

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 24th January, 1918.

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

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Public Education Act Amendment.
 - 2, Health Act Amendment.
 - 3, Apprentices.
- Introduced by the Colonial Secretary.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.34]: I move—

“That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 5th February.”

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.35 p.m.

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[For “Questions on Notice” and “Papers Presented,” see “Votes and Proceedings.”]

QUESTION—REPATRIATION, RIVERTON ESTATE.

Mr. THOMSON (without notice) asked Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Is the Minister prepared to place on the Table all papers in connection with the Riverton Estate.

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: I have here the file referring to the Riverton Estate and containing the reports of various officers, together with that of the Government analyst. I move—

“That the papers do lie on the Table.”

Question put and passed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by the PREMIER, leave of absence to the end of the session was granted to Mr. Wilson on the ground of active service with the military forces of the Commonwealth.

BILLS (6)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Sewerage Works Validation (introduced by the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage).
- 2, Curator of Intestates Estates (introduced by the Attorney General).
- 3, Electoral Act Amendment (introduced by the Attorney General).
- 4, Licensing Acts Continuation (introduced by the Attorney General).
- 5, Industries Assistance Act Continuation (introduced by the Attorney General).
- 6, Dentists Act Amendment (introduced by Hon. T. Walker).

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day—Conclusion.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [5.5]: I was very pleased last evening to hear the replies given by the Attorney General to the questions asked, and also the speeches made by hon. members with reference to the repatriation of our returned soldiers. In going through the country we often hear complaints as to what the Government are doing with respect to this matter. Recently in travelling by train between here and Brookton I was informed that a widow with five or six children, whose husband had been killed at the war, was living in one of the Metropolitan-Suburban areas on an allowance of something less than 30s. a week.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That could not be true, surely.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I hope not, but if it is true it is a scandalous thing. We have our valiant men who have volunteered to give their services, many of whom have paid the extreme penalty, for their King and country and for our protection, and surely the dependants of these men should be better looked after than this unfortunate woman appears to have been. I hope that inquiries will be made to ascertain the truth of the matter. There is also the case of a returned soldier suffering from shell shock, who has a wife and children living at either Claremont or Subiaco. The soldier remained at home after his return for some 10 days, and the doctor then said he had delusions, and instead of some proper place being found for him where he could be properly attended to, he was placed in a ward in the Claremont Asylum. This seems to me to be a very extreme action to take.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You would not assist me to amend the Act when I wanted to.

Mr. HICKMOTT: This information was given to me by the wife of this soldier, and as far as she knew there was nothing wrong with her husband. He had been at home for 10 days, and was sent to the asylum for the reasons I have stated. When one comes across instances like this related by the very persons affected, it does seem that although something is being done for our returned soldiers, something very much better should be done. It is the business of the Government to look after returned soldiers, while the Federal Government find the wherewithal

with which to provide them with homes and occupations suitable for them on their return. I trust that the Minister in charge of this matter will look into these particular cases and find out how much truth there is in them. It is pleasing to find that many of the soldiers have been settled in various occupations and are being looked after, and I trust we shall have no more of this sort of complaint being made. The question of the State's finances has been dealt with by various hon. members, some of whom have roundly criticised the actions of the Government with respect to the manner in which they are dealing with them. One hon. member in referring to the recent electioneering campaign said that surely hon. members gave their constituents some information as to what they intended doing. For my part I made the matter as clear as possible to the people of my electorate. They know well, I think, the serious state of our finances. As the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington) informed the House last night, the deficit which is now increasing very rapidly is a legacy. It is at all events part of a legacy left to the present Government by the previous Government. Times are growing worse, and it is increasingly difficult to finance the affairs of State. When the deficit first made its appearance some two or three years ago, things were in a normal condition. We were not feeling the stress of the war, or the difficulties with which we now have to contend. In fact, it is almost impossible for any Government under present conditions to square the finances.

Hon. T. Walker: Either the present Government or any previous Government.

Mr. HICKMOTT: It has been said by the Premier, and other Premiers in various States, that the key to the solution for straightening our finances is "produce, produce, produce." One of the great factors in reducing our national debt is population. Unfortunately, we are very much isolated in Western Australia. This State has many resources, but we have a small and sparse population. Large sums of money have been spent in opening up and developing the country, and in the construction of railways. It appears to me that the system of railways in this State is a bad one. Whilst travelling along to the opening of the Emu Hill line a couple of days ago I found that when I reached a point along the Emu Hill line I was as near to Fremantle or Perth when I got to Narrogin as I was to Kondinin. The people have to pay for the haulage of their stuff over a distance of 100 miles, whereas if the line had been built straight instead of in a circular fashion from one town to another, it would have been very much easier for the people to bear the burden, and the line would have cost very much less. Instead of our railways being constructed from port to port they are built in a loop fashion across country. To go from Emu Hill, the present terminus of the Kondinin extension, to Fremantle or Perth, one has to travel a distance of 280 miles, whereas if the line had extended from Korrigin to Kondinin through the Arm-

adale extension, it would have brought Korrigin within 133 miles of Perth. This would have saved practically 100 miles of haulage. In the near future all the produce that is raised east of the extension will go to Bunbury as its natural port. I trust that as soon as possible this line will be linked up. It certainly is a line which should attract the attention of every hon. member. A line has been authorised from Dwarda to Narrogin, but the Advisory Board report that it will open up very little new country which is not already served. The estimated cost of the line in normal times would be £80,000 or £90,000. The line will open up very little new country, so that it would be almost useless. On the other hand, if the money were expended in the construction of a straight through line from Armadale to the Great Southern, to connect with the Kunjin-Korrigin line, and on to either Bendering or Kondinin, the route would be shortened and many thousands of pounds in freight both ways would be saved to the settlers there. I was indeed pleased to see the Minister for Works and the Colonial Secretary, especially the former hon. gentleman, present at the opening ceremony, for I believe that the belt of country from Kondinin to Kellerberrin, and further east to Kondinin and Bruce Rock, is one of the finest belts of country in Western Australia for sheep and wheat. At all events, it is one of the finest belts I have seen. The assertion has been made that the seasons in that district are not regular, and that the rainfall is uncertain. In conversation with residents and farmers of the district, however, I learnt that they are quite satisfied. They tell me that during the last three years they have had very good returns. This season's crop has been affected somewhat by the heavy rains. I am told that as far east as Emu Hill there was 20 inches of rain last season, and that is rather too much for light country; but where the land is heavy the returns have been good and the settlers are quite satisfied. A most unfortunate occurrence in this time of stress and stringency is the extension of the rabbit plague. This plague, I consider, represents another legacy from previous Governments. Tens of thousands of pounds have been expended in the construction of two rabbit-proof fences, and a chief inspector and a staff have been employed for many years to see that the fences remained intact and in good repair, and also to see that the rabbits were held in check. All that money, it appears to me, might as well have been thrown into the sea. The rabbits are now in thousands between the fences, and in many places as far south as the Great Southern railway. Either this is a legacy from the carelessness and neglect of previous Governments, or the inspectors have not done their duty. The chief inspector informs me that he has impressed upon previous Ministers for Lands the urgent necessity for taking measures to prevent the increase and the forward movement of the rabbits. He states that he was told that the rabbits would never hurt in Western Australia, that poison plants and the wet season in the southern districts would kill the rabbits out. Nevertheless, they are coming along now in

thousands. Inside the second fence we have many evidences of the advance of rabbits. The member for Beverley (Mr. Brown) tells me that two rabbits were shot at Beverley last week, and that five or six were either seen or killed there a little while ago. Rabbits have been seen in York and west of Pingelly, so that it is plain they are advancing westward very fast. Now is the time, and now is the opportunity, for dealing with the pest. It must be dealt with right away, not weeks or months hence; the matter must be taken in hand at once and in earnest, or else the rabbit plague will cost the Government not only tens of thousands of pounds for eradication, but will also cost them the value of the railways they have constructed and will cost numerous pioneers the value of work extending over the last four or five years, and in many instances six or seven years. All that will go for nothing unless the rabbit pest is checked. The people themselves say that it will be impossible for them to remain on their holdings unless effective measures are taken to eradicate the rabbit pest.

Hon. P. Collier: The Government ought to pull down the eastern fence, so as to give the rabbits a chance to go back to South Australia.

Mr. HICKMOTT: It has been suggested by the residents that the eastern fence be pulled down and given to the settlers to fence in their holdings. But it is so long since the eastern fence was erected, that the material would not stand if re-erected. We all know that wire netting deteriorates, and we know that the portion which has been in the ground would be rotten. If the fence is kept in repair where it stands, undoubtedly it will still operate as some check on dingoes and rabbits. But if it is not kept in repair it will be useless. We know it has not been kept in repair in the past, for I have heard it said by both the late member for Gascoyne (Mr. Gilchrist) and the late member for Kimberley (Mr. Male) that many miles of the fence were simply lying flat on the ground. Thus it is plain that neglect has been the cause of the inrush of rabbits. I hope the Minister for Lands will take note of what I say and do all that is possible. In the Eastern States the custom was for the Government to make a proclamation about the 1st February in each year requiring all men who had rabbits on their land to make a simultaneous effort at eradication. They were supplied with poison and with the means of distributing it. I believe our settlers are prepared to take action, but they have no carts, or other means of distributing the poison. So far as I can learn, it is not likely they will be supplied with means in time to do good work this season. There are only the two coming months, February and March, in which poisoning is likely to be successful. If carts are obtainable, I hope they will be supplied to settlers in the districts east of Kellerberrin, Kunnunoppin, Emu Hill, and Kunjin. It is known that one man, who came to Perth to learn what the Industries Assistance Board were going to do for him during the coming season, had some 300 or 400 acres under crop, of which the greater portion is looking just like bare

ground. The rabbits have eaten it right down, and from 300 acres the settler will reap only 140 bags of grain. At Kondinin 14 farmers have testified that they have lost 4,000 bags of wheat through the ravages of rabbits. As regards the policy of increasing production in order to enable us to straighten the finances, I was pleased to learn from this morning's newspaper that Prof. Lefroy, of Sydney, is urging Australia to produce all the grain she possibly can, and that he thinks there will be great demand for grain and foodstuffs at the termination of the war.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That was said by Mr. Drummond.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Both gentlemen have expressed themselves to that effect. Prof. Lefroy said it was extremely difficult to tell what the price of wheat might be when the war terminated. A good deal has been said about the price the farmer has been receiving for his wheat. It has been contended that he ought to be very thankful to the Federal Government for guaranteeing him 3s. per bushel. It does not appear to me, however, that the Federal authorities have taken into consideration the extraordinary rise in the cost of production since the war begun. We know that all the farmers' requirements have risen. Fertilisers, a large item in farming, have risen about 22s. 6d. per ton, although it is true that in this State fertiliser freights have been reduced. Machinery parts, again, have risen 15 to 25 per cent., and in some cases as much as 30 per cent. Thus the rise in the cost of production more than counterbalances the advance in the price of wheat; and the farmer who is now growing wheat to be sold at 3s. per bushel will find himself in an unsatisfactory position at the end of the season. It is computed that wheat costs from 30s. to 32s. per acre to put in and take off, and meet general depreciation of machinery, and so forth. So that a crop of 12 bushels per acre would yield only a return of 4s. per acre. Something should be done to enable the farmers to carry on and combat the difficulties facing them at the present time. Hon. members know that this State sends away about half a million pounds for butter, and about £200,000 for bacon, each year. During my election campaign I urged the people to go in for the production of butter and bacon, so that the money now being sent out of Western Australia for the purchase of those commodities may be kept in circulation here. It has frequently been said that dairying cannot be carried on in Western Australia; but I have in my mind a place some hundred odd miles north of Bendigo, where, 40 years ago, when there were neither separators nor creameries nor other facilities of that nature, a man made a competency out of butter and cheese alone, and that without growing a single acre of artificial feed of any kind. If that is possible in a dry area of Victoria, there can be very few districts in this State which would not permit of dairying being carried on successfully. I consider it is a shame that the people of Western Australia do not go in for the production of commodities so largely used, commodities for the

purchase of which so much money is sent out of the State each year. As regards the Industries Assistance Board, I am not a believer in the spoon-feeding of anybody. When the board were created I was very pleased that the Government of the day offered such liberal terms to, and placed such large sums of money at the disposal of, farmers who had lost their crops owing to drought. Unfortunately, however, the board have grown out of all recognition, have grown into a large department. The amount of money that has been spent by the board is astonishing. At the end of the last financial year over two million pounds had been advanced to farmers by the board.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It has been largely repaid.

Mr. HICKMOTT: About three-quarters of a million was still owing at that time. The board have grown beyond all dimensions relatively to the purposes to be served. Therefore, I was pleased to hear the Minister for Industries say last night that he intended to wind up the board at the very earliest opportunity. My own opinion is that the board's business should be conducted by the trustees of the Agricultural Bank. That is the proper method in which to deal with such a matter. In my opinion the Government should use every endeavour to obtain cheap money for the farmers and to supply them with water and railways. Those are three absolute essentials for the settlement and development of the State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you think the farmers would be satisfied with those three things?

Mr. HICKMOTT: Anyone who was not satisfied would not be much good on the land.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Ask the Managing Trustee of the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. HICKMOTT: That is as far as the Government should go; and the Government ought to see, before lending money, that the work in respect of which the loan is applied for has been actually done. There has been a slipshod method of advancing in the past. In many cases money has been granted on the certificate of labour done, without its being ascertained by actual inspection that the improvements had really been carried out. There are many cases within my own knowledge in which the Agricultural Bank has been fleeced owing to that method of doing business.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It has been stopped for a couple of years.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I am pleased to hear that; it should be stopped for all time. I believe in giving that measure of assistance which will enable a man to carry on, that is to say, any bona-fide man who understands the work that he has taken in hand. I have no desire to delay the House. It had been my intention to refer to a few other matters, but I understand the member for Northam desires to say a few words before he leaves by this evening's express. Before concluding, however, I would offer a few remarks on the subject of State enterprises. Hon. members know that I am not in favour of them, but at the same time I do not think they should be sacrificed at this stage. If we dispose of them we should get something like their value.

Hon. P. Collier: Did not your executive only last week give you instructions that you were not to support any proposal to dispose of the implement works?

Mr. HICKMOTT: I have been requested to support the retention of the State Implement Works.

Hon. P. Collier: Of course, and you are not in favour of them.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I am not in favour of establishing State enterprises. We have a number with us, and these, I repeat, should not be sacrificed. I do not know which branch of the implement works is a losing proposition, but I understand that a big loss was incurred there last year.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Only a paper loss.

Mr. HICKMOTT: We know that there is a lot of machinery there which, we have been told, is practically useless. If that is the case we should know about it, and we should be informed which part of the works it is that is responsible for the loss. We know also that the implement works have proved a check on importers of machinery from other parts of the world.

Hon. P. Collier: Now you are justifying the State enterprises.

Mr. HICKMOTT: It is very difficult to know what the price of machinery would have been at the present time but for the State works acting as a check. I am not justifying the establishment of State enterprises. I have already said that the State should not embark on these undertakings because private capital is by such means kept out of the State. Some time ago I drew attention to the fact that the tramways were a paying concern, showing a profit of £22,000 a year. Notwithstanding that fact it would have been much better to have permitted the municipality to secure them, instead of spending as we did, half a million in the purchase of this concern, and subsequently finding a big sum of money for effecting repairs. At the present time we have not anything in the nature of an improved service.

