

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [9.48]: I
move—

That sessional committees be appointed
as follows:—

Standing Orders: The President, the
Chairman of Committees, Hon. J. W.
Kirwan, Hon. A. Lovekin, and the mover.

Library: The President, Hon. A. Sau-
derson, and Hon. J. Nicholson.

Printing: The President, Hon. J. W.
Kirwan, and Hon. A. Lovekin.

House: The President, the Chairman
of Committees, Hon. J. Cornell, Hon. J.
Duffell, and Hon. J. W. Hickey.

In the case of the Standing Orders committee
I have added the names of Mr. Lovekin and
Mr. Kirwan in view of the fact that certain
amendments made in the Constitution during
recent years render it desirable that we should
look into the Standing Orders, having regard
to those matters.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [9.50]: I
move—

That the House at its rising adjourn
until Tuesday, the 22nd August.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan)
[9.51]: On this motion I should like to em-
phasise the remarks made by several hon.
members as to the position of our Leader
here. Probably we shall have a strenuous
session, and he will again be alone through
it as he was through the last session. There
ought to be found some one hon. member
who would be willing to accept an honorary
position in giving our Leader some relief,
and I rise merely to make the suggestion
that before the House meets again our Leader
should consult the Premier on the subject.

The PRESIDENT: That is a matter for
the Government.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.52 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 2nd August, 1922.

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

QUESTION—SCAFFOLDING
LEGISLATION.

Mr. SAMPSON (for Mr. Davies) asked
the Minister for Works: Is it his intention
to introduce this session a Bill to regulate
the erection and supervision of building
scaffolding?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied:
The proposed Bill is receiving consideration.

QUESTIONS (?)—RAILWAY
MATTERS.*Petrol Coaches.*

Mr. LUTEY asked the Minister for Rail-
ways: 1, Has the Railway Department
ordered any more petrol coaches? 2, If so,
how many, and what is the approximate date
of delivery? 3, Is it the intention of the
Commissioner for Railways to run any of
them on the Brown Hill loop line?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS re-
plied: 1, No. 2, See No. 1. 3, As soon as
the suitability and efficiency of the motor
rail coach has been established, the question
of obtaining additional coaches and extend-
ing their use will be considered.

Spark Arrester, Premium.

Mr. CARTER asked the Minister for Rail-
ways: 1, Have the Government ever offered
a premium for the invention of a satisfactory
spark arrester for use on locomotives? 2,
What payments have been made, if any, in
this connection?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS re-
plied: 1, No. The profit to be derived by
the inventor is sufficient inducement. 2, In
the case of three employees of the Railway

Department, who have exercised much ingenuity and devoted their time to improve the spark-arresting appliances, a preliminary payment of £150 has been made as an appreciation of the work done, and incentive to further effort towards its perfection.

Yarramony-Yorkrakine and North Baandee Railway.

Mr. HARRISON asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has he received the report of the surveyor now engaged on the proposed Yarramony-Yorkrakine and North Baandee railway for July, 1922? 2, If so, how many miles have been completed, and where is the head of the work at present?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, No. 2, Information to hand shows that to 23rd July 13 miles of survey have been permanently located and a further five miles of trial survey made.

Claisebrook-road and Summer-street Crossings.

Mr. SIMONS asked the Minister for Railways: Will he cause to be laid on the Table all plans and reports in the possession of the Department relating to proposed bridges at the Claisebrook-road and Summer-street crossings respectively?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: If the hon. member will call at the office of the Commissioner of Railways all papers and plans will be shown him, and if he so desires, there will be no difficulty as regards laying on the Table any papers he wishes.

Arbitration, Mr. Poynton's Fees.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Minister for Railways: What was the amount paid Mr. Poynton for services connected with Railway Arbitration Court proceedings?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: £677 15s. 1d.

Carnarvon-Killili Railway, Report.

Mr. ANGELO asked the Premier: 1, Referring to the resolution unanimously passed by this House on the 15th September, 1920, that a report be obtained as to the advisability of constructing a railway from the port of Carnarvon to the Junction of the Gascoyne and Lyons Rivers, has the report been prepared? 2, If so, will it be placed on the Table of the House?

The PREMIER replied: This report is now ready, and will be placed on the Table of the House to-day by the Minister for Works.

Pier-street Crossing, Withdrawal of Night-signalman.

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What amount of money has been

saved by the Railway Department in withdrawing the night signalman from the Pier-street crossing? 2, What is the number of persons killed and injured at that crossing since the signalman was withdrawn? 3, Does he consider the amount of money saved is commensurate with the lives lost and injured during that period? 4, Does he agree with the attitude adopted by the Commissioner of Railways, namely, that he, the Commissioner, is only responsible in so far as seeing a train is not delayed or derailed, and not in the prevention of loss of human lives?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, £216 per annum at Pier-street. There are other similar crossings involved in the principle, the saving in connection with which would amount to over £1,000 per annum. 2, Two, viz., (a) Susan Browning, killed on 15th June, 1922. Signalman not on duty. (b) P. McLean, killed 29th July, 1922. In this case there was a signalman on duty and in manipulating the gates he closed them on the deceased, the gates were then released and McLean ran across the line and was caught by the train. 3, It is not recognised that lives were lost from this cause, as accidents occurred when the gates were attended. 4, This is not the attitude of the Commissioner.

QUESTION (2)—UNEMPLOYMENT.

Eastern Goldfields.

Mr. BOYLAND asked the Premier: Is anything definite being done to absorb the unemployed on the Eastern Goldfields, or is the matter being allowed to drift?

The PREMIER replied: Immediately after the return of the Minister for Mines from a visit to Kalgoorlie in connection with the unemployed question, an officer of the Mines Department was despatched to investigate and make suggestions for meeting the position. Recommendations have been telegraphed by him and action approved in a number of instances. Inquiries are still being pursued. The matter is not being allowed to drift and everything practicable is being done to meet the situation.

Westonia District.

Mr. HARRISON asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Has the department been notified of the cessation of work at the Edna May Deep Levels Mine, Westonia? 2, If so, have representations been made to the Lands Department and Agricultural Bank with the object of absorbing as many as possible of those out of work in or near the district, thereby keeping families in this centre where they have homes and good educational facilities?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No official intimation has reached the department, but an announcement has appeared in the Press. 2, Yes.

QUESTION—ELECTRIC CRANES, COSTS.

Mr. CHESSON (for Mr. Munsie) asked the Minister for Works: 1, What was the price quoted by the British makers for the supply of electric cranes for the Bunbury jetty f.o.b. and the price erected? 2, If no price was quoted for erection, what would have been the cost of freight, insurance, and erection? 3, Where were the cranes constructed? 4, What was the cost of manufacture? 5, What allowance was made for supervision, capital cost of plant, insurance, and general overhead expenses? 6, What was the cost of the erection of the cranes? 7, What was the saving to the State by having the cranes manufactured locally? 8, Were the cranes as well made as imported cranes?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Cranes £5,565 f.o.b., Glasgow. 2, £2,633 per crane, including duty, thus giving an estimated total cost of £8,200 per imported crane, as compared with £4,719 as charged to the Bunbury Harbour Board. 3, State Implement Works. 4, Total cost, £13,377 for the three cranes, including materials, erection, and overhead charges. 5, Estimated on the basis of 33 per cent. on labour costs. 6, £595 for the three, and included in answer to No. 4. 7, Based on prime cost, £11,223. 8, Yes.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, MEEKATHARRA.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Works: 1, What were the chief causes of the extortionate increase in operating expenses of the Meekatharra water supply for the year ended 30th June, 1921? 2, Is it a fact that old pipes railed from Cue, to replace part of the main at Meekatharra, were found after completion to be inefficient, and had to be immediately taken out and the original pipes replaced? 3, What, if any, was the total cost of this work?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The increase in operating costs was due chiefly to: (a) rises in wages including retrospective payments; (b) increasing age of the pipe main necessitates increased cost of maintenance; (c) two million gallons more water was pumped than for preceding year. 2, Some of the second-hand pipes sent from Cue to Meekatharra were found to be unsatisfactory, and were removed from the main. 3, £37 (including all labour and railway freight).

QUESTION—WOOROLOO SANATORIUM, TRANSFER OF INMATES.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, On what grounds were some of the inmates of Wooroloo transferred to the Old Men's Home, Claremont? 2, Was the alteration made at the expressed wish of Dr. Mitchell? 3, Is he aware that the victims of this inhuman act have suffered in some cases in

loss of weight to the extent of 3 stone? 4, In view of their declining health, will he consider the advisableness of ordering the return of these men to Wooroloo?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1 and 2, The men were discharged from Wooroloo either because the disease, tuberculosis, had become completely arrested or because, although suffering from fibrosis, prolonged observation had failed to detect the presence of tuberculosis also. 3, None of the cases has lost the weight indicated in the question; one has lost 21 lbs.; three have gained in weight since leaving Wooroloo. 4, The cases are under the observation of the medical officer of the Old Men's Home, and whenever he considers it necessary in the interest of any inmate, such inmate will be transferred to Wooroloo.

QUESTION—TEACHERS' APPEAL BOARD, FEES.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Premier: What was the total amount paid to Mr. Downing, K.C., for services in connection with the School Teachers' Appeal Board?

The PREMIER replied: £299 14s. 6d.

QUESTION—EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ROOM.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Premier: 1, Is it correct that the Government have closed the Executive Council room and the Governor's office and have set it aside for use by the Secretary to the Premier? 2, If so, have the Government altered their opinion in respect to the position of the Governor? 3, Would not it have been preferable to notify the Governor that he was no longer required, instead of shutting the door against him? 4, If the Governor has no office, where will the opportunity be given him to inspect decisions of Cabinet and other particulars or papers secretly, before signing Executive Council minutes?

