

venience of members so far as I can, and this being so I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, 16th August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 4th August, 1921.

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

QUESTION—TRAMWAYS, EXTENSIONS AND RENEWALS.

Mr. CARTER asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to proceed immediately with the South Perth-Como tramway extension? 2, What is the estimated cost of the construction of the line? 3, What proportion of the material ordered and now arriving to be used in extension work would be suitable for renovation and relaying work on present existing lines? 4, Has the department an adequate supply of material for the renewal work on the lines now in use? 5, In view of the repeated accidents and derailments on the Perth system, is it the intention of the Government to proceed with relaying work wherever needed? 6, Does he consider extension work to be more important than that work necessary to safeguard the travelling public? 7, What is the exact number of derailments on the Perth system of tramways during the past two years?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Yes. 2, £36,160 for track and overhead gear, plus £5,000 for substation building and equipment for the complete scheme. 3, Practically none. 4, Yes. 5, Repeated accidents and derailments are not occurring. Relaying work is being carried out as needed. 6, The extension of tramways does not affect the question of the safety of the travelling public. 7, A statement of derailments and their causes is being prepared.

QUESTION—OLD MEN'S HOME.

Mr. J. THOMSON asked the Colonial Secretary: Is he aware that the Master of the Old Men's Home (Mr. Rust) has made a claim for 4s. 6d. out of the 5s. per week received by inmates from the Kalgoorlie Mine Workers' Relief Fund, thus leaving only 6d. per week to those receiving the benefit of this fund to buy fruit, etc.?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: A demand was made, as is the usual custom, but upon the whole of the facts being made clear it was withdrawn.

QUESTION—COPPER EXTRACTION.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is he aware of the existence of an invention for the extraction of copper from copper ore by means of chemical solutions? 2, If not, will he cause inquiries to be made to ascertain if such an invention is in existence?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Yes. There are numerous such methods of extraction. I am also aware of experiments being made locally. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Premier: What is the number of single holdings that have been purchased to date for Soldier Settlement purposes, the area concerned, and the total amount of the purchase money?

The PREMIER replied: The number is 1,929. I cannot give the other information because I have not got it. It will mean the preparation of a return. I understand the hon. member will be satisfied with the number.

Hon. P. Collier: If the Premier will get the information later on I shall be satisfied.

The PREMIER: The hon. member will receive the information.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Supply Bill and State Trading Concerns.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.35]: I desire to make a personal explanation. When speaking on the Supply Bill in regard to the State trading concerns and the amount of money which was derived from them by the Consolidated Revenue, I find that I took one column wrongly. I took the estimate instead of the actual revenue received. I should like to explain to the House that where I said that the Consolidated Revenue received from these trading concerns was £728,966, the correct figures I should have given were £766,372.

The Premier: For how long a period is that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is since the new Act was passed in 1917.

The Premier: It is not much for last year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is only £7,000 for last year. That does not interfere with the figures. I do not want to discuss the matter, although I have a very good case. I know I should not be allowed to do so. With regard to recoups, departmental charges, etc., where I quoted the figures £409,349, the correct figures should be £490,067, and where I spoke of the balance of profits transferred to revenue as being £319,617, I should have quoted the amount of £276,305.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second day.

Debate resumed from 28th July.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.37]: As I feel possessed for the moment of a spirit of friendship, perhaps I had better open my remarks regarding the work of the session by congratulating the Premier on his having retained the leadership of his party.

The Minister for Mines: There is something underlying that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: More especially do I offer these congratulations when I regard the somewhat mixed and uncertain elements which go to make up the Ministerial ranks. I should like also to congratulate the Minister for Agriculture upon his having attained Ministerial rank. The changes one observes on the front Ministerial bench serve to remind one of the fact that whilst the Government secured a majority at the poll, certain constituents were not over enthusiastic in regard to the personnel of the Government.

The Premier: The same thing may be said about your side.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should like also, if I may be permitted, to welcome the many new members of this Chamber. I am quite sure that the freshness of thought and the vigour of expression which we shall have during the session from these members will be of great benefit and advantage to our deliberations in this Chamber. May I also specially congratulate the member for West Perth (Mrs. Cowan) on having attained an unique distinction in the Parliamentary history of Australia. I will not be so ungallant as to repeat the sentiments expressed by the Leader of the Primary Producers' Party immediately following the results of the elections.

Mrs. Cowan: Hear, hear!

Hon. P. COLLIER: That gentleman said he was unable to understand, having regard to the serious financial problems that were hedging us around and the need there was for economy, why it was the electors rejected an experienced Minister and elected an inexperienced woman.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Which leader was that?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The outside leader; the real controlling force, the power behind the throne. That is why I deem it worthy of notice.

The Minister for Mines: The McCallum of the Primary Producers.

