

# Legislative Council,

Thursday, 21st August, 1919.

	PAGE.
Auditor General's report ... ..	302
Address-in-reply, conclusion ... ..	302
Adjournment, special ... ..	318

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

## AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

The PRESIDENT: I have received the following communication from the Auditor General, dated 21st August, 1919:—

In pursuance of Section 53 of the Audit Act, 1904, I have the honour to transmit for presentation to the Legislative Council a copy of the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts of the State of Western Australia for the financial year ended 30th June, 1918, together with my report thereon. I regret the delay in presenting the report; it should not have happened. When I found it impossible to present the report prior to the 20th December, the last day Parliament sat prior to the present session, I laid it aside to deal with current pressing work and did not take the matter up again in sufficient time to place the report on the Table of the House when Parliament opened on the 31st July, 1919. I am making special arrangements to deal with the report for 1918-19 as expeditiously as possible.

I will place the report on the Table.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

### Tenth Day—Conclusion.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East): I desire at the outset to convey to hon. members my thanks and appreciation for the uniformly generous and undoubtedly helpful criticism in which they have indulged during the course of this debate. I am sure when they reflect on the number of subjects and the variety of matters touched upon, they will not expect me to reply to all that has been said. My aim will be to give as much information to the House as I can on the more important points raised. We were all pleased with the speech delivered by Dr. Saw in moving the Address-in-reply. Before that hon. member left on war service, he had established an influence in this House, although he had not been here very long, and we welcome him back in the assurance that his widened experience will make him a valuable factor in assisting us to solve the many problems with which we are confronted. There have been many references to the question of price fixing, and although I am quite prepared to fully ex-

plain the attitude I took up in the past and the attitude I shall take up now, I think it will be convenient to the House if I reserve my remarks on that question until the Price Fixing Bill is before us inasmuch as it will save a duplication of matter. One important question which was raised by Mr. Kirwan, and was subsequently referred to by several members, was the question of the embargo placed on our base metals. The Minister for Mines has furnished me with information on this subject showing what the Government have done up to the present time. It appears that towards the end of 1916 the Federal Government refused permission to export ores of the base metals for the smelting of which there was provision in Australia, except in some special cases. The Whim Well mine was the exception because transport difficulties precluded any other practical course than export. The export of copper matte and unrefined blister copper was also forbidden, as works for refining copper existed in Australia. Previously to this prohibition, lead, copper, and tin ores, copper matte and blister copper, had been shipped advantageously to Europe and America. It must be agreed that we will not question what the Commonwealth Government did as a war precaution measure under the War Precautions Act, but we have every right to protest against the War Precautions Act being used after the war is over for the purpose of aiding the development of industries in the other parts of the Commonwealth. If we assume that the Commonwealth Parliament or the Commonwealth Government are entitled to pass special legislation to assist industries here or there, we must still agree it is entirely improper to make use of the War Precautions Act for that purpose. Repeated representations have been made to the Federal Government to allow the export of ores and crude furnace products, but permission has been constantly refused, the declared policy of the Commonwealth Government being that all Australian ores which can be treated and refined in Australia shall be so treated. If that is the declared policy of the Federal Government, before they can put it into effect, they must obtain specific legislation. They have no right to put it into effect as a provision under the War Precautions Act.

Hon. A. Sanderson: No legal right?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am not going to argue the legal point, but the hon. member will agree that it is an improper power to take. The Commonwealth Government were given large powers under the War Precautions Act and any Government receiving from Parliament large powers for a specific purpose are taking a great risk if they use those powers for something else. Recently the Minister for Mines visited Melbourne to attend a conference to deal specially with the question of copper. That conference limited discussion to the matter of copper. The Minister for Mines then pointed out that we were in the same position to the Com-

monwealth as the Commonwealth was to the world's markets, and the restrictions on the treatment and sale of copper made it almost impossible for many of our mines to continue. We have been compelled to send some of our ore and most of our matte to Port Kembla for treatment owing to the Commonwealth regulations. The statement furnished by the Minister for Mines continues—

Apart from the high charges at Kembla we have to pay freight from Western Australia to Kembla. I pointed out that the restrictions so far as Western Australia were concerned should be removed, inasmuch as we had to pay this freight from Western Australia to Kembla, treatment charges, freight from Kembla to Sydney, and then take copper all the way back past Western Australia again to England. We had to do this to comply with the Federal desire to have all the copper treated in Australia. This hampers us very much, and with the option of sending our ore or concentrates for treatment where costs were cheaper, and the market closer to us, we might probably keep going, whereas many mines were compelled to close down under the existing regulations and conditions. The Minister for Mines of New South Wales supported me in this view, but our efforts were unavailing. Sir John Higgins, the honorary adviser to the Commonwealth Government on matters affecting metals, assured me that the metal had to be sold through the metal exchange of the Commonwealth, firstly because of the necessity of ensuring it would not pass into enemy hands, and secondly because it was found to be the better method in the interests of the producers, inasmuch as it prevented cutting prices and kept a steady market.

So far as the first reason is concerned it has disappeared. So far as the second is concerned our producers of copper are entitled to have the widest possible opportunity of getting the best price they can. Sir John Higgins supports in his administrative capacity, the declared policy of the Commonwealth Government to enforce the treatment of these ores in Australia. I do not know that it is necessary or that it would be advisable for me to say any more on this matter at present, for the reason that the Minister for Mines left the city last night to meet the acting Prime Minister Mr. Watt, on his arrival at Kalgoorlie, chiefly with the end in view that before Mr. Watt reaches the city, and before he is involved in a number of other matters, he will have the full opportunity of going into this question. The Minister for Mines is particularly anxious to do this because at the time the conference was held in Melbourne, Mr. Watt was confined to his bed through illness and there was therefore no opportunity of interviewing him. I am hopeful that the discussion with the acting Prime Minister and subsequently with the

Prime Minister on his arrival in Perth on Saturday, or before he leaves on Monday, will result in fair dealing to Western Australia. I do not see what ground the Commonwealth Government have to stand on. At the same time I will say I am not without grave fears that the declared policy of the Commonwealth Government to afford what it terms effective protection to the secondary industries of Australia, cannot be put into practice without doing grave injury to many of the primary industries of Western Australia. Speaking at a recent conference the acting Prime Minister said in this regard it was the intention of the Commonwealth Government to put into effect the policy which had been approved by the people of Australia at the last general elections. So far as I am concerned, I would not hesitate to say that the policy of protection was not before the people of Australia at the last elections. However, that is a matter which will probably occupy our attention before long. Under the heading of repatriation, several points of interest have been touched upon. I will endeavour to deal with them briefly in the hope of affording as much information as possible. Mr. Sanderson deprecated the action of the State Government in assuming responsibility for the advances made by the Commonwealth for the settlement of soldiers on the land. I think the hon. member is quite aware that that assumption of responsibility was in accordance with an agreement arrived at between the Commonwealth and the State Governments some years ago. I do not see how Western Australia could have stood out of that agreement, and I think it has to be admitted in connection with the settlement of soldiers on the land, whilst it is an obligation on the part of the Commonwealth Government from the point of view of repatriation, it is at the same time a great advantage to the State as a State. And it would therefore be a little unreasonable to expect that the Commonwealth Government should find the money, should bear the whole of the risk, and that the State should obtain the benefit. I am not going to admit that the Commonwealth Government are doing as much as they should do. I do not think they are. For instance, it is beyond question that the Commonwealth Government are much less generous in the matter of advances for land settlement than in the matter of advances in connection with the housing scheme and that, of course, is prejudicial to the interests of Western Australia as compared with the other States. We have comparatively a larger proportion of soldiers than the other States settling on the land. Consequently it is reasonable to assume that they will have a larger proportion of soldiers taking advantage of the soldiers' homes proposals. In connection with soldiers' homes, the Commonwealth takes the whole risk, whereas in the other instances, the States have to take the whole risk. I think in that respect, Western Australia probably has some ground

for complaint. With much of Mr. Pantou's speech I cordially agree, and I desire to associate myself with the welcome other members have extended to him on his election to this House. I think he was not altogether fair in his reference to what has been done in the matter of repatriation. He said our share of 22 millions of Commonwealth money set aside for repatriation was represented by six poultry farms at Osborne Park. That is by no means accurate. Up to the present 2,307 applications have been received by soldiers for settlement on the land. Certificates have been issued to 1,373 and 653 have been settled and loans approved. If we compare these figures with Victoria's record, we find in that State 7,768 men have applied, 4,722 have been granted certificates and 1,093 have been placed on land specially passed by the closer settlement board for soldiers. Taking the number of certificates issued, Western Australia proportionately has done more than Victoria, and Victoria has spent in repurchases nearly two millions of money, whereas up to the present Western Australia has not spent one-tenth of that amount. Our record in comparison with that of the other States is not unfavourable. At present returned soldiers are being settled on the land at the rate of 50 per week. The organisation is in good working order and, if the work is being well done, I maintain that to settle 50 soldiers per week is a satisfactory record. I doubt whether they could be settled more rapidly, and I would rather see them settled satisfactorily at the rate of 50 per week than to attempt to do more and perhaps do it less satisfactorily. Mr. Pantou was also critical regarding the prices paid for repurchased estates. Other members seem to take an opposite view. Mr. Stewart condemned the Government for not having bought more land. It is the policy of the Government to give the soldier the best land obtainable, to give it to him where he wants it, which is generally in the district from which he enlisted, and above all to see that he gets it at a fair price and will not be hampered afterwards. In carrying out that policy, we do not expect to escape criticism or to give satisfaction to everybody. We do not expect to entirely satisfy all the local committees. The Government value the assistance of the local committees, but we recognise that, in protecting the interests of the soldiers, it may at times be necessary to do something of which the local committees will not approve. I might briefly describe the system from which the Government do not intend to depart. We intend to follow it in every case, in order to prevent any suggestion of improper action by anyone, and to prevent the soldier being placed on a property for which more money is paid than is warranted. When an estate is placed under offer, Mr. McLarty determines from the point of view of soldier requirements whether it is worth while to have a classification made by a Lands Department official. He is helped to arrive at a decision by having placed at his disposal all the information