The PREMIER replied: 1, For over a year past Executive Council has been held in the Premier's room, with the approval of His Excellency the Governor, whose convenience has in no way been affected, and who was delighted to co-operate in this arrangement because of shortage of necessary accommodation. 2, No. 3, Answered by No. 1. 4, The Governor has ample office accommodation for all purposes.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from 27th July.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.42]: It has been freely stated during recent weeks that the work upon which we are just entering, will transcend in importance any questions which have occupied the attention of Parliament during recent years. I believe

that that viewpoint will prove to be substantially correct. Undoubtedly, the future of this State will be considerably influenced by the deliberations and work of the present session of Parliament. More particularly will that be the case as affecting the administration by the Executive. After all, although Parliament may lay down certain definite lines for the guidance of the Government, upon the executive capacity which Ministers bring to bear upon the administration of their departments will depend, largely, the success or failure of any given policy. I hope that when this session comes to a close, for good or ill, the people of the State may say, if I may make reference to lines from a poet—

The Minister for Mines: I hope it is not Omar Khayyam again.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I refer to the poet, quoted by the Minister for Mines, who tells us that—

“Our fates were sealed for all the morrows, yesterday.”

A perusal of the speech prepared for His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor would not lead one to believe that this session is to be a very important one. We have had in the past long Speeches and short Speeches, Speeches which have been more or less important, but I venture to say we have never had one to compare in volume with the one delivered last week.

The Premier: What about 1914?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not even the 1914 Speech reached the extent of the present one. It is padded out with comparatively unimportant matters that might be of local or parochial interest to the districts concerned, but certainly are not of any State-wide importance. Where the Speech deals with trivial matters, it is clear and explicit. It is considered of sufficient importance to warrant inclusion in the Speech that a jetty somewhere on the North-West coast has been completed.

Mr. Teesdale: It is very important to us.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Important no doubt it is to the local people, but of very little importance to the whole of the people of this State to whom this Speech was delivered. Following that, we are told that a goods shed, I presume on one of these jetties, has also been completed. Further we are informed that the Aborigines Branch of the North-West department—that is a very extensive title—has been experimenting with Australian, American and Egyptian cotton seed, and at present there is under cultivation some 2½ acres of Egyptian cotton. And the area of this aborigines station embraces some 70,000 acres! I can realise how the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale)—the cotton king of this State—as Sam Weller would say, swelled wisely with pride when he heard that 2½ acres was under cultivation in the North-West. It is considered of sufficient importance to state in the Speech that in the South-West, in connection with group settlement, temporary schools are being erected pending the erection of perman-

ent ones; also that a mutual sick and accident fund has been created, and that those concerned are contributing weekly. It is most interesting to learn that they find the cash to contribute weekly. While the Government consider that the inclusion in the Speech of these trivialities in elaborate detail is warranted, when we turn to questions of outstanding importance, we find that they are passed over either with vague generalities or with the briefest possible reference. For instance, the finances of the State are considered to be deserving of only a brief passage of four lines, four short lines to cover the whole of the finances past and present. Before proceeding to a consideration of matters which concern the future, we ought to pay some attention to the work of the past. I go somewhat further back than the recess which has just terminated and see in retrospect before me over a period of six years past, the achievements of the party now sitting on the Government side of the House. The party came into existence equipped with a policy of clear, specific and definite proposals. First of all the outstanding feature of the policy of the Government party was the squaring of the finances. That was the special mission for which they came into existence. During the six years they have been in office that has been accomplished. The finances have been placed in a sound position. True, of course, they may not be satisfactory to everybody, but in the years that are ahead when the policy now being propounded has fructified, all our financial difficulties shall have passed away. Then, too, another prominent feature of the Government programme was the disposal of State trading concerns. The public of this State who elected the Government on that policy may sit back to-day and congratulate themselves upon the complete fulfilment of the programme then outlined. The State trading concerns have all been disposed of.

Mr. Pickering: All scrapped.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, all scrapped. It is true that the Minister for Works has embarked upon an extension of one of the trading concerns, namely, the sawmills in the South-West, but that, of course, was forced upon him by circumstances over which he had no control. Having been offered from overseas a fair purchase price for the sawmills, the Minister, after careful investigation and after concluding that it was a fair offer, found that events transpired which prevented him from giving effect to his views regarding the disposal of the sawmills.

The Minister for Works: You cannot blame me for that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is true, also, that the Government received a very substantial and lucrative offer for the State motor-ship “Kangaroo,” and could have disposed of her for £280,000, a sum exactly double her cost price. In the meantime, she had been trading and had returned to the State a profit of something approaching £300,000. The fact that the Government did not dispose of the “Kangaroo” is no evidence that they were

not keenly desirous of giving effect to the policy of disposing of State trading concerns. I hope the public will not think that, because we still own the "Kangaroo," the Government have turned their backs on that policy. That particular period was important to the political life of the Government, because the Minister for Mines was seeking election at Albany. Although the Cabinet of the day, I understand, had decided to accept the offer then made, the unforeseen intervention of a by-election at Albany might have been responsible for altering the Government's attitude to this question.

The Minister for Mines: The people of Albany were not interested, anyhow.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Government are unable to give effect to their policy of disposing of State trading concerns in so far as shipping is concerned, no doubt time will accomplish their purpose. The "Kwinana" has gone and other boats have gone, and ships do not last for ever. If the Government continue long enough, no doubt the day will arrive when this State will no longer own any steamships.

Mr. Pickering: It is to be hoped they will be well insured.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Another very important principle for which the Government party stood was the abolition of the departmental construction of public works. Seeing we have in the present Minister for Works the greatest champion of private enterprise in the State, and seeing also that he presides over the department chiefly concerned with the construction of public works, it is not to be wondered that departmental construction has been entirely abandoned, and that all works constructed during the past six years and in the course of construction at the present time have been and are being carried out by contract. Perhaps I am giving the Minister for Works greater credit than he is entitled to.

The Minister for Works: You ask the Chamber of Commerce.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Bencubbin line is to-day being constructed by day labour, if the Herdsman's Lake drainage scheme is being constructed by day labour, if the harbour improvements are being done by day labour, and, in fact, if every public work carried out during the past six years has been done in accordance with the policy of the Labour party, namely, departmental construction, I am sure the Minister for Works will be acquitted of any responsibility in the matter. Another question which annoyed Ministers most grievously when they were in opposition, particularly the Minister for Works, was the policy alleged to have been pursued by the Labour Government of entering into secret contracts. We are fortunate that, during the past five or six years, no secret contracts have been entered into in this State. If the public of Western Australia were not acquainted with the fact that the Lake Clifton railway purchase agreement had been executed two years before it came to their knowledge, it was because of unfortunate

circumstances over which the Minister had no control. I am sure that the large number of electors responsible for the existence of the present Government party will be pleased to know that the policy of Labour has been entirely reversed and that, as a result of the reversion and of the getting back to sound, commercial business principles in the administration of the State affairs, we are to-day enjoying the financial and general prosperity of which we see so many evidences around us. The administration of the present Government is characterised by an evasion of responsibility. Never in the history of the State, so far as I know, have Ministers shirked the responsibility, not only of administering their departments, but of drafting or preparing policies, as has occurred during the past 12 months. Do we not know that throughout this State, north, south, east and west, there have been peregrinating Royal Commissions, inquiring into every possible subject under the sun? And most of the questions to which they have given attention have been matters upon which any Government might be expected to have a definite policy of their own. In fact so numerous were these commissions that one of them was unable, through lack of accommodation in this House, or because of the limited "Hansard" staff, to commence its investigations until four or five months after the close of the session. The Tramways Commission has my entire sympathy because of the fact that owing to circumstances which have intervened during the past month or two, the public generally may be apt to place blame unduly on the shoulders of the members of that Commission. It may be thought in some quarters that there was a hidden motive for the delay in the commencement by that Commission of its investigations, but I make this statement to-day in order to clear the Commission of any such suspicion. The delay was due entirely to the fact that there was no accommodation in this building and because the "Hansard" staff were working night and day on other commissions, and it was not considered desirable that the Tramways Commission should hold its meetings outside the precincts of Parliament House or engage an outside staff.

Mr. Richardson: Do not forget that they had the same opportunities as other commissions.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member with his Commission took good care to get in first. Then in addition to commissions we have boards, and we find that matters of great importance have been relegated to these boards. It matters not now what the subject may be which confronts the administration—the assistance of a board is called in to deal with it. If it is a question of employment in the service, or if it has to do with returned soldiers, a board is appointed to deal with the matter. A board that has been appointed, or is in the process of appointment at the present time, is one that concerns this House and the people of the State. I understand that early in the year

the responsible officers who are controlling the funds of the Industries Assistance Board thought fit to suspend or refuse further assistance to clients of that board who had failed, or who, in the opinion of the board, are likely to fail. I am speaking from memory when I say that according to the annual report of the Industries Assistance Board presented to Parliament last year there was something like a total of £95,000 representing bad debts which was likely to be written off, and in order to conserve the public funds the officials in charge decided that they would stop any further assistance in certain cases. What happened? The Executive of the Country Party approached the Government with regard to the matter and protested strongly against the action which it was proposed to take. I am indebted for this information to the columns of the "Primary Producer," and here again I notice that Ministers have fallen into the habit of receiving in camera, deputations upon most important matters. It is only weeks after deputations have waited on Ministers that the knowledge reaches the public or those interested sufficiently to read the "Primary Producer." I protest on behalf of the people of this country against Ministers adopting the policy of receiving deputations upon important public matters behind closed doors. It is one of the questions upon which the members of the Government were very keen when in opposition. Matters affecting the public interest, particularly the expenditure of public funds, should be discussed openly. We find that apparently owing to pressure brought to bear by the Executive of the Country Party, the Government, so far as I have been able to understand, decided to appoint a board consisting of three persons, an inspector under the board and two others who are to be farmers resident in the locality, who are to be elected or nominated by the local branch of the Farmers and Settlers' Association. This board of three, two of whom are to be appointed by the Association, are to decide the whole question of future assistance to the settlers who are concerned.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is not so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If it is not so it is an extraordinary thing to find the Executive of the Country Party circularising the whole of their branches in the State and requesting them to nominate two men to sit on the board in their districts. The Minister knows that in many districts in the State two nominees of the party have been elected.