Mrs. Cowan: He has apologised for that since and said he was sorry.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is just what they do.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He would make an excellent politician.

Mrs. Cowan: Quite so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Rather do I say I welcome the advent of a woman to this Chamber. It would not be inappropriate if I were to remind hon. members at this juncture of the fact that it was the Australian Labour Party that pioneered the question of full citizenship for women. The Labour Party was the first organised political party in Australia to adopt, as a foremost plank of its platform, the enfranchisement of women some 30 years ago. To repeat a little history, I may say that it was the first labour member who was returned to the Legislative Assembly in Victoria who submitted a motion to that Chamber to confer the vote upon women. Although there were 95 members of the House at the time, he being the only labour member, he failed to secure a seconder to that motion. As a result of the propaganda work carried on by labour subsequently, after many tries, women were enfranchised in Victoria as in other parts of Australia. I take no small degree of pleasure in the fact that we have the opposite sex, if I may put it in that way, represented in this Chamber. This is mainly due to the work done throughout a quarter of a century by the organised forces of labour.

Mr. Pickering: And through the irony of fate she is sitting opposite to you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They will be on our side in good time. I was glad to hear the declarations of independence that fell from the mover and seconder of the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply. It is true the member for York, who seconded the motion, made reservations which were imposed upon him of course by the platform of the party to which he belongs, and properly so. I hope this attitude of independent thought and action will be manifested on more than one occasion before the session closes.

The Premier: I think you have it on your side, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

The Premier: I think so; I hope so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It would be a bad job for you if it were not so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Having regard for some things which have transpired since the election, I am not over hopeful that we shall see too much independence manifested. Many of the candidates during the election made a feature of the necessity for the affairs of State being carried on by a responsible Government. That has been the parrot cry for

years past. Generally, when it has been used, it has been by way of criticism as to what have been alleged to be the unconstitutional methods adopted by the Labour Party. So we have been told that there is a need for a return to the principles of responsible government. I should like to deal for a moment with the question of how far the party that now sits on the Government side of the House stands for truly responsible Government. It was rather a remarkable feature of the election events to find that a considerable section of members sitting on the Government side of the House, those who give adherence to the Primary Producers' Party, were unable to say whether they were going to support the Government or to support the Opposition, until they had received their instructions from an outside body.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is incorrect.

Mr. Latham: You are quite wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let me see what the position is. I well remember the occasion when members of the party met in this building and after discussing matters for an hour or two they trooped down in solemn array and, I suppose, marched down to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., whose building is the place where this outside caucus meets. The object of that visit was to decide with the executive upon their future relationship with the Government and, in fact, to receive definite instructions as to whether they were to remain in support of the Government or not.

Mr. A. Thomson: Don't romance too much. You are absolutely wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There was not one candidate standing in the interests of the Primary Producers' party during the elections who was able to tell the electors whether he would support the Government or not after the elections. There was not one of them in a position to do so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Many of them opposed Government supporters.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At any rate, they could not say whether they would support the Government or sit on the opposition side of the House.

Mr. Corboy: One of the Country Party candidates stated that he would not support the Government.

The Premier: But he was not returned.

Mr. A. Thomson: They did not say, at any rate, that they would support the Opposition.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They were not in a position to say who they would support.

Mr. Thomson: Yes, they were.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The constitution of the Primary Producers Association says that you must get your instructions from the executive after the elections.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is absolutely incorrect.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Will the hon. member deny that at the last conference of the members of the Primary Producers Association it was laid down that after the elections were over, the elected members of

the Country Party would meet in conference with the members of the executive and decide their future attitude?

Mr. A. Thomson: No, not towards the Government, but regarding actions of the party.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is the attitude of members of the Country Party in this House.

Mr. A. Thomson: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let us see what the leader of the hon. member's party said about it. He said—

At the annual general conference of branch delegates of the Primary Producers Association held in Perth in August last, the question of the relationship of the Country Party to other Parliamentary parties after the general elections which were to be held in March, was considered and it was then determined that this matter should be left to be decided by a joint conference of the executive of the association and the new Country Party subsequent to the elections being held. The joint conference of the executive and the Country Party was held today and the matter was fully considered. Hon. members know what the motion was that was carried at that conference.

Mr. A. Thomson: Read the motion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It does not bear on the point I am making.

Mr. A. Thomson: It does. If you do not read it, I will later on.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is proof of what you have just contradicted.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the hon. member is so keen on the matter I will read the motion. This is what it says—

That in the interests of stable Government we are of the opinion that the Country Party should co-operate with all parties on the Government side of the House in the duties of government relying on the administration so formed, as far as possible, to give effect to the general policy outlined in the objective and platform of the Country Party.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We can keep them bound down to those conditions.

Mr. A. Thomson: Why not?