Mr. Lambert: Are you in favour of the establishment of superphosphate works?

Mr. HICKMOTT: The hon. member could give us some valuable information on that subject. Some time ago he told us in this Chamber that he thought it was possible to manufacture superphosphates in the State for 50s. a ton. If that can be done there should be a move made to manufacture our own superphosphate, because we know at the present time the price we are paying is a heavy burden on the agriculturists and the fruit growers. If we can get information which will enable us to manufacture superphosphate in the State we should have it. I hope that the remarks which I have offered will be taken notice of by hon. members, and that during this time of stress and difficulty all party bickering will be dropped and that all will work together for the welfare and prosperity of the State.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [5.37]: I am sorry, and I am sure the Government are sorry, that the leader of the Opposition did

not make use of his undoubted right to offer some remarks on the Address-in-reply.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We want to get on with the business of the country and save expense.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know that members are so anxious about that. The Address-in-reply is merely a safety valve, and the speeches which are made on it sometimes prove to be a little embarrassing for the Government. It is the one period when we can criticise the Government without danger, and my friends opposite realise that.

Hon. T. Walker: We had no desire to waste their time. We want them to get on with their work.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have listened to many interesting speeches on the Address-in-reply. Of course hon. members know that it is possible to refer to any subject, and it is better to do so on the Address-in-reply than by a separate motion, which is a dangerous thing if it is carried.

Mr. Green: How are you on joining the Cave?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have sometimes been accused of having done that. The speech made by the hon. member who has just sat down was very interesting. His remarks and the remarks of other hon. members are productive of suggestions which are useful to the Government. But they also make clear that there is a good deal which hon. members do not know. For instance, more than one member has discussed the Industries Assistance Board, while the previous speaker stated that the board and the bank should be amalgamated. As a matter of fact they have been amalgamated, and the trustees are practically the same. Hon. members should realise that everything that can be done to minimise expense has been done. I am surprised that the hon. member did not know what had been done. Some hon. members have intimated that they will discuss many matters on the Estimates, but they cannot refer to everything they please when the Estimates are before the House. The limitation there is much greater than it is in connection with the Address-in-reply. I suppose one thing which has influenced hon. members who do not desire to talk is the fact that the newspaper reports are now very short and we are getting very little publicity. But I am digressing somewhat. Reverting again to the Industries Assistance Board, I do not know why farming members object to it. There were 2,500 accounts eighteen months ago. These were reduced to 2,000 a year ago, and they have been reduced by 100 during the past few months, and nothing from the present crop has been brought to credit. The debts to-day cover the cost of the present crop. The result achieved by the board has, I think, been magnificent. It has resulted in increased production and better farming, while considerable assistance and comfort have been given to many people on the land at no expense to the taxpayers. I wish to refer to the position of the State wheat scheme, the arrangements in connec-

tion with which in many respects are unsatisfactory. The members of the Farmers and Settlers' Association believe that if they had members of the Country party as Ministers of the Crown and the Farmers' Co-operative Company handling the wheat, everything would work economically and satisfactorily. That was the theory, but experience has shown that theory and practice, as has often been the case, do not always agree. Let us for a moment deal with one or two matters connected with the scheme. Depôts were not prepared at the outset. The Minister for Works is now engaged in putting up sheds. If in June or July last he had been requested to put up these sheds, the work would have been completed before the end of the winter. The result of the delay was that farmers had to hold their wheat until January. This meant a serious loss to them. We know that wheat loses weight, and there is also the risk of fire and flood, and, above all, the farmer who wanted money was compelled to hold his wheat and remain without his money for probably six weeks. That meant a loss not only to the farming but the trading community of the State. The sheds should have been erected before the wheat was stripped, so that, when it reached the depôt, it might have been put in without becoming wet. As a matter of fact the wheat at Spencer's Brook has been wet by the rainfall of two days only last week. Another matter I wish to speak about is what is known as dockage for inferiority in connection with wheat received by acquiring agents at country stations on account of the scheme.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is the best thing the Minister has done.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I doubt whether the hon. member is growing wheat. If he is he does not know what has happened. Notwithstanding the fact that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., have been handling the wheat, this body, like every other trading concern, wants all the profit it can get, and takes as little risk as it can. The risk they take is this: if the dockage is insufficient when the wheat reaches the depôt, then a further dockage is made. I understand that the Westralian Farmers' agents in the country intend to take no risk, and are imposing an unnecessary dockage. At any rate very grave dissatisfaction is felt, and I urge Ministers to take this matter into serious consideration without delay, because the wheat is being delivered and injustice is being done. Of course, I do not really anticipate that the Government will take the slightest notice of it for a day or two, but presently the Country party members at least will find out that meetings are being held in the country by dissatisfied farmers. The pity of it is that the Country party members, although they must know of this dissatisfaction, are silent in the House. If this wheat were being handled by ordinary mercantile agents, we should hear something from the Country party members. The real danger to the agriculturists in the districts represented by Country party members lies in the fact that the wheat is being handled by their own organisation. I strongly advise Country party members to

listen to what the dissatisfied farmers have to say, and see what can be done to relieve the position. Those farmers have already had to be content with a very light crop, and this docking is a serious matter to them. The Honorary Minister in charge of the scheme ought to look into this question at once. As a matter of fact, it is the duty of any Minister, as soon as he hears that injustice is being done to even a small section of the people, to immediately investigate the matter and do what he can to put it right. I am told that all the docked wheat goes into the general stack: thus the wheat sold from that stack is actually turned out of its quality. We know that some of the 1915-16 wheat shipped was not up to standard, notwithstanding which the fair average quality rate has been paid for it. It is a positive injustice to dock a man sixpence, put the wheat into the general stack for shipment and allow the growers generally the benefit of that sixpence. Of course, if the wheat is absolutely inferior, unfit for shipment, it must be stacked separately and sold as damaged wheat. It is well known that Australian wheat is probably the best in the world. In England last year it produced 78lbs. of flour to 100lbs. of wheat. The only other wheat that came up to it was a little choice stuff from Bombay. Thus it will be seen that our standard quality is sufficiently high to justify the Minister in taking some small risk. At any rate, it is plain to everybody with any knowledge of wheat that this docking is a serious matter. Moreover, there can be no reason for it if the wheat docked goes into the general stack as f.a.q. wheat. I have recently heard of the case of a man who was docked a shilling for a few smut balls. The Minister has asked for the name of this man; but the Minister knows the name, for I gave it to him several days ago when I mentioned the case to him in order that he might go into the matter at once. If this question is not attended to in the meantime I shall feel it my duty, when the House meets again, to move the adjournment of the House in order to afford opportunity of ventilating the matter. Something was said by the last speaker concerning the remarks of Professor Lefroy. Personally I believe that when the war is over we shall get a good price for our wheat. I know very well that unless we continue to grow wheat in this State a great many people will be out of work. It was quite cheering to hear the member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) speaking as he did to-night, and to know that very many men who otherwise would be unemployed are busy in connection with our wheat. In any case, it is a national duty to produce food in the shape of meat and wheat, for both will be required. It seems likely that the only wheat Britain will control when the war is over will be the stacks in Australia. It may be difficult to keep the wheat, but I feel confident that it will pay us to put up silos with this end in view. I wish to impress upon Ministers the immediate danger of the rabbit invasion. The member for Pingelly blamed every previous Government, and said that nothing whatever had been done to keep the rabbits in check. As a

matter of fact, the fences were well maintained until a few years ago. The rabbits are through the fences now, and it is no fault of the Chief Rabbit Inspector, who has done very well indeed in keeping them back for so long. However, they are in now, and I hope the Premier will tackle this question in earnest at once, so as to prevent the spread of the pest. I hope also that farmers will do all that lies in their power to assist in the eradication of the rabbit. It is impossible for the farmers to do it all, because some 80 per cent. of the land is still held by the Crown. I should have liked to speak fully on the subject of repatriation, but I understand that we shall have another opportunity before the House adjourns. The position is not at all satisfactory; the scheme as it stands will require to be vastly improved. Initially we require a sufficiency of land, and in the second place the necessary money; also, as nearly as possible ordinary methods of settlement should be made to apply. We require to protect the soldier settler wherever we can, but as a matter of fact we are making it very difficult for the soldier to get a block of land. We shall have an opportunity of discussing the financial question next week, or the week after. It seems to me wrong to think that we can do very much more to raise money by taxation along the present lines. We have already a land tax, an income tax, indeed a multiplicity of taxes, and I doubt if hon. members can expect to impose increased taxation along the existing channels. Another way, we are told, is to decrease expenditure. I am perfectly willing to practice the most rigid economy, but I do not think the country will be saved by decreasing expenditure on necessary functions of the Government. We are a new country, with much to do, and our only hope of getting out of the present position is by doing things. The point is that we should see to it that we get value for money spent. In 1911 we had a credit balance, and our invested money was paying sinking fund on the total amount borrowed.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You had no war.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is perfectly true. In 1911 the position was quite satisfactory.

Hon. T. Walker: To you, but not to the country.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, satisfactory to the country. It was the first and only time since Responsible Government that we have had a credit balance on revenue account.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You got it by neglecting to pay your accounts.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We paid our accounts. There always is some money held over, and when the hon. member left the Treasury he left four times as much owing as he had found on taking office. The position to-day is serious. Still we have in the country a magnificent asset. Since 1911 we have gone to the bad by 2½ million pounds, but during the same period we have added a similar amount to our sinking fund. In other words, we have set aside a sinking fund equal to our deficit. This would not have been done by any other State in Australia. The Honorary Minister on my right demands to know the extent to which

the late Government went back during their year. It was approximately £600,000, and it was due to the fact that between 1911 and 1916 the expenditure of borrowed money had been so great as to necessitate payment from revenue on account of interest and sinking fund to the tune of £700,000. That interest has to be met, notwithstanding that owing to the war and other causes the capital invested is not earning anything.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It was "want of business acumen" before.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have never used the phrase in my life. If a reasonable immigration policy had been pursued by the Scaddan Government the unusually big expenditure by that Government would not have mattered very much. If they had brought in 15,000 persons each year the population would have increased by 100,000, and we would not have felt the financial stringency. The enormous sum expended on railways and harbours must cease to earn what it earned before the war, because without the shipping we cannot expect our railways and harbours to maintain their previous returns. We have in our timber forests a magnificent asset which, some day, will be converted into money. We have broad acres to sell too. We have magnificent assets in this country which could be turned to account. Though we cannot turn them to account just now or balance the ledger, these assets and this sinking fund make all the difference between bankruptcy and solvency. We must remember just what our assets are when we come to consider our position. The future of the State depends upon individual effort, the co-operation of all sections of the people, and upon the work of those employed. We have to struggle hard to straighten out this position. So long as this £700,000 has to be found from revenue to balance the interest and sinking fund we shall be in trouble. Whether that time is to be long or short depends entirely upon the Government, upon the influence of the Government in this State, and upon the work of the Government and the effect of that work on the securities of the individuals in the State. I venture to say it would be an easy matter to increase the value of our agricultural lands by £5,000,000—no small sum—if we could only induce a few buyers from the Eastern States to come and settle here. If we could do those things which would encourage people and help them, the value of our securities would then be advanced, and we should thus be providing opportunity for others.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It would not do to clear away our orchards.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It would not do to destroy our securities. I am talking about the security of the individual from one end of the State to the other. Undoubtedly our lands are not worth as much by many pounds as they used to be, and upon the work of the Government depends a change in that direction.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But they are reducing the price of them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I want the price increased, and the influence of the Government brought to bear in order that people may

realise the real value of our land, and in order that once again farming in this State may be looked upon as a valuable industry. Upon our policy in this respect depends the future of the State, increased production and increased population. What we want to know is what is intended by the Government in this regard. It must be realised that we must turn to either one or other of our great natural industries. In 1902 the output of gold from this State was nearly nine millions and now it is down to 4½ millions, which is a tremendous drop. Our exportable timber, which was worth a million before the war, is now down to £300,000. That, of course, could be revived, but can we do much more in the way of increasing our gold production? We have had increased agricultural production, but even the 18 million bushels of wheat of two years ago will be down to about 10 millions this year because so many of our farmers have gone away.

Hon. T. Walker: The rabbits have had a lot to do with it, too.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Unless the rabbit question is dealt with promptly there will also be a loss in this respect. The hon. member who has just sat down has abused all State enterprises except the State Implement Works. I am not even clear as to whether he would not like State Phosphate Works. I am of opinion that we should control all monopolies. If the prices asked by private people are too high and unreasonable, if there is a monopoly it ought to be dealt with. Good, however, can only come to the State by the encouragement of private enterprise; it can never come from the establishment of State competitive trading.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Where does competition with private individuals come in with regard to the Implement Works, because there are no manufacturers of implements in the State?