available in the Lands Department, the Agricultural Bank, or any other department with information regarding different portions of the State. If he considers the proposition worth going on with, there is a classification by an official. Then the Soldier Settlement Board is consulted, and if the board thinks it advisable the Land Purchase Board makes an inspection and reports. The Land Purchase Board's report is then submitted to Mr. McLarty, who consults the Soldier Settlement Board, and the last-named board recommends the purchase or otherwise. These things are done with as little delay as possible, but it is necessary to take these precautions. The recommendation of the Soldier Settlement Board is then submitted to Cabinet for final approval. It would not be advisable or safe for the Government to repurchase estates with fewer precautions, and I do not see the necessity for any further precautions. So far as Mr. Stewart's remarks are concerned, I referred them to Mr. McLarty, the controller of soldier settlement, and he said it was rather difficult to reply to general statements without some specific instance being given. In one case we had a specific instance. That was in reference to an application by a soldier, W. H. Bevan. The facts are that Bevan applied for an advance to purchase a property in the Wagin district. The departmental report disclosed the property to be a poor one, only 100 acres being first class. It was not regarded by the board as being a living proposition for a soldier, and was turned down. The Wagin repatriation committee recommended purchase of the property, but at the same time advised that they had not inspected it. Bevan subsequently applied for an advance of £2,510 to purchase a property, but this could not be considered, as the Act limits advances to £2,000.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: For how many acres?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not know the size of the property.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The local committee had no right to make that report without an inspection.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The local committee are assisting in an advisory capacity, and they stated that they had not inspected the property. They knew the procedure followed, and they were entitled to assume that the responsible board would not be misled by their recommendation, as they stated they had not make an inspection. In the Wagin district there has been a fair amount of soldier settlement, and this can be increased as good land is made available in that district. No estates have yet been inspected there, but some recently offered are now being dealt with by the Land Purchase Board. In regard to the Williams district, to which Mr. Stewart referred, every effort has been made to obtain land there, but without much success. There are no suitable Crown lands available in the vicinity of Williams, and very few estates have been offered. Some of those inspected have

proved to be unsuitable for subdivision. Five thousand acres adjacent to the Williams townsite was recently inspected by the board, and purchase of this is now under consideration and ready for finalisation. The property owned by Mrs. Murdoch was turned down by the Land Purchase Board, but further representations have been made and a further inspection has been made. Whilst it is not the intention of the Government to purchase hastily, it is not the intention to turn down a proposition without a thorough inquiry. The assistance given by the Williams, Katanning, and Wagin repatriation committees is appreciated by the Government, as well as by the soldiers, and everything the Government can do to settle men from those districts in those districts will be done. Mr. McLarty has suggested I should mention that, at all times, it is open to members to go to the department and inspect the files, and see exactly what is being done. He would welcome the co-operation of members who are interested in this work in their respective districts. I hope his suggestion will be acted upon. Mr. Stewart made certain remarks about the present Premier which were not altogether fair. He sounded what he called a note of warning, and, referring to the present Premier's previous efforts at land settlement, suggested that they had been followed by wrecked communities and blighted lives. In every walk of life there is bound to be a certain proportion of failures, but where would the State of Western Australia be to-day if it had not been for the impetus given to land settlement by the present Premier when he was Minister for Lands some years ago?

Hon. A. Sanderson: Very much better off.

Hon. V. Hammersley: Not at all.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is not the chief point of my complaint. The injustice of Mr. Stewart's criticism lies in these two things. In the first place, directly this policy of land settlement had been initiated, Western Australia was visited by a series of bad years, the worst ever experienced in the history of the country. Because of those bad years, many people failed who would otherwise have succeeded. Any one who wishes to do justice to Mr. Mitchell will remember this point, but the more important point is that directly after these people were settled on the land, just before the succession of bad years came along, Mr. Mitchell and the Government with which he was associated were removed from office, and had no opportunity to carry the matter further.

Hon. H. Stewart: The three specific communities I instanced were the result of bad classification of land.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: At the present time, one going through the country districts does not find people levelling at the present Premier the criticisms that were levelled at him a few years ago. Mr. Mitchell stands higher in the estimation of the people to-day than he did then, and there is no section of the community so full of

confidence in him as those who settled on the dry areas to the east of Meckering ten years ago.

Hon. J. Cornell: If they are not sorry, they soon will be.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: There were bound to be some cases not entirely successful. There always will be in any walk of life, but Mr. Mitchell's land settlement policy of ten years ago was not a failure. If he had had an opportunity to handle it right through, it would have succeeded more rapidly than it is going to succeed and, if he is given an opportunity to handle this matter of soldier settlement, he will do it to the satisfaction of soldiers and to the lasting benefit of the State. Mr. Mills dealt at some length with repatriation and made suggestions which no doubt will prove very useful. I have carefully noted them and forwarded them to the Minister for Repatriation, and I am sure they will receive his consideration. The matter of settling returned soldiers, particularly maimed soldiers, partially incapacitated men, in the neighbourhood of the city is receiving every consideration, and I would like to repeat now what I said some time ago, that the men most deserving of the consideration of the Federal Government, the State Government, and the public are those maimed men. Something more will have to be done for them than has been done in the past. The men who have come back well, if given opportunity, will make good, but the men who have come back maimed cannot make good by their own efforts and, therefore, every possible consideration must be extended to them. Mr. Panton referred to the attitude of the State Workers' Homes Board towards the returned soldier. The position is that the Commonwealth Government have discussed with various State Governments the question of administering the soldiers' homes matter through existing State organisations. The Commonwealth Government professed a desire to avoid the duplication of departments. They knew that in certain States there were existing organisations that had been satisfactorily handling this matter. When Senator Millen came over here, he said that he was particularly anxious to have this matter fixed up through the different States, but that in certain of the States, where it was run through the Savings Bank, they wanted to make money out of it. So far as the Government of Western Australia are concerned, we assured him that we did not want to make a sixpence out of it, that we were prepared to do the work for the Commonwealth Government; and so far as administrative expenditure was concerned our suggestion was that the total expenditure for the year should be taken, and that just as the expenditure was on Commonwealth account and on State account, in that proportion should the administrative expenditure be allotted between the two authorities. Senator Millen entirely agreed with us on every point. There was not a single point of difference between us. He went back to

Melbourne, and, in response to a telegram sent by me, he replied that we could go ahead. And we did go ahead. We got 20 soldiers fixed up in their homes in a very short time. The agreement between the State Government and the Commonwealth Government was signed by the State Government and was taken over to Melbourne by Mr. Baxter, who had occasion to visit that city on some Wheat Scheme matters. We received a telegram saying that the agreement was approved and signed by the Federal Government, and that the whole thing was fixed up. And then we were told that the Commonwealth Government had reversed their decision and had decided to carry out the whole business through the Commonwealth Bank. The Commonwealth Bank have no organisation for the purpose, and the result has been a great deal of vexation from the soldiers' point of view, and the building up of another department to carry out the same work as the existing organisation here carries out. The suggestion of Mr. Panton is that, although this has happened, the soldiers should still be allowed to go to the State Workers' Homes Board if they wish to.

Hon. A. H. Panton: As citizens.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not dispute that for a moment, but I would point out to the hon. member where a policy of that kind would land us. The State board cannot give as favourable terms as the Commonwealth offers.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We differ on that point.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not think so. The Commonwealth rate of interest is lower, and it should be lower; the soldier should have a special concession. But what is the position? There are 2,000 applications pending before the Commonwealth Workers' Homes Board; and if the State Government take the applications of the soldiers as well as other applications, where are we going to get the money?

Hon. J. Cornell: But where did you get the power to discriminate?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not think there is any discrimination. The State Workers' Homes Board have not refused to deal with the applications of soldiers.

Hon. A. H. Panton: But the secretary of the State Workers' Homes Board tells me that it is so.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: When the soldier applicant comes along to the State board, he is advised to go to the Commonwealth Bank. He is told that there is a special organisation set up for his benefit and also a special rate of interest. Now, if the thing cannot be put on a satisfactory basis by the Commonwealth, then I admit that the State Government would have to do something; but I want again to remind the hon. member that if we take the soldiers' applications, of which there are already 2,000, the diffi-

culty is where we are to get the money to handle all those proposals. It is not right that, on account of any fault of the Commonwealth, the State should be called upon to carry out Federal obligations; and it is our endeavour, in the interests of the soldier, and in the interests of the State, to have the thing done properly and by the proper authority. I do not think that is a wrong attitude to take.