Hon. P. COLLIER: There were more members of the executive than of the members of this House present at that meeting.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is not right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The official organ of the party, the "Primary Producer," says that that was the decision and that organ is more responsible than the irresponsible member for Katanning.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is all right; I simply happened to be there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is evidence of the fact that members belonging to the Country Party were not in a position to say whether they would support the Government after the elections but only after they had gone down to the executive and re-

ceived their instructions. That is the plain fact. It demonstrates that the members of this Chamber, to whom I referred, are committed to carry out the instructions of this outside body. Members of the Labour Party were never tied down in such a manner during the whole history of the Labour movement.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. Munsie: We have got a parrot in the House again.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I could teach any parrot to say "that is absolutely incorrect" in 24 hours. I have proved the correctness of my statements from the quotation appearing in the official organ of the Primary Producers' Association. Members should know that the Country Party members went down to the executive but the executive did not come here. Members of the executive sat in their offices and members of Parliament went down to receive their instructions.

Hon. T. Walker: Mahomet went to the mountain.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is clear evidence that the members of the Country Party were not able to declare their attitude until they had received instructions.

Mr. A. Thomson: We attend every conference meeting.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know you do, because you have got to.

Mr. A. Thomson: No, we have not got to do so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We know that the Leader of the Country Party and others have been carpeted by the organisation and have to attend the executive meetings. That is where they receive their instructions.

Mr. A. Thomson: The same as you attend the Trades Hall.

The Speaker: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Katanning is labouring under the new honours which have been thrust on him. He will be able to refute my statements, if he can do so, later on.

Mr. A. Thomson: I will refute them all right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Like all converts, the member for Katanning is an apostate. It is generally the same; when an individual joins up with a new party, he generally advocates their claims more aggressively than he did the claims of his old organisation. Some time ago the member got out of the wet in time for the elections.

Mr. A. Thomson: It was a pretty substantial majority at the last election.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They did not know you as well as we do.

Mr. A. Thomson: You did your best to get me out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Katanning should contain himself. He does not like the truth. I repeat what I have said before. We have, in the organisation of the Primary Producers' Association, evi-

dence of the fact that the Country Party were not able to tell the people what action they were to take after the elections. The members are not free to take what action appeals to them as best. One of the planks of the National Party—they had 20 at the elections—set out that members should be responsible only to their constituents. At the same time the present Government are holding office owing to the support of more than half the Ministerial Party who are not responsible to their constituents but to an outside organisation, some members of which have even failed to secure election to this House from time to time. I repeat, members of the Country Party were not in a position to say whether or not they would support the Government if returned at the elections.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is incorrect.

Hon. T. Walker: That is all the member for Katanning can say.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Katanning has made a most intelligent interjection.

Mr. A. Thomson: You know that is not so.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Katanning must keep order.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know, Mr. Speaker, that your years make you tolerant of the actions of members but the hon. member for Katanning is not able to understand a plain proposition any more than he would be able to understand the plain facts about the explanation of the saw milling lease extension.

Mr. Pickering: Do you understand it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I notice that the member for Sussex lapsed into silence pretty quickly. I do not know whether the unseen hand of the executive was at work in his case, but while he, together with the member for Katanning, were extremely boisterous about 11 o'clock the other night they were absent on the following day.

Mr. Pickering: I will have the opportunity of dealing with the matter on the motion I have brought forward.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It seems strange, too, to see the Minister for Mines, one of the members of the Country Party, who also goes down to the executive for instructions. More particularly is this strange when one remembers the sentiments expressed by the Minister only within recent times. When the Minister for Mines severed his connection with the Labour Party he made a direct declaration when he spoke at a meeting in the city. He said that they did not want to introduce into the National Party's movement that which would mean a domination of a junta in control of Parliament. He stated that if there was one thing the National Party stood for—he then belonged to the National Party—it should be that every member elected should be responsible to his constituents and to no one else. How can members hold that they are responsible to their constituents only when they have to meet an outside executive body in order to decide whether or not they shall support the Government? Not only in this respect, but

ever since the advent of the Country Party into the politics of this State, we have had this sort of thing going on. During the past four or five years members of the Country Party, although in a minority, have been absolutely in control of the Government of this country. The Premier and his Ministers dare not refuse any request made to them from time to time by the Primary Producers' Association.

The Premier: Who makes the requests?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Mr. Monger and his executive have made their requests. The Ministers, as well as the Premier, and also highly placed officials in the Government Departments, bow to the authority of this outside executive on all matters.

The Premier: They have never made any requests to me.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They can say which Ministers shall go East and so on.

Mr. McCallum: They do not make requests, they make demands.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They have never ceased to make requests and I do not know whether it shows the influence of their organisation or not, but the requests have been agreed to.

Mr. Pickering: That is a compliment to us.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is a compliment to the machine.

Mr. A. Thomson: You should talk about machines, ye gods!