The Minister for Works: I know of one private manufacturer, Purser & Co.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am only speaking generally, and do not think we can have State competitive concerns and progress. Private enterprise cannot be expected to invest its money and be competed against by the Government.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What about State enterprises in connection with meat, butter, and so on?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I agree that there are some trading concerns in existence which will have to be continued, but they should only be continued so long as they can be run to show a reasonable trade profit, having regard, of course, to the present abnormal conditions. If the Government do enter upon any particular trading concern, the country should insist that this concern should only be kept going so long as it shows a fair profit. When the control of the Ice Works came into my hands those were my instructions. There was competition between the ice makers, and I said to Mr. Cairns, "You get out the cost of your ice at a fair trade profit, and stand to your price all the time." The State Implement Works are capable of doing good, but I believe they did

harm in the early stages because they tried to make too many machines which were not of good quality, and consequently lost a lot of money. I hope the Minister for Works will insist upon the very best machines being made.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If he follows our advice he will do good.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I doubt if the State machinery will be equal to the machinery we can get elsewhere, or can be made as cheaply. If a man is paid 12s. a day at the State Implement Works and only earns 11s. a day the works will have to be shut down. If, however, a man is paid 12s. a day and shows a reasonable profit in the shape of earnings, then private enterprise cannot complain very much. I trust that the Government will inform the House what they mean to do in regard to the pastoral leases. There should be a longer tenure of these leases in order that the necessary improvements may be made; and these improvements should be insisted upon. We also want an increased rental from these leases. Some of the provisions of the Bill are not quite as I would have them. I do not believe in disturbing a man who has spent his life in building up his station. I want to give him fixity of tenure, and to insist upon certain improvement conditions consonant with the productivity of his land. It is essential that the pastoralists should know whether their leases are to be renewed, and the State should know what it is going to get for the renewal. In 1928 all leases revert to the Crown, and it would be unreasonable to take a lease from the original holder and give it to someone else when that occurs. We want a fair increase in the rental where the carrying capacity of the land warrants it, and also want the matter fixed up so that we can insist upon certain improvements and increased stocking, and at the same time derive a revenue from lands which are very profitable to-day. I stand by the man who has put his life into the making of his station. Such a man should have his lease for life, for it is very rough upon him when he reaches the age of 60 to be told that his station is to be given to someone else. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) referred, as other members have done, to the fact that we import butter and bacon. We send four millions of money to the Eastern States each year for produce, and settle that account by the export of goods to the tune of two millions, the balance having to be paid in cash in some shape or other. All the money that our friends opposite borrowed during their period of office really went to the Eastern States to settle our account with them, or at all events the equivalent to it did go. No country can stand that, and the sooner we are told that we must live on our own food and import as little as possible from outside the better will it be for us. Money will be hard to get, and if there is to be employment in this State it will have to come through the sale of the produce of this State, and that is through our agricultural industry. The time has come

when we must have freezing works at Fremantle, and I urge upon the Government to erect them at once. The abattoirs are there and the sale yards are there. In 1911 a vote was left on the Estimates, but our friends built the abattoirs but not the freezing works. There is no time to lose in erecting these works. People in the old land want meat, and our farmers want a market for their stock. Sheep are twice as valuable in the Eastern States to-day as they are in Western Australia because of the shipping facilities existing there. We have six million sheep in this State, a million and a-half more than there are in South Australia, but in that State they usually export over a million sheep per annum. In this State we can now export sheep to the tune of half a million. That money would go into circulation, and having gone into circulation it will benefit the working man. If we are to have employment in the State we must get it from the money obtained in this way. The cost of small freezing and canning works would not be very great, and I desire to impress upon Ministers the urgent need of taking this matter in hand. It is the most important work they could engage upon, and Parliament ought to give them a vote for the immediate erection of these works. I am sorry to hear the criticism which has been levelled at the Commissioners who have gone. With respect to the criticism concerning the Denmark farm, I may say that I visited it some time ago. Though it is a small farm it is a good one, and if we had 50,000 farms like it with 50,000 farmers settled in this State we should have a wonderfully good asset in the South-West and would not need to import either butter or bacon. Excellent work has been done there, and the manager is a useful man, capable, and knows his work. He has done good work also in regard to the butter and bacon factory. It is only a pioneering business, and though my friends opposite do not appear to think much of it, it is an object lesson worthy of being followed by the settlers on small holdings throughout the State. If hon. members will visit the farm they will see what can be done by the 50-acre man in the South-West, where the land is good. I congratulate the Government upon having a considerate opposition, and hope that members opposite will remain as considerate throughout the session as they have already shown themselves to be.

[Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.]

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [7.30]: I have risen rather early in this debate in consequence of the speeches delivered last evening by the member for Albany (Mr. H. Robinson) and by the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington). Various statements made by those gentlemen are statements which, I am quite satisfied, spring from lack of experience in parliamentary matters, which lack of experience must, of course, attach to new members. As there are other new members who may possibly have somewhat similar ideas, I hope the House will bear with me while I try to make as plain as

I can the actual position. In one portion of his speech the member for Albany said that ordinary business methods did not apply to the Government, that the Government had special ways of doing things. He also stated that he knew of no reason why the ordinary business methods adopted in commercial circles should not apply to the bulk of the concerns of the Government, and that any special way of doing things should simply be the result of experience which dictated a certain course to be pursued for the benefit of the State. After giving that opinion, to which I can subscribe, the hon. member said that it was almost impossible to get information from the heads of departments. During his remarks I interjected that surely he did not wish to bring Ministers into conflict with the heads of departments. Very rarely indeed is there a reason why information required by a member of the House cannot be obtained, and obtained accurately. If a member feels that a Minister—no matter of what Government—arranges with his officers to burke information of any sort, there is one clear course for the member to pursue; and that is to bring the matter before Parliament.

Mr. Draper: Suppose Parliament is not sitting.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then he should do so when the House meets. Most of the information that hon. members desire is wanted by them either in preparation for the sitting of the House or during the time when the House sits. If a member feels that a Minister is so misguided as to attempt to deceive him, it is his duty to bring the matter before the House and let the House give judgment.

Mr. Draper: Will the Minister give me the information for which I asked when the House was not sitting?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know to what information the hon. member is referring.

Mr. Draper: In connection with a certain Bill which affected the Perth City Council. Can I get the information?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. The matter was referred to Cabinet, and the action I took was the result of Cabinet consideration. I wish to point out to the member for Albany that the proper course for him to pursue, when desiring information, is to address the Minister through the Under Secretary, whereupon the matter is referred to the Minister, and an intimation is given whether the information is obtainable or not. But it is not to be thought of that members should be let loose on the departments, given access to the correspondence rooms and the records and the accounts, with a roving commission. That would naturally cause disturbance amongst the officers and interfere with routine work. Such a proceeding would not be permitted in any ordinary business, and should certainly not be allowed in a Government concern. The hon. member further said that he hoped the Minister in charge of the trading concerns would bring them up to date and put them on a business footing. He added that, although at present it was impossible to say whether they

were to be sold, the time was not far distant when some of them would be disposed of, and that if they were put on a better footing it would be easier to dispose of them at a better figure. That is exactly the view which the Wilson Government took of the State trading concerns, and exactly the view which the Le-froy Government take of them, and exactly the view which the Minister administering them is administering them upon to-day.

Mr. Lambert: That is sound policy, to put them on a good footing and then give them away.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Albany said that he was not prepared to support any Government which might be disposed to extend the trading concerns; and then he made this remarkable statement as to the water meters, that the works had no money available for working them and no data for costing.

Mr. H. Robinson: I said they had no machinery available.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Every one of the State trading concerns has its trading capital, and therefore has the money to carry on. With regard to there being no data as to costs, perhaps the hon. member will allow me, as an engineer, to tell him how engineers carry on their business. If an engineer had to wait to obtain data as to cost from someone or other, he would never be able to progress. However, his whole training and business experience are directed towards enabling him to form a judgment as to what the cost should be, and from that he forms his selling prices. I may inform the member for Albany—and I know this will delight the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin)—that the estimate of cost made by Mr. Shaw for the meter works is below the price put in for, and that that cost has not yet been reached in the matter of meters, so that the State should make a larger profit than was anticipated. Another aspect in which the State trading concerns were taken to task by the member for Albany was that of the supply of fruit cases. The fruit-case business controversy of last year was gone into most thoroughly by myself, not only in this House but also in the Press; and I regret to say that I found the Government were selling fruit cases below cost. When the matter came under my notice as Minister, I was not satisfied that the costs of producing the cases were correctly taken out. Therefore I had the costs taken out again according to what my experience told me was a proper method, and I found that fruit cases had been sold at less than they cost the Government. I am not going to sell anything knowingly, at less than it costs to produce. As regards the Mt. Barker people not being able to obtain fruit cases, the position briefly is that the Associated Fruitgrowers made a contract with the State Sawmills for the supply of fruit cases, and that they practically had the control of the supply of fruit cases.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They wanted the Government to put in extra machinery.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would not be surprised to find they wanted anything. They were, however, a little doubtful—this is where their business acumen came in—as to

what the fruit crop would be. The member for Albany, as an orchardist, will know perfectly well that no one can tell exactly how much fruit will come along. The Associated Fruitgrowers accordingly held off placing their orders for fruit cases, and later on attempted to rush orders in. The result was that the State Sawmills and the other manufacturers of fruit cases were unable to meet the demand with their ordinary machinery. When the Associated Fruitgrowers came along and pointed out what was required on each specific proposition, they were plainly told by the Government, "We now find that our cost is so and so, and you can have either one thing or the other; all the orders we have on hand shall be carried out at the prices taken, but for any future orders you will have to pay 4s. per dozen more; or, if you like, we will take the orders we have in hand and the orders you wish to place now, and we will average them out at an advance of 2s." Those are the facts. When I found that the costs of the State Sawmills were not to be relied upon, I went to the sawmills myself and had the costs got out by the accountant under my direction. In ascertaining that the Government were losing money, I said, "All right; as far as I am concerned, that ends the business; I am not going to cut fruit cases for anybody unless I am going to get at least my money back." A good many strictures were passed on Mr. Humphries, the manager, in this connection. In the previous year, with a view to anticipating the demand for the season I am now referring to, he cut and put into stock 100,000 fruit cases. When these fruit cases came to be opened up for sending out, over half the number were found to be only fit for putting on the fire shoot. They had warped and split, and had also developed a dry fungus rot which appears to be more applicable to karri than to any other Western Australian timber. As regards the State Brickworks, I shall a little later in the session ask the indulgence of the House, when I shall take every one of the State trading concerns that I administer and give hon. members the fullest information I can regarding them. But this is the position as regards the brickworks, if we could work them under the most favourable conditions, keeping up our full supply of men and having no stoppage, we could produce bricks at a cost to the State of 32s. or 32s. 6d. per thousand. As the result of six months' trial under the same conditions as an ordinary business, it was found that the fluctuations in the supply of men and the consequent curtailment of output made the cost considerably more. Consequently, the State Brickworks are shut down. I hope to be able, before the end of this month, to arrive at conditions under which I can advertise the State Brickworks for leasing. I am satisfied there is no chance of selling the works at the present time on such terms as I feel I ought to ask in the interests of the State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The works would be a good paying proposition under ordinary conditions.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Albany made reference to a little bit of ancient history—the bridge across the Denmark river. The State Sawmills, he said, supplied the timber for the bridge at £6 15s. per load, while a local company could supply it at £4 5s. per load. This statement is correct within, say, 2s. 6d. per load, which is nothing either here or there. However, this matter was brought forward by the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) in March, 1915, and a full inquiry was held by the Public Works Department. The result was the issue of instructions—I think the member for North-East Fremantle issued them—that if local timber could be got at a cheaper price than State Sawmills timber, then the local timber must be used. That, so far as I am aware, is the procedure that is going on in the Works Department at the present time. If the hon. member had chosen to ask for that information it would have been supplied to him. I think hon. members generally will bear out that they have no difficulty in obtaining information which can reasonably be given. There is another matter to which I would refer. Like the hon. member, I myself as a new member some 20 years ago, fell into the trap that he has fallen into over the Auditor General's report. Most hon. members have fallen into the trap, and I suppose other members to come will do likewise. The Auditor General, who is a very responsible officer so far as this State is concerned, contents himself by pointing out errors, or pointing out where something is done which does not coincide with his views. But he has never yet told anyone how it would be possible to avoid falling into errors, or how the system which he criticises might be improved. The Auditor General works under an Audit Act which lays down certain things, and like the laws of the Medes and Persians, must not be altered. The hon. member quoted from the Auditor General's report these words, "The direct collections by Works officers were banked at monthly (or longer) intervals in lieu of weekly, as directed by the Treasurer." If ordinary conditions could be applied it would be quite right to draw attention to the matter, but the particular remark in the Auditor General's report applies to the collections on four railways then under construction. There are no banks where railways are in course of construction, in which money can be deposited, neither is there a bank at the terminus of these newly constructed country lines.

Mr. H. Robinson: How do you pay the wages?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The wages are made up here and sent by a special pay officer. The whole of the money collected on these four lines under construction for twelve months was just about £100. It was money collected to pay for freight on parcels and collected as passenger fares. There was no embezzlement or shortage in any shape or form in connection with those matters. And I tell the hon. member, that

if I had been carrying out those contracts I would not have allowed any of my men to waste their time going to a banking institution every week; I would rather have lost the whole of the money as the time occupied would materially interfere with the carrying on of the work. Another quotation the hon. member made from the Auditor General's report read, "Although requested, no wages sheets have been supplied for an amount of £1,045 11s. 1d., stated to have been disbursed." Unless this matter is contradicted it will remain as a direct implication upon the honesty of the man concerned in the management of the sawmills, because there is not the slightest shadow of foundation for the statement. Listen to the comment of the hon. member on that quotation. He said, "That is another glaring instance of the way money is being handled. This money is supposed to have been expended." The hon. member should not have said "supposed to have been expended" when there is a wages sheet.

Mr. H. Robinson: The Auditor General says that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: He does not say that. The hon. member's comment was, "This money is supposed to have been expended, but there are no vouchers for it." That is untrue. Then the hon. member went on to say, "It appears that there are some funny things going on in connection with the State sawmills."

Hon. P. Collier: That is a very reckless statement.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is a question which deals with men who are doing their duty. This query was raised by the Audit Department on the 24th December, 1915, and the report which the hon. member read from deals with the finances for the year ended 30th June, 1916. The wages sheets referred to were sent direct to the Audit Department on the 31st March, 1916; consequently long before the Auditor General wrote this report the pay sheets were in his office. The reply to the query was not returned until the 29th August, 1917, as the Auditor General notified us that the query was still outstanding, but the Audit Department wrote the query off when they found that the wages sheets had been in their possession since the 31st March, 1916. The hon. member talks about funny things going on in connection with the sawmills. That can only mean embezzlement or theft.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You need not be afraid; there were no funny things in our time, and the officer is quite all right.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There have not been any funny things either in the time of my predecessor or since. The hon. member made fun about the fruit trees at the sawmills being charged to working expenses. It appears that there is flat land there which was partially cleared for a recreation ground, for the purpose of a garden in which to grow vegetables to be sold to the men, and for con-

verting into a grass paddock in which to turn out the horses at the end of the week. The manager, Mr. Humphries, considered there was a piece of ground there which was suitable for planting a little orchard, and he established this small orchard on his own responsibility, thinking that his appointment as manager left him absolutely free in connection with these matters, as would have been the case had he been employed by a private concern. This matter was brought before the House by a question, and the member for North-East Fremantle, when Minister for Works, inquired into the matter and stated that the orchard should not have been planted without the consent of the Minister. The inference to be gathered from the remarks of the hon. member for Albany would be that the orchard was planted for the benefit of the silvertails connected with the sawmills, who would get free fruit. But I would point out for the hon. member's information that any product from the orchard must pass through the store, and if there was any fruit from it it would be for consumption by all the employees who would pay for it. Another question the hon. member raised was that there was no voucher in connection with an advance of £80 paid to the manager of the sawmills for travelling expenses. For the hon. member's information, I would like to state that that amount of travelling expenses was recommended by the Public Service Commissioner, and the matter came before Cabinet and was approved by Executive Council. Therefore, if the Public Service Commissioner and Cabinet dealt with it, and Executive Council approved of it, why should we waste time over it? The hon. member also quoted from the Auditor General's report that the Stores Suspense Account was charged with an amount of £7,126 16s. 6d. for payments made by the Agent General, and that no vouchers had been supplied supporting the charge. The hon. member left out the little word "yet." Permit me to say that the most dangerous thing he or any other member can do is to mis-quote, and the reputation of any man—I do not care who he may be—who mis-quotes and is found out, is gone in this House. The fact of the matter is that this sum of money was for goods sent out in connection with the Government Printing Works, and immediately the goods arrived in store in Perth a cable was sent to the Agent General authorising him to pay the money, and the vouchers were not in the hands of the Auditor General when the report was written. The Agent General had to post those vouchers out.

Mr. H. Robinson: Is the Agent General authorised to pay money away?

