drought and war, and also feel that the results which have been secured during those years of light rainfall, if we take them year by year, have gone far towards demonstrating the real value of the agricultural lands of the State, and so far from discouraging us I think, rightly regarded, they clearly show that when the initial difficulties are overcome and our farmers cease to rely upon one method of wealth production alone and become farmers in the true

sense of the word, the land in Western Australia will carry a large population and create an enormous amount of wealth for the State. So far as steps being taken by the present Government in regard to the agricultural industry are concerned, I want members of this House and the public generally to understand that in the conference recently held between the Liberal and Country party, the Liberal party made no concession that was not entirely in conformity with its own policy and its own desires. The matter of the abolition of railway terminal charges had been advocated by Liberal members for some time past, and has been quickly put into practice, these charges being abolished as from the 1st of the present month. The reduction of fertiliser freights was in keeping with the policy and previous performances of Liberal administrations. The freights on lines now under construction have also been reduced to the rates applying on opened lines. The reason for that action was that, whilst it was felt that it was an entirely unjustifiable act to charge higher freights on lines in course of construction because of the inconvenience and necessary extra cost of handling the traffic, whilst the lines are being built, it was also felt that when the construction of these lines was spread out over an unduly long period it became an intolerable injustice to the settler that the special rates should continue. A Royal Commission has been appointed to inquire into the agricultural industry. The scope of the Commission will be wide, and I am confident that good results will follow.

Hon. J. Cornell: It will take a load off Ministers' minds.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In connection with the agricultural industry, steps have been taken to give goldfields boys who desire to take up the farming industry a better opportunity than they have previously enjoyed to acquire the necessary knowledge. I desire to refer to this because I notice that when the proposal was made it met with a good deal of criticism from the goldfields themselves. I want to emphasise the fact that there is no suggestion whatever of compulsion in this matter. At the present time a certain number of

lads from the goldfields and other places have engaged themselves to work on farms. Now the Government say to these boys: "If you wish to engage in farming operations we will help you." We propose to pay their fares to the farms.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Will the Government pay the boys' fares back if they want to go back?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have no doubt that this could be arranged. We do not propose to allow them to be engaged except under suitable wages and conditions. We also propose that when they are engaged the officers of the Government shall not entirely lose sight of them and shall see that the engagement, so far as the employing farmers are concerned, is fully carried out. I have no doubt that if there are those who have so little respect for the farming community that they feel that the farmers are going to impose upon everyone in their employment and that some additional security is required, the Government will be prepared to see that every such boy who has been engaged in farming and has not been well trained will have his fare paid back to the goldfields if necessary. Our desire is not in any way to induce these boys to compete with farm labour. I have heard that argument used already, but it does not apply. When a boy leaves school it is usually necessary for him to go to work at something or other, and this scheme is designed to assist those boys who in their future career desire to follow up the agricultural industry. And I think we are bound to give such boys every opportunity, because it must be admitted that the future prosperity of the State rests largely on the development of the agricultural industry. I think therefore that it is only right we should give every opportunity of doing so to those disposed to follow farming pursuits. There is no desire of getting any boy to work on farms who has not a wish to do so. I think that the scheme would be followed by good results to the farmers, the farm employees, and to the boys themselves. Both parties should make their arrangements with care. Farmers must be very careful to see that only suitable boys willing to work and who want to become farmers

are engaged. The parents of the boys themselves should see that they send their boys to work only on farms where they will receive good treatment and where they would have a reasonable opportunity of acquiring an all-round knowledge of farming work. It is also proposed to establish a Railway Advisory Board consisting of the Surveyor General, the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, and the Chief Traffic Manager of Railways. The duty of this Board will be to investigate and report on any proposal for new railways in Western Australia. Their attention will be devoted at once to those agricultural districts lacking railway facilities now, and particularly to those agricultural districts in which railways have not proved profitable.