Hon. J. Cornell: But you are usurping a power to discriminate, which power you do not possess.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I would tell the hon. member that that is not so. If we said that we would take applications from soldiers, the applications we would receive in a week would entirely exhaust our funds.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Why not say that to the returned soldier instead of telling him that you cannot deal with him?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: My impression is not that the soldier is told that the State cannot deal with him, but that he is told the Commonwealth authority is the proper authority to deal with him in the matter. If the Commonwealth cannot do it, of course the State will have to find some means of raising the money. But I think that it will be agreed we cannot do it without money, and that it will also be agreed the State Government are not entitled to come to Parliament and ask for this large sum of money to carry out a Commonwealth obligation unless they are compelled to do it. The action of the Commonwealth Government in this matter has been most severely criticised by the leading financial and other journals throughout Australia.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Quite right, too.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The building up of a separate department is entirely uncalled for, and had the Commonwealth Government carried out the agreement with this State, just as we settled 20 soldiers in two or three weeks when the business was in our hands, so we would have given complete satisfaction to the whole of the soldiers in this matter.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: What was the Commonwealth Government's justification for changing to the bank?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: They have not offered any explanation. They simply said that they had decided to do it through the Commonwealth Bank in all the States.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Surely they do not do these things without reason?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: They may have a reason, but we do not know it. The very important question of State finance has been touched upon by several members, particularly Mr. Sanderson and Mr. Holmes. I have already expressed my agreement with the contention that the Annual Estimates should be presented to both Houses of Parliament in time to allow both Houses every opportunity of considering them, and I hope that this year there

will not be any reasonable cause for complaint on that score. Mr. Sanderson made reference to loans redeemable at the option of either the Government or the lender, and he was quite right in mentioning an error that had occurred on page 90 of the public accounts. Owing to the insertion of the letter "E" instead of "F" it was made to appear that a certain loan is redeemable at the option of either party, whereas it is redeemable only at the option of the Government. I feel bound to say a few words in reply to the remarks by Mr. Holmes. I am sure the hon. member will recognise that if I answer him in some detail on this occasion, as I did before, it is because I take very much the same view as his colleague, Mr. Miles. I know the influence of Mr. Holmes. I know the weight that will be attached to his remarks in business circles. Therefore, I feel disposed to correct him, in the kindest possible fashion, if he says anything that in my opinion is derogatory to the best interests of the State. Mr. Holmes said that last session I had reproved him for certain financial forecasts he had made, but that, after all, he had proved to be pretty right in his remarks. On one occasion Mr. Holmes paid me what I regarded as a very doubtful compliment. He said that he would be quite willing to have me to defend him if he was charged with some offence of which he was guilty. I would rather satisfy the hon. member that he might reasonably take a different view. I ask him, in justice to himself and in justice to me, to go through the speech that he delivered to the House on this subject last session, and to go through my reply, and in the light of the present position to say whether there was one word of my reply which was not absolutely correct, to say whether I was not entirely justified even in the strongest remarks that I made in reply to his criticism.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Was my forecast correct?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No. I am just going to tell the hon. member what his forecast was, and all about it. Speaking last week the hon. member said that the statement of 12 months ago, for which I reproved him, had turned out pretty well correct. He said the statement was that this year's deficit would be at the rate of £2,000 per day. However, that was not the hon. member's statement, nor was it the subject of my reproof. I would ask him to look up "Hansard" and to see exactly what he said, and exactly what I said. In the report of the 29th August, 1918, on page 83, appears the following:—

Hon. J. J. Holmes: This Ministry has to face a deficit of £2,500 a day this year. I make the statement that there is going to be a deficit of £2,500 a day. We began the first month of the year with a deficit of £4,000 a day, and from analysing the figures I believe the deficit this year will be £2,500 a day and approximately a million deficit for the year.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: So it would have been if you had not got that additional £300,000 which you did not expect.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Mr. Holmes further said—

I have analysed the figures, and the lowest estimate I can get for this year is a daily deficit of £2,500, plus the interest of £150. This deficit of £2,500 daily, plus the £150 interest, works out at a deficit for this year of approximately one million of money.

But even that was not the statement I took exception to. I told the hon. member that that would not be so, and that the Treasurer's estimate of a deficit of about £640,000 would prove to be correct. The statement to which I took exception is the following:—

This will mean, on our present population, a per capita indebtedness of £127 10s., plus the £12 10s. per capita charge on the deficit account, which makes a total indebtedness per head of the population of £140. This is the burden which every man, woman, and child in the State will have to bear.

Mr. Nicholson suggested that it was a mistake, but Mr. Holmes repeated the statement—

If the hon. member will take the 38 millions and divide it by 300,000 people, if he does not get a result somewhere in the vicinity of £127 10s. he is a better mathematician than I am. Every child that is born in this State comes into the world with a plaster of liability round its neck representing £140.

That was the statement to which I took exception, and I want the hon. member to look at the position and say if I was not justified. In replying to Mr. Holmes I said—

His conclusion was that at the end of the present financial year the State public indebtedness of the people of Western Australia would be £140 per head. That statement was published in the Press, and no doubt has been published broadcast throughout Australia. It is a reckless and a damaging statement.

But the hon. member interjected, "We shall see." He still stuck to his guns about the capital indebtedness of £140 per head. I went on to say—

I will show how grave that exaggeration is. I will illustrate it by stating that in order to bring our indebtedness per head up to £140 it would be necessary for the State Government to spend this year in excess of their receipts—that is by way of loan expenditure and deficit in excess of receipts—upwards of seven million pounds.

On the 30th June, 1918, the State's indebtedness per head was £117 17s. 6d. To increase it to £140 per head would mean an increase for the year of £22 2s. 6d. I now give hon. members the positive assurance that instead of this increase of £22 2s. 6d. there will not be an increase of the odd £2 2s. 6d.

That is what I said. The hon. member told this House and the country that the State was going to show an increased indebtedness for the year of £22 2s. 6d. per head, and I gave the House an assurance that the increase would not amount to even £2 2s. 6d. A little later I said—

I will go a step further and say it is not a remote possibility that the increase will be less than £1 per head of our population.

Now, I want the hon. member to go through those speeches and then look at the present position and see which of us was right. The fact is that he was not right and that I was not right. I was not right because something quite unexpected happened in the interim. The sudden finish of the war has meant that our soldiers have come back much more quickly than anticipated. It has also meant our borrowing large sums of money from the Commonwealth Government for their settlement on the land. The first factor has more than outweighed the last. Had the position been maintained as it was then, my prediction that we should increase our per capita indebtedness by something less than £1 per head would have been verified; but because it was altered, our per capita indebtedness has decreased during the year, for the first time in many years past. In my first statement it was given as £117 17s. 6d.; the actual amount was £118. The indebtedness at the end of the financial year was £116 7s., so instead of the increase suggested by the hon. member, there is for the first time in many years, a decrease of 33s. 8d. per head in the per capita indebtedness.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I said also that you could make black look white.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I would urge the hon. member to bear in mind that I am using not my own figures, but the official figures published by the Treasury. I have explained to the hon. member how this is brought about. There is a reduction for the year of £1 13s. 8d. in the per capita indebtedness of Western Australia. I have never pretended that the financial position was otherwise than bad. My protest has always been against trying to make it out as being worse than it is. In comparison with the Eastern States it is very easy to make our position look very bad and their's very good. As a matter of fact, our position is no worse than is theirs. There is not another State in the Commonwealth that has any appreciable amount in sinking fund, and there is not another State in the Commonwealth that has made any contributions to its sinking fund during the war period. What provision did we make by way of sinking fund last year? On the 31st June, 1918, the accumulated sinking fund was £5,570,350; by the end of March of this year, the date at which the annual calculation is always made, it had increased to £6,139,000 the increase being £568,000, made up of contributions directly paid out of revenue and by interest on the accumu-

lated sinking fund which had previously been invested. It will thus be seen that the contribution from revenue and from interest on accumulated sinking fund counterbalances the year's deficit to the extent of all but £83,856.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Then practically there was no deficit at all.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** Yes, there was, because we are under an obligation to pay this sinking fund. But we are entitled to claim that the facts should be considered as they are, and if we are to put up a comparison with the Eastern States we are entitled to say that the other States which had no sinking fund, which paid no contribution to their sinking funds, and which managed to just struggle through the year without a deficit or with a very small one, did no better than did Western Australia which had a deficit greatly exceeding any in the Eastern States.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Have you ever given credit for a sinking fund before you became a Minister?

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I think so. When the hon. member spoke last he referred to remarks which I had made in the House last year. I do not deny that we are struggling under an appalling load of debt, but given a return to normal conditions, particularly in our big revenue earning departments, and given the revival which we may reasonably expect in our industrial circles, I see no reason why that debt should not be reduced.

Hon. H. Millington: Given also good sound Government.