The Minister for Agriculture: The matter is still pending.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister informs us that finality has not been reached. It seems strange that the executive should get ahead of itself by circularising the branches and asking for nominations when at the same time it is not known whether the policy I have referred to will be adopted by the Government.

The Minister for Agriculture: I made a full statement to the Press of the facts as

they were told to representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and the Primary Producers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is an entirely different thing to exclude the Press from a deputation and then for the Minister to make a statement to the Press of what transpired. In doing this the Minister is free to eliminate from the report anything which he does not desire the public to know. We know perfectly well that a report taken by a shorthand writer will contain an account of what transpired, whilst a statement made by the Minister may not do so. In any case I wish to say that for my part I think the majority of the people will be behind me when I object most strenuously to the control of public funds being handed over to any irresponsible board. The very fact that this proposal can receive the slightest consideration is evidence that Ministers do not appreciate the importance of the situation when they say that two farmers living in a district shall sit in judgment upon a neighbour and decide whether he is or is not to receive further aid from the Industries Assistance Board. Can it be expected that any two men in a district will turn down a neighbour in a matter of this kind? If they did so they would become so unpopular as to make it impossible for them to reside there. In any case even if men could be found to fairly and impartially carry out duties that may be given to them in this respect, I contend that the expenditure of public funds must remain in the hands of officers who are responsible to the Minister in charge of the department. I am going to take every possible step open to me to prevent the proposal to which I have referred being finalised. I may be permitted now to refer to a matter which has been agitating the public mind during the recess. It has some bearing too upon the question of responsibility—I refer to the now famous, or shall I say notorious, extension of the tramway to Como.

Mr. Willcock: Infamous.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will not say that. I do not propose to offer any opinion whatever with regard to the merits of the extension to Como or to any other suburb. As a matter of fact I do not know anything about these extensions. I do not think many members of this House, except perhaps those who were members of the Tramways Commission and heard the evidence given, are in a position to judge as to the relative merits of tramway extensions.

Mr. Richardson: That particular extension never came before the Commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is unfortunate. The hon. member knows that that was not any fault of the Commission because they were crowded out by other Commissions which got in before them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They even objected to us sitting when we did.

Mr. Richardson: The member for Canning is not so slow.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Canning is a new member and he will not be

caught in that manner again. He naturally thought that the House was composed of honourable members, and that the members of other Commissions would have given him a fair deal.

Mr. Richardson: He got a very fair deal in the end.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Before coming to the question of the construction of this particular line, associated with it is the disturbance that occurred not only outside, but within the precincts of this House. The Minister for Mines was taken to task by members of the party with whom he is associated for the part he played in the construction of the Como line.

The Minister for Mines: Somebody else was being spared.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have here extracts from a report of the meeting of the party at which the Minister was on trial.

The Minister for Mines: Who said that the report was correct? I did not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I venture to say that the Minister had no fault to find with the report. If it be not correct, the report has not erred on the side of favour to the member for Sussex who was one of those concerned. The report reads—

Yesterday's meeting was held in private under the Chairmanship of the Leader of the Country Party, Mr. T. H. Harrison, M.L.A. Shortly afterwards the members of the Country Party trooped upstairs to the Ministerial room, the Colonial Secretary being one of them.

I remember that. I saw him pass along the corridor with a saddened expression, as if he were going to eternal doom.

The Colonial Secretary: That is not correct.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The report goes on—The Minister for Agriculture was absent at Mullewa.

This was rather a coincidence—the Minister for Agriculture was also absent from the historic Cabinet meeting which decided to construct the line. At the first meeting of the Country Party, when the Minister for Railways was on trial, the Minister for Agriculture was present, but the Minister for Railways was absent. And so in turn on this occasion, while the Minister for Railways was present the Minister for Agriculture was absent. So far as the trams are concerned, "never the twain did meet." The report continues—

Mr. Scaddan was late.

The heroes in all great dramas come in late, after the settings are in place.

The meeting proceeded behind closed doors. At the conclusion the chairman was sphinx-like. He declined to say anything at all. Those of us who know the Leader of the Country Party are inclined to say that the reporter responsible for that statement was quite correct.

In broad outline, though, the story was as under. Mr. Scaddan spoke for an hour and a-half.

That intimation did not surprise me. I venture to say that the Minister for Railways during that hour and a-half covered the whole range of irrelevancy.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: One man told me the Minister spoke about everything but the Como tram.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the construction of that tram line was the cause of a speech of an hour and a half from the Minister, then, were I to deal in relative proportion with my various subjects, I should be here on my feet for several days. However, I shall not detain the House at that length. I wish to say, though, that whatever may have occurred at that meeting upstairs, and whatever explanation may have been given by the Minister there, no satisfactory reason has been advanced up to date by any member of the Government for so deliberate a violation of the solemn pledge given to this House. It is not a light or a trivial matter even for the head of the Government, for the Premier of the State, supported by one of his Ministers, to give a definite, clear, and specific pledge to this House, and then within a few months, when Parliament is in recess, entirely ignore that pledge. I care not what the circumstances may have been. I consider it to be no defence to say that the exigencies of the moment with regard to unemployment in the metropolitan area justified the Minister in breaking a pledge given to this House. If that is going to be accepted as a sufficient explanation, what guarantee can members have in the future but that Ministers will justify the breach of a pledge on matters of even greater moment than the extension of a tramline in the suburban area, by urging a similar excuse? In this instance the word of the Minister was broken on the ground of what, in all circumstances, I regard as a trumpety excuse. Work could have been found elsewhere. If the policy upon which the Government are now embarking is what it is supposed to be, if we are to go ahead upon the lines laid down by the Government, surely it cannot be contended that they were forced into the position of having to construct that tramway, involving the breach of a pledge given to this House, merely for the purpose of finding employment for 100 or 120 men? Such a contention, it seems to me, will not hold water for a moment. Further than that, the State, it would appear, has made a bad deal owing to the action of the Government in this matter. It is known to this House that the people resident in the suburb to be served by that tramway extension, and also the residents of other suburbs, were willing to shoulder any financial responsibility or loss which might be incurred from year to year in the operation of this extension. According to the evidence of the manager of the tramways, the loss for the first year or two will be at the rate of £1,000 per annum. The Government, having decided that in the circumstances of the unemployment existing they were justified in departing from the pledge given to this House, should now state why they failed to observe ordinary business

methods, why they did not take advantage of the offer of the people interested to guarantee the State against any loss. It would appear that the Government ignored the offer which was made—deliberately decided that they would construct this tram line and allow any loss thereby occasioned to be borne by the taxpayers of the State. In effect, they said to the people interested, "Yes, it may be a very good thing on your part to offer to bear the financial responsibility of the matter, but we do not require, or desire, that; we are quite content that you should keep your guarantee and your money in your pockets, and any loss there may be we shall call upon the taxpayers of the whole State to bear." I want to know why the Government did not adopt the ordinary business precaution of making the best possible deal in the circumstances, having decided to construct the line. Now I come to the question of Parliament having been ignored in the matter, which is an important question. So far back as 1912, when the Labour Government were in office, an amendment to the Address-in-reply was moved by Mr. M. L. Moss in another place. The charge then made against us is somewhat similar to that which confronts the present Government. The amendment moved by Mr. Moss read as follows:—

That all the words after the word "Sovereign" be struck out with a view of inserting the following words:—"and to protest against expenditure incurred by your Excellency's Ministers without an Act of Appropriation, such procedure being derogatory to the privileges of Parliament and subversive of the Constitution, while in addition thereto the proposal contained in your Excellency's Speech, implying that a ratification by the Legislative Assembly of such unauthorised expenditure is sufficient in law, ignores the constitutional rights of the Legislative Council."

Here is an amendment with a direct bearing upon the question now at issue. Speaking to that amendment the present Minister for Education, who was acting Premier when Cabinet decided to construct the Como line, said:—

One reason why I intend to support the amendment is because, rightly or wrongly, I regard it as a cardinal fault of the present Administration that they do not observe the Constitution, that their desire is to set the Executive above both Parliament and the people.

That was the view expressed by Mr. Colebatch, that the desire of the Labour Government was to set the Executive above Parliament and the people. In connection with this matter the present Executive have set themselves up above both Parliament and the people. We know the influence of environment. The fact that Mr. Colebatch and the Minister for Railways have been associated with each other in the government of the country during the past three years has apparently weakened Mr. Colebatch's de-

termination expressed in those words which I have read. However, that is the position. I am not going to labour it, except to say that I hope the House will register its disapproval of the Government's action. I should like to know what the Premier thinks about the pledge which he gave to the House regarding this matter. The other day I read in a newspaper that the Minister for Railways, speaking on Saturday night at Albany, not only declared himself a supporter of the Government policy of immigration, but pledged his unswerving loyalty to the Premier personally. I am inclined to think the Minister for Railways must have had in his mind a lively sense of favours to come. How could the Premier, after his colleague had pledged himself personally to the hon. gentleman, as well as to the Premier's policy, be so unkind as to let that Minister down with regard to this proposal?

The Minister for Mines: He would not have waited till Saturday night to do it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He might have done so, seeing that the matter was still in the air, seeing that no final decision had been arrived at by the meeting upstairs, seeing also that a higher authority meets next week. In view of all those circumstances the Premier may have been waiting to see how things would go. I think I should adopt the same attitude were I in the Premier's place. If the Minister did not win the first round, it was somewhat in his favour; and therefore the Premier might well wait until next week to see what that other body which meets in this city will have to say about the matter.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Monger and McGibbon will fix it all up.