Member: Is the same board to inquire into the Esperance Railway?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, that is another board. So far as the action of the Government in stopping the construction of the Esperance Railway is concerned, I would like hon. members to understand that that action can in no event cause a single day's delay in the completion of the line; for if the Commission's report be favourable, the Government's action, while not causing a single day's delay in construction, will mean an enormous saving in the cost of construction. Up to the present something like £21,000 has been spent upon this work and only 10 miles of rails are on hand, with no certainty when the remainder of the rails will be available. Altogether apart from the merits or demerits of the Esperance Railway, it is sheer madness to start the construction of a railway in this fashion, doing a little bit to-day and a little bit more to-morrow, and never knowing when you will be able to make any solid progress with the work. Therefore, the appointment of this Commission will mean no delay in the completion of the line, because the Commission will have completed its work before the full supply of rails is in sight; and if it be then determined to go on with it, it will be possible to finish the work and make one job of it at a far less cost than would be the case if we went on tinkering with it as at present. I want to emphasise the fact that this Chamber will

be given the benefit of the full information at the Government's disposal. That full information was not submitted when the question of the construction of the line was under consideration. Until the present Government assumed office Mr. Mann's report on the character of the soil was never published, and although I have no positive proof I believe I am right in saying that it was never placed on the Table of either House. I can find no record of its having been so laid on the Table, which is significant seeing that there is reference to the report; but that reference does not touch on the salient features of the report or give the conclusions that Mr. Mann draws as a result of his investigations. In August, 1912, just about the time this report was prepared the Minister for Lands was asked by the Goldfields Esperance Land League of Kalgoorlie for any reports and results of analysis of soil for publication. The Minister asked the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt whether it was advisable to make known the information in Mr. Mann's report. The Commissioner replied in the affirmative, and the Minister seems to have endorsed this. Subsequently, the matter must have been lost sight of, as the report was never published. As a matter of fact reports by other persons, particularly by Mr. O'Brien, an engineer, traversing Mr. Mann's report with a view to showing that Mr. Mann's report was not reliable, were widely published: but Mr. Mann's report, so far as we are aware, was never published either by the Government or by the Esperance Land League, and was apparently never laid upon the Table of the House. My predecessor, when speaking on the Esperance Railway Bill in January, 1915, just before the Bill was passed, said—

Of all the reports that have been made, there is not one that has been condemnatory of the land.
and yet, the concluding sentences of Mr. Mann's report are in these words—

I can only express the opinion that in the light of the fact then disclosed, and assuming that the tentative standard of salinity I have adopted is a correct one, settlement on this land must be considered as hazardous, unless its adaptability for

wheat has been first fully tested by means of fairly extensive plots grown on various parts of the territory.

The settlers of the district were kept in ignorance of this report, and only when the trustees of the Agricultural Bank began to inquire as to why it was that farming operations gave such unsatisfactory results did the full facts come to light. The average yields in this district have been as follows: 1913-14, 4.2 bushels; 1914-15, 2.5 bushels. We were told at the time the Bill was before Parliament that the average yield was over five bushels. As a matter of fact, the wheat had then been stripped and the actual returns, if they were not within the knowledge of the Government, should have been, and the actual return in 1915 was 2.5. For the past season, 1915-16, when the rest of the State generally had a good yield, the average return from the Esperance district was 5.2. Everything possible has been done to assist those people. A sum of £2,000 is due for rent and that sum has been advanced by the Industries Assistance Board. The Government, well knowing that there was very little prospect of its ever being recovered, transferred this sum from loan money to revenue. So recently as the 13th April, 1916, the trustees of the Agricultural Bank said "These holdings have no mortgageable value at the present time" and they refused to risk the bank's money. Mr. Paterson says, "It is not safe business for the bank to undertake." The Commission which has been appointed has been given very wide powers. And there is not on that Commission anyone who is prejudiced against the Esperance Railway. One of the members is Mr. C. E. Dempster of Esperance, one of the warmest advocates of the railway.