Hon. J. Cornell: And sound finance.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I make this further proviso: it is a condition of our sound development that when the Commonwealth Surplus Revenue Act expires on the 30th June of next year it shall either be re-enacted or shall be replaced by an Act which shall give equal, if not greater contributions to Western Australia. We must have a fair and reasonable agreement with the Commonwealth in regard to the distribution of surplus revenue. A great deal has been said about immigration, particularly the immigration of British soldiers. There is a motion on the Notice Paper regarding that matter, and therefore I shall reserve any remarks I have to make on the subject until that motion is before us. Mr. Panton mentioned the Shops and Factories Act. I hope it will be found possible to deal with that measure this year. It is a big measure and likely to prove highly controversial, but I entirely agree that the time is fully ripe for an amendment of that legislation. That and a great many other things have been by common consent put on one side during the period of the war, but now that the war is over we must take them in hand and try to legislate on modern and approved lines; because I believe that legislation of that kind, if sound, will do a great deal towards

minimising the existing industrial unrest. Mr. Lynn made reference to Collie coal, particularly to what he termed its unfavourable treatment by the Fremantle Harbour Trust. I am sorry the hon. member is not in his place. I understood him to say that the Harbour Trust got nothing whatever out of the imported coals, whereas they got a big revenue out of Collie coal. I referred the matter to the Harbour Trust, and this is the reply I received—

This matter was placed before the Harbour Trust Commissioners at their meeting to-day and duly discussed and I was directed in reply to point out that all foreign coal, including of course Indian coal, and also Welsh coal, South African coal, and New South Wales coal, which is imported into Fremantle for the purpose of bunkering steamers within the port, is caused to pay a wharfage rate of 6d. per ton plus a 20 per cent. war surtax, whilst Collie coal is not caused to pay any wharfage or other toll whatever. All classes of coal, including Collie, are of course called upon to pay whatever are the handling charges determined by the methods of working which apply at the moment. You will perceive, therefore, that Hon. Mr. Lynn is not quite correct in his statement that the only revenue received from Indian coal is the license fee paid on the hulks, because as I have pointed out we get from all foreign coal a wharfage charge in addition to the bulk license fee, whereas from Collie coal we get no revenue whatever.

I hope I have not misunderstood the hon. member.

Hon. H. Millington: It was the hulk fees to which he objected.

Hon. J. Duffell: And the demurrage on Collie coal.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** But he stated that the Indian coal paid nothing whatever except for the hiring of the hulks, and that the Harbour Trust should impose further charges on it. Now the Harbour Trust informs me that they have always imposed such further charges.

Hon. J. Duffell: He spoke of the demurrage charges as compared with the hulk charges.

Hon. H. Millington: That is the point.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I am sure we were all deeply impressed with the speech of Mr. Dodd. The portion which most closely interested me was his reference to miner's disease. He threw out the valuable suggestion that Mr. Heitmann, who has interested himself in this matter, should be communicated with and, if possible, induced to leave the ship at South Africa on his way home, and make inquiries there. I took up the matter with the Minister for Mines on the following morning, and that Minister, agreeing that the suggestion should be acted upon, took immediate steps to get into communication with Mr. Heitmann. I hope he will succeed. No expenditure is too great if we can do any-

thing in the direction of checking the frightful ravages of that disease, especially amongst our miners. I am in full sympathy with the statements of Mr. Cunningham in this matter, and I entirely endorse, as I have previously done, his reference to the sanatorium at Wooroloo. It certainly was not the intention when that sanatorium was erected that it should be put to its present purpose. It was intended for the cure of consumptives. It was not intended that it should take its place as a hospital where those who were past cure could peaceably end their days. I think the chief reason for the adoption of the dual purpose to which the institution is now put was that it had cost an enormous sum of money to erect, and it was felt that the cost of a second institution could not be faced.

Hon. J. Duffell: Why did they not grade the different cases?

Hon. J. Cornell: Dr. Mitchell says that eight per cent. of the cases received should never go there.

Hon. J. Nicholson: The repatriation authorities are establishing a home for favourable cases amongst soldiers.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** That is so. I agree with Mr. Cunningham that it militates against the chances of a cure if people are placed in an institution in which others have been assembled to await their end. As Minister in charge of the Public Health Department, I keenly appreciate Mr. Duffell's tribute to the good work done by the officers of that department under the direction of the Commissioner of Public Health, and I particularly appreciate his reference to Mr. Servante, who died in Kalgoorlie a few days ago. Mr. Servante was a most excellent officer, and had he lived his outstanding qualities and abilities would have taken him far. He died virtually at his post and I am sure that all will appreciate Mr. Duffell's references. Something has been said about the necessity for an amendment of our liquor laws, but that subject can best be dealt with when the Bill comes before the House. Several speakers, Mr. Allen, Mr. Stewart, and Mr. Carson, have referred to the important question of education. It may not be without interest if I submit to members very briefly a review of the educational development which has taken place since the beginning of the war in several different countries, affording in each case conclusive evidence that the authorities recognise, not merely the advisableness, but the imperative necessity for improving their education systems; because in every case this vastly increased expenditure has been undertaken at a time when the financial position of the respective countries gave least opportunity, in times of greatest possible financial stress. In England an Education Bill has recently been passed providing for compulsory continuation classes for all boys and girls from 14 years to 18 years of age. The classes were in the first instance to be held during eight hours weekly for 40 weeks in the year and were to



be held in the employers' time with no deduction from wages on that account. The Bill was passed, although slightly amended. It provided that for the immediate future it should apply to children between the ages of 14 and 16. It is to apply automatically to those up to 18 years of age in a few years' time. The reason why it was made to apply only to children of from 14 to 16 years of age at the start was the recognition that the provision of teachers and schools was so stupendous an undertaking as to be virtually impossible. The hours were reduced from 320 to 280, but it is the law in England to-day that every boy and girl compelled to leave school at the age of 14 in order to earn a livelihood must, in the employers' time, without deduction of payment, go to a continuation class for 280 hours in each year.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: They had no compulsory military training and that accounts for 64 hours in the year.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In addition, the compulsory age for full-time schools was raised to 14. In the past it had been customary to grant exemptions for children between the ages of 12 and 14 in order that they might contribute to the incomes of the homes. It was decided that that was a means of perpetuating poverty. It was felt that some other means must be found to meet the requirements of the home and that the children must get their education up to the age of 14. The local authorities in England were also given power to increase the compulsory age up to 15. Further, the employment for profit of children under the age of 12 is absolutely prohibited in England. Children between the ages of 12 and 14 may be employed only under rigid restrictions and under medical supervision. They may not be employed before school on school days, or in any case after 8 p.m. Before passing this Bill the Imperial Government had increased in one year the educational vote by four million sterling, and applied the money almost entirely to improving the salaries and conditions of the teachers. When the Bill was passed providing for technical and continued education for children between the ages of 14 and 16, the Education Vote was increased again by 20 million sterling, which was equal to 10s. per head of the entire population of England. Before that increase was made they were spending more per head of the population on education than we were in Western Australia.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: A different class of education is required there because it is a different class of country.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In France provision has been made during the last two years for the establishment of a scheme for compulsory continuation schools. This falls into two portions. The first is for boys up to 17 and girls up to 16—300 hours per annum; 50 for general, 150 for technical and 100 for physical education. The second part is for boys from 17 to 20 and girls from

16 to 18, or up to marriage if before 18—200 hours per annum. This was not done in France because the country was overburdened with money. It was only done because the authorities recognised that the future of the country depended upon the more complete education of the whole of the children.

Hon. J. Cornell: And what has been the asset to mankind as a result?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In the United States, under an Act passed in 1917, grants were made from Federal funds to the States for providing agricultural and industrial education. The grants begin with £340,000, and rise steadily to a maximum of £1,440,000 to be reached in 1925. The States are compelled under the Act to provide pound for pound from their own funds. These grants by the Federal authority are in addition to the large Federal grants which were previously in existence. The expenditure per head of the population in the United States was in 1915-16 £1 17s. 6d. as against 25s. in Western Australia, where we have a much more scattered population to deal with. In Canada some of the States have spent as much as £2 6s. 5d. per head of the population on education. The population there is much denser than it is here, and they get a bigger result for every pound they spend. In New Zealand the expenditure on education for 1917-18 was £1 13s. per head of the population, or 8s. higher than it is in Western Australia. There again the population is more dense than ours. In New South Wales the Government recently provided a sum of £50,000 for improvements in teachers' salaries, and a further sum of £100,000 has been provided this year for the same purpose. In Queensland an improved scale of teachers' salaries has been brought in involving an addition of nearly £60,000 in the first year and a further £60,000 in the second year. In Western Australia we have done something, although we have not done as much as has been done in other places. During the war we established four district high schools, and 40 scholarships have been provided for country children in connection with these schools. The course of training for teachers for country schools has been extended from six months to one year. It was one of the weakest features of our country schools that the children were taught by teachers who had only been six months in the training college. This improvement means an additional expense, but if it also means that we shall have more qualified teachers I am satisfied that the country will derive benefit from it. Manual training has been established in many country schools, and it is intended to extend the household management training in the country as far as possible. Correspondence classes have also been established to reach children who are too remote from school centres to attend any school. This is entirely an innovation, and already we have 150 children taking advantage of these correspondence classes. Judging by the work that has