Mr. SIMONS: Yes, and they will exclude the Press.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not propose to say more with regard to the Como tram, except to make the affirmation that the breaking by a Minister of a pledge with regard to the expenditure of public funds should not be taken lightly by the Parliament of this country. Associated with that question is the matter of the finances generally. I think I should apologise to the House for referring to the financial position of the State at all. I have done it so frequently during the past six years, both on Addresses-in-reply and on the Estimates, to no purpose whatever, that I am very reluctant to weary hon. members with what must be more or less a repetition of remarks previously made. So accustomed have the Government become to the recurrence of an alarming deficit, that the matter now is passed over with the slightest possible reference, and is apparently considered as a subject of relatively no importance.

Mr. SIMONS: They are shock-proof now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It would appear to be so. But I want once more to say to the Government that they cannot expect to be allowed to continue in office with the finances drifting in the manner they are. Instead of any signs of recovery, we have an increase

in the drift. Whether from year to year or from month to month, they are going from bad to worse. Financially, last month was the worst July in our experience, and the same may be said of the deficit for the whole year. Two years ago the Premier estimated a deficit on revenue of £399,000.

The Premier: That was the year of the railway strike.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier always has an explanation. Instead of with a deficit of £399,000, the year closed with one of £386,000, or £287,000 worse than the estimate. Last year it was the same; the Premier estimated a deficit of £570,000, whereas the year closed with a shortage of £732,000, the largest shortage on one year's operations the State has ever had. The Premier attributes the huge deficit for the year to the failure to secure the passage of the Licensing Bill, from which he estimated an increased revenue of £110,000. There are two ways by which a Treasurer can juggle with Estimates. One is to inflate the estimated revenue, knowing, or at all events he should know, that the full amount will not be obtained. The Premier must have known that there was no possible chance of his obtaining £110,000 additional revenue from the Licensing Bill, that this House would never pass a Bill which would give him that extra amount. However, having inflated the estimated revenue, the Premier when he fails to obtain it can turn round and say, "It was not my fault; it was due to the failure of Parliament to pass the Bill." One year it is the strike, another year a certain Bill fails to pass. It is not peculiar to one year. We have had six years of it. Surely the Government have not been so unfortunate as to have met with unforeseen difficulties over a period of six years! We have to-day a total accumulated deficit of five and a half millions. I am not including July, the first month of the new financial year. The interest on this deficit is increasing year by year, and the time is not far distant when it will almost overwhelm the taxpayers. It is of no use whatever to say we are going to recover our position by increased production. This cry of increased production as a solvent for our financial difficulties has been on deck for five or six years without producing any results. No matter how successful any policy of land settlement and immigration may be in the immediate future, for some years to come it can have comparatively little bearing on the restoration of our finances; any recovery that will be made from increased production must of necessity be gradual, and spread over a number of years. If we are to continue as we have been going I say, using the words of members of the Government when in Opposition, and when the accumulated deficit was not one-fifth of what it is now—adopting the language of Ministers, I say the State is going headlong to bankruptcy. It must appeal to the common sense of any man, however casual he may be in financial matters, that no community of the size of ours can continue to go to the bad

at the rate of three-quarters of a million per annum. It is alarming, and if it continues I do not know where it will end. I am unable to discover in any of the departments that the Government, or any Minister thereof, has made any serious attempt to cut down expenditure. Indeed there has been increased expenditure all along the line.

The Premier: Due to increased wages and salaries.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Which have been met by increased charges for services rendered. To meet increased wages and increased expenditure occasioned by increases in the cost of commodities, the Government have imposed increased charges for services rendered by the public utilities, and they have had also increased direct taxation, an increase from £400,000 odd to £975,000.

The Premier: No, we have not received it for the year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am talking of the previous year, when direct taxation rose to £970,000. But no matter how taxation is increased, we continue to go from bad to worse. Moreover, the Premier has benefited to the extent of £50,000 saved in sinking fund and interest on the goldfields water supply loan.

The Premier: No, £34,000.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Education, when Acting Premier, put the sum at £49,000 for the six months. Also, I think the Premier has told us in the Governor's Speech that it represents £100,000 for the whole year. I do not know whether or not he has had the benefit of a full half year. I should like to know what members of the Country Party have to say about our financial position. That Party has professed to stand for financial reform. Perhaps it is one of the chief features of the Party's existence. Have those members entirely forgotten Plank 11 of their platform? What has the Leader of the Party to say on behalf of those he represents, and on behalf of the influential body of primary producers behind him? Is the hon. member unconcerned?

Mr. Harrison: Is this question time?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not expecting a reply just now; later on will do. I am justified in asking the question. If the hon. member is so indifferent to the views of those he represents, I am going to assume the responsibility of asking on their behalf what his attitude is towards the financial administration of the Government and, of course, of his own party. I have the famous declaration of the executive, calling upon the Country Party in Parliament to do something to give effect to their financial views. Apparently it has gone unheeded. Let me contrast the inactivity of the members of the Country Party in this House with the effective work being performed by the Federal Country Party. I believe it was mainly due to the work of that small, compact party of 10 or 12 in the Federal House that the Federal Estimates of expenditure for last year were reduced by £2,000,000. There is no doubt it was the insistent demands of the Federal Country Party that brought to the Federal

Government the realisation of their financial position.

Mr. Angelo: The Federal Government are spending our money—money we ought to be spending.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not affect my point.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That might be questioned.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even if that be so, it is a good thing that they will be spending at least two million pounds less than they would otherwise be spending, as a result of the work of the Federal Country Party.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They have nothing to do with agricultural development.

The Premier: They have the baby bonus.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The finances of this State have become worse since the party on the cross benches took a share in equal proportions in the responsibility of government.

Mr. Harrison: Is not the position the same in other States and other parts of the world?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I read in a local newspaper the other day a scathing criticism of the Queensland Government for its deficit during last year's operations. Apparently the writer was not aware that last year the deficit in Queensland was only £185,000.

The Premier: They make no contribution to the sinking fund.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They have reduced railway freights 20 per cent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This is indicative of the hopeless attitude of members on the cross benches. When confronted with the result of years of financial drift, their leader has nothing more to say than "Is not that the position in every other country? There have been shipwrecks on other oceans; let our ship sink as well."

Mr. Harrison: Where are your recouping sources of revenue as compared with other countries? Where are your secondary industries?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should like to know if that is the view of the hon. member's executive. Does his executive say, as he does in effect, that it is hopeless, that there is no hope, no remedy, that the conditions are only what are to be found in other countries—

Mr. Harrison: I said nothing of the sort.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And that it cannot be helped here? That is not the view taken by his executive, or expected of it under plank 11 of the party's platform. I hope the hon. member has not forgotten its existence.

Mr. Harrison: You would not allow anyone to forget it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In the Speech there is no suggestion as to how to meet the financial position. It is not even said, "My Ministers are applying themselves to their departments with a view to effecting economies." Even an old stock phrase like that is omitted. There is no suggestion of economy or reduction in expenditure. We are told there is not to be any increased taxation, except under the heading of licensing. What does the Premier expect? There is not a shadow of any improvement in our financial position for years to come under the policy that we have

had put before us. The Premier says that he does not contemplate effecting any reduction in expenditure. He does not expect to receive any increase from taxation except a comparatively small amount from licensing. If there is not to be any reduction in expenditure or economies in the departments, or increased taxation, we shall have nothing to look forward to but the ever-recurring deficit of £700,000 a year. Is it expected that we must continue until such time as the immigration policy or the introduction of people from overseas squares our position? If that be so, we shall be over the financial precipice before we can get any result from such a policy. The position is very serious. A close examination of our various departments by an impartial and qualified man or board would, I am sure, show that expenditure could be so reduced as to cover the whole of our deficit.

The Premier: Which departments?

Hon. P. COLLIER: All of them. I believe that in every one of them there is room for reduced expenditure without affecting efficiency.

Mr. Teesdale: Without retrenchment?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not say without retrenchment. If it should be found upon investigation that there are in the service men who cannot be profitably employed, the department concerned has no right to employ them.

The Premier: Salaries do not matter so much. It is the services that cost the money.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not so much a question of salaries as the lack of co-ordination and of efficiency. We have incompetent men at the head of some of our departments. Ministers are largely in the hands of executive officers of departments. The general details of administration, of amalgamation of work, and of reduction in expenditure, are largely, if not entirely, in the hands of responsible departmental officers. If there is inefficiency, or there are incompetent individuals at the head, so surely shall we have inefficiency in the service from the top of the tree to the bottom. Without offering any opinion at this stage on the report of the Royal Commissioner on Railways, I have no doubt that as a result of Mr. Stead's investigations the financial position of the Railway Department could be considerably improved.

The Minister for Mines: That is why we appointed him.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe it was a good appointment, and a wise thing to have an inquiry into that big spending department. Mr. Stead is a capable man.

Mr. Underwood: This House ordered the inquiry.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think not. It was undertaken on the initiative of the Government. I think much good will come as a result of it. Who can say that a searching inquiry into other departments would not result in the discovery of similar things to those which have been revealed to us during the inquiry into the Railway Department? Whenever inquiries by competent individuals

or boards have been held in the other States, or by the Commonwealth, it has been shown that great expenditure has been going on which was not justified. Inquiries have been made into the administration of Federal Departments such as shipping, defence, etc., and it has been shown that money running into millions was being spent without an adequate return. I believe that would be found to be the case with the departments in this State. It is, however, for the Government to say how far they will go in a matter of this kind. We have reached a stage when we cannot heap any additional taxation upon the people of the State. What with Federal and State taxation, with taxes imposed by our local governing bodies, and the charges for services rendered, the people of this State are paying right up to their limit.

The Minister for Mines: We provide too many services without payment; that is one of our troubles.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That may be so, and that would perhaps be a fitting subject for inquiry. The call to-day in this State, in the Federal sphere and everywhere else, is for a reduction in expenditure. The demand is loud in the land that the wage-earners of the country should submit to a reduction in their earning capacity. The need is infinitely greater upon the departments of the various Governments to effect reductions in expenditure. If the expenditure swelled during war time and in the years following the war because of high prices, and other costs incidental to the war, it should surely follow, if it be true, as claimed by those who demand a reduction in wages, that prices have been coming down, that the expenditure by Governments should also come down. Large sums have been spent year by year in the carrying on of the public services. If there has been a reduction in prices all round, that should be reflected in the expenditure of our Government departments.