Interjection.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I know he is. Personally it has been a standing quarrel between himself and myself for years. He has been a strong advocate of the Esperance Railway.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: He has a selection on the line.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: His land is miles away from the agricultural settlement. I know that Mr. Dempster has everything to gain and nothing to lose by

the construction of the railway. Mr. Dempster owns a good deal of the land in the vicinity of Esperance and that land will be enormously increased in value if the line is constructed.

Member: Why have you not appointed a representative of the farmers and settlers?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know that they have a branch in that district. Another member is Mr. M. H. Padbury, who is a member of the executive of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, and the third member is Mr. M. J. McDonald of the Taxation Department.

Member: But you have not anyone who knows anything of that land.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I suppose Mr. Dempster and Mr. Padbury know a good deal about it. At any rate, they can call whatever evidence they think fit.

Member: What qualifications has Mr. McDonald?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: He was an inspector of the Agricultural Bank. I do not personally know his qualifications. If hon. members would like to submit any questions to me on the matter I shall endeavour to get them the information. With regard to the timber industry, the aim of the Government is to preserve the forests of the State as a great national asset and by judicious conservation to ensure that they shall remain a source of wealth and revenue to the State for all time.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Do you propose to stick to your regulations?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Those regulations were framed as a result of advice obtained from the expert officers of the department. Since they were framed those actively engaged in the industry have waited upon the Minister and submitted to him a number of reasons why the regulations should be amended. Those reasons are now being investigated, and if it be found that alterations of the regulations are desirable the Government will not hesitate to make such alterations. At any rate, when the Government has arrived at a decision in the matter the question will be open to the comment and criticism of hon. members, as the regulations will have to be tabled. With regard to the State Children and Charities Department, it is pro-

posed to at once appoint a successor to Mr. Longmore, when the question of the outlay of those departments will be carefully gone into. At the present time the cost of those departments is enormous, and judging by the number of complaints received from all quarters its efficiency could be improved in several directions. In the Education Department we shall endeavour to do all possible within the means of the Government, particularly in the direction of extending secondary education. One of the chief lessons of the war has been that the future of the nation must depend upon the efficiency of the individual, and we feel that efficiency can be gained only by spreading as widely as possible the benefits of higher education. We regard it as a great national waste that we insist upon children going to school until 14 years of age and then, no matter how clever a child may be, its future education, unless its parents are able to afford to pay for secondary education, is neglected. The Government has already done something for secondary education in Perth and Kalgoorlie, but we think that as a matter of justice something should be done for the children of country parents who bear the burden of the development of the country, and that so far as possible they should have the same assistance. Arrangements have already been made for an amendment of the education regulations and these were laid upon the Table of the House to-day. Amongst those amended regulations is one for the removal of the parent's income limit in regard to scholarships. Under the old regulation no child was eligible for a scholarship until a declaration had been supplied that its parent's total income did not exceed £350 per annum. Attention has been drawn to many cases in which, whilst the parent's total income might have exceeded £350 per annum, he still had a very indifferent net income and was quite unable to bear the cost of secondary education for his child. Again, cases have arisen in which the parent's income during the year in which the child was eligible for a scholarship amounted to £350, while in the following year it was considerably less. We see no reason for maintaining that restriction and so it has been abolished. Provision is also made for country children who