been sent in these schools are a success. Scholarships have also been provided for children of deceased or incapacitated soldiers. The present defects of our educational system are well known to the department. They are defects which can be cured by the expenditure of more money. One defect is that the teachers in many cases are insufficiently trained. Another is that in a great many cases the class under the teacher is too large. Children cannot get that education which might with great benefit to themselves be bestowed upon them. Another trouble is that we do practically nothing for children under six years of age. I do not suggest that children under six should be compelled to go to school. For children whose only playground is the gutter we should have a system of kindergarten schools, so that they may be supervised during those early years of childhood when so much harm is often done to them. This is done in nearly every country in the world, and in a country as rich as Western Australia we ought to be able to do something for the younger children of the poor. Another defect is that our scheme of education, after the age of 14 is reached, is not as comprehensive as it might be. I agree with Mr. Allen that the age should be increased. Another defect is that particularly in the country districts our school buildings are not as they should be. Another is that the medical inspection of school children is not carried out as systematically as might be done with great profit to the children in the country districts. All these things can be done if the people are prepared to pay for them. I hope it will not be long before public opinion in Western Australia reaches the same level as it has reached in other countries, and before people come to the conclusion that it is not a question of whether they can afford it or not, but that it is a fact to be demonstrated that they cannot afford to do without it. With regard to increasing the compulsory age from 14 to 16, I would go further and make it 17 by gradual steps. The two obstacles in the way are the cost to the State, and the cost to the parent of maintaining the children after they reach the age of 14. So far as the cost to the State is concerned, I have nothing to add to what I have already said. It is recognised in other parts of the world, and must be recognised here, particularly in a democracy, that we cannot afford to let people grow up in ignorance. Ignorance and democracy cannot go on side by side. Unless people are generous, self-sacrificing and strong enough to destroy ignorance, ignorance will destroy democracy. In the case of the parents the same argument was used against compulsory education when it was first introduced. It was also used against the proposals in the amending English Act, to which I have already referred. We must recognise that in times gone by, when parents' wages were less than they are to-day, children had to be educated until they reached the age of 14, it is not therefore a big jump to make to say that,

with the war over and better conditions brought about, the time has come when the wages of the parents should be such that they can afford to have their children educated up to the age of 16 years.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: You will not get many like that in the country.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The only matter in which I disagree with Mr. Allen is in his condemnation, let me say, of the district high schools. He suggests the abolition of these high schools, and that some system of centralisation should be substituted for them.

Hon. J. F. Allen: The raising of the age compulsorily will do away with them automatically.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Or multiply them. These high schools have been established in four towns in the State, in Northam, Geraldton, Bunbury, and Albany. Not one of these has yet completed its third year of existence. Each of these has from 100 to 150 scholars, and will soon reach even larger dimensions. A school of such a size is quite as economical to handle, and can be as efficiently staffed as a much larger school in the metropolitan area. There will consequently be nothing saved by adopting a system of centralisation. The cost to the parents, particularly, would be increased by their having to send their children to some school in the metropolitan area. At present the bulk of the boys and girls attending these high schools can live in their own homes. For the remainder, those who obtain scholarships from the smaller schools in the surrounding districts, the department allows £30 a year as a contribution towards their board. These children from the smaller country schools are selected by the inspector. They do not get a scholarship by examination. It is felt that in competitive examinations the children in smaller schools, where one teacher has to take the whole of the classes, would be placed at a serious disadvantage as compared with children in larger schools. The practice of allowing the district inspector, after consultation with the teachers, to select these children, has proved a satisfactory one. I do not think it would be a good thing to centralise secondary education in the city. The system suggested of centralisation has the initial disadvantage of alienating children from country life. In the secondary schools there are three systems under which the children can live. They can live as boarders, in their own homes, or as day scholars living in boarding-houses, where after school hours they are subject to such discipline as the people in charge of the boarding-houses are able to impose. Since the Perth modern school has been established a large number of country children have attended there, and they have done magnificently. The result of this has been that homes, particularly for those children, have been established in the city. I believe they are excellent homes. I throw out the suggestion to Mr. Allen that, if we are to multiply the number of children attending

our secondary schools in the metropolitan area, the third system of housing, that of day scholars living at boarding-houses where they are subject to only that discipline which the people there are able to impose, is the least desirable of the three alternatives, and the one most open to risk.

Hon. J. Cornell: Yes, from 12 years of age upwards.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** Yes. I do not agree with the idea that we should rely, as Mr. Allen suggests, more upon the scholarship system. That system reaches the boy who is particularly bright in his early years. Of course, such a boy is worth looking after. I do not know that it always reaches the best children, but I do know that what we want is, not to pick out children here and there, but to raise the general standard of education throughout the State. I am sure Mr. Allen agrees with me in that. Personally, I admit that I take pride in the establishment of these district high schools. Long before I entered Parliament I took an active part in educational work, and was a member of a local school board. I realised then that what we wanted was some opportunity for educating the children in the country after they had reached the age of 14. I went to the trouble many years ago of organising throughout the eastern districts a deputation to the Government of the day asking that something might be done. The files dealing with the matter of secondary education are built up upon my personal agitations. The first step I took, when becoming Minister for Education, was to see that this was done. It has been done, and I am sure it will be of benefit to the country. I have listened to Mr. Stewart's interesting review upon agricultural education in America and other places, and noted his emphasis on the necessity for an agricultural college here. I agree with Mr. Stewart in that. I do not think a college could have been established here sooner because there would have been no students to attend it. As a result of the establishment of district high schools, however, students will be made available for such a college. He suggested that the capital cost of such a college would amount to about £100,000. That is about what it would cost, although that capital expenditure would be distributed over several years. The annual expenditure would be something like £9,000 per annum. Is it worth while spending £9,000 a year on an agricultural college? If, as a result of the training we would get in that college not only of the experts, the necessity for which Mr. Stewart has stressed, but the training of the ordinary students, who would go back from the college to the farm, there was only a single bushel of wheat per acre added to our annual yield it would mean, on the two million acres which will very shortly be under wheat, an increased wealth production of half a million sterling per annum. This would be enough to pay for the maintenance of the college for half a century in one year. Can it be doubted that we would get our

money back if we were prepared to make this expenditure? The committee appointed to consider the establishment of an agricultural college has gone thoroughly into the matter, and submitted a comprehensive report which is now receiving the consideration of the Government. I agree with Mr. Hamersley that the area should be a large one, and I think that from 2,000 acres upwards is required for the purpose. I wish to refer to one or two matters dwelt upon in the interesting speech made by Mr. Miles. One is the granting of licenses to Asiatics for pearl buying. The Pearl-ling Act makes this provision in Section 11—

No license other than a diver's or pearl dealers license shall be granted, transferred or renewed to or in favour of any person who is not a natural born or naturalised British subject.

The two persons to whom he refers, to whom licenses have been granted, are Asiatics though Australian born. But even if they were not, I want to point out that the Act itself contemplated that even to aliens, pearl dealers' licenses might be granted. This question was under consideration for a long time before a decision was arrived at, and a petition was sent to the Government, signed by over 40 of the pearl dealers at Broome. The petition read—

We, the undersigned pearl-ers of Broome, respectfully request that the application for a pearl dealer's license by Thom Fong, who is a British subject of good character, resident in Broome, and who held a pearl dealer's license last year, be granted for the following reasons:—(1) That the larger the number of pearl dealers the greater the competition for and the higher the prices realised by the pearl-ers for their pearls and baroque—especially of the less valuable sorts. (2) That for the less valuable pearls and especially for baroque the effect of Chinese buying has been to more than double the prices previously obtaining in Broome for these classes of goods; and that this is very important to the average pearl-er because we all succeed in finding more or less baroque and indifferent pearls of little value every year, and not only every year but every time our boats go out to sea. Therefore a good price for these inferior classes is of considerable interest to us all, whereas the valuable pearls are so few and far between that the price they realise only interests the few pearl-ers who from time to time are the fortunate finders and owners. (3) We understand that one reason why the Chinese storekeeper can outbid other pearl dealers is that he finds a ready market in Hong Kong for baroque and pearls of small value and by sending his pearl purchase thither instead of remitting through the banks he saves a very heavy exchange in paying for the merchandise he imports thence.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What is baroque?