Hon. P. Collier: Of course he is.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is a reference made to the Tambellup wheat shed, and about the employment of two Government officers and a tally clerk, and also a Farmers and Settlers' man and a clerk to deal with merely one or two trucks of wheat. For the information of hon. members I will state what the exact position is. The Government receive the wheat at the depôts and

stack it, paying for the labour that is employed. The Westralian Farmers, Ltd., have a representative there, who, if any question arises as to the quality or the grade of the wheat, can sample, discuss and settle the matter with the Government representative at the depôt. All the work that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., do is this: at the siding to which the farmers take their wheat, they receive it, grade it, load it into trucks, despatch it to the depôts, and render statements to the Government representative. When it gets to the depôt it is the Government's liability. It is unloaded, examined, and compared with the certificates of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and if there should be any dispute as to the quality there is the representative of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and the dispute is settled immediately. With regard to the depôt at Tambellup, this was ready some days ago to receive wheat, and therefore one officer was sent down and he would employ such hands as he needed them. There may be some little waste of time when starting a thing like that, and this is common to any new business. I might give hon. members figures which will show the position as it is at the present time. At the Tambellup shed the wheat is coming in slowly. There are 2,000 bags stacked there. At Spence's Brook we are receiving 17,000 bags every day, and there are now 160,000 bags stacked. At Midland Junction we receive 5,000 bags daily, and there are stacked there 32,000 bags. At Narrogin we receive between 2,000 and 3,000 bags daily, and the stack there consists of 9,000 bags. At Geraldton we receive between 2,000 and 3,000 bags daily, and the stack there consists of 8,500 bags. The position at the end of last week showed that there were stacked at the various sheds 211,500 bags of wheat, and it is only a few weeks since we called tenders to build those sheds. The hon. member also referred to the Torbay drainage scheme. That is a matter about which I can later on offer him every information. The Engineer-in-Chief is at present engaged in compiling a report on it.

Hon. P. Collier: Is he compiling still another report?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think I need say anything more in regard to the hon. member. I hope he will take what I have said as having been said kindly, and with the idea of showing him that it is possible to make mistakes. The member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington) made a remarkable speech last evening, in the course of which he said a good many things. I propose to deal with a few of them. He said it was a remarkable fact that all the remedial measures proposed by the Government emanated from the Colonial Treasurer. The explanation is that the Treasurer is the man who handles the cash. If he were here he could not do other than say that from every one of the Ministers and of the departments proposals for economy have been put before him, and in a number of cases has been actually carried out. I do not know why the hon. member should have made that remark, but I know why a great deal of attention has been paid by a certain newspaper to

this subject. It is because some of the departments which have been quietly reorganising and reducing their staffs have refused to give to the representatives of the Press particulars of their reductions. The reason for this attitude on the part of the departments is that it is bad enough for a man to have his employment taken from him because there is no work for him, without putting him in the newspapers and pillorying him as having lost his job. I know that this policy has given dire offence to one newspaper in particular.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Had it been done in our time you would have been the first to demand an investigation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then the hon. member took exception to the appointment of the member for Yilgarn (Mr. Hudson) as Minister for Railways.

Hon. P. Collier: In that respect he agrees with McIntyre, of Southern Cross.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Very likely. Under the Act of Parliament which controls the Railway Commissioner, and which should control the House and the Government, the Commissioner has certain defined duties and defined powers. If he does not care to assert his position it is his own look out. It is well known how the appointment of the Minister for Railways came about, and if the hon. member is not satisfied, if he thinks the present Minister is incapable of carrying out his duties, it is open to the hon. member to challenge the position and get a decision in the House. Then the hon. member went on to deal with State enterprises, and wanted to know the Government policy. The Government policy is practically placarded on the walls of the Chamber. The policy of this and of the preceding Government is to get rid of the State enterprises, but not to scrap them. There is a million of money in those trading concerns, and anyone who advocates the scraping of them is a traitor to the State. To be told, as I was by some members of the Chamber of Commerce, that we ought to scrap the State enterprises, makes one's blood boil. In respect of the deputation from the Chamber of Commerce I must say I have very little time and very little respect for men who find their political consciences awaking when their chances of profit are vanishing. I have no respect for men, individually or collectively, who for years while money was being thrown about had no political consciences, but who suddenly develop such consciences when they find their profits going. The hon. member brought a deputation to me, and three subjects were discussed, namely, meters, timber and ships. The order for meters was given to the State Implement Works. The two firms in this State who could make the meters were told distinctly by me in my office that unless they gave me competition they would get no consideration from me, that the only right we had to call for tenders was founded on the inviting of competition in order to see that the Government were not slaughtered or profiteered. The tender from the State Implement Works was put in two days before the tenders from the other people were received,

so there was no question of Mr. Shaw knowing what their prices were.

Hon. P. Collier: They were never opened, were they?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course not. The tenders put in by those two firms were for the same price, namely, 60s., and they have since admitted that they put their heads together and were going to divide the order. Although I do not believe in State enterprises, I am not going to allow anybody to exploit the Government.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why not tell the House that those firms proposed to rob the State of 7s. 6d. per meter?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That was in the first tender, that for 67s. 6d. However, the main factor was the financial question, and between the times of calling for and of receiving the tenders the Treasurer told me that I could not rely on getting the amount of money he had previously allotted to me. If I had placed an order for 4,000 meters with a private firm and then wanted to cut it down, would I not have had to pay for it? They would have found any number of advocates to plead their case in the House. They would have been able to show how badly treated they had been, and the sympathies of hon. members would have led to debate after debate in the Chamber. In respect of the timber question, timber was required for the wheat sheds, and the timber merchants and cutters met together to decide the price the Government should be exploited for, the price the Government was to be charged. Then they had the cool, cast-iron cheek to send to the manager of the State Sawmills a letter in which they said in effect, "Herewith is list of prices we have decided to quote the Government for this timber; you will be good enough to quote the same thing." I had thought that I was bossing the mills, and those people have since found out that that was actually the case, with the result that the timber people are to-day treating the State sawmills in a very different way. Then this wonderful deputation were not satisfied with the attitude of the Government in respect of the Government ships. Having a ship available and having timber to sell, the Government had the impudence to want to supply their own customers in the Eastern States. It seems the Government should have said, "Certainly we have the ship, and we want the money, but you may take the ship and load her with your own timber and let ours stand by." As a matter of fact, if we have State trading concerns, they must be run on business lines. We should do with the State trading concerns exactly what we would do with our own private concerns; that is precisely what we have done.

Hon. P. Collier: Will the Minister say whether, if a satisfactory offer were received for the State Implement Works, he would sell them?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, I would. I will now say something else to the member for Perth. It is this: if he desires to see the lion in the path, the difficulty

in the way of selling the works, let him table a motion. I can assure him he will not get the House to give him authority to sell the Implement Works. The policy of the Government is to sell those works, but I do not believe the Country party members would agree to such sale. I am quite sure the Opposition would not agree, and so if we put those two forces together we see exactly what chance there is of selling the Implement Works.

Mr. H. Robinson: Have you not been asked to place an option on them?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: By whom? You seem to know a lot about it.

Hon. P. Collier: It would not be fair to furnish the names, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Let me tell the hon. member that Section 25 of the Trading Concerns Act lays it down that no sale of the works can be effected until it shall have been approved by both Houses of Parliament. The hon. member can think over that, and the member for Perth will be able to tell him what chance there is of evading that provision. I challenge both those hon. members to table a motion for the sale of the State Implement Works and have it debated in the House. I will not allow members to come here and make incorrect statements—which they may believe to be correct—without my correcting them.

Mr. Draper: But you believe in the sale of the State Implement Works, do you not?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

Mr. Draper: Then you have not the courage of your opinions?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot sell them.

Mr. Draper: And you will not amend the Act in a way that would allow you to sell them?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no question of courage. The Government have all the courage required for anything.

Mr. Draper: Yes, to keep their seats.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This Government is possessed of some common sense and prudence, and the members of it are not such fools, or such idiots, as to waste the time of the House in view of that particular clause in the Act.

Mr. Pilkington: You know the policy, but will not carry it out.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington) made a remark which on reflection he will be sorry for. He said that the Government were holding office because to do so personally affected each member of it. Every member of this Government, so far as I know, is prepared to retire from his position if the House will show that there are other men who can do the work better. I say to the member for Perth and to the member for West Perth (Mr. Draper) that if it is fair game to twit Ministers with holding office because of what they may get out of doing it, it is fair for me to say that they in turn should not use their positions as members of Parliament for the benefit of any of their clients in their constituencies.

Mr. Pilkington: What do you mean?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I say it is impossible for the member for Perth to introduce a deputation from the Perth Chamber of Commerce without there being some of his clients concerned in it, and equally impossible for the member for West Perth to acquire information on behalf of the City Council without its affecting the interests of some of his clients.

Mr. Draper: I ask you to name those clients.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It would be ungentlemanly and unfair for me to make such a statement but for the fact that I only make it in return for the statement made by the member for Perth, that the members of the Government are occupying these benches for their own benefit.

Mr. Draper: Name my clients if you can. You know it is untrue.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is impossible for the hon. member to introduce a deputation or to deal with a matter which concerns the city of Perth without this also affecting the interests of some of his clients.

Mr. Lambert: Is this the first example of non-party Government?

Hon. T. Walker: This is strictly national.

Mr. Green: Never mind, you are winning the war now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have tried to keep cool in this matter, and I think the explanations I have given on these various points, which affect the officers of the different departments, are fully warranted, and the House will judge between the hon. members concerned and the Government in the attacks to which I have referred.

Mr. STEWART (Claremont) [S.17]: I do not know whether it would not have been better to follow the example of the Opposition with regard to this debate. We have met here for the discharge of business, and the silence on the part of the Opposition is doubtless due to their desire, and for that I give them every credit, to co-operate with the Government for the promotion of national ends. I give them that credit because it seems to me that much of the time of Parliament in past days has been occupied by vituperation and abuse from one side to the other. As a new member I may possess ideal ideas as to what should govern public conduct. I was, unfortunately, the auditor last night of some uncomplimentary remarks, which I feel do not add to the dignity of the House, indulged in between the Attorney General and the member for Albany (Mr. H. Robinson). I trust that this House will not be subjected to a repetition of that sort of thing. It can neither add to the dignity of the House, nor can it add to the comfortable feelings or the good opinions of those who are met here to conduct the business of the country. The question of the financial position of the State is of paramount importance. We should get very little further on in our journey towards good government unless the fullest attention is paid by the Government to the arguments elucidated yesterday by the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington). That hon. member has been twitted with having had nothing to recommend:

the way of remedial measures. Since the entrance of this State into the Federal arena, we have shed much of the glory of what is known as higher politics, and we are here now as a community interested mainly in affairs of an industrial and commercial character. We have reached that stage in our political development, and it seems to me, therefore, that in the choice of men for the government and administration of these departments we should look around and fix upon those who are best qualified to hold the positions, irrespective of what might be their party or political faith. Glaring instances of anomalies, which under ordinary party conditions might have redounded to the advantage of the party concerned, have arisen quite recently in the course of the administration of certain departments. One of the matters of which I wish to complain, and to which I desire to point members' attention, is in connection with the constitution of the present Fremantle Harbour Trust.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: A very good board.

Mr. STEWART: That is a matter of opinion, and I always defer to opinions which I may consider do not quite coalesce with mine. It has been the practice in days gone by for various Governments to depend to some extent upon the advice or recommendations of representative bodies. Consistent with that practice the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce submitted the names of two of its members previous to the last appointments.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What Chamber?

Mr. STEWART: I am speaking of the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce, which being situated at the Port, might be expected to be in a special position to make recommendations for appointment to that board.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I am lead to believe that they have recommended the last eight appointments. They are running the country.

Mr. STEWART: I do not follow the reasoning of the hon. member. These names were submitted by and with the consent, and practically at the request of, the Minister controlling the department. Certainly, the Government have always made it clear that appointments to the Fremantle Harbour Trust are made quite independent of whatever party the appointees may belong to, that is, they are not representing any particular section. That does not detract from the fact that the Government have been dependent, and have acted time and again, upon recommendations from certain representative bodies. One reason for the Fremantle Chamber incurring the ill-favour of the department administering the Harbour Trust relates to the time when the State Steamship Service was joined, so far as its management was concerned, to the Fremantle Harbour Trust, consequently placing a dual control in the hands of one person. As a matter of principle, the Fremantle chamber felt itself obliged to protest against such action, which in its effect will place the interests of the shipping companies in the hands of the manager of the State Steamship service, who at the same time holds the office of secretary to the Fremantle Harbour Trust. In that dual capacity the secretary of the Trust has access

to documents submitted by the shipping companies, which in all other countries are supposed to be peculiarly private, and admitted only to the knowledge of the department concerned.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I was rather opposed to it myself in the first instance, but I think I was wrong, and that it has been a success.

Mr. STEWART: The hon. member has expressed his opinion, and I hope I shall be able to confine myself to facts.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is a fact.

Mr. STEWART: I take it that it is by the production of facts and not that of opinions that we have to arrive at some solution in regard to proper administration. In justification for my having said that the Government desire recommendations from such a body as this, I wish to read an excerpt from a letter by the Colonial Secretary of quite recent date, sent, in fact, prior to the last appointment in December. The excerpt is as follows:—

At the same time the Government is keenly desirous that the control of the Fremantle harbour should be in the hands of men of ability and experience, and feels that it could receive from the committee of the Chamber of Commerce and other institutions very material assistance in the form of advice as to who, in the opinion of those bodies, are best qualified for the duty of Commissioners.

No higher compliment could be paid by any Government department to the combined wisdom of such a body, and nothing could show more clearly the belief that the Government then entertained in the integrity and the wisdom of those governing such a representative body as the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce. One would have thought that from a body like that, having a special interest in the Port, having men there whose business it is to patrol the wharves, and to know all that is going on, and who from their positions are more qualified than many others are who live at a remote distance from the Port and carry on their businesses at a remote distance, a good selection could have been made. The fact is that arising out of this direct expression of opinion on the part of the Government, the Chamber of Commerce sent in two names, but neither of the gentlemen named was selected. One of the gentlemen had been appointed by the Government in 1916, at the time that the change took place from the Scaddan Government to the Wilson Government. What the Wilson Government considered to be fit should surely at a later stage, when we had a National Government, have been considered equally fit. If the Government of 1916 thought it wise and a good thing to make the appointment of Mr. Nicholas, then the Government calling themselves a National Government, and admitting that the gentleman had performed his duties satisfactorily, and seeing that his nomination was not only approved by the Chamber of Commerce but endorsed by the Federation of Employers of waterside labour as well as by the Interstate steamship companies, should surely have given some consideration to a recommendation of that nature. I have some knowledge of the practice

which generally governs the Minister's actions in connection with matters of this kind, and here I must ask for the indulgence of the House while I repeat what my own experience was. In 1916, following on the assumption of office of the Wilson Government, a change was effected in the personnel of the board by the retirement of Capt. Irvine and Mr. Thompson, the Engineer-in-Chief.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That was a great mistake.