have passed the entrance examination being placed on the same footing with City children, and it has been decided that they shall receive the sum of £30 per annum boarding allowance, just as do the winners of scholarships. That is for the country children who have to go away from their homes for their education. It will do nothing more than put the country child on the same footing as the City child. Consideration has also been given to the matter of the establishment of high schools in the agricultural districts so that the education of the children might be extended from the age of 14 years to that of 16 years. In connection with these high schools, the idea is that scholarships shall be granted available only to children in smaller country schools, so that they will go on to the district high school in much the same manner as children in the bigger towns are able to go on to the Modern School now. In regard to the State trading concerns we are faced with many serious difficulties. Careful consideration has been given to the matter of State steamers and the conducting of that service in the immediate future. The motor ship "Kangaroo"—which, by the way, is expected to arrive at Fremantle on Wednesday evening—by virtue of the present abnormal freights on oversea carriage is making large profits and will probably continue to do so during the period of the war, and for some little time afterwards. In view of the opposition I offered to the purchase of the "Kangaroo," I think I might go so far as to say that there is now but little danger that the "Kangaroo" will not have earned sufficient profits before normal freights are restored to write her cost down to pre-war value.

Hon. J. Cornell: She has ceased to be a "pup."

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It has turned out to be a very profitable speculation, but that is not to say that the Government are entitled to enter into speculations of this kind. However, the position in regard to other State steamers is by no means so satisfactory. The "Western Australia" is under charter to the Imperial Government, and that charter, although probably the best thing that could have been done in the circumstances, is not going

to result so profitably as we at one time supposed. The vessel had to be docked for some six months before she was fit for her new purpose. During that time nothing was paid for her, and there is still some difference to be decided in regard to the matter of cost of fitting her for her new occupation.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Who is going to pay for the alterations?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I understand that question is to be referred to arbitration, but I am afraid we shall have to abandon any hope of the "Western Australia" recouping us for the loss she has already occasioned.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: They ought to scuttle her.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If she is put to work in the North Sea, of course there is always the chance of something happening. However, whatever else happens, she is not to be returned to Western Australia. The Government will use every endeavour to dispose of her at the first opportunity. We realise, of course, that we cannot hope to sell her after the war is over, because no one would buy her, except to scrap her, and in order to sell her during the war we shall have to see what arrangements can be made with the Imperial Government.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Do you know that you are lessening the chance of a successful sale?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is hardly to be supposed that a prospective purchaser would be influenced by expression of opinions by members of Parliament. In any case, whilst it is altogether inadvisable in the interests of the citizens that the Government of the State should buy "pups," I hope the time will never come when the Government will attempt to sell "pups." If this Government have anything to sell, they will not try to make it appear to be of a better quality than it really is. The remaining ships are inadequate for the Nor'-West trade, as well as being unsuitable. The "Bambra," although we do not pay anything for her, has been unable to earn even working expenses. At the present time she is in dock at Singapore, and it is estimated that a couple of months will be re-

quired for her repairs. This increases our difficulties in conducting the North-West trade. The "Moirra," loaned by the Federal Government to the Agricultural Department, will be of some assistance providing we can retain her services for another year, as we are hoping to do. The "Kwinana" has been the most profitable of these boats, but if I were not afraid of a similar interjection to that recently made by the hon. member I would confess that the manager of the State Steamship Service thinks that she has now reached that ripe old age when we should endeavour to dispose of her. In arriving at a determination as to the method of conducting the service in future, the Government will be dominated chiefly by two desires: first the determination that everything possible shall be done to facilitate the trade in the Nor'-West—every other consideration will give way to that. The second will be to save the State as far as possible from present and future losses. But the dominating consideration will be to do the best we can in very difficult circumstances for the trade of the Nor'-West. In respect to the State Ferries, this is another venture which is causing us a good deal of anxiety. Taken over in 1912, these ferries for the first 15 months showed a profit of £1,250; in the following year the profit had fallen to £1,060; in the third year the profit had disappeared and in its place was a loss of £396. Consequent on this the service was somewhat restricted, and the fares were increased, and it was confidently reported that this would result in eliminating the loss. Nevertheless, although the increased rates returned increased revenue, the expenditure also went up, and for the year ending 30th June last there was shown a loss of £355. This, on a service which only two years ago was showing a profit of over £1,000 per annum! This unsatisfactory state of affairs appears to be due to the building of the ferry boat "Perth." It was an expensive venture and the excessive cost of running the vessel renders her unsuitable to the trade. The position is being carefully investigated by the Government, and I can assure hon. members that whatever alteration is made the convenience of the public will be studied