Mrs. Cowan: The salaries of Government officers were not raised as others were during the war.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know. A number of public servants, highly paid officials, were given increases up to £200 a year.

Mr. Simons: Take the general manager of the Wheat Scheme.

Mrs. Cowan: There have been increases lately. I admit.

Hon. P. COLLIER: During the last couple of years. I am referring to expenditure generally. There is considerable expenditure in departments apart altogether from salaries. There are materials and requirements generally which run into huge sums of money every year. I do not know but that reductions might be made in the expenditure in these respects. The responsibility lies with the Government. We are going headlong into trouble, unless a stern and strong attitude is adopted by Ministers towards expenditure. Scarcely a day goes by that I do not read in the paper of instances of expenditure of public funds in directions that are not war-

ranted. In reply to questions I asked to-day, I was informed that the Railway Department paid £690 odd to a man outside the service to conduct the department's case before the Arbitration Court. I refer to Mr. Poynton, general manager of the Midland Railway Company. Mr. Poynton was an outside man who was brought in by the Government to conduct the case before the Arbitration Court. I understood that the fee he received was £10 10s. per day.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Was there no officer in the department competent to conduct the case?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I cannot say that.

The Minister for Mines: Do not forget that even the unions appoint advocates. They do not always appoint members of the unions to appear for them.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The unions do not pay £10 10s. a day.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the department found that Mr. Munt could appear in the other arbitration proceedings, surely some officer could have carried out the duties entrusted to Mr. Poynton. When the present Minister for Works was Commissioner for Railways, he did not employ an advocate at £690, but went to the court himself and conducted the case in person.

The Minister or Works: And your people said it was undignified.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course, it was absurd.

The Minister for Works: I won the case at any rate.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In addition to his work as Commissioner, the Minister did not cost the State a penny on that occasion, and he won his case.

The Minister for Works: I won both the cases I had before the court and yet I was told it was undignified!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Surely there is someone in the department who has capacity enough to enable the Government to save such an expense as the £690 to which I referred. Then there was the Teachers' Appeal Board. Will Ministers say they were justified in engaging a King's Counsel to represent them before that board?

The Minister for Mines: Who could we get, when they were all going before the board for increases?

The Minister for Works: Yes, all of them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There are other men besides those employed in the Education Department. There was Mr. Munt; he was junior counsel, as it were, to Mr. Downing, supplying him with information, and yet the King's Counsel drew in fees over £200. If a comparatively trivial tribunal such as the appeal board for the teachers, could not be conducted without incurring such expense, it is surely a reflection.

Mr. Latham: We should abolish the Arbitration Court.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If such a thing had to be, it shows that there is something radically wrong.

The Minister for Mines: The unions frequently appoint a King's Counsel, who is not attached to any union, to appear in court.

Hon. T. Walker: That would be in order to settle points of law.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Usually unions have not a wide choice within their own ranks, as the Government have amongst the public servants. Here and there, these increased amounts of expenditure crop up. Since the trans-Australian railway has been constructed there has been a remarkable number of public servants, and particularly railway officers, who have found business calling for their attention in Melbourne or Sydney, by means of conferences and so forth.

The Minister for Mines: Only the regular conferences.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has been easy to find grounds for conferences since we have had the railway constructed. We must have expenditure cut down and if Ministers think that they cannot get extra taxation from the people, they will have to tackle the problem seriously. It will have to be faced some day and the longer it is delayed, the more expensive it will be when finally it is taken in hand.

The Minister for Mines: The Royal Commissioner who dealt with the railways, said that we did not send our officers away often enough.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That may be so.

The Minister for Mines: The trouble is where will it begin and end?

Hon. P. COLLIER: In Western Australia, as we are situated, it may be that officers who remain here will stagnate, and not keep abreast of the times in connection with the services supplied in other parts of the Commonwealth. It may be a good thing for our officers to travel to the Eastern States occasionally. At any rate, this is how the matter appeals to me. The Premier mentioned that, while in the Old Country, he was able to secure relief in connection with the sinking fund on the goldfields water supply scheme, relief which will amount to £100,000 per year. I am glad he has been able to achieve that. Much correspondence has passed for some years back, and the result of the Premier's work shows what the man on the spot can accomplish in a very short time, where correspondence will not give the same result over a number of years. This assistance will afford us some relief. I put it to the Premier that rather than take advantage of this relief in connection with the general revenue, the best use of the saving will be in affording a reduction in the cost of water supplied to the mines on the goldfields. I need not go over the ground so often traversed in pointing out that whatever degree of affluence or prosperity is manifest in the agricultural areas and in other directions to-day, that development received its driving force in the first instance from the discovery of our goldfields. Of that there cannot be any doubt. The principal factor in increasing our population and our develop-

ment during the past quarter of a century, has been the mining industry. The decline that has taken place in that industry has been considerable in recent years. During the past few years the decline has become almost alarming, and if such a great industry, which has done so much for the State, is not to become extinct, something will have to be done to enable the mines containing low grade ore to be worked. To-day many mines find it unprofitable to operate. While I would not advocate that payable mines should get the benefit of a reduced price of water, for I think that mines well able to pay for the water supplied to them should be made to do so, it would be a good policy to give the relief I indicate, if it will bring back to a profitable existence the various low-grade properties now idle. By this means we will increase not only the avenues of employment, but also production. I hope the Minister in charge of water supply will go carefully into that question. During recent years, he has received requests from various local governing bodies, and from other quarters as well, urging a reduction in the price of water. I can appreciate why those requests were not entertained in view of the then existing state of the Scheme's finances. The Goldfields Water Scheme has been showing a loss for many years past and the general revenue has been called upon to make up the loss on operating costs, apart from the sinking fund. Now that the Government will be relieved of that loss, the time is opportune for the Minister controlling water supplies to go into the matter with the Minister for Mines—it affects the Mines Department almost entirely—and examine the whole of the situation with a view to giving relief by reducing the charges for water supplied to the mines which cannot operate to-day.

The Minister for Mines: The main consideration is that by such a reduction we can increase production.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. Not only Western Australia but the whole world requires an increased production of gold. This assistance, as the Minister for Mines knows, should be given to the mines at Kalgoorlie and Boulder.

The Minister for Mines: The trouble is that the mines are now leaving behind ore that should be taken out and which will never be recovered.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As a matter of fact, the high cost of production has been most detrimental to the industry as a whole. The result has been that ore has been passed over, the gold from which, had there been lower costs, would have been extracted. These low-grade ore bodies and the gold contained in them, are lost for all time because those portions of the mines cannot be worked on any future occasion. Relief to the extent of £100,000 should enable the Government to make a reduction in these charges in a way which would have a compensating effect through other revenue-earning departments. It would be possible to forego, say, £30,000

out of the £100,000 per year, for it would not mean a sacrifice of that revenue but rather a return through other channels and through other departments. The return would come through the Railway Department, the Mines Department and other services, together with something additional. I know that the Minister for Mines will find that the people on the goldfields will expect some concession, since the Premier, when in London, was successful in his efforts to secure relief. With such assistance, I believe there are many years of life before even the older mining fields in the centre of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, areas which have been worked at high pressure for the past 25 years. The other day I was reading information dealing with the production of some of the principal mines in Australia, such as the famous Mt. Morgans mine in Queensland, some base metal mines at Broken Hill and others at Walhalla, in Victoria, and elsewhere. It would surprise hon. members, who have not followed closely the production from the mining industries, to see how Western Australia stands out, not only regarding the total gold production, but also the individual output.

The Minister for Mines: Notwithstanding the decline in the yield we still produce 63 per cent. of the gold yield of Australia.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A little while ago, we were producing 53 per cent., but now that has increased to 63 per cent. of the total production throughout Australasia. That shows that the decline in other parts of the Commonwealth has been greater than in Western Australia.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I come now to the immigration and land settlement scheme of the Government. I regret that we have not at this stage sufficient detailed information before us to enable us to intelligently examine the proposals for land settlement in all their bearings. The question of increasing the population of the State by bringing persons from overseas, and land settlement generally, is one which I think meets with the approval of every sane person in this State. I can only reiterate what I have said on many previous occasions that I should like to see as many people introduced from overseas as it is possible for us to absorb. The greater that number might be, the better it would be for this State. With regard to the general policy of immigration we are all in agreement, but there are aspects of it that require very careful consideration. First of all there is the question of obtaining a suitable type of immigrant. It is realised by everyone that Australia can obtain large numbers of men and women from overseas who would be unsuitable for the work and life expected of them in Australia. It should be our object to avoid introducing people of this class. Only within recent months there has been a unanimity of opinion amongst those who take an interest in immigration that we were getting an over-per-

centage of unsuitable immigrants. I believe the Acting Premier, a couple of months ago, during the absence of the Premier in the Old Country, endorsed that view. The member for Canning (Mr. Clydesdale), who is the president of the New Settlers' League and who comes into touch more or less with a large percentage of new arrivals, also expressed the opinion, which I understand was conveyed to the Premier by cable, that more stringent steps should be taken to secure a better class of immigrant. Upon the class of men we obtain depends largely the success of any scheme of land settlement. I am not aware—perhaps the Premier will supply us with the information when he speaks—of the precise methods adopted in the Old Country when selecting immigrants. I understand that the matter is entirely in the hands of officers of the Government of this State.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That being so, and the selection being made principally by an officer sent from Western Australia last year or the year before specially to perform this work—

The Premier: Two of them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am unable to understand how these officers came to select such a number of men considered to be unsuitable by those in a position to pass judgment. I remember reading in the Press a statement made by the member for Claremont (Mr. J. Thomson) after his return from the Old Country that, on the ship on which he travelled back to Western Australia, he selected on sight only 10 out of 90 immigrants as being suitable for settlement in this country. If, in the judgment of the member for Claremont, whose opinion should be worth something, 80 out of 90 of the immigrants were of an unsuitable class, it is a serious matter and one which requires rectification. We are led to believe that whatever weakness has existed in this respect in the past has been rectified. The Premier will be able to say what steps have been taken, and whether in future we may rely on obtaining a suitable class of settler. I am not in a position to judge. I was anxious to make myself acquainted first hand with the class of men coming to the State, and, in pursuance of that anxiety, I, in my innocent unsophisticated way, wandered down one day to the Immigrants' Home, merely to observe, even at a distance, the type of immigrant we were getting. I had no other desire and I would not even attempt to defile what was apparently regarded by officers of the department as their sacred presence by personal touch, but I was denied that opportunity.