Mr. STEWART: Quite so. Following upon that again, the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce were asked to nominate; and I myself—I say it with no idea of drawing attention to myself—was one of those selected by the Chamber as a suitable commissioner. What do I find? That, immediately all kinds of back stairs influences, unknown perhaps to men like myself, are used to persuade the Minister to give his decision in favour of a certain person. I had the mortification of being addressed one day on the stairway of the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce by an ex-legislator to the effect that he believed Mr. Colebatch would be down that afternoon and that it might be well for me to be somewhere in the neighbourhood so that I might come across him. I knew that the speaker was aware that I was recommended as a suitable commissioner; and, of course, my obvious reply—I have carried out this principle all through my life—was that I had never lain in wait for any honours, and that if Mr. Colebatch desired to see me it was open to him to make an appointment with me. However, the positions on the Fremantle Harbour Trust were filled without the Minister of the day knowing anything whatever of the qualifications of the men whom he was going to select. In these recent appointments the Minister has selected men who were not nominated, and who had never been consulted as to whether they would or would not accept a seat on the board. I challenge the Minister responsible for these appointments to deny my statement that he had not previously communicated with these men. At any rate, one of the new members had received no communication whatever from the Government intimating that they had any intention of selecting him. Naturally, the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce felt aggrieved that, after they had acted in all good faith with the Government, their nominees were turned down. I fancy that if the Lumpers' Union had sent in a nomination and it had not been accepted by the Government, the Lumpers' Union would have felt aggrieved. I would like to know whether, previous to the constitution of this latest board, there was any instance of the Government making appointments outside the channels of recommendation. We have had an example of what we may expect from members of the present Government, and I leave Ministers to feel whether they are perfectly proud of the transaction and to decide whether the dignity of Ministerial office has been maintained. In reply to a very respectful com-

munication sent to the Government by the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce on the 15th January, the Chamber received a letter dated the 19th January, over the signature of Mr. Underwood, Honorary Minister for the North-West, which reads as follows:—

Referring to the question of the appointment of members of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, it is quite correct that the Government asked of your Chamber the favour of advice; but that did not carry with it your right to demand—

A demand was never made, as the correspondence will show.

to demand that one of your members should be on the board.

The particular sentence to which I wish to call attention is this:

If such were the case, we could not possibly ask for your advice; but, as you adopt that attitude, let me assure you, as far as I am concerned, we will not ask for your advice again.

I submit that letter for the consideration of members of the Ministry, and I leave the question there. I hope they will feel proud of the action of their colleague in returning such a curt, discourteous, and undignified reply—a reply such as should never emanate from a ministerial office.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Why do not you read my first letter to the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce?

Mr. STEWART: I am dealing with the climax which has been reached now.

Hon. P. Collier: I am rather surprised, because dignity has always been the Honorary Minister's strong point.

Mr. STEWART: I want to amplify to some extent a statement made last night by the Minister for Industries in regard to the contract placed with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. for the handling of the 1917-1918 harvest. The communications started practically on the 3rd August last, when the general manager for the Wheat Marketing Scheme addressed the wheat acquiring agents as follows:—

I have also been instructed to advise that, as the result of a conference in Melbourne, it has been suggested that the agents should be restricted to only one sub-agent at a siding or group of sidings. The Honorary Minister, however, supported by the local advisory committee, was favourable to the proposal of dividing the wheat handling business of the State into port-zone districts, and it was tentatively proposed that if the present agents to operate allotments should be made as under.

That is a very clear and emphatic statement of the intention of the Government, as expressed in this letter of the general manager for the Wheat Marketing Scheme. I presume this letter was written by him with the authority of his ministerial chief. On the 8th August a further letter is addressed by the general manager to the wheat acquiring agents as follows:—

Further to my letter to you of 3rd August in this connection, I would point out that it is the desire of the State Wheat Marketing Advisory Committee, together with the gen-

eral manager, to confer with the agents as early as possible, in order to definitely arrange for the handling of next season's wheat harvest. It is further desired that when the meeting is arranged, something definite and tangible will immediately result. I have, therefore, to suggest that it would be possible for you to give estimates of the cost of handling under the different methods suggested to you in my letter of the 6th July, (a) Assuming that the acquiring agency commission should be for a term of 12 months; (b) that the allotment of zones be as tentatively suggested, but subject to a similar quantity of wheat being handled by the respective agents this year as last year; (c) that two-thirds of the wheat at each centre should be in silos, and one-third in stores.

On the 23rd August the wheat acquiring agents, with the exception of the Westralian Farmers Ltd., submitted their rates to the general manager; other conditions being set forth with which I need not trouble the House for the moment. On the 28th September—that is, nearly a month later—the Honorary Minister in charge of the scheme informed the wheat acquiring agents that their offer of the 23rd August was unacceptable and that he did not view with favour the proposals for handling; and he called for another tender. Well, the wheat acquiring agents submitted a further tender. Up to this time no tender had been submitted by the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Proceeding still further, on the 2nd October the wheat acquiring agents again made a modification in their terms, and submitted it to the general manager. That is to say, no less than three offers were submitted by the wheat acquiring agents. Evidently a second and a third offer were submitted consequent upon intimation received that the terms previously offered did not meet with the approval of the Minister. There can be nothing clearer than this, which is evidenced by the correspondence, that during the time these offers were being submitted by the wheat acquiring agents certain communications were passing between the office of the Wheat Marketing Scheme and the Westralian Farmers Ltd. On the 6th October the general manager of the Wheat Marketing Scheme communicates with the wheat acquiring agents, submitting the terms upon which he is prepared to accept the business. Up to the 6th October there has been no indication of the Minister's requirements in regard to the prices at which he expected the business to be put through. But, after the receipt of the various offers of the 23rd August, 28th September, and 2nd October—I must emphasise these dates—the whole matter had been digested by the Minister, and he came forward with the proposal of the 6th October. He then says, "These are the only conditions on which I am willing to do business." I say that the whole thing admits as clearly as possible that there has been collusion—I can find no other term to describe it—between that office and the Westralian Farmers Ltd. I will go further and say that the Honorary Minister, acting in the capacity he did by arranging the scheme, and being himself a financially in-

terested member of the Westralian Farmers Ltd., should not have been entrusted with the handling of a matter of this description. In the country from which I come it has been held to be a dishonourable thing for a Minister to be associated with a transaction of this kind when he is financially interested in it; and I contend that we are becoming lower in our standards by tolerating this kind of thing.

Mr. Lambert: It would be all right to hand the business over to your friends.

Mr. STEWART: I am asking the hon. member to follow me, as to whether I am logical in my contentions. The hon. member may have motives, and may impute motives to me; but he cannot put into my mind what is not in my mind. The evidence confirms my opinion that there has been collusion between the manager of the scheme and the Westralian Farmers Ltd., and I condemn in the most strenuous terms anything which allows a Minister, when he is financially interested, to conclude a contract such as this.

Mr. Pickering: Were you interested in any of these transactions?

Mr. STEWART: I am not a wheat buyer at the moment.

Mr. Pickering: But you were then.

Mr. STEWART: That statement is not in accordance with fact. A further explanation was offered by the Honorary Minister in a letter dated the 3rd November. He agreed on the day previously to receive a deputation of the acquiring wheat agents, and, at the conclusion of that meeting he was asked a question as to whether he would consider a fresh offer from the wheat acquiring agents. There need be no beating about the bush. We have the Westralian Farmers Ltd. on the one hand, who were out for all they were worth to beat the wheat acquiring agents. The Westralian Farmers Ltd. refused to adopt the zone system, so highly approved of at the initiation of the proceedings, but from that time it is clear that the wheat acquiring agents were as much opposed on the other side.

Hon. P. Collier: If we could get at the bottom of the facts we would find that the price for the Westralian Farmers Ltd. getting this contract was the support of the Country party.

Mr. Pickering: That is a matter of opinion.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a matter of fact.

Mr. STEWART: I submit it is inadvisable that the farmers should be entrusted with the responsibility of selling from themselves to themselves; I think the principle is bad.

Mr. Hickmott: Was it a big financial loss to your people?

Mr. STEWART: I had no agents, but surely I am not to be blamed for earning my living in a legitimate manner.

Mr. Pickering: Are you blaming the Westralian Farmers, Ltd.?

Mr. STEWART: I claim that the Honorary Minister should have been debarred from concluding this contract. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst the farming community at the manner in which the wheat scheme is now being managed; there is a feeling in the minds of many that considerable mismanagement exists. Returning to the Minister's letter of the 3rd November.

I want to compliment him on the care shown on behalf of the farmers, and particularly the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. I also desire to know from the Government exactly what is meant when the Honorary Minister in writing on the 3rd November, made use of these words, "The co-operative societies, which, once formed, we are obliged as a Government to protect." I want to know what special protection these co-operative societies are entitled to that I or any other member of the community in business is not also entitled to receive. There must be some special protection implied when the Minister commits himself to such a careless statement as that. That is the kind of thing which discloses the incompetence of Ministers to even cover up their own blunders. The letter concludes—

It is not considered in the best interests of the scheme to ask any agent to co-operate in what must be a severe business loss if their previous assurances are to be believed, and I might point out, even if your offer of the 2nd inst. were to do the work for nothing, I could not recommend Cabinet to accept it.

Notwithstanding that, the Minister on the 2nd November, before writing that letter, was prepared to receive and did receive a fresh offer from the wheat acquiring agents. He should then have had the courage to say, "I cannot accept any offer you make now; I have closed with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd." But to get out of it, after inviting the offer, he disposes of the matter by stating that even if they offered to do the work for nothing he could not recommend Cabinet to accept it. We have come to a pretty pass when we have a responsible Minister bandying with reputable members of the community who carry on business in a legitimate manner, and agreeing in the morning to receive and consider a fresh tender and then giving as an excuse for not accepting it that even if they undertook to do the work for nothing he could not recommend Cabinet to accept it. I will leave the matter there because I think I have sufficiently demonstrated to the House that the whole business is of such a character that it will not bear the light of day upon it.

Mr. Green: You had a bit of a brush with the Minister in his office.

Mr. STEWART: I can repeat what I said on that occasion. I asked the question with all gentleness, "When will the Government begin to look at things in a national way?" and the Minister ordered me to sit down, and said that he would not have any of my insolence. I was not in any way guilty of insolence. I merely made a statement which I was entitled to make. Another matter to which I wish to refer, and in regard to which I support the remarks made by the member for Perth, is in connection with Government interference in private industries. An example of the unfortunate consequences which follow such interference may be given as the result of the Government's intervention when the priority committee presented their report. A request came from Melbourne that a priority committee should be appointed

consisting of gentlemen qualified to make recommendations as to the class and quantity of goods which should be shipped from the Eastern States to Western Australia. One would have thought that as the priority committee had access to complete information, whatever recommendations they made would have been worthy of respectful consideration at the hands of the Government. The priority committee went to considerable trouble. They sat for a number of days and finished their labours on a Saturday evening at seven o'clock, so as to complete the recommendations which the Government were to send on to Melbourne. The statement was then made by the Government that the list which the priority committee had prepared would have to be subjected to Government audit, that is to say, it had to be revised by the Government. Can anyone tell me that the action of the Government would throw any additional light which would be likely to assist the shipping control board in Melbourne? I understand that the gentlemen to whom the list prepared by the priority committee was submitted were Messrs. Gardiner, Willmott, and Baxter. I have no doubt that these gentlemen satisfied themselves that whatever course they adopted was the right one, and they in their wisdom saw fit to eliminate a number of lines.

The Attorney General: Such as?

Mr. STEWART: The Minister will know.

The Attorney General: I do not know.

Mr. Harrison: We would like to know, anyway.

Mr. STEWART: At any rate, I give the House the assurance that the list prepared by the priority committee was one which was carefully prepared. The gentlemen who composed the committee were well qualified to carry out an undertaking of this kind.

Mr. Harrison: What was left out and what was put in?

Mr. STEWART: I am not going into details. My object is to draw attention to the absurdity of the Government interfering in matters of this kind, and I am endeavouring to prove that the Government were wrong in interfering in this way, because it was a matter about which the three gentlemen in question could not have had the special knowledge possessed by the members of the priority committee.

Mr. Harrison: To us that is simply an assertion; now give us something definite.

Mr. STEWART: I desire to offer a few remarks in regard to the repatriation proposals. If all the goodwill and good intentions expressed by members on behalf of the repatriation movement, or if only 50 per cent. of them were carried into effect, I feel sure we should be at the end of our troubles. But while I have not any definite scheme to recommend, I am willing to hear and weigh very carefully the proposals that come from the Government, because from the Government we expect something special as the result of their knowledge and intimate acquaintance with matters of this kind. After all, we have our own ideas, and it is with the view of assisting the Government that we give expression to them, notwithstanding that they may or may not be found to be

practicable in the working out of this problem. I wish to call the attention of the House to what has taken place in New Zealand, where steps for the training and employment of disabled soldiers have been taken by the Dominion Government. The object of the special board appointed by that Government is to arrange to train disabled soldiers and place them in such employment as their education and qualifications fit them for. Many of the returned soldiers will find it difficult to obtain employment in industrial branches, and it is with the object of meeting this difficulty that the New Zealand board has been established. The board is designed to assist the disabled soldier in taking up a trade for which he is manifestly qualified, notwithstanding that he has no special knowledge of it. The War Council in this State is practically debarred from anything of this sort by reason of the Arbitration Court's awards, which in their operation will not permit of the employment of disabled soldiers in branches of industry where their labours would not return a satisfactory financial result to their employers. In New Zealand there has been gazetted an Order-in-Council which suspends the operation of all industrial awards. At the same time the interests of the trades unions are fully protected. Permits for the temporary engagement of these disabled men are given for one month, at the expiry of which period the trade unions' officials are invited to give their opinions as to the wage earning capacity of the men in question. I quit expected a chorus of disapproval from my friends of the Opposition, but I think that on further consideration they will agree that there is something to be said for an expedient of this kind. For myself I will not be a party to any movement having for its object the employment of cheap labour. It is with a view to contributing to the elucidation of this repatriation problem that I have brought this particular aspect of the case before the House. Our own War Council is up against a very real difficulty, and I desired to submit this plan to the notice of the Government because apparently no step has been taken here to relieve the very acute distress of the disabled soldiers. Under the provision of this New Zealand Order-in-Council, as I have already said, the interests of the trades unions are fully protected. The object is to place the disabled soldier as speedily as possible in an industrial channel where he will best be fitted to continue his labours for the remainder of his life.

Mr. Munsie: Is this not a duty of the Commonwealth Government?

Mr. STEWART: There are many things in connection with the proper treatment of disabled soldiers which await determination. We have to bring our minds to the consideration of all these points, and not allow our preconceived ideas to stand in the way of giving these men a fair deal.

Mr. Munsie: The win-the-war party were going to do all this themselves.

Mr. STEWART: I am trying to bring under the notice of the Government one way in which certain relief can be given to the disabled soldiers. Now I have a word to say on the education vote. The question is,

are we justified in expending moneys which, from the nature of our financial difficulties, we are not in a position to spend? From conversations with teachers, I have some knowledge of the working of education boards both here and in the Eastern States, and I claim that thousands of pounds are uselessly spent on education in regard both to juniors and to seniors. Let me, in illustration of my meaning, quote a conversation which took place between two gentlemen, one of whom said, "There are only two educational institutions in which I am interested, namely, the Modern School and the Scotch College." The retort to this statement was, "Yes, you are interested in those because in the Modern School your daughter is being educated free, and from the Scotch College you draw a big fat cheque in premiums." The Modern School was not designed to provide education for the children of wealthy members of the community. I firmly hold that opinion.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They go in by examination.