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: It is an inferior class of small pearl.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: It was only individuals who signed that petition. The association opposed it.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** These individuals form part of the association. So far as the executive of the Pearlers' Association is concerned, the Government earnestly tried to meet their wishes in all matters and a good deal of difficulty was found in understanding exactly what they wanted. We had many contradictory suggestions from them. I admit that it was the expressed intention of the Government to confer very freely with the members of the North before making any alterations in matters of this kind, and I have no doubt that the many changes of Government to which reference has been made, have been responsible for what has happened. I know the intention of the Premier was to make the fullest possible use of the members representing the northern parts of the State, recognising that it is a remote part of the State, and we shall welcome all the assistance we can get. Mr. Miles also indulged in some criticism regarding the State steamship service, and then gave what he said would be my reply. I tell him frankly that I should never make any such reply. The present intention is to secure the services of the best manager we can possibly get for the State steamers, and he will have no other responsibilities on his shoulders. It is intended also to endeavour to get a steamer something like that now in use on the coast, and it is also, intended, as soon as possible, to have built a steamer which will in every way be suitable for the North-West trade. Mr. Miles and Mr. Holmes made reference to the pastoralists and the million-acre provisions. The Premier has already announced his intention of introducing a Bill to give effect to the clear intention of Parliament in that particular. Mr. Rose and other members have stressed the necessity for making country life more attractive. I entirely agree with those hon. members. Mention has also been made of the necessity for having telephonic communication in the country districts. That, however, is not a matter for the State Government, but it is one of the things that we should have attended to long ago if it had been a State matter. I am convinced that it will be a payable proposition to have practically every farm in the country connected with the telephone. It would do a great deal to break down the isolation of country life, but if the Commonwealth Government will not do what they should do, there is no reason why the State Government should not do as much as possible in connection with those things which come under State control. In the matter of providing medical treatment and hospitals for people in the country districts, that has been a matter which it has been impossible to give very much attention to during the progress of the war. It was difficult to secure the services of doctors, but we did what we could in the way of subsidising district nurses and establishing cottage hospitals. At a recent meeting of the Farmers

and Settlers' Association reference was made to the establishment of maternity hospitals in different centres. I admit that something will have to be done, and at the present time we are in communication with the Agent General to see whether it will be possible to acquire possession of some of the motor ambulances which were in use during the war. If we could have such an ambulance attached to a country hospital the ambulance could be looked after satisfactorily by a local committee, and in that way patients could be taken from isolated places to the localities where the hospitals existed. I hope we shall be able to learn from the Agent General that it is possible to procure some of these motor ambulances at a reasonable price. I was glad to hear a warm tribute of appreciation paid by Mr. Rose and Mr. Hamersley to the work done by the Ugly Men's Association. That body are not only doing good work, but they are setting a magnificent example to the whole of the community. This spirit of self-sacrifice in the interests of those who are unfortunately situated is one of the assets of the war. We have to remember that a great many of the things to which I have referred can only be carried out by the expenditure of money, and I do not know how far this House will be prepared to go in the matter of finding additional money. My own opinion is that we have a great opportunity of increasing our revenue from our big earning concerns, and that we should not hesitate to incur expenditure which is really necessary in order that our country may be settled. If we do not incur that expenditure the country will not be settled. I come now to the question which has occupied so much attention during this debate, the question of industrial unrest. I do not intend to talk in generalities nor to say more on the subject than I deem necessary. One outstanding feature of these industrial disputes has always struck me—the unreasonableness of strong combinations whether of employers or of employees. We often hear it said that it is quite impossible for the employer to yield at the point of the bayonet, and the retort from the other side—and I must say there is much justification for it—is that the big employer yields very little excepting at the point of the bayonet. Mr. Cornell spoke very truthfully when he emphasised the value of men and women as contrasted with the value of wealth from the point of view of the country. I earnestly believe that it is the duty of employers to ameliorate the conditions of their employees before they are forced into it, either by strikes or court awards. With that I leave the general question. Mr. Allen and other members have made more or less extensive references to the trouble at Fremantle, and I feel that I should be lacking in my duty if I did not endeavour to place the matter clearly before the House and to remove certain false impressions. For what appeared to me to be good and sufficient reasons, I have maintained a long silence and endured a good deal of mental discomfort. In so far

as it influenced my retirement from the Premiership and the appointment of Mr. Mitchell, I have not the faintest tinge of regret. I would never have accepted the leadership of the party if at the time the party had been willing to follow Mr. Mitchell or any other leader from the Assembly. I accepted it with much disinclination, and for many good reasons that it is unnecessary to go into here. But when I say that I have endured a great deal of mental discomfort, I refer to the fact that a great many people, whose good opinion I valued, have condemned me with unmeasured severity and with, I think, inadequate knowledge of the facts. I have no wish now to remove from my own shoulders the responsibility for anything that I did, but I want the facts to be known. From the remarks of Mr. Allen it would appear that he shares the very common belief that the loyalist workers went on to the wharves in 1917 under a promise of protection and permanence of employment extended by the State and Federal Governments.

Hon. J. F. Allen: I do not.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is not the case. Something of the sort was put forward by the employers, but employers do not always state the case fairly. For instance, on the 7th of May of this year, the Association of Employers of Waterside Labour wrote me on this matter, and since my reply covers the question very fully, I propose to read it—

I am in receipt of your letter of the 7th May acknowledging mine of the 6th inst., covering copies of letters from the disputes committee. Regarding the final paragraph of your letter, it seems to me that the following sentence—"As the pledge was given by the Commonwealth and State Governments and at their request adopted by the employers"—may lead to misunderstanding without a complete recital of the facts. These, as they appear on the Government files, are briefly as under:—On the 24th August, 1917, the State Government, at the request of the Commonwealth Government, commenced the enrolment of persons willing to offer themselves for national volunteer service. The documents prepared for this enrolment by the Government were headed—"National Volunteer Service. We the undersigned, do hereby offer our services to the Government of Western Australia, and we agree to do to the best of our ability any labour we may be called upon to perform until a suitable settlement has been made with the industrial workers now out on strike."

That was the condition under which the national workers were enrolled, "Until a suitable settlement has been made with the industrial workers now out on strike." No national worker in 1917 was enrolled by the Government, or with the consent of the Government under any other condition than that. The letter continues—

On the 27th August the following telegram was received from the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce:—"The following resolution was unanimously passed at a meeting of the committee held this morning—'That this Chamber is of opinion that the national workers should be retained in their employment at the termination of the present trouble, if they so desire.' " On the same day a letter was received by the Government from the West Australian Employers' Federation Incorporated, one paragraph of which reads—"I am further directed to state that my committee strongly urge the Government to give to all national workers, whose services prove to be satisfactory, an assurance that, if they so desire, they will be maintained in employment after the settlement of the trouble."

The employers, in writing to me, said they had extended this preference at the request of the Government, but I have shown what the terms of enrolment by the Government were, as well as the requests of the employers.

These requests were not responded to by the Government at that time.

We did not respond to them because we had no such idea in our minds.

As indicating the full spirit of the Government's intention at this time, I would quote to you a minute written by myself on the 5th September, 1917, concerning the enrolment of public servants, which reads:—"Regarding the enrolment for national volunteer service, it must be distinctly understood that the call of the Federal and State Governments is for volunteers. The slightest suggestion of advantage or disadvantage likely to result to any public servant from volunteering or refraining would destroy the value of the whole movement. The Government does not even want to know who volunteers or who refuses."

That was the attitude taken up by the State Government throughout.

On the same date, a statement was made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes) to the effect that employment and protection would be guaranteed by the Government to all those who would come forward as loyal workers, and who desired to remain in their employment after the trouble was over. This statement was published in the "West Australian" of 6th September, 1917, and on the same date the secretary for the executive committee of the National volunteer service wrote to the Premier from Fremantle, referring to Mr. Hughes' pronouncement, and asking if the committee could inform national volunteers that the State Government would afford them the same protection as indicated by the Prime Minister. This pronouncement of the Prime Minister involved a complete alteration of the previous policy of the State Government, at all events in regard to the purely volunteer character of the service rendered, but since

there seemed to be no indication of the lumpers returning to their employment, and it was understood that there was a desire on the part of a section of the national workers to retain permanent employment on the wharf, a reply was sent by the Premier on the 21st September endorsing the promise of the Prime Minister of protection and future employment.

That reply was sent to the employers' committee on the 21st September, a fortnight later, a fortnight devoted largely to negotiation to get the lumpers to go back to work. The employers have never made any attempt to controvert that statement; indeed, it cannot be controverted. The effort to get the promise of preference to the nationalist workers came from the employers and was resisted by the State Government as long as they could resist it. The State Government resisted until the Federal Government had given their promise and it was no longer possible for us to do otherwise. I hold with Mr. Lynn that when the trouble of 1917 was settled, it should have been settled finally. There should have been no room for quarrelling afterwards. But what did the employers do? Justice to the national workers demanded that it should be settled. If they were entitled to special compensation they should have been given it. If the lumpers would not return to work except by agreement with the nationalists, it should have been arranged then and there. The employers, however, went to the Federal Arbitration Court and obtained from the judge, not a preference for these men, but a right to extend preference to these men who had actually worked on the wharf during the trouble. Under this arrangement no new men could ever join the union. If the union lost a member his place could not be filled. An organisation which cannot grow must die. Altogether 800 names were submitted to the judge, but half of that number did not want to work on the wharf. The number dwindled down to 300 at the time of the armistice and, at the time of the trouble, there were only 200, many of whom were casuals. Some used to go down at the week-ends only. When the trouble arose, there were not more than 70 or 80 regularly continuing employment on the wharf. The employers also appointed from the old unions pannikin bosses because they were more competent, and immediately we had complaints from the nationalists. What chance did they give the nationalists? From the outset the Government were inundated with complaints regarding the position in which the nationalists were forced by these and other means. Reference has been made to the origin of the latest trouble in connection with the s.s. "Dimboola." If the employers had deliberately set out to do this, I do not think they could have acted more foolishly than they did on that occasion.