Mr. Mann: You thought well of those you saw.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I was about to say I was pleasantly surprised. I spoke to one and only one, but it was possible to form an opinion by general observation of the type of men there. Almost without exception they appeared to be young men under 25 years of age and physically of an excellent type. I was surprised to find them of such a good stamp. According to Press reports, those who

have arrived since that date are of a similar class. If this is so, then all is well. However, I do not quite understand why there should be any desire on the part of those in control of immigration in this State to prevent any responsible citizen from coming into touch with the new arrivals. There seems to be a desire on the part of the Immigration Department, or the officers of the department, that the new arrivals must be prevented from coming into contact with the outside world as it were. While in that home they are regarded as being as secluded almost as the gentlemen a little farther up on the hill in Fremantle.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I never heard of such a thing before.

Hon. P. COLLIER: One cannot enter the institution on the hill without permission or without having his qualifications examined. A similar policy, it appears, has been followed with regard to the Immigrants' Home. I think it would enlarge the sympathies of the general public and broaden their views if they were not only permitted but afforded opportunities to come into contact with these new arrivals.

The Premier: So they are.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I did not find it so. I do not wish to deal with a personal matter, but I was told over the telephone by an uncivil civil servant that I had no business there without permission from the Minister. It is an extraordinary thing that a member of this House should not be permitted to visit this home, or, having done so without permission, should be told to get out. This is all part of the method of administration which we find gradually creeping into the government of this country. It is a case of establishing a bureaucracy in which the uncivil servant is governing and controlling the affairs of this State. Ministers in many instances appear to sit back and to be content. Take the Ministerial head of the Immigration Department: Instead of him being the captain on the bridge and guiding the ship, it appears to me that he is no more than the paint on the rudder of the ship.

Mr. Marshall: A barnacle.

The Premier: That is not right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is right.

Hon. T. Walker: He is purely a rubber stamp and no more.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When it comes to a conflict of statements between a member of this House and some jack-in-office in the department, the Minister without a knowledge of the facts ranges himself behind the official. I venture to say the officer, knowing the Minister, wrote out the statement for him, and he was obliging enough to put his signature to it.

Mr. Simons: When he does that to you, what will he do to the new arrivals?

Hon. P. COLLIER: One would imagine that the department had something to hide or had some object in keeping new arrivals apart from the general public. Surely the whole of the department's methods will stand the light of day or the investigation even of

an ordinary citizen. Surely it is not thought that members would go there to create dissatisfaction or trouble amongst those in the home for the time being. I do not intend to trespass again upon the indulgence of the Minister with regard to the Immigrants' Home. Regarding the scheme of land settlement as put forward by the Government, I am sure the House will await with interest a statement by the Premier for, after all, the information we have to date is general.

The Premier: It was really all published in January last.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not so sure of that. We have the proposal that it is intended to take 25,000 people a year for a period of three years, or a total of 75,000.

The Premier: Women and children included.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. I notice that in the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech the period is extended somewhat, because it states "from three to five years." A perusal of the speech of Colonel Amery, made in moving the second reading of the Bill, would seem to indicate that he calculated on a possible period of seven to eight years. That was the term mentioned.

Hon. T. Walker: That applies to all Dominions. It is a British scheme for all the Empire.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is the object of the Imperial authorities to render assistance to the various Dominions to enable them to absorb as many of those who are considered to-day to be the surplus population of England. So the scheme is not peculiar to this State or to any particular State. Canada, the Dominion of South Africa, and every State of the Commonwealth will come under the proposals embodied in the Act that was passed in the Imperial Parliament a month or two ago. There are many points on which I would like to be enlightened. I would like to know if there are any conditions attached to the loan of £6,000,000. Is there any written agreement between the Government of this State and the Imperial Government?

The Premier: There is a draft agreement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I take it that the terms of the agreement between the State Government, the Imperial Government, and the Commonwealth Government will be reduced to writing.

The Premier: Oh, yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And I suppose there will be an opportunity later on in the session of discussing the whole question?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know whether a Bill or any special legislation will be required.

The Premier: I do not think so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is or will be a written agreement, and I imagine that will be available to the House at a later date. I would like to know also whether any conditions are attached as to the number of immigrants we are to take each year, that

is to say, if we should fail to take the agreed number of 25,000 in any one of those three years that the £2,000,000 will still be available to us.

The Premier: At the end of the third year if we have not taken the full number it may be reduced.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They will not stand by a specific number in any one year. If at the end of three years, instead of having taken 75,000 people, we have only absorbed 30,000 or 40,000, I suppose that the assistance by way of one-third of the interest on the loan money will be proportionately reduced.

The Premier: Yes, of course, that is only fair.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I wanted to make that clear.

The Premier: It is an undertaking.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Another point has arisen as to whether there is any restriction placed on the Government in regard to the scope of the expenditure of the £6,000,000.

The Premier: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is to be entirely within the discretion of the Government? We have to take 75,000 people, and of that total we must settle 6,000 families. Apart from those conditions there are no other restrictions on the expenditure of the money.

The Premier: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Education is reported to have said on Monday night that it is the intention of the Government to devote half of the £6,000,000 towards the settlement of the 6,000 families, and that the other half will be available for persons already on the land. I do not know whether that is so or not.

The Premier: It is not set out in that way; we can use the money for improving the land already settled.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I understand the Government can exercise discretion in the matter, but I am not clear as to what the policy is. I did read that the Premier stated he considered that of the £6,000,000, five millions of it would be devoted towards settling 6,000 families on the land.

The Premier: I did not say that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Before one can analyse the figures it will be necessary to know what is the real scheme of the Government.

The Premier: The agreement was published.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I only know of what has been published within the last fortnight, a general outline of the scheme. I take it of course that the details will be supplied later on.

The Premier: It was published in detail in January.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have not seen that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: How could you publish the agreement in January when it was not made then?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Education said on Monday:

There is no obligation to spend the £6,000,000 in any particular direction. The Premier had already indicated that half of it would be

spent in giving greater facilities to those already on the land. The remainder would be required to settle 6,000 new arrivals in other directions.

So that according to the Minister for Education half of the £6,000,000 is to go to those already on the land, and the other half will be available to enable us to absorb 75,000 people of whom 6,000 are to be settled on the land.

The Premier: The money will be advanced to farmers for work to be done.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I only wish to get the facts. I have quoted the statement made by the Minister for Education on Monday night.

The Premier: We can use the money for any purpose in connection with settlement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not questioning that aspect of the matter at all. I understand that it is entirely within the discretion of the Government as to how or where the money is expended provided we take 75,000 people, and provided also that 6,000 families are settled on the land. Apart from those two points the Government have entire discretion as to how the money is to be expended, and in the exercise of that discretion we are told by the Minister for Education that it has been decided by the Government to devote £3,000,000 to people already on the land, while the remainder will be spent on absorbing the 75,000 and settling 6,000. That seems to be clear.

The Premier: Whatever money is spent will be spent in finding work for those people who come out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not affect my point.

The Premier: I thought you would remember the scheme as published in January.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am rather surprised at the Premier stating that we should remember what was published in January. I do not think one in a thousand would remember that. Every opinion which has been expressed about the scheme has been based on statements published during the past week or two. That is all anyone knows about it. In any case I take it that the statements made by the Premier and his responsible Ministers will be found to be not in conflict with what was stated in January.

The Premier: Don't you take Mr. Lovekin's statement published to-day.

Hon. T. Walker: There is a good deal of sound sense in what Mr. Lovekin says.

The Premier: Nothing could be so silly; it is absolute nonsense.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let us take the scheme as we know it—the settlement of 6,000 families. It does not matter whether it be over a period of three or five years. If we allow £1,000 to each settler the total will come to £6,000,000. It is obvious of course that the whole of this money will not be available for the settlement of the 6,000 families; much of it will be required in other directions. If we take Mr. Colebatch's figures, the total will be reduced to one half—that is to say, there will then be available £500 for each of the 6,000 new settlers. I would like to know whether the Premier believes that it is possible to settle 6,000 families at a cost of £500 each.

The Minister for Mines: It does not mean that either. Do not they get that assistance from the Agricultural Bank?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. The hon. member has not read the statement of the Minister for Education who said that £3,000,000 would be paid to men already on the land. If experience shows that these people can be settled at a cost of £500 per man, it will be a good thing, but the majority, if not all of the 8,000 are to be settled in the South-West, and I would like to know whether the Premier considers that £500 is sufficient to enable a person to settle in that part of the State. I do not think the Premier will say that it is sufficient.

The Premier: But it does not matter a jot so long as we get the money.

Hon. T. Walker: That is the point.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There we are. I hope the Premier understands that I am commenting on these figures not with any desire to criticise the scheme unfairly. It is, however, incumbent on this Parliament to know that there will be some definite scheme. It is not sufficient to put people on board ship in large numbers in the Old Country, send them here and put them ashore and leave them to gravitate, as it were, into places here. A definite plan of ordered settlement and development must be prepared.

The Premier: It has been.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But before we proceed with it for two minutes, we find the Premier in conflict with the Minister for Education.