Mr. STEWART: A very proper safeguard, but I hold strongly to the view that the education of children of parents who can pay should not be provided free. The principle should here obtain which obtains in public hospitals, where every patient who is able to pay is called upon to pay.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You know the reason why; otherwise the doctors would not attend the hospital.

Mr. STEWART: My opinion that we are needlessly spending thousands of pounds on education is confirmed by teachers and by graduates of universities both here and in the Eastern States. For students of exceptional ability provision could be made, as in the past, by means of bursaries or exhibitions. I come from a country where education is highly regarded and where it has always been the practice and privilege of parents to see that their children receive a good education, even if they have to pay for it themselves.

Mr. O'Loghlen: What country is that?

Mr. STEWART: The country which up to the present has provided the biggest percentage of soldiers at the Front, the country where, I am told, when conscription was introduced, there was hardly a military eligible left. I am proud to claim the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces as one of my countrymen. Another point to which I would draw the attention of the House is the attitude of the Government in regard to the late strike. An arrangement was made by the Government with the Railway Department under which the railway employees were not required to run the locomotives on to the wharf. This was done at the instigation of the unionists of the Railway Department. The result was that an engine was borrowed by the Harbour Trust, the men of the Railway Department refusing to take their engines on to the wharf to carry on the ordinary work of the wharf. To this extent the Government were guilty of what practically amounts to compounding a felony.

The Minister for Railways: I admire your modesty.

Mr. STEWART: I am correct in my facts.

The Minister for Railways: If you gave us facts we would take more interest in what you say.

Mr. STEWART: The Government arranged with the railway officers to sanction the determination of the railway men not to run their locomotives on to the wharf. If I am wrong in that statement, I shall be glad to be corrected. The effect of that action on the part of the Government was to declare the National workers "black."

Mr. Munsie: So they are; 'scabs' of the worst character.

Mr. STEWART: It must not be forgotten that they, together with certain members of the Chamber of Commerce, were the men who came to the assistance of the Government and helped them out of their difficulty. And the reward which the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce secured was the turning down of their nominee for the Harbour Trust. If that is the way in which the Government are going to treat those who render them good service, they must not look for too much assistance from this quarter in the future.

Mr. TEESDALE (Roebourn) [9.15]: Following the example of the leader of the Opposition I will refrain from wasting the time of the House upon the Address-in-reply. There has been quite enough time lost to-day already, and I fail to see where the slightest benefit has accrued to the State as a result of what has been said with the exception of one or two matters which members of the Country party have brought up, the question of the invasion of rabbits which is an important thing, and the question of fires along the railway lines. Apart from these two items I doubt whether the State has benefitted in any shape or form as a result of to-day's business. The leader of the Opposition has been very considerate, and has shown good feeling in refraining from letting loose his artillery on the question. We on this side of the House have made a mistake and have been wanting in reciprocity. Many charges have been made to-day. Members have come here with grievances to ventilate, but if they have grievances they ought to be particular where they sit. There are seats in the Chamber for members who have grievances. There is not the slightest necessity to start the session with a long list of grievances. Let the past bury itself. What we want to know is about the future, and not about the past. We may possibly admit that all of us have made mistakes in the past. No doubt the Premier and the Minister have made mistakes and by previous Governments mistakes have been made, but, for God's sake, let us leave the past alone and try to avoid these mistakes in the future. Let those members who are throwing such a lot of light on various questions and coming forward with all these brilliant ideas see that for the future we do not make the errors that have been made in the past. Never mind about past errors; we can watch the future and see that Ministers keep on the

right track. We can at all events do our best to keep them here.

Hon. T. Walker: There are too many tracks going in all directions.

Mr. TEESDALE: That may be so. Our friends opposite have been very accommodat-ing to-day, and will no doubt help us if they see we are doing the right thing. I hope that next session we shall start with a clean sheet, and allow all this wretched bickering and pin-pricking to slide. The country is already losing confidence in us. We are nothing but a bedlam, and barracking about things from one side to the other. That is not good, and I hope that all this will be stopped from next Tuesday onwards.

Mr. MONEY (Bunbury) [9.20]: As a new member I may probably be able to express the views of the people of Western Australia as well as any member of the House. Perhaps no member of this Chamber has been subjected to such an amount of opposition in his election as I have been, for I had the opposition of members who now sit on the Opposition benches and also the opposition of those who occupy the Ministerial benches.

Hon. W. C. Argwin: How did you get in?

Hon. T. Walker: Between two stools you fell to the ground.

Mr. MONEY: I agree that we must not waste time here in too much talking, and admire the attitude of the members of the Opposition who say they are desirous of getting on with the business of the country. At the same time we are asked to give some expression of opinion as to the methods by which we propose to improve existing circumstances, and as shortly as I can I will give my views, which I believe are also the views of the people, as to what we should do. The most important matter we have to discuss is that of the financial position of Western Australia. This can only be improved by two methods. We have to create more wealth, and to create more wealth we have to produce more. That must be the most important feature of our progressive and creative measures of the future. The Premier, in his policy speech, told us that production was to be the watchword of the future, and that in the past it had been somewhat neglected. I agree with him, and feel that if we are to produce more and create more wealth we must follow the practical methods that are before our eyes, and have been before them for some considerable time. I also agree with members who have stated that it is our bounden duty to preserve the wealth of the State by producing our own requirements, instead of sending money out of the State with which to purchase them. I am certain that by ordinary measures we can produce all the butter, cheese and bacon we require here. In Western Australia there is land which can be made as good as any other land with a little practical management. I am speaking particularly of the swamp lands of the South-West. By the ordinary system of drainage we should on this land be able to produce not only sufficient butter for Western Australia, but in a short time sufficient for export. There is one feature connected with the requirements of the farmers and settlers of Western Australia

lia to which I would like to refer. Years ago we were told by Government advisers that it was absolutely necessary that cheap agricultural lime should be made available for the settlers of the South-West, but years have gone by since that statement was made that it should be available, and yet to-day there is no cheap agricultural lime placed at the disposal of those people. There has been a marked neglect in that one simple particular. The cost of providing that facility would be very small indeed, but I believe the results as forecasted to us by our Agricultural Commissioners would be something marvellous. Our lands are sour and require the application of lime in order to make them yield to their full capacity. I am convinced that owing to the lack of drainage we are losing annually ten times as much as ever we will gain by any irrigation scheme that may be formulated. The ordinary measures of drainage and the application of lime should precede all artificial measures of production, and the natural resources of the State should be fully developed before it is thought necessary to go in for other artificial means. I am of opinion that the swamp lands will grow sufficient green fodder for our cattle during the whole of the summer months, without there being any necessity for irrigation works whatever. We have an example in the Stirling estate, where we can to-day see green grass up to our knees sufficient to carry a large number of cattle. The Minister for Works will agree with me when I say that the proper development of our swamp lands in the South-West would provide sufficient feed for stock throughout the summer months, and would give us the supply of butter and cheese that we so urgently require. I also wish to deal with the question of economics. We have heard that it is the intention of the Government to cut down this department and that department, and very largely to curtail expenditure. If we, as representing the people of the State, are sincere in what we preach it is our duty to set our own house in order first, and to ask ourselves whether we as members of this House, constitute a paying concern to the community. Can we effect any economy in our own house? Upon the institution of Federation much of the legislative work of Western Australia was transferred to the Federal Parliament, but was the cost of our legislative work in this State in any way decreased thereby? We know, however, that the contrary has taken place, and that instead of the cost decreasing with the decreased work of our Parliament it has increased.

Hon. W. C. Argwin: The work has increased, too.

Mr. MONEY: How can the hon. member say that? Let him read the Act and he will find all the administrative branches which have now reverted to the Federal Government. For instance, the post offices have been taken away from the State, the telegraphs have gone to the Federal Government, and even our marriage laws. That big department, the Customs Department, has also been transferred. On the list there are at least 23 matters which have been transferred

to the Federal authorities, and when the hon. member has read that let me ask him what is left for the Parliament of Western Australia.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Take the Parliament of Western Australia in 1900 and compare it with that of 1918.

Mr. MONEY: The Act to which I refer will show the hon. member those things which have been transferred to the Federal Government.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have not sat here quietly if you have at Bunbury.

Mr. MONEY: The legislative enactments in Western Australia have decreased very considerably indeed. Had there been a little more work to do in the House during the past two or three years we might have avoided those scenes which have been so deplorable. It is to the want of serious work that these scenes, which have been so much deplored by the people of Western Australia, may probably be attributed.

The Minister for Works: Let the past be buried.

Mr. MONEY: I have been looking in vain for suggestions for economies. With the advent of Federation I feel that our cost of administration has very considerably increased. To-day we have to bear our share of the cost of the Federal Statistical Department as well as that of our own Statistical Department. We have to bear our share of the cost of the Federal Electoral Department in addition to bearing the cost of our own State Electoral Department. We have to bear the cost of a Federal Taxation Department in our midst, as well as bear the cost of our State Taxation Department. We have to bear the cost of the Federal Savings Bank in addition to the cost of our own State Savings Bank. The time has arrived when some effort should be made to do away with those dual departments. One taxation department should serve the purposes of both State and Commonwealth, and similarly one statistical department and one electoral department. I see from this morning's newspaper that steps are being taken in Victoria to amalgamate the two electoral departments in that State. I am now endeavouring to point out certain matters which seem to have escaped members who have already spoken on the Address-in-reply, and if I can offer suggestions which will help in any way, I will not say to get us out of our financial difficulties, because that will take a long time, but help even a little towards that end, I think it my duty to give those suggestions to the Treasurer.

Hon. P. Collier: Make any suggestions you like, but for Heaven's sake make no attack upon this institution.

Mr. MONEY: We shall be only doing right if we occasionally investigate the position of Parliament itself. If we are sincere to the people of Western Australia we shall not refrain from investigating the cost of every department of the State of Western Australia. It must be admitted that Parliament represents the most important department of the State, and it is only due to it that thorough attention should be paid to it.

Unless we adopt this course, how can we practise economy in every other department, leaving our own alone? From what I have seen I am satisfied that hon. members, although they have indulged in a considerable amount of criticism, have only one interest, and that is the advancement of Western Australia and the benefit of its people. I was glad to hear that an invitation had been extended by the Premier to our friends on the Opposition benches to join hands in the government of Western Australia, to assist in the election of a Ministry to conduct the affairs of State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is not correct.

Mr. MONEY: That invitation, I understand, was extended before the general election.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is not so.

Mr. MONEY: I for my part hope sincerely that the same invitation may be extended again after the election.

Hon. P. Collier: Is that offer still open, Mr. Premier?

Mr. MONEY: I am satisfied that if our Government are really and truly national, their administration will not be that of a section of the people but that of the whole of the people. Our condition to-day is such as to need the united help of all parties in this House, in order to improve matters, instead of continuing the present drift. I feel that to a certain extent my presence in this Chamber is due to the fact that my constituents considered that it would be better, even if the National party returned to power after the election, that the whole of the Ministry should be re-elected.

Mr. Holman: Has not that been done?

Mr. MONEY: It was considered that gentlemen should be appointed to Ministerial positions for their qualifications, and for no other consideration whatever. I would prefer the Premier's invitation to be extended once more. Exceptional circumstances require exceptional remedies, and there is no doubt that to-day our circumstances are most exceptional. Radical wrongs require radical remedies, and therefore I hope that in the future there may be united action in this House for two purposes—the increasing of our wealth by production and by the secondary industries, and also economy in every possible direction, so that our industries may not be hampered by excessive burdens but may be fostered in every way possible in order to improve our position.

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [9.37]: I intend to follow the example set by the leader of the Opposition, and not delay the business of the House by speaking at undue length. I am very glad the hon. gentleman has set that example for the benefit of new members. There is only one subject to which I desire to refer particularly on the Address-in-reply; and I somewhat regret, although in another way I am pleased, that it has been mentioned by the member for Bunbury (Mr. Money). I recollect well that a few days after the result of the recent State elections were known, the member for Boulder (Hon. P. Collier) gave an interview to the Press, which appeared in the

"West Australian" of the 2nd October and contained the following passage:—

So far as the Official Labour party was concerned, there was no intention of playing the party game; all possible assistance would be given to the Government in the difficult and trying times ahead.

Hon. P. Collier: I have lived up to that so far.

Mr. DAVIES: That is so.

Mr. Munsie: I will engage that the leader of the Opposition did not say exactly that. He would not say "Official Labour party."

Mr. DAVIES: He may have said "The Labour party."

Mr. Munsie: Yes; that is right.

Mr. DAVIES: Every advantage should be taken of that promise of the leader of the Opposition, and I must express my surprise that on the meeting of the National party no invitation was extended to the Opposition to join hands with those returned at the last election to carry on the affairs of the country. I think that, throughout Australia—and this is notable in the Federal arena also—there is an idea of coming together for the purpose of carrying on the affairs of Australia. The differences between the parties in this House do not seem so great that a conference of the heads might not lead to the formulation of some scheme for the elimination of party differences existing to-day. No man was more surprised than myself during the debate on the Wheat Marketing Bill. I received the shock of my life when some hon. members sitting in Opposition to-day rose in the interests of what I term big business in this State. I do not know whether it is owing to my lack of knowledge—I am here to learn—but from the discussion which took place on the Wheat Marketing Bill it appeared to me that certain hon. members opposite were primed by those agents who had lost the wheat handling business through the operations of the Westralian Farmers Ltd.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You are wrong. Nobody spoke to me on the subject.

Mr. Holman: You ought to be in the game yourself; then you would know differently.

Mr. DAVIES: It had that appearance to a new member.

Hon. P. Collier: We were primed with the facts.

Mr. DAVIES: By whom?

Hon. P. Collier: That does not matter. The point is that we had the facts.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They were published in the Press.

Mr. DAVIES: To-night we have had a member on this side of the House assuming an attitude exactly similar to that adopted by the Opposition on the previous occasion. That being so, what reason is there for the Opposition opposing the present Government? I think it would not be out of order if the Premier made an offer to the leader of the Opposition to confer and see whether the Opposition cannot accept some part of the responsibility of conducting the affairs of this State for the next three years.

Mr. Green: You know the basis of the movement; you know it will never come to anything.

Mr. DAVIES: I am glad to get that admission from the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green), though it is really a fatal admission for any member recently elected to make. My knowledge of that fact enables me to appreciate the difficulties confronting the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Green: That is my attitude.

Mr. DAVIES: It is not the attitude of the hon. member at all. It is the attitude he is bound to take unless he, and every man sitting with him, is prepared to abandon party tactics to-day. I trust that the invitation to which I have alluded will be extended to the leader of the Opposition, if it has not already been extended to him. There are one or two other matters I desire to touch on. First, let me offer my congratulations to the railway men of this State on the increases granted them by the Arbitration Court award. Undoubtedly arbitration in this State is on its trial at the present juncture.

Hon. P. Collier: And it has proved a failure.

Mr. DAVIES: No; I do not believe that, though I understand a judge has said so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The judge does not know what he is talking about. I believe in Somerville.