first, and then it will be the desire of the Government to get out of this losing venture as quickly as possible. The case is the same with the State Fish Supply. During the first 12 months this enterprise showed a loss of £3,183, and for the seven months, 30th November to 30th June last, there was a loss of £2,740. Thus, whilst the average monthly loss for the initial year's operations was £263, that for the past seven months has been £391. To my mind that is a pretty solid sum to lose on a small venture, and as far as I can see there is no immediate prospect of getting rid of that loss. The operations of the last two years do not indicate that that loss is going to disappear. Here again the fault seems to be due to the purchase of unsuitable vessels for the trade. It is not the policy of the Government to carry on competitive trading enterprises of this sort, and the earliest opportunity will be taken to get rid of it. But we do not propose to rush things without fair and reasonable consideration. We want to protect the public against undue interference with any of their food supplies, and we want also to avoid the sacrificing of the assets of the State. Other ventures, such as the State Brick Works, I do not intend to allude to at any length. In this enterprise there is employed a capital of £30,000 and the loss, including depreciation, for the 15 months ending 30th June, 1916, was £1,000. Endeavours will be made to get rid of this venture, every care being taken to protect the State against loss. The State Implement Works, being a larger concern, presents a more serious problem. In this venture is invested £275,000, and the loss on the operations amounts to £57,000. And this is assuming that the stock on hand, valued at £70,000, and the patterns, valued at £7,000, will realise the amount set against them in the balance sheet. The plant is being revalued, and it is reported to us by expert advisers that much of it is unsuitable for cheap production, that the works are badly planned, and that to alter them to bring them into conformity with modern practice, to produce economy in working, would require the expenditure of a large sum of money. In the State Saw Mills

there is employed a capital of £350,000. The total trade from the start of operations amounts to £645,000 and the profits shown in the balance sheet to £2,000, subject to the stocks on hand, valued at £145,172, realising the amount set against them in the balance sheet. Both of those are, of course, large ventures which the Government may find considerable difficulty in handling. Regarding the Wyndham Freezing Works, the plans prepared by Mr. Nevanas were found to be insufficient, and had to be revised, not by the present Government, but by our predecessors in office. Practically the whole of the plans for the works themselves had to be redrawn. It will be remembered that the price tendered by Mr. Nevanas for these works and for the water supply was £155,000, in addition to which approximately £26,000 would have had to be paid under the conditions dealing with fluctuations of freight, making a total of between £180,000 and £190,000. The present estimate of the Public Works Department is as follows, instead of the grand total of £183,000: buildings and machinery £360,000, water supply £44,000, jetty £38,000, oil tanks £10,000; or a total of £452,000.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Only £300,000 out.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Three times the original estimate, three times the Nevanas contract price.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: More than twice. Here again the Government expect to find great difficulty in operating the Wyndham Freezing Works with a reasonable charge to the people using them, and at the same time paying interest and sinking fund and other charges on a capitalisation so enormous. The matter has been given every possible consideration, and whatever saving can be effected will be effected. I do not know that it is necessary for me here to deal at any length with the financial position of the State. That question will be dealt with fully by the Treasurer in another place. So far as future legislation is concerned, a Bill will be introduced to legalise the actions of the late Treasurer in taking loan and other moneys for the purpose of deficit, and to transfer these amounts to public accounts. The intention of the present Government in regard to finances is to restore