Hon. P. COLLIER: At any rate, no member of the Labour Party has ever been compelled to attend regularly executive meetings for the discussion of important political questions, the decisions on which have to be given effect to by Parliamentary members. Such a policy has never been foisted on the Labour Party.

Mr. A. Thomson: What about the happenings in Sydney?

Hon. P. COLLIER: You do not know what you are talking about.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Come back to Perth.

Mr. Latham: They have carpeted Ministers anyhow.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You are young yet; wait until Monger gets to you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This sort of thing applies not only to the Government but to highly placed officials. Taking the Commissioner of Railways for instance; a little while ago certain charges for demurrage were levied. A deputation from the Primary Producers' Association waited upon the authorities and their requests were complied with. The organiser when speaking at a meeting in the country a little while ago, referred to the demurrage on wheat and made a statement, as evidence of the power and influence of this organisation. He said:—

In regard to the recent charges for demurrage there has been a 50 per cent. reduction and since then the whole of the demurrage has been refunded on the representations of our association. One member has received £45 refund, while the whole of the charges have been wiped out.

I asked a question dealing with this matter the other day and the Minister for Mines replied that the amount involved was £393. If the charges were not equitable, and should have been refunded, then the Commissioner of Railways should have been able to do that without any deputation from the executive of this party.

The Minister for Agriculture: How does an individual farmer put up a claim for demurrage in regard to wheat?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know. The statement was made by Mr. Johnson, organiser of the association. The same thing applies to wool. I find it reported in the "Primary Producer." The paragraph states—

The President reported that he and Mr. Lee Steere had waited on the Commissioner of Railways before the latter's departure for the Eastern States, and after considerable argument Mr. Pope decided to rebate the whole of the demurrage levied in this case.

The amount involved was £4,151.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They contributed to the election fund.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We see therefore the power of this organisation. It is little wonder that the finances of the State are drifting when a powerful body of this kind is able to go along to the Commissioner of Railways and after considerable pressure secure a rebate of £4,151.

The Minister for Agriculture: Was that the Pastoralists' Association or the Primary Producers' Association?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Primary Producers' Association, and the rebate was on wool. The members of the association certainly were mostly pastoralists who, only a few months before, had subscribed a substantial sum of money towards the funds of the party the members of which sit opposite.

Mr. Pickering: An organising fund.

Mr. Munsie: You did not use any of it for political purposes; of course not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is putting unfair pressure upon a responsible Government officer when he finds a deputation from a body which he knows has political representation in the Cabinet, and which has considerable power in this House, making a demand of the nature which I have described. It places the official in a most invidious position indeed. If as the Minister stated yesterday the Commissioner was entirely justified in remitting this amount of £4,151, it is difficult to understand why, according to the report which I have read, it was necessary to apply special pressure on the Commissioner in order to induce him to make a refund of the amount. Another instance of the manner in which this executive is controlling the Government of this State may be quoted. The organisation has decided what legislation is to be introduced during the present session. At the same meeting of the executive of that organisation the question came up of the

introduction of a gold buyers' Bill and this is what the report says—

Mr. Blossome introduced the question of the proposed gold buyers' Bill which was submitted by the Chamber of Mines. It was decided to adopt the recommendation of the Mining Committee to assist, by means of a deputation (to the Premier and the Minister for Mines) requesting the Government to introduce this Bill at the opening of Parliament as a Government measure. The Mining Association is to be requested to co-operate on the deputation. The deputation is to be introduced by the Leader of the Country Party, who will be accompanied by as many members of the party as may be available.

And listen to this—

An advance copy of the Bill will be sent to the Minister for his information. Not only do they request the Government to introduce legislation covering a certain question, but they have the impertinence to draft the Bill. The Bill comes before the executive. The executive considers it clause by clause and decide what form it shall take, and then send it to the Minister and say, "Here you are, introduce this Bill." Then, of course, the Bill is accepted by the Government and it is referred to in the Governor's Speech. Just imagine the power of this executive! The Leader of the Country Party represents a rural hamlet somewhere in the wheat areas, and most of the members of the same party have no interests whatever in the goldfields or in mining matters; yet the Chamber of Mines, who a little while ago were wise in their day and generation, realised that if they desired to have any influence in connection with the legislation introduced by the Government now in office, their only chance was to join up with the Primary Producers' Party.

Mr. A. Thomson: Do you not know that the leader of our party represents a mining constituency?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member need not make such an inane interjection. The Leader of the Country Party has one or two small mines in a corner of his constituency, but the matter to which I am referring was brought before the executive, and that executive decided that the Bill had to be introduced, and it was sent to the Minister, who accepted it. Were it not for the influence of this body—and I mention this to show how they are controlling the Government—the Bill would never have been brought forward. I never heard the present Minister for Mines during the whole period that I was associated with him, suggest that it was necessary to introduce a gold