Hon. J. Duffell: Hear, hear! They plunged themselves into that trouble.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The "Dimboola" arrived with a case of influenza

on board. The Commonwealth quarantine authorities treated it as a case and removed the patient and the contacts to Woodman's Point. A portion of the crew were also removed. The agent for the ship then represented to the Commonwealth quarantine officer that he could not safely remove the remainder of the crew until the vessel had been brought to the wharf and secured there. He said he would arrange to have a cordon of police around the spot to prevent anyone landing and then, on the vessel berthing, the remainder of the crew could be taken off in the launch to the quarantine station and the disinfecting of the ship could be proceeded with. To this course the Commonwealth and State quarantine officers agreed on the insistence of the agent that it was the only way in which the work could be done with safety to the ship. I have heard the health authorities blamed for this action, but I say they were in no way to blame. From a purely health point of view, the course suggested was safe. Other people, knowing the condition of affairs at Fremantle, should have had sufficient foresight not to have courted trouble in this way. No member of the Government knew anything whatever of the matter at this stage. In pursuance of the arrangement arrived at, the "Dimboola" came into the river with the "L" flag—signifying strict quarantine—flying. The berthing flag was also up and she was proceeding to the wharf. A meeting of the Fremantle Harbour Trust was in progress at the time. Through the window, members of the Trust saw what was happening. They were amazed at the unprecedented occurrence of a vessel, flying the "L" flag, coming to the wharf, and the secretary was instructed to make inquiries. He communicated with the berthing master, who said that he was merely carrying out the instructions of the quarantine authorities, and who expressed much uneasiness over the proceedings. The secretary of the Harbour Trust took the responsibility of ordering the berthing flag to be lowered and of instructing that, pending further inquiry, the "Dimboola" must tie at the buoy. His action was confirmed by the Trust. An hour or so later, as the meeting of the Trust was about completed, it was noticed that the berthing flag was again flying and the vessel on the move. The chairman of the Trust (Mr. Carter) then issued final instructions that the vessel should not be permitted to come alongside until she had been granted pratique. The agents then did what they had previously said they could not do with safety; they removed the remainder of the crew to Woodman's Point. Officers of the Federal quarantine department were put upon the ship and carried out the work of disinfection and the vessel in due course was granted pratique. All this occurred in the full view of lumpers and many of the populace of Fremantle and it excited indignation. It afforded the opportunity which had been looked for. A great deal of the responsibility for what occurred is

on the shoulders of those who blundered in this matter.

Hon. J. Duffell: The shipping people, the agents for the s.s. "Dimboola."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Throughout the whole period in which the national workers had been given preference, they were complaining that they were not getting effective preference, and the lumpers, on the other hand, complained bitterly that the preference accorded was not what the court contemplated. The arrival of ships at the port has been very irregular and, until recently, work has been scarce. The lumpers complained that the nationalists, having secured preference in regard to one ship, would also be given preference in regard to the next which might arrive a few days later. They also complained that the nationalists picked and chose their jobs, passing over objectionable work to the lumpers, and that some of them made a practice of turning up only for week-end jobs at extra pay. The feeling between the two bodies was as bitter as it could possibly be, and both were dissatisfied. The estimate furnished to the Government was that the rank and file of the lumpers' union, during the whole of this period since preference was granted to the nationalists, did not earn on an average £2 a week. The political situation at the time was very awkward so far as I was concerned. I had been elected leader of the party and the Government had not been sworn in. The employers and Harbour Trust Commissioners interviewed me, and said the only thing to do was to re-erect the barricades on the wharf, so that those who would work should work. There was no delay on my part. I immediately agreed to the Harbour Trust's recommendation to erect the barricades and told them to do it. They said it was necessary that increased police protection should be provided and immediately instructions were issued and all the available police out of our scanty force of 400 were brought to Fremantle. There was no delay so far as I was concerned. It was said that I showed partiality. I did nothing of the kind. If I had done so, I might have fared far better personally. But I recognised the obligations of the Government, the legitimate grievances of the lumpers, the rights of the nationalists under the promise given them, and the impossible position into which the whole affair had come. The employers stood tight. They would not meet the men in any conference until after a demonstration. The meeting then proved altogether futile; neither side was amenable to reason. At the outset, I communicated the whole of the facts of the position to the acting Prime Minister, and strongly advised a settlement by negotiation. He refused absolutely. He merely emphasised the obligations of the State Government, saying nothing about the obligations of the Federal Government who had forced the position on us. He insisted that it was the

duty of the State to afford protection and put the nationalists to work. Meanwhile, the Harbour Trust had not erected the barriers. They told me that public feeling in Fremantle was such that it could not, at that stage, be done. All sorts of negotiations preceded. Consignees endeavoured to arrange for the unloading of the most needed cargo. They were blocked at every step by one party or the other. The food position was growing serious. It was summer time and butter could not be brought overland by rail. Patients in the hospital were suffering owing to the absence of necessaries which were on the "Dimboola." There was no indication that either side was willing to listen to reason, and the employers were the more obdurate. The Government put forward suggestion after suggestion, the chief being that the matter should be dealt with by the Arbitration Court. Both sides objected to this, the employers on the ground that the preference given to the nationalists was absolute and binding for all time, thus setting up a ridiculous limitation of the powers of the Arbitration Court. Deputations of merchants and others waited on the Government and offered to unload the boats themselves, and again the Fremantle Harbour Trust—they were the responsible people—urged that the only thing to do was to enclose the wharf and then we might get someone to work the boat, returned soldiers, nationalists or consignees. I reminded them that they had already authority to do so, and that it had not been withdrawn. They instructed their men on Saturday morning to proceed with the work, and the men refused to do it. The chairman and secretary waited on me that afternoon and expressed surprise at the men's refusal to erect the barricades. They said they wanted 30 or 40 handy men, including a few carpenters, and suggested that we should get men from other Government departments. That suggestion did not appeal to me. I knew the feeling in the other Government departments and in the State railways, and I knew that to attempt anything of the kind would be merely to spread the trouble over other departments. A public appeal for volunteers was also suggested, but that seemed to me like an open invitation to a trial of strength. Ultimately those responsible for the deputation to the Government, those who had agreed to do the work, were communicated with; and they readily undertook to go down and do it on the following day. It was considered by those responsible, by those who had to advise, that the police protection was ample for the purpose. It has been asked why did I go. I went down because I was not entirely satisfied. I went down because many of those who had volunteered to go were personal friends of mine, and because I do not like asking anyone else to do what I am not prepared to do myself. I readily confess that I never for a moment dreamt of any demonstration like that which occurred. I did not expect, either, that the result of the

closing of the wharves would be to restore the nationalists to the wharves, because I had received many letters from them asking the Government to try to make some other arrangements for them, stating that their position on the wharf was intolerable and had been so for a long time, and that they knew very well it would not become any better. But I did think that if the wharves were closed, the parties could be brought to reason, and the work of unloading could be done by somebody. I now know that the intention of the Government to go down there on that Sunday morning became known to other people at once. I am not going to say how it became known, for the very sufficient reason that I do not know. I have my suspicions. I leave it at that. The result was the wide circulation of a report that the nationalist workers were going down to Fremantle by boat at a certain time. That was how the strength of the demonstration was obtained. I do not intend to make any extended reference to the murderous assault which was made upon us when passing under the bridges. Undoubtedly it was the deliberate intention of those responsible to kill or drown the people in the boats. That was their intention. If they are satisfied in their own minds that they were doing right, I am not going to argue it. However, the assault had no effect in deterring the party from going there. Neither do I intend to say very much about what happened on the wharf itself, except that the police under the greatest provocation showed the greatest restraint and the most exemplary courage and did everything they were asked to do and cleared the wharf. Now, the position was that the number of police was limited and that many of them were wounded. Those able, after being wounded, to return to their posts, returned at once. In the meantime, the crowd was growing greater in numbers, and there were more firearms amongst the crowd than amongst the police. The Inspector of Police, who is not a man to be deterred from his duty, considered that with the number of men at his disposal it was impossible to hold the crowd back for any extended period without firing upon them.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That would not have held them back.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The act of firing into the crowd was an act that I would not for one moment countenance or permit. The result was that some of the leaders of the disputes committee met me on the wharf. There was the position facing us clearly: what were we going to do about it? The leaders of the disputes committee gave me the assurance that if no further work would be attempted on that occasion it would be an end to the rioting and disorder. I had to make my decision, and I made it myself, without consulting those who had accompanied me, although when we talked over the matter on the way back in the boat, there was not a single man but agreed that what I did was right. I say I