full parliamentary authority. I think I could not express our policy in that respect any better if I spoke for half an hour. We desire in all these matters to restore the authority of Parliament. For instance, in the matter of trading concerns, those concerns which require capital will have to have that capital provided by Parliament. In every respect it is the desire of the Government to restore the authority of Parliament in dealing with the State's finances.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: What will be done with the deficit?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The intention is to fund the deficit, and to pay it off over a number of years. It will interest hon. members to know that to get rid of the deficit in 30 years will cost £100,000 per annum. That is the legacy the new Government have had to take over. A Bill to amend the Treasury Bills Act will be introduced. The present Act limits the issue of Treasury bills to three million pounds against Loan Acts in force. But apparently our predecessors were not hampered to any extent by restrictions of this kind, and the actual amount of Treasury bills issued to-day is upwards of four millions—more than one million in excess of the authorisation of Parliament. That matter, of course, will have to be put right by an amending Bill. Increased taxation will be necessary: we cannot provide the £100,000 per annum required to wipe out the deficit in 30 years—and 30 years is about the longest period we could reasonably allow for that purpose—without some method of new taxation; and it will also be necessary to impose taxation in order to provide the State's contribution to the repatriation fund and other essential expenditure. Details of the financial proposals of the Government will, in due course, be submitted; but, naturally, the matter cannot be fully considered until the Estimates have been prepared by the Government. At an early date a Bill will be submitted to make provision for the better representation of the people in Parliament. The intention is to appoint three electoral commissioners, non-political.

Hon. J. Cornell: They must be dead if they are non-political.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The duty of the Royal commissioners will be to submit to Parliament a redistribution of seats. Certain instructions will be conveyed to them in the Bill; because it is not the intention of the present Government to follow the lines of the Bill introduced by our predecessors. That measure provided that the representation of the North-West portion of the State should be reduced from four members to three. The present Government do not intend to adopt that course, but to preserve the four members for the north-west portion of the State. Nor do we intend, as our predecessors desired, that all the remainder of the State shall be split up on a purely population basis, the effect of which would be to reduce very largely the representation of the goldfields, to reduce to a smaller extent the representation of the agricultural districts, and to increase to something like 20 the members in another place for the metropolitan areas—a proposal which could have no other effect than to centralise political power in the Capital. The instructions to the Royal Commission will be on a generous scale. They will have the duty of dividing the State into electorates on a certain percentage for the metropolitan area, a lower percentage—a considerably lower percentage, because of its distance from the capital—for the Golden Mile, and a still lower percentage for the scattered out-back agricultural and mining districts. The Royal Commission's report will be submitted to Parliament, and a Redistribution of Seats Bill will be framed on the basis of that report. The Bill to be submitted to Parliament for the establishment of the Royal Commission has already been drafted, and will be submitted at an early date, when members will have the fullest opportunity of considering the matter. I think the necessity for this Bill is admitted by everyone. There should have been a redistribution long ago.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Admitted by everyone?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think many have the hardihood to deny that a redistribution of some kind or other is necessary. However, I am hopeful—so carefully has this Bill been prepared to conserve the interests of all sections—that it will be

carried without opposition even in another place: and I feel sure the measure will be received with enthusiasm here. A Bill will also be presented to facilitate the execution of instruments by soldiers on active service, and, further, a Bill to preserve the electoral franchise of soldiers on active service. A measure to amend the Workers' Homes Act will be submitted to enable holders of perpetual leases to convert into fee simple on fair and reasonable terms. No effort will be made to force these holders into that course, but if they prefer the leasehold they have their claim and can continue as leaseholders. The experience of the working of the Workers' Homes Act, however, and the reports of the Workers' Homes Board, indicate that, whilst the holders of freehold homes have greatly improved their properties, and have asked for very little in the way of concessions in regard to overdue payments, and generally represent an entirely satisfactory position from the point of view of the State, the same cannot be said in respect of leaseholders as a whole. Therefore the Government propose to give the holders under leasehold the chance, if they so desire, of converting their holdings into freehold on equitable terms. An amendment of the Land Act will also be tabled to enable lessees of town lots to convert into freehold or conditional purchase holdings. The Government will propose an amendment of the Industries Assistance Act in order to enable repayment of advances to be spread over several years, according to circumstances. A Bill will also be submitted, which I am sure will interest hon. members very much, to confer powers retrospectively on the Commonwealth Parliament to tax the salaries of State Ministers, members of State Parliaments, State civil servants, and others. That is in conformity with the decision arrived at by the Premiers' Conference some time ago.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: But they have always been taxed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There has been no right to tax them, though. Certain people have objected to pay the Commonwealth taxation. Most of us, I suppose, have paid it thinking we were obliged to do so; but some objected and have not done so. I understand the Bill for this object was drafted by our predecessors. A Bill will be