The Premier: Oh no!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier will not ask me to believe that when his Minister went to address a large gathering of people he was so ill equipped with information that he made to them a wrong statement. I leave it to every member of the House to say whether I am not fairly commenting upon the information supplied to us. I was about to say that when the State obtained the endorsements of the Commonwealth and Imperial Governments to participate in the payment of interest on this sum of six millions, and when the Government decided to take 75,000 people over a period of years, in those two acts were laid the foundations of a huge scheme of immigration and land settlement. But, just as an architect, after having laid the foundations, cannot then retire from the scene and leave to his workmen the responsibility of erecting the superstructure according to their own ideas, but finds that a detailed plan of the complete building must be provided—

The Premier: Quite so; it has been provided here.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Very well. I am just endeavouring to examine some of the details of the scheme in the light of the information supplied by Ministers. That is all I am doing. I have arrived at this point: according to the Minister for Education that three million pounds will be utilised for settling 6,000 people. That leaves us with an average of £500 per man. Now we arrive at the point whether that amount of £500 per man is sufficient or not. The Premier says it is sufficient. According to the figures supplied to us in respect of soldier settlement, the experience has been far otherwise in the South-West. In the Governor's Speech we are told that 4,547 soldiers have been granted advances and that the commitments have been £5,181,629. The average per soldier, taking all

the soldiers settled throughout the State, is £1,126.

The Premier: The soldiers have special terms and conditions, though, quite different from those given to ordinary settlers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Special terms which would make their cost lower than it will be for the 6,000.

The Premier: No; higher.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know what special consideration the soldiers have except in the matter of interest.

The Premier: As regards equipment and so forth.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the soldiers have been given special consideration which is not available to others, it means that the total capital cost on the average would be less for soldiers than for future settlers. But here are the figures showing that the average cost per soldier settled has been £1,126.

The Premier: And all the 15,000 others.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Which 15,000?

The Premier: Settled on the other farms in the State.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The old farms?

The Premier: Yes. Soldier settlement is on very special terms.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, just such terms as those on which our new settlers will be settled.

The Premier: No. There is the matter of crops and machinery.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope the figures will be right, but I do not think there is in this State anyone with a knowledge of land settlement in the South-West—

The Premier: No one has said anything about that. We get six millions of money cheaply. That is all. We are not using that special money for that purpose.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It amounts to this, then, that the Premier will say that if the six millions is insufficient to settle the 6,000 people—

The Premier: I have not said that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is no alternative.

The Premier: I say that as long as we get the six millions and settle these 6,000, it is all right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I take it that the Government will be able to show by a detailed plan of organisation that it can be done—that the land is available, and that the work can be done at that cost. I have here figures of the cost of settling one soldier in the South-West. In that case the total amounted to £2,736; and I understand that the great majority of soldiers settled in the South-West are on all fours with this case.

The Premier: What is the name?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Sampson. The Premier will find that before very long there will be a call made upon him to write down the capital cost of soldier settlement in the South-West by 50 per cent. In many instances, I believe, that will have to be done if the men are to remain on their holdings. Otherwise they will be driven off. Here is the statement of accounts: 116 acres at £5 16s. per acre, £884. That bears out my statement that it costs more to clear virgin country in the South-West than to purchase a fairly well improved farm in the Wheat Belt. Many of the soldiers settled on the Wheat Belt were settled there on the basis of a walk in walk out sale at £3 per acre. In the case I am

quoting the Commonwealth Bank loan amounts to £525. For clearing effected by the Government—and this is in addition to the £5 16s. per acre I have already mentioned—£1,177. Loan on balance of improvements represents £50. That makes a total of £2,736. At six per cent. interest that represents an obligation upon the man of £163 per annum, or more than £3 per week, for interest on the capital cost of the property. There is not a member of this House who will say that that man—I care not what the value of the land may be—can in the near future pay an overhead charge of £3 per week for interest.

The Premier: That is one man.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is one man, but I think the Premier will find that that position is applicable to a large number of others. This has to do with the matter concerning which the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) has given notice for a Royal Commission to inquire. Everybody knows that practically the whole of the soldiers settled in the South-West are in a similar position to this man. They are all now up against it, and absolutely unable to meet their obligations. That is unfortunately the truth, and the State will have to come to their assistance.

Mr. Harrison: Has that man been dairy farming in the South-West?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I cannot say what he has been doing.

Mr. Harrison: Is there no source of income given to you for this settler?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not dealing with his income.

Mr. Harrison: I said, source of income.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not concerned with that at all. I am only dealing with the capital cost, with his obligations. He will need to have some exceedingly profitable land—

Mr. Harrison: But he walks into an improved property.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. He walked into absolutely virgin country.

Mr. Money: Where is the property situated?

Hon. P. COLLIER: At Capeldene. I hope information will be given to the House enabling us to get a thorough grasp of the proposal. There is an obligation upon Parliament and upon the country to look carefully into the entire scheme. I contend that those who perceive, or think they perceive, obstacles or difficulties which require to be surmounted and who point them out, will be found to be the best friends of the scheme. After all, if we think there are many difficulties ahead of us, then those in charge may, by considering the facts, be enabled to arrange to dispose of those difficulties. Now taking the financial side of the matter, I wish to point out that the State is embarking upon very serious financial responsibilities. I do this not with the object of suggesting or implying that because of that fact we ought not to undertake the scheme or accept the responsibilities. I do it in order to bring home to every member of the community the absolute need which exists for a rigid supervision of all expenditure of loan moneys in connection with our development policy during the next few years, and for ensuring that no loan money is spent except upon what are, in the true sense of the word, reproductive works. When a country is embarking upon the expenditure of large sums of loan money there

is always the danger that there will creep into that expenditure and the control of those funds a recklessness, a disregard for strict business principles, which will ultimately land the country in difficulty. That has been the experience in the Eastern States. The bank smashes in Victoria in 1893 and the fearful depression that then existed in that State, followed on a period of reckless expenditure of loan funds.

Mr. Mann: It was not spent on land settlement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member knows that money can be spent just as unwisely in land settlement as in any other enterprise. Reckless expenditure of loan money is not confined to any particular sphere of activity. There is always in every community a considerable number of people who welcome the introduction and spending of large sums of loan money, because of the general expansion of trade which it brings. Such people are more or less indifferent to the ultimate results. There are thousands of men in the city who would regard it as an impertinence in me or in anybody else to attempt to carefully analyse a scheme of this nature, involving the expenditure of millions. Those men will not bother to investigate it; they are satisfied with the knowledge that the introduction and expenditure of so much money will greatly increase trade, and that a portion of that increase will come their way. In this State the next five years will be fraught with the greatest consequences to the future of the country. There can be no question about that. Upon the wisdom of Parliament and the administration of the Government during the next five years will depend largely the success or failure of this scheme. Its success will mean that the State will go forward in development and prosperity, whereas if the scheme fails the State may be saddled with a financial responsibility sufficient to weight it down. That is merely an ordinary point of view which will commend itself to every thinking man. For that reason I could wish that we had in the present Government a couple of sound, cautious business men of Scotch extraction. Whenever it comes to the handling of money and the necessity for a long-sighted view of the best means of handling that money, I prefer a Scotchman. It is essential that there should be no spirit of recklessness, no smug conviction that all is well and that prosperity is going to flow. Here is the position: Parliament is authorising the expenditure of loan money at the rate of 3½ millions per annum.

The Premier: No; we did not spend it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But we authorised the expenditure of that sum. I do not know what the actual expenditure amounted to last year, but in the previous year it was 2½ millions. Suppose we set down the estimate of 2½ millions per annum for the next three years. That will amount to 7½ millions of loan money. In addition there will be the special loan of six millions.

The Premier: No; it will cover soldier settlement and, largely, land settlement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Apart from soldier settlement, I do not see how the Government are going to get on with an expenditure of less than 2½ millions per annum. We have all over the State authorised railways awaiting con-

struction. There will be roads to make, school buildings to erect, and all the expenditure incidental to a policy of land settlement. The Premier will find that, apart from land settlement expenditure, he will have very heavy calls for ordinary loan expenditure. Thus, including the six millions, we shall be spending 13½ millions within the next three years. But if we take the five year period and say that ultimately it will resolve itself into the scheme being accomplished, not in three years but in five years, this will probably be our loan expenditure: three years at 2½ millions per annum, 7½ millions; special loan of six millions, making a total of 13½ millions.

The Premier: No, you are quite wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not wrong.

The Premier: We did not spend 2½ millions last year. Over one million was for the soldiers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am only going on the latest figures published, which were 2½ millions.

The Premier: But the six millions will shortly take the place of it. Do not be misled by Mr. Lovekin.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not, although in point of fact I worked out the figures available to me, and I arrived at the same result as did Mr. Lovekin in respect of our total indebtedness for the next five years, namely 20 million pounds. There will be all the time an insistent call for expenditure of loan moneys in connection with any scheme of land settlement. There will be need for expenditure in a hundred and one directions, and I estimate that the task we have embarked upon will involve an expenditure of loan moneys amounting to 20 millions, inclusive of the special six millions. And it has to be remembered all the time that this two-thirds interest payment by the Commonwealth and Imperial Governments will expire at the end of five years, and that after that date the State will have to assume the full responsibility.

The Premier: Five years for each loan.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. If we will require an expenditure of something like 20 millions to give effect to the scheme, we shall then have an added interest bill of £1,200,000.

The Premier: I would oppose the expenditure of 20 millions.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But in our ordinary expenditure we would require ten millions in five years, without any new settlers.

The Premier: We have not been doing that for some years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The only years in which we have not done it were those in which nothing was doing in any direction.

The Minister for Agriculture: When the goldfields were discovered we settled thousands of people at a much lower cost.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is entirely different. The discovery of the goldfields brought here 140,000 people without the expenditure of a shilling. Indeed those people brought money with them, which was a Godsend to those already here, many of whom had not seen any money at all for years before. But it is altogether false reckoning to take our total population and total indebtedness, do a simple sum in proportion and say, "We settled 140,000 people for so much, therefore we can settle 75,000 people

for so much less." That is not at all applicable to this scheme.