should do the same again on a similar occasion. I acted in the feeling that the people, although riotous on that occasion, were not enemies of our country, but our own fellow citizens; and I did not intend to have the loss of the lives of any of them on my shoulders if I could help it. The effect of that demonstration on the Sunday was to convince the employers and the national workers of what I had already been long satisfied, that the position was impossible, and that a small body like the national workers could not work on the wharf in antagonism to the wishes of a large body. The nationalists subsequently withdrew, and the two parties—the employers and the lumpers—agreed that there was no further bar to settlement, and they arranged the terms of the settlement between themselves. I was impressed with what Mr. Allen said here recently with regard to victimisation, and I am not yet satisfied that the disputes committee have kept their word in that respect. The secretary of the disputes committee, to whom I wrote on the subject, assures me that they have done so. The agreement was that there should be no victimisation and that the nationalist workers should not be debarred from joining unions anywhere else in the State. I am not yet satisfied that that agreement has been carried into effect, although Mr. McCallum, in writing to me, said that the Government could rest assured that it would be done. If the disputes committee have not yet done it, I hope they will do it. Immediately the trouble was over, I made a suggestion which was approved by the Government, in the same way as I had their approval of every action I took in the matter, that a Royal Commission should be at once appointed jointly by the Federal and the State Governments to inquire into the matter of the position of the nationalists, so that they could be treated fairly and generously, and so that the spirit of the undertaking given to them should be kept. I take it that if the Government had been unable for public reasons to keep a promise given to a big commercial firm, there would be no talk then of breaking an obligation, but simply a question of what the monetary damage might be. That was the suggestion I put before the State Government. It was approved by the State Government and submitted to the Federal Government, and for months we were unable to obtain any reply whatever. As a matter of fact, the Federal Government thought fit, without any reference to the State Government, to send for the secretary of the national workers to come across to Melbourne, where they opened negotiations with him for a settlement. Whether they expected the State Government to stand in halves with them I do not know, but they did send for the secretary, though we knew nothing about it for weeks afterwards. Later, we found out indirectly that the secretary of the national workers had said he could have settled the matter with the Federal Government, only his union would not give him the authority



to do it. There the matter stands, and I hope that on the arrival of the Prime Minister an agreement will be reached whereby the position will be thoroughly gone into and justice done to the national workers; and the cost fairly and properly apportioned between those responsible, among those who should bear it. Now, let us see what happened in Melbourne under similar conditions. Directly the same trouble occurred in Melbourne, the Acting Prime Minister, who had refused to do anything so far as Western Australia was concerned, appointed a Royal Commissioner, and that Royal Commissioner has reported. The Western Australian Government have been unable to ascertain from the Federal Government what the nature of the report is, but I have been informed on the very best authority that, in accordance with the Royal Commissioner's report, no attempt is to be made to restore the Melbourne national workers to the wharves there. The Commissioner recognised the impossibility of the position of trying to maintain two hostile bodies working in one undertaking of that kind. Now, after all the talk indulged in regarding this matter—it is easy to be wise after the event—I would like some of the wisacres to say what they would have done? I deny that as head of the Government I took sides with either party. From the very first moment that the Government came into the matter, I said I recognised the responsibility of the Government to do certain things, and said it was a matter for negotiation, and urged the parties to negotiate. From start to finish I endeavoured to hold the balance fairly between the two parties. I did at every step what I believed to be right. I had the concurrence of Cabinet, and of the responsible advisers on whom I was entitled to depend; and to-day I say that I welcome the fullest and most complete inquiry into the matter. I agree entirely with those who say that there is nothing very surprising about the industrial unrest which is manifested throughout the world. The termination of the war was bound to bring industrial troubles of surpassing magnitude. But if we can find the means of reducing the industrial disagreements to a minimum, what is the prospect? To-day most of our troubles in Australia are of our own making—I do not say, the making of any particular section. We are faced with none of the natural difficulties of other countries. We have a Constitution "broad based upon the people's will," which can be amended from time to time according to the desires of the people. We have an abundance of the things we require for our material comfort, and we can produce in almost unlimited quantities some of the things the world wants and is willing to pay for. There is no better workman than the Australian, and all that is needed is that everyone in Australia should get a move on. No country in the world will meet its war obligations more easily than Australia, and there is no land more favourably situated than ours.

What are the immediate prospects? The splendid rains in the North have removed the difficulties which faced a portion of our territory. As regards wheat production, Sir Edward Wittenoom has suggested a guaranteed price of 5s. per bushel—a suggestion well worthy of consideration. At the present time we are selling our wheat to England, subject to an undertaking on the part of the Imperial Government to lift it, at 5s. 6d. per bushel. We are sending wheat to other countries at prices going as high as 11s. 6d. per bushel, and there is no reason to suppose that there will be a speedy decrease in prices. Indeed, the indications are that high prices will be maintained for a long time; and as the freights drop, so the relative value of Australian wheat as compared with the wheat of other countries that have a shorter voyage to the European markets, will increase. The proposal to offer a guarantee such as suggested by Sir Edward Wittenoom is one to which the Government are giving serious consideration. In 1915-16 Western Australia had 1,734,000 acres under crop. Now, because of war conditions, the area has shrunk to 1,145,000 acres. If the offer of a guaranteed price for wheat would only restore the position of 1915-16, the effect would very speedily be felt in our railway receipts and in the remainder of our industries.

Hon. H. Stewart: The guarantee must be given quickly to be of any use.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I agree with Mr. Stewart's interjection. The Government should make preparations to guarantee the price in respect of the 1920-21 harvest. It is too late for any extra guarantee to be of any material benefit as regards the approaching harvest. I am sorry to have had to detain the House so long, but it will be recognised that I have had to touch on a number of matters and to reply to a number of speeches. In conclusion, I wish to refer to the very instructive and interesting speech of Mr. Cornell. Since his return from active service Mr. Cornell has spoken less frequently than many of us would like. Probably it is because, having been himself in the midst of big things, he recognises the futility of too much discussion over comparatively small things. He has displayed dissatisfaction, probably well grounded, with our political system. To use his own words, he showed a desire to begin anew and remodel everything—an echo of the old astronomer-poet's cry—

... could thou and I with fate conspire  
To smash this sorry scheme of things entire,  
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then  
Re-mould it nearer to the heart's desire.

Mr. Cornell spoke of the aspirations of the returned soldier, and he spoke as one having knowledge and authority, and I am sure he was right when he said that what the returned soldier wants is not so much preference for himself in various quarters but better conditions not only for himself but for the whole community. My faith in the future of this State and in the future of

the Commonwealth rests in the most complete confidence upon the returned soldier. We read discussions as to whether the returned soldiers' association is going to enter the political arena. It is a matter for the soldiers to decide, and I do not care how they decide it. I feel assured that for the next half-century the destinies of Australia, not merely politically, but socially, commercially, industrially, will be in the hands of the men who have fought for and won their countries' freedom. They will make our laws, and they will make our songs; and because they are men whose minds have been broadened by travel and association with other peoples and other conditions; men whose characters have been strengthened by difficulties overcome and dangers faced, men whose sympathies have been deepened by sufferings endured, and who out of the triumph of right and justice have drawn a glowing and an enduring faith, the future of our country cannot be other than safe in their hands.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, the 2nd September.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 6.30 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 21st August, 1919.*

	PAGE
Auditor General's report	319
Questions: Lands Classification	319
State Sawmills, minimum wage	319
Wheat Board, Mr. McGibbon's appointment	319
Mining operations, Fremantle	319
Address-in-reply, ninth day, conclusion	320
Bill: State Children's Act Amendment—Restoration	339

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

#### AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General for presentation to the Assembly a copy of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended 30th June, 1918. I will lay the paper on the Table.

#### QUESTION—LANDS CLASSIFICATION.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Honorary Minister: When is it expected that the classification of the country lying between the Margaret and Blackwood rivers will be completed by the officers of his department?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: About December, 1919.

#### QUESTION—STATE SAWMILLS, MINIMUM WAGE.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that the minimum wage paid on the Government timber mills is 9s. 7d. a day, while private timber firms are paying 10s. 6d. a day? 2, In view of the fact that workers on 9s. 7d. cannot purchase sufficient clothing and food for their children, will Cabinet consider the advisability of extending the provisions of the Industries Assistance Board to timber workers as well as farmers?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The minimum wage, according to the existing award, is 9s. 7d. per day, which is the minimum being paid by all sawmillers in this State, with the exception of the South-West Timber Hewers' Co-operative Society, Limited, which company at a general meeting held on the 31st July, 1919, voted themselves the minimum of 10s. 6d. per day. The timber workers have cited the employers before the Federal Arbitration Court, in spite of the fact that the sawmillers offered the workers a minimum of 10s. 6d. per day with proportionate increases, which offer was refused by the union. 2, The matter will be considered.

#### QUESTION—WHEAT BOARD, MR. MCGIBBON'S APPOINTMENT.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Premier: 1, Who is responsible for the appointment of Mr. McGibbon to the Australian Wheat Board? 2, What are the duties appertaining to his position on the board? 3, What payments and expenses, if any, are made for his services in this position? 4, From what source are these payments made?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Mr. McGibbon was appointed by the Government of the day on the nomination of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association. 2, He has equal status on the board as Ministers, excepting on questions involving relations between the Governments of the Commonwealth and of the States, and on questions of finance. 3, £4 4s. per day, whilst away from home, plus fares. 4, Central Wheat Pool.

#### QUESTION—MINING OPERATIONS AT FREMANTLE.

Mr. ROCKE asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is he aware that mining operations are being conducted at Fremantle on a site about south-east of Arthur's Head? 2, Does