submitted to amend the Trading Concerns Act in the manner I have already indicated, so that whatever capital is required will be provided, and, further, to debit or credit interest, as the case may be, on Treasury balances. A Bill will be submitted for the suppression of street betting and for the abolition of the bookmaker. This is in accordance with the recommendation of the joint select committee on racing that sat last year. A Bill will also be presented to enable the Western Australia Day funds, locally raised, to be applied not only to Red Cross objects, but for the benefit, assistance, and advancement generally of returned sick and wounded soldiers. Bills will be tabled to enable the Lake Clifton lime deposits to be leased and for the construction by the lessees of a railway to connect with the Government railway system, and to authorise the leasing of lime deposits at Capel. Further, a measure will be submitted to provide for the dredging of shell in Melville Water for the purpose of the manufacture of cement. A Bill will be presented for the taxation of amusements of all kinds and to increase the totalisator tax. An amendment will be proposed to the Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Act to adjust anomalies and defects which the experience of the last few years has proved to exist. The nature and extent of those amendments I am not at present able to indicate, because I have had no opportunity of going into the matter. Special legislation will be prepared and introduced dealing with the settlement of returned soldiers on the land. They will be settled under special conditions, with exemption from payment of rent for a stated period, with special rates of interest for loan moneys to be raised by the Commonwealth and lent to the States for this special purpose, and with necessary restrictions in respect of transfers. It is hoped, too, that the Royal Commission on agriculture will submit other suggestions that will assist the Government in this matter of settling returned soldiers on the land. Acts for this purpose have already been passed in South Australia and New Zealand. Whatever is done will apply to members of the Imperial forces who choose to come out to Australia and make their homes here, as well as to our own soldiers. The matter of the bulk hand-

ling of wheat is receiving consideration, and I hope that before long the Government will be in a position to make a definite statement to Parliament on this subject. As regards the Industries Assistance Board, its affairs appear to be in an almost hopeless tangle and confusion. Advances have been made in many instances far in excess of legitimate requirements as contemplated by the Act. No supervision, apparently, has been exercised over the operations of farmers. The result must be very heavy loss to the State. The inability of the board to render accounts has caused a great deal of confusion and probably will result in a good deal of loss, and the neglect to pay the surplus owing to many farmers who sold their wheat through the board has embarrassed numbers of them. In some instances people have received from the board assistance beyond their requirements and beyond their merits, whilst in a great many cases honest and deserving applicants have been discouraged till numbers of them have left their holdings. It is proposed to introduce at an early date a Bill to amend the Fire Brigades Act. The expense under this Act has increased beyond all expectations, and it is desirable that a check be placed on the ever-growing expenditure. The method proposed for doing this is, while maintaining a form of central administration, to give to local governing bodies a measure of control in respect of the amount of money to be raised in their various districts, also a measure of control in respect of the class of brigade and the method of fire protection, and, further, to provide that the moneys raised by the local authority shall be confined to their proportion of expenditure actually incurred in their respective districts. The object of this is not only to do an act of justice to the local authorities by putting them on a fair basis but also, if possible, to realise the hope that these local authorities having a say in the amount of money to be spent in their respective districts, will see that it is spent economically. Thereby money will be saved not only to the local authorities themselves, but to the other contributing parties, namely the Government and the fire insurance companies. Amending Bills, not of a controversial but of a necessary character, will be submitted