Mr. DAVIES: I congratulate the railway men now because some criticism has been levelled at them. At the same time I wish to draw the attention of the Minister for Railways to the fact that, notwithstanding this Arbitration Court award, there are to-day in the railway service men working below the poverty line. These men have not had an opportunity of placing their case before the Arbitration Court. The unions who appeared before the court do not cover the entire railway service.

Mr. Lambert: Will you withdraw your support from the Government until they give the railway men a fair deal?

Mr. DAVIES: I am giving the Government my support in order that I may help to get the railwaymen a fair deal. There are to-day in the railway service salaried men in receipt of less than £156 per annum, and some of them are married men. When Mr. Frank Wilson gave the railway men the war bonus, which brought up the minimum wage of the married man to 10s. per day, why was not some appeal made on behalf of railway servants in receipt of annual salaries of £140, £145, and £150?

Mr. O'Loughlen: What about the men in the timber industry with nine and ten children and earning 9s. 7d. per day?

Mr. DAVIES: If the court rules that 9s. 7d. should be the basic wage, must it not be accepted that no man in Government employ should receive less?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Those timber men are in intermittent employment.

Mr. DAVIES: I would make the Arbitration Court available to every man in the State, whether on salary or on wages.

Member: Would you remove the judge from the Arbitration Court and appoint a better qualified man?

Mr. DAVIES: I will not express an opinion on that matter. The Minister for Railways should extend every consideration to the ability there is in the Railway Department. We can-

not expect men to give the best service to the Government unless they are encouraged. It has come to me on the best authority that there are men in charge of stations with a turnover of £30,000 or £40,000 per year who are being paid annual salaries of £160. If that is so, it is time the responsible Minister took heed of those things and rectified them. The repatriation of our returned soldiers and sailors is a very big matter, and it will require all the attention we can give it from both sides of the House so as to complete a scheme which will be satisfactory to the men who have gone to fight for us and have left their wives and children behind. I am glad to know that the Government have not cast iron rules with regard to repatriation, because I believe that as time goes on we will find we shall have to change our methods. Men who have left their homes in the country have brought their families to the City, and then gone to the front. Those people have had a taste of back country life, and is it likely that they will accept any proposal to send them back again? I believe there is land available in and around Perth, say within a distance of 20 or 30 miles from the metropolis, which could repatriate thousands of men. But it will require money to do that, and I do not want to be regarded as in any way parochial when I say that the attention of the Government might well be turned towards the Guildford electorate and the districts surrounding it. I do not think it is right to send men 20 miles from a railway line and 200 or 300 miles from the capital. Advantage should be taken of the offers made to-day by some of our leading men. If our moneyed men in this State prove themselves as good as the aristocrats in England, I shall be prepared to turn round and tell them that they are thoroughbreds. I believe there are many men in this State who, if approached, would be prepared to do what is possible for the repatriation of our soldiers by giving up their estates so that the soldiers might be settled on the land. It is all very well for hon. members to laugh, but I would remind them that all men are not bad. We might find bad employers, but I can speak from experience as a union secretary and declare that I have found employers who have been gentlemen. True, there are others who are brutes, but the same thing will be found on the side of the employees. Men will be found who are prepared to give an employer a fair deal, and we can also find men who will take 10s. out of an industry and will not put 4s. back into it. Because some moneyed men are bad, it does not follow that all are bad. With regard to the State enterprises, it may surprise the House to know that so far as the brick-making industry is concerned, the Minister for Works has asked me to confer with him on the subject of the men employed in it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I suppose you know I once asked you to confer with me when the men at the brickworks cleared out.

Mr. DAVIES: That is absolutely wrong, and I am just the man who can put the hon. member right on that subject.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They cleared out from the works.

Mr. DAVIES: Nothing of the kind.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They did.

Mr. DAVIES: I was secretary of the union, and I know that those men did not clear out. It was alleged in the columns of the "Worker" that the hon. member said at Kalgoorlie that those men had put on their coats because they were not given an increase in wages.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They asked for an increase over the Arbitration award.

Mr. DAVIES: I rang up Mr. Munt, the Under Secretary, and asked him if there was any truth in that statement. He replied that he could not say, but so far as the department were concerned it could be taken that those men did not go out because an increase over the Arbitration rate was not given to them. I then wrote and asked if that was the case why the staff were kept intact, were put on a train and sent to another job.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That was not the reason for closing down. The men cleared out and the manager had to train a new lot of men.

Mr. DAVIES: That is wrong.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is quite correct.

Mr. DAVIES: So far as the workers in State enterprises are concerned they are not so well off as those who work for private enterprise. What is the reason? When we applied to the Arbitration Court for an increase for those men, amounting in the aggregate to 2s. 6d. per thousand bricks, Mr. Daglish's figures were 2s. 7½d., the brick masters were 3s. 6d., and mine 2s. 6d. I urged that we should split the difference. The men's claim was for 1s. 2d. per day, or 2d. an hour, and the reply was that the brick works could not afford to pay it. A statement was published on behalf of the State brickworks that bricks could be produced at 25s. per thousand.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They were produced at 22s. 6d. per thousand.

Mr. DAVIES: Six months before we went to the Arbitration Court bricks were selling in this State at £2 10s. per thousand, and they were all first class, because bricks were in great demand. Prior to that, there were first and second class bricks and clinkers. We appealed to the court on behalf of the men, whose wages had not been increased since 1911, but the increase was not given owing to the price at which the State was selling bricks. To-day bricks are being sold at 36s. per thousand.

The Minister for Works: Second class.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And for first class bricks 45s. to 50s.

The Minister for Works: Forty-five shillings and 46s.

Mr. DAVIES: Where is that, at the kiln?

The Minister for Works: At the station.

Mr. DAVIES: I am talking about at the kiln. If all the State industries are carried out on such lines, the men will say, "Do not give us any more State enterprises." They will call it State capitalism.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That does not get away from the fact that the men cleared out.

Mr. DAVIES: I will soothe the men on to you.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Never mind, they cleared out and left the job.

Mr. DAVIES: I am prepared to give State enterprises a fair deal, but if they are going to compete with outside employers with big businesses, do not let it be at the expense of the men working in the industries.

Mr. Lambert: Are you in favour of selling the State enterprises?

Mr. DAVIES: I am not.

Mr. Green: The Government are.

Mr. DAVIES: It does not matter. The policy of the Government can be what it likes, and it does not matter what my view would be on the floor of the House. We have been elected as Nationalists, and we have the right of free discussion in Parliament. Hon. members have had an example of it.

Mr. Holman: You did not have a voice in the election of the Ministry.

Mr. DAVIES: I am surprised that when Parliament was re-elected Ministers did not offer themselves for re-election. I thought that before the House met all the Ministers would have submitted themselves for re-election.

Mr. Holman: You were afraid to take action.

Mr. DAVIES: The hon. member does not expect a man who has been in the House for five or ten minutes to take the initiative. I am waiting for guidance. It is gall to me to refer to the member for Boulder as the leader of the Opposition. Opposition to what? To try and put this country on its legs?

Mr. Green: You know better than that.

Mr. DAVIES: I sincerely hope that an effort will be made in this House to bring parties together, just as is being done in the Federal Parliament. The leader of the Opposition stated that so far as the party behind him were concerned they would give the Government a fair deal. If that is the case I will ask the Government, and particularly the Premier, to extend to the leader of the Opposition an invitation to confer with them with a view of at least one member of the Opposition taking part in the government of the State. Are hon. members opposite prepared to consider that if the offer is made?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Was there any party in connection with the election of the Chairman of Committees.

Mr. DAVIES: I cannot tell the hon. member, but I will tell him that I was asked where I was on the night the member for Wagin was elected Chairman of Committees. I was missing on that night because I was taking part at a conscription meeting, the first that was inaugurated in this State. No one was more surprised than I was when I read of the appointment of the member for Wagin. I do not know that I need say anything else. I did intend to speak on other subjects, and take advantage of the opportunity on the Address-in-reply to refer to a number of matters, but I am following the commendable example set by the leader of the Opposition by cutting short my remarks.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy-Moore) [10.10]: I cannot allow the debate to

close without replying to some criticisms from hon. members on this side. It is usual to reply to criticisms from members of the Opposition, but hon. members opposite have been good enough to consider that this is not a time to indulge in unnecessary debate, when there are so many matters of graver importance to be considered. Hon. members are aware that they will have full opportunity for discussion when the Estimates come down, and I understand that members opposite consider that on the return of the Treasurer from the Eastern States a different complexion might possibly be put on certain questions to be brought before the House. Whilst complimenting hon. members opposite, I cannot compliment some of my friends on this side in respect of the criticisms they have levelled against the Government. The member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington), in speaking on the Address-in-reply, almost led me to suppose that he had a brief for some particular section of the community. Members on the Treasury bench have no brief for any particular section. They have but one brief, namely, a brief for Western Australia as a whole, a brief to endeavour to advance the State, to treat all views of hon. members with tolerance and to consider, not one class of the community, but all classes as a whole.

Mr. Holman. It sounds very nice, but you do not do it.

The PREMIER: One might suppose that certain members were returned to the House not to support the interests of the community as a whole, but to support merely the interests of some one section. At this time, when the nation is at war, when the Empire is in the throes of the greatest conflict the world has ever seen, when in consequence we might have thought that matters of national moment would be considered rather than the grievances of certain sections of the community, we have had brought before us grievances which savour, not of the interests of the State, but merely of the interests of one particular section. I would like to deal first with the member for Perth, who confined his remarks principally to the question of finance. Every one agrees with the hon. member that the most difficult position we have to deal with at present, not merely in Western Australia, but throughout the whole of Australia and indeed of the British Dominions, is the question of finance. When hundreds of millions of pounds are being spent in the manufacture of war material and the prosecution of the war in Europe and elsewhere, it is only natural to expect the States which are not directly engaged in the war, or which I might say have the different industries of their peoples to keep moving should feel the financial stringency. We are charged with the existing deficit. Does the member for Perth believe it is possible to reduce that deficit to any material extent at present without upsetting the whole machinery of State, without placing us in such a position that, when the war is ended, instead of our being ready to go ahead and cope with the difficulties we shall have to contend with we shall find the industries of the country

strangled and the education of our children neglected. One of the most important matters the hon. member touched upon was the question of education. He said it was the duty of the Government to cut down the expenditure on education. I consider it would be a suicidal act for the State to neglect the education of its children. The hon. member said he could not suggest where anything could be cut down unless he had the details before him. The hon. member's policy is one, not of construction, but of criticism. If the hon. member had taken the trouble to make inquiries or to look for these details he would have found them available at any moment. In the "West Australian" of the 13th October last the detailed cost of every item of expenditure by the Education Department was set out. One would have thought it was the duty of the member for Perth to read that statement. Had he done so he would have acquired the full details, which he says he is not in possession of. He also told us that the Minister for Education should call together his officers and see where expenditure could be cut down. The officers of the department could show at once where expenditure could be cut down. They might suggest the closing of small country schools; they might suggest the cutting down of the salaries of our teachers. At present we keep a school open for an attendance of eight. We could make a substantial saving by closing schools showing a smaller attendance than 20. Would hon. members on either side of the House approve of such a suggestion? As I have already remarked, we could cut down the expenditure by reducing the salaries of our teachers. Would that be a good thing at the present time? I say *no*, and I say farther that the salaries of our teachers are well earned. We should pay a decent salary so as to be able to provide for our children the best instruction available. We could also cut down the expenditure of the Education Department by increasing the number of children under each teacher. Would that be a wise thing? Would it be wise to cut down the staffs in the schools until we gave to the remaining teachers a greater number of children than they were capable of attending to? To do that would be to bring down the standard of our education far below that of any other part of the Commonwealth. It would be a short-sighted policy, a suicidal policy which the Government do not intend to become a party to. The hon. member has not given much time to public matters in Western Australia. He criticises members of the Government, and to hear him one would suppose that the members of the Government had had no experience in the administration of the State. One might assume that members on the Treasury bench had never performed any public duties in their lives. Has the hon. member for Perth ever performed any public duties until he came into the House a few months ago? From the age of 19 I have been engaged in the public life of this country, and here I am to-day, over 60 years of age, still engaged in the public life of the State in which I was born and to which I desire to give the best that is

in me for the benefit of the country and of the people in it. We are twitted with being without a policy, with being responsible for the existing deficit, a deficit brought about, I will say, principally by the war. I am not going to charge hon. members opposite with the deficit. I am generous enough to say from my place in the House that hon. members opposite were just as honest in their desire to advance the interests of Western Australia as are those on the Treasury bench to-day. Although they were expending large sums of money, and although they engaged in undertakings of which I did not approve, I am generous enough to admit that I believe they were imbued with the highest motives in putting forward those principles which they endeavoured to carry out, imbued with the highest motives in regard to the works they desired to achieve. Had it not been for the war Western Australia would have been in a very different position to-day. We had borrowed an enormous sum of money within a few years—more than I considered the State could stand in the circumstances; still I recognise that Western Australia has sufficient recuperative power to survive that expenditure. That expenditure would have borne fruit had it not been for the fact that the war came upon us nearly four years ago, and in addition to the war we were afflicted with a drought throughout the State, a drought not felt by the people in the cities. People in the cities can go about their business and enjoy themselves, whilst those in the country are slaving to endeavour to procure the food necessary for the sustenance of the people in the cities. At this time Western Australia was afflicted with one of the greatest droughts ever experienced here, and unfortunately further disasters followed from year to year. Moreover, the farmers of this country were not able to dispose of the produce which they had obtained from their holdings, and which should in ordinary circumstances have gone directly overseas. Had it not been for the presence of the Government of the day the State would have been in a far worse condition. I am generous enough, also, to say that the late Government which occupied these benches two years ago rose to the occasion, and were prepared, although not directly representing the farming interests, to do all they could to assist the farmers over the difficulties which arose on this occasion.

Mr. O'Loughlin: And we had no gratitude for it.