The Minister for Agriculture: You make no allowances whatever for the creation of secondary industries.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are largely in the dark regarding details. I take it the Government have thought out a plan, and have now in process of formation the necessary machinery and organisation to give effect to it. If the Premier shows that it can be done at a lesser cost than has been estimated, so much the better pleased will be everybody concerned. But there is an aspect of land settlement which must not be lost sight of, namely the closer settlement of some of the older areas of the State. I believe that can be done at a much smaller expenditure than will be necessary to put people in the virgin country of the South-West, which is so heavily timbered. At this stage, probably the turning point in our history, it is incumbent upon us to take such steps as will effectively force into utilisation the lands in the older settled country areas. The series of articles which appeared in the "West Australian" recently regarding settlement in some of the older communities was an eye-opener. From it we learned that the population of York in 1911 was 2,876 persons, whereas in 1921, after the lapse of 10 years, the population was only 2,843, or a decrease of 30 or 40 people. In that comparatively rich district, the first to be settled in the State, for a period of 10 years there was no increase whatever in population.

Mr. Davies: That is a good point.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That was all very well in the days when there was plenty of land. We are now forced to go out hundreds of miles from the seaport into heavily timbered virgin country, which will cost large sums of money to bring into production. It, therefore, behoves us to turn our attention to those lands within a comparatively close radius of the city, and which should be forced into use. It is all very well for a few men who are making a satisfactory income for themselves, but the welfare of the State and of the general community must be considered before individual interests. It was further said that three miles from York there were 7,000 acres of which 200 acres were cropped. Probably the owner is using the balance for running stock, but it would be much better to have a dozen or so settlers upon that area, and thus have a larger population than the land would otherwise carry. There was another 7,500 acres, 1,000 of which was cropped, and 5,000 on the fringe of the municipality, of which only a small portion was cropped. Nine miles out there were 8,000 acres of which 5,000 was cultivated and a 6,000-acre block only one-sixth of which was cultivated. There was also 30,000 acres which was a model of disuse. Altogether 60,000 acres were held in the immediate vicinity of York by a few families. These are some of the problems confronting us.

The Premier: The 30,000 acres are now cut up.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is the Wilberforce estate, which is being brought into proper use.

Hon. P. COLLIER : Occasionally one of these large estates comes into use, either by the owner cutting it up himself or by Government resumption. In Pingelly we find the same thing. Surveyor Lefroy reported that there could be effected a large increase in population along the rich Avon Valley near Toodyay to the general well-being of the whole community. What is true of Toodyay, York, Pingelly, etc., is true of many other parts of the State. The whole question of land settlement and the financial difficulties of the State are wrapped up in closer settlement. Whilst we can more economically and more effectively place new arrivals or new settlers upon the land already served by railways, we shall also be helping materially towards solving the financial difficulties of the State if we settle them upon such land. It is a mad policy for any Parliament to embark upon, to construct railways hundreds of miles out from the capital and the port, to grid-iron this vast State with railways north, south, east and west, where there is only a sprinkling of settlers. Common sense tells us that we should start nearer the heart of things, so that all our lands may be utilised and brought to the utmost productive use. As we get them settled, so may we expand further from the centre, until ultimately, when the State possesses the population necessary, we may engage in building railways and settling the outer areas. The Premier has repeatedly stated that the loss on our railway system is one of the most embarrassing features of our finances. This loss, apart from such economies as may be effected by better administration, can only be overcome by bringing our railways more work for them to perform. That may be done by production and increased cultivation along existing railways. That is a phase of the question that has always been shirked by the Premier and those associated with him. They have always had a tender regard for the owner of large estates.

The Premier : Not at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER : Yes. That is shown by the fact that throughout the period of intense financial embarrassment for the last ten years, when taxation of all forms has been increased, in many cases to more than double the amount, the land tax has remained stationary. To-day notwithstanding all the increases in value which have accrued to our lands, the taxation remains much the same. I am not referring to the broad acres in the country but to land within the metropolitan area, between Fremantle and Midland Junction, which has increased in value. It should always be remembered that just a little over half the amount of land tax that is paid within the State is paid upon property within 20 miles of the city. The palatial buildings we see going up indicate that the city is going ahead. Land values are increasing in the city. Land which was obtained in and around the metropolitan area in years gone by for a mere song has increased in value to an enormous extent. To a very little extent have land values increased because of the individual efforts of the owner, but these values have been created by the community as a whole, by the expenditure of public funds in the construction of railways, harbours, water supplies and the other functions of State. They have been created by the community ; it is a

community-given value. In return the owners of these lands should give a fair amount to the community. The Government have not attempted to do anything in the matter.

Mr. Willcock : And they never will attempt it.

Hon. P. COLLIER : We receive to-day the inadequate sum of about £45,000 a year in land taxation. The Government passed through this Chamber last session a Closer Settlement Bill. This was lost in another place. Nobody regretted it ; it would have accomplished nothing.

The Premier : You are absolutely wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER : It might have accomplished something, but not along the most effective or equitable lines. The Premier has a tender regard, as have his colleagues, for the big land owner.

The Premier : I do not think a man should be pilled because he is on the land.

Hon. P. COLLIER : It is not a question of pilling the man on the land. Subject to equitable treatment of the individual, his considerations must yield before the demands of the community. That has been the experience of land settlement all the world over. The large landholder plays his part in the settlement and development of any new country. He has played an important part in opening up and settling this State, as well as the other States of the Commonwealth. There will have to take place in Western Australia that which has taken place in other parts of Australia. As population has increased, in order to meet the ever increasing demands of the public, the big land holder has had to retrace his steps and go further back until, in many cases, he has disappeared altogether.

Mr. Lutey : They want their pound of flesh before they go.

Hon. P. COLLIER : I am not advocating any policy of confiscation. The landowner is entitled to fair consideration. The man who does the pioneering work on the land and goes out into virgin country is deserving of practically all that comes to him. He is the pioneer of progress and settlement. Unless men had come to the country who were prepared to face difficulties, privations and other hardships, our virgin country would not have become productive in the way it has done.

Mr. Money : They have not made half as much as those who followed.

Hon. P. COLLIER : That is so. After a life of comparative drudgery, of 30 years or more of disabilities and hard work, both for himself and his family, the settler has found himself possessed of not as much wealth as the commercial man in the city was able to make in a year. Because that is true we are confronted to-day with the problem which every State in Australia is facing, that is the drift of population to the city. It is a reflection upon Governments in this Commonwealth that out of a total population of about five millions more than half of the people are concentrated within the fringe of the capital cities.

Mr. Money : It is the biggest problem we have to deal with.

Hon. P. COLLIER : In certain farming districts of Victoria the population was greater 40 years ago than it is to-day because of the attractions of city life. When the old people become too old to farm their land the young people clear out to the cities, and the richest

man in the district becomes the largest holder. There is a natural inclination in that direction. I go as far as any member on the cross benches, and will assist to the best of my ability, in doing everything possible to make life attractive in the country districts. If for no other reason than a selfish reason we must see the wisdom of and necessity for developing our country districts. There are many obstacles in the way and the Government must assist. In no State of Australia has such a generous measure of Government assistance been given to people on the land as has been given by successive Governments in this State. I cannot conceive of any country where the assistance given has exceeded that which has been made available in Western Australia. It is a wise and sound policy. We must continue to pursue that policy, all the time striving to see that the expenditure of public money is in the direction of essentially reproductive works. In time to come money thus expended will be returned to us fourfold. The problem is so great to-day throughout Australia that unless the various Parliaments wake up and take serious measures to stop the drift to the cities, the Commonwealth will not go ahead and prosper, production will not increase nor will Australia be that great country we all hope to see her become. I believe that in Western Australia—and I agree with the Premier here we can carry three or four times the population we have to-day, with a greater degree of prosperity to all.

Mr. Money: We can carry twenty times the population.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. When one looks around the Commonwealth, starting from Queensland in the North and working round the various States, one realises the possibilities of each State. Each is rich in those great natural resources which go to make any country great. There are no great natural resources upon which America has built up such a big population in the past century or so, of which Australia is not possessed.

Mr. Money: They utilised their natural resources to the utmost.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is largely due to the policy adopted by the State Governments throughout Australia in the concentration of expenditure, that has led to the aggregation of population in the cities. It is true that in New South Wales railways have been constructed for 300 or 400 miles into Sydney rather than build a small section of railways to tap a natural port. It is this policy of centralisation that is the curse of Australia to-day. It is necessary to spend money in the country districts to provide facilities for settlement and production, and to ensure a fair measure of comfort and prosperity without which we will not attain that standard of life we would like to see in Australia.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8-48 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 3rd August, 1922.

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

QUESTIONS (3)—GROUP SETTLEMENT.

Sustenance Allowance.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Premier: In view of the assistance by way of sustenance allowance granted to settlers on group settlement areas, will he favourably consider the extending of similar benefits in that direction to the South-West as are enjoyed by settlers operating under the provisions of the Act governing the Industries Assistance Board?

The PREMIER replied: Allowance to group settlers is an advance against cost of making farms, and becomes an Agricultural Bank advance on the security of the made farm. Individual settlers can obtain clearing loans from the Agricultural Bank in the usual way.

Accounts System and Costs.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Premier: 1, Has a proper system of accounts been inaugurated for each group settlement which will include all phases of expenditure? 2, What will be the basis of allocation of costs on individual farms? 3, Is the cost of supervision to be made a charge against each group, and to be debited equally to each property?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, The total charges against the group must not exceed the total costs. Allocations to each block will be made by the general manager of the Agricultural Bank when it takes over the liability. 3, Yes, so far as the working foreman is concerned.

Road Making; Federal Grant.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Premier: In view of the decision of the Federal Ministry to provide a sum of £250,000, to be allocated to the various State Governments on the pound for pound principle, for the purpose of providing work for the unemployed on road making, and of the urgent necessity for provision of good roads to group settlements, does he propose to take advantage of the assistance offered by the Commonwealth Government?