dealing with the Pearling Act, the Interstate Destitute Persons Relief Act, and the Friendly Societies Act. There are also a number of Bills that had been prepared or were in preparation by our predecessors, and to all of these careful and impartial consideration is being given. In conclusion, I desire to express the profound conviction of the Government that in this grave crisis of our Imperial fate local desires and local aspirations must give way to national requirements. Jealous as we are of State rights and State powers, we recognise that the successful conduct of the war is the one question of paramount importance. Australia's part in the war being a matter of Federal policy, we deem it our duty to tender to the Federal Government assistance to the limit of our abilities.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Even to adjourning during the referendum campaign.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes. Whatever is necessary will be done. Whatever we as a Government and as individuals can do to assist Mr. Hughes in his effort to organise the resources of Australia, both in men and in money, will be done. Conclusive evidence has been furnished by the Prime Minister that voluntarism has broken down, that it has failed to provide the number of men required to reinforce our troops. What are the alternatives? The first is in decreased effort and the second is compulsory service. Dare we contemplate the former? What will it mean? We have actually at the front an effective army of 100,000 men. If the long list of casualties inseparable from a vigorous offensive that alone can win the war is not made good day by day by reinforcements our Australian army must dwindle away, until, when victory comes, which we believe already to be within measurable distance, it will become insignificant and contemptible. Is it for this that we have sacrificed the cream of our young manhood in Gallipoli, in Egypt, in France? These men have brought glory and renown to Australia. Where will our prestige be if we fade out of the combat now? And what of the men who went away in the early days of the war and who, having so far escaped destruction, are still fighting on? Are they not to be relieved?

Is their respite from the nerve destroying and strength-sapping fatigue of the trenches to be limited, to be restricted because of scarcity of men, whilst thousands who should go are seeking only to reap the harvest of individual liberty and national greatness that these men are sowing. The alternative to all this is compulsory service, that each shall contribute to conserve the rights and liberties of all. So far as Western Australia is concerned, I believe that the Government, the Parliament and the people, without regard to class or creed or party, will stand behind Mr. Hughes and say, "We have put our hand to the plough and we will not turn back." I desire to move the following amendment:—

We beg to assure Your Excellency that we will give the most careful consideration to measures that will best promote the welfare and prosperity of Western Australia.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.48]: I second the amendment.

On motion by Hon. J. M. Drew debate adjourned.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.49]: In moving the adjournment of the House I should like to intimate to members that if we meet again to-morrow I hope they will be prepared to go on with the debate. I do not want members to meet to-morrow and then to find that only one or two members speak. It will best suit all parties if we go on with the debate till it is concluded and then we can take up the business of the House.

House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 19th September, 1916.

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

ELECTION RETURNS.

The Speaker announced the return of writs for the election of members for Sussex, Moore, Northam, Murray-Wellington, Canning, and Coolgardie, showing that the Hon. Frank Wilson (Premier and Treasurer), Hon. H. B. Lefroy (Minister for Lands), Hon. Jas. Mitchell (Minister for Railways), Hon. W. J. George (Minister for Works), Hon. R. T. Robinson (Attorney General), and Mr. Lambert respectively, had been duly elected.

The hon. members took the oath and subscribed the roll.

ELECTORAL—BROWNHILL-IVANHOE SEAT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to announce that, in consequence of the resignation of Mr. Seaddan, a writ was issued for the election of a member for the electoral district of Brownhill-Ivanhoe. Mr. Lutey was declared elected, but, Mr. Lutey having resigned on the 15th inst., a writ has been again issued for the election of a member.

OBITUARY—MR. C. McDOWALL, LETTER IN REPLY.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the widow of the late Mr. C. McDowall the following letter:—

Lynton, Colin-street, 16th August, 1916.
Hon. M. F. Troy, M.L.A. Dear Sir,—
Will you please convey to the members