The PREMIER: Had it not been for these difficulties Western Australia would have been in a very different position to-day. I am not afraid for the future of this State, but I do say it is necessary for us to exercise the greatest possible economy. We should not spend our money in frills, and in works which are not necessary to advance the interests of Western Australia. The Government of the day are prepared, and are daily engaged in endeavouring, to bring about economies in every direction. Not a day passes but my Ministers are trying to effect economies in their departments, and these economies are being made. We do not, however, feel these economies, but we know it is necessary to cut down expendi-

ture by making certain retrenchments in the departments. Beyond these there are many other economies which the Government are engaged in effecting. We do not come down to this House and inform hon. members of all these economies which are being made, and do not inform the Press daily of what is taking place in this respect in the departments; but when we come to discuss the Estimates hon. members will be able to obtain from Ministers all the information they desire on the subject. To reduce the expenditure on the education of the children of the State would be a most short-sighted and suicidal policy for the Government to adopt. We have to find the money for this purpose, and we shall find it. It is no good saying that if we educate our children in the way we are doing now we are going to run against the rocks. It is better to run against the rocks with a people educated than with a people not educated. With the country educated, we shall be likely to have more opportunity at any rate of getting off those rocks again. At this time in the history of the world when perhaps it has never paid greater attention to the question of education, are we to stand aside and neglect the education of our children? Of course the expenditure on education has increased, because the number of children in this State, I am happy to say, is increasing by thousands annually. We should be proud to think that such is the case, and that it is necessary for us to spend more money on education, as it shows at any rate that the population is increasing in the right direction. Only a few years will elapse when the children we are educating now will become the men and women of the State, and the fathers and mothers of the future children of the country. The member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington) also alluded to the railway department. We all know that the expenditure in that department is greater just now than are the receipts; but when we come to consider the difficulties that Western Australia has been going through in the last three years, and the other difficulties in connection with the war into which Western Australia has been brought, it is only natural to suppose that the receipts from our railways must decrease. It is also well known to the hon. member that the railways of the State are not under the control directly of the Government, but that they were placed under the control of a Commissioner who is under the Minister for Railways. The hon. member would lead people to believe that there was some political jobbery in the appointment of my colleague to the position of Minister for Railways, and I regret to say makes opprobrious remarks regarding that hon. gentleman, although he says that he is a reputable member of an honourable, or honest profession, as the newspapers report it. At the same time the hon. member was sufficiently cognisant of the political life of the world to know that it was not necessary to put an engineer into the Department of Public Works to control its administration, that it was not necessary to put a miner into the Mines Department to control that department. The leader of the Opposition had control of the Mines Department, and he will agree with me that from this know-

ledge and from my knowledge of that department, it is not necessary that the Minister administering its affairs should necessarily be an underground miner or a miner above ground, or a mine manager. It is not necessary either that the Minister controlling the Railway Department should be an engine-driver, or a boiler-maker, or have had practical experience in the administration of the Railway Department. The hon. member knows as well as I do, and no one should have known better than the member for Perth, that in the past, in the Mother of British Governments, Ministers have not been selected from amongst those who were experts in the work of the departments which they had under their control. Have hon. members ever heard of an admiral of the fleet controlling the administrative affairs of the greatest asset we have, namely the fleet of the British Empire? Have hon. members ever heard, except on the rarest occasions, of a banker being placed in the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer of Great Britain? Hon. members know well that the greatest and ablest Chancellors of the Exchequer the Old Country has ever had has not had that financial experience which the hon. member seems to consider it is necessary that a Minister should have to fill that particular position. The success of a Minister depends on how he makes use of those whom he has under him, and whom he has to control in the administration of his department. A Minister is the most successful who will endeavour to get the best out of those he has under his control, who will put the greatest trust in those who are worthy of such trust, who will be able to pick them out, and be that judge of character which will enable him to get the best out of those who are serving under him. And that is what is required in a Minister. The Minister for Railways has thrown all his energies into the question of the administration of the Railway Department. He has worked late and early in an endeavour to carry on the administration of the department, to his own honour and to the credit of the chief of the Ministry in which he serves. The hon. gentleman was placed in that position, and I have never for one moment regretted that he took it up. At the same time I should like to say that the hon. gentleman did not think at the time that there would be such a volume of work in connection with the Railway Department, which has actually arisen at the present moment, when he took over the administration of these two important branches of the service. Just now the question of railway administration is one which is exercising the attention of the Government perhaps more than anything else. The railways of the State are the great arteries which govern the work and industries of this country. It is the desire of the Government that these industries should not be strangled at the present moment. They desire that the people of this country should be enabled to go about their duties and their work on the railways with as little expense as possible to themselves. At the same time the Government have to take seriously into consideration the question of endeavouring to square the ledger in regard to the Railway Department. It is for these reasons that

the railways are giving the Government so much cause for consideration.

Hon. P. Collier: People outside have no idea what difficulties the railway people have to face during the war.

The PREMIER: Moreover, up to date between 30,000 and 40,000 of the best of the manhood of this country have been taken away from us. That would make as much difference to this country as if 100,000 of our people had been suddenly taken away from it. Those men who have gone from this State are the workers of this State. They are the men who were doing the work, carrying on the industries, of Western Australia. Any thinking man must admit that, under such circumstances, not only must the government of the country be more difficult, but that the task of squaring the finances must be more arduous than it would be under normal conditions. I wish the public of this country would consider these questions in that light. It would be very much better for the country if they did so. It would be very much better for the country if they did not spend so much in extravagant living at the present time. There is great waste in extravagant living at the present day in Western Australia. People do not seem alive to the position. It is the people who need to wake up. If the people would only show to the Government of the State that economy which they should show, it would be an advantage to Western Australia and it would be helpful to the Government of the day. The member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington) spoke of the man in the street, saying that the man in the street says this, and the man in the street says that. I take no notice of the hon. member's remarks as regards the man in the street. Did the hon. member ever see a man in the street? I do not think there is any member of the House who knows less about the man in the street than does the hon. member who has levelled this criticism at the Government. Moreover, I would recommend the member for Perth to put his ear a little closer to the ground, so that he may be able to hear the true voice of the people of this country, so that he may be able to hear the opinions of the people from one end of this country to the other. We have got to get down to the level of the people of this country if we want to govern the people of this country. I do not refer to the level of the gutter; but we need to allow ourselves to feel at any rate that we are amongst the people of the country if we desire to govern the country. That has always been my desire, and it is the desire of all the other members of the present Government. We all wish to be in touch with the people of the country. Ministers do not pose as being better than other men. What they desire is that the people of this country should be able to give them credit for an honest attempt to carry on the work of governing the country in the interests of the community of Western Australia as a whole. In ordinary circumstances, the public do not hear very much from the leader of the present Government. That is to say, I do not stand upon the

housetops and proclaim what the Government are going to do and are about to do. But I can assure hon. members that the Government are silently working in the interests of the State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Most Governments do that.

The PREMIER: I think they all do it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Government of a few years ago did not get credit for it.

The PREMIER: The member for Perth asked a number of questions. Those questions refer to the financial affairs of this country, and I will defer replying to them until the Colonial Treasurer returns from the East. It would be better that I should be in full possession of all the latest particulars bearing on the finances of the State before I endeavour to reply to those questions. There is one point I should like to refer to. Charges have been made against the Government in connection with the wheat pool arrangements arrived at with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. The member for Perth stated that I had said in my policy speech that the Government were in favour of the zone system. In the whole of my speech I never made use of the word "zone." I did say that the Government would put no impediment in the way of the co-operative societies which had already been formed by the farmers themselves, participating in the handling of their wheat, but that the Government were desirous of encouraging all laudable efforts made by the farmers for the advancement of the great national industry in which they were engaged. That was the statement I made. The Honorary Minister controlling the wheat scheme has been charged with having been in favour of the zone system. He has been charged by the member for Claremont (Mr. Stewart) with collusion—a charge which, I think it is ungenerous of the hon. member to level at the Honorary Minister, because there is absolutely no foundation for it. The Honorary Minister was not in favour of the zone system, and the Honorary Minister has said over and over again that he is not in favour of the zone system. The whole trouble is this: The various companies engaged in the wheat handling business were not prepared to go into open competition with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. That is the position, and the member for Claremont cannot deny it. Those other companies wanted to relieve themselves of that position, and were not able to do it. They would agree to come in only on one condition, that they should have the zone system, so that all the companies should get an equal share. The Westralian Farmers Ltd. last year got five-ninths of the business, much to the chagrin of those other companies, for whom I have the very greatest respect. At the same time their managers were desirous, as smart business men, as men with what hon. members opposite call business acumen to outdo the other man—

Hon. P. Collier: No, that is what you call it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We are devoid of it.

The PREMIER: The great aim of all business men is to outdo the other man, to beat the other man in the great conflict of business. These various companies were desirous of getting as much of the business as they possibly could. They were not prepared to take it up under the conditions which the Honorary Minister required, and consequently the whole of the work was handed over to the Westralian Farmers Ltd. I myself think it was a most excellent thing, in the interests of the farmers of this country, that the business should be taken over by the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. I have always urged co-operation on the part of the farmers of this country. The greatest difficulty has been to get the farmers to co-operate. I am pleased to think the farmers have now risen to the knowledge that co-operation is for their benefit. They have been informed that co-operation has proved beneficial to their fellow workers in the outside world; and, consequently, having obtained this knowledge, they are now launching out in the same direction themselves. I tell the House that there was absolutely no collusion between the Honorary Minister and the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. The Honorary Minister was in frequent consultation with me at the time, and I know perfectly well that there was no such thing as collusion. The late manager for the Wheat Marketing Scheme was in favour of the zone system, and many letters passed from the manager to other people outside which should not have passed without the approval of the Minister controlling the scheme. The member for Perth in his address set himself up as an authority, a law unto himself and everybody else. He told the House what the Government should do, and said that he was prepared to support the Government if they did exactly what he wanted. I would like at once to say that I do not want fair weather supporters. I want supporters behind and around me who are prepared to support me in foul weather. I want supporters who have full confidence in the Government, and who feel that there are times when, perhaps, it is not possible to do everything which might be acceptable to the majority of members. If the member for Perth has a policy of his own, and apparently he has one up his sleeve, let him formulate it. But are the people of Perth prepared to allow their member to form a party of his own in these trying times, a party to harass the Government and to interfere with the administration of the affairs of the country? If so, let the hon. member try, and if he succeeds I and the members of the Government will be prepared to let him occupy the Treasury bench.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Members have been telling us that they are absolutely free to criticise or otherwise.

The Minister for Works: So they are.

Hon. P. Collier: And the first time a man exercises that freedom to criticise, you resent it.

The Minister for Works: You do not want a man to shake hands with you and then stab you in the back.

The PREMIER: I have expressed my opinion freely on many of these important questions, and it is not my desire to prolong the debate. I thank hon. members for their indulgence, and I assure them it will be my desire during the present session to see that the work of the country is carried on with credit not only to the Government but to all members of the House as well. We are meeting under trying circumstances to formulate measures for the government of this country in a difficult time and in a temperature under which it is a task for anyone to utilise his brains to the best advantage. I hope, therefore, hon. members will assist me in expediting the business of the House during this short session. It is not the desire of the Government to present any contentious measures. It will be time enough to do that when the war is over. But I do trust that in the future we shall be able to formulate some scheme which will be for the betterment of our system of government, and which will have the effect of furthering and improving the industries of the country. I have been told over and over again that the Government have no policy, and that their policy is merely one to produce. We want no other policy to-day. In a new country like this production is what is required, but unfortunately we cannot get it now because between 30,000 and 40,000 of the manhood of the country are away from it. Our greatest thought should be to endeavour to keep prosperous those people who are now engaged in the industries of this country. There is an important question which has been alluded to in this House during the debate on the Address-in-reply, and it is that of the ravages committed by the rabbits. Hon. members fully realise the great destruction that follows a rabbit invasion. Most of the hon. members opposite originally came from the Eastern States, and they are fully aware of the damage that the rabbits caused there. We have been tackling this question for some time, but we shall have to tackle it still further, and the Government feel that they will be justified within the next month or six weeks in doing everything they can to destroy the rabbits throughout the eastern areas. But at the same time we feel that we must have the co-operation of the people, of the farmers themselves. Moreover, we have the Rabbit Act. That Act must be strictly enforced, and those people who have rabbits on their holdings must be compelled to do their best to destroy those rabbits. If that is done, if the farmers will co-operate with the Government, the Government are not afraid to spend money in assisting them. Two rabbits will increase by, I know not how many hundreds of thousands, by, I think, a million in a year. There is not the slightest doubt that the rabbits in the Eastern areas have increased to an enormous extent. It is a most serious matter. The people out there are only beginning to realise the seriousness of it now, when they see them in those numbers. I am informed by the Chief Rabbit Inspector that, where the poisoning is going on, the poisoned rabbits can be smelt five or six miles away, in such numbers do they lie. The Government intend to spend more money in the eradication

of these rabbits during the next few months, before the winter rains come; for a couple of thousand pounds spent now will save a hundred thousand pounds in a few months time.

Mr. Green: Why not try to get a cut out of the Imperial order for rabbits for soldiers?

The PREMIER: It would never do to send them poisoned rabbits. I know this question of the rabbit pest is of great interest to all hon. members, particularly those of the Country party, and I can assure them that the Government will take further steps at once to cope with this pest. It is not my intention to delay the House any longer. I thank hon. members for their indulgence, and I trust the work of the session may proceed along lines coinciding with the interests of the country. I am sure that hon. members opposite—and I hope the same may be said for members of the third party on this side—will not endeavour to harass the Government at the present time, but rather will assist them in carrying out those duties which they have to perform. Our desire is to practise the strictest economy in the interests of Western Australia, while at the same time not sacrificing the industries of the country.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

House adjourned at 10.55 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 29th January, 1918.

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

CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES, TEMPORARY.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to inform the House that I have appointed the members for Toodyay (Mr. Piesse), Leonora (Mr. Foley), and Hannans (Mr. Munsie) as temporary Chairmen of Committees.

[For "Questions on notice," and "Papers presented" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [4.53]: Last week the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) was proceeding to give notice of motion for some information relative to the Industries Assistance Board. I then assured the hon. member that I was actually engaged on preparing a statement in

that connection, which I said I should be glad to submit to the House on the following Tuesday: that is, to-day. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make the statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister has permission to make the statement.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES: I shall read the statement and afterwards move that it lie on the Table. It is as follows:—

With the object of supplying detailed information to the public on the question of assistance rendered to farmers under the Industries Assistance Act, I have had prepared tabulated figures setting out the position in a general way. It will be remembered that, with the advent of the Liberal Administration in August, 1916, the policy of the board's operations was remodelled on the basis of decentralisation, and providing for inspection and payment on the farm. The change in policy has exceeded even the most sanguine expectations, and to-day, on the whole, the farmers assisted are far more satisfied and contented than ever before, and the Government feel assured that the payments now being made are supported by actual value in the work advanced upon.

Hon. P. Collier: This is not a statement, but debatable, controversial matter.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES: The leader of the Opposition will have an opportunity of debating it later.

Hon. P. Collier: That is just the trouble; I shall not have the opportunity.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES: The hon. gentleman will have an opportunity of debating it probably to-day. The statement continues—

The amount advanced by the board at the 31st March, 1917, was £1,257,184. Against this amount proceeds amounting to £737,770 have been received. These proceeds have been dealt with in the following manner: Recoup of board's advances, etcetera, as provided for in Section 14 of the Amendment Act of 1917, approximately, £595,770; Payment made to creditors, or to be made during the next few days, approximately, £142,000; total, £737,770. The advances at the 31st March, 1917, have therefore been reduced by proceeds to £661,414. If further dividends are declared on the 1916-17 pool totalling 1s. per bushel—and this amount, I am pleased to say, my colleague the Honorary Minister controlling the wheat scheme considers should be available in due time—this amount would be further reduced by £190,000; but it is hardly likely that this money will be available before the close of the board's financial year, namely, the 31st March, 1918; hence it will probably be included in the distribution of the 1917-18 crop, should it then be available. Since the 31st March, 1917, further advances have been made of £490,000; but this figure will be set off by the proceeds of the 1917-18 crops. Early in the year it was estimated that creditors would have their claims of £522,000 reduced by approximately £200,000; but this estimate has proved too liberal. However, the sum of £142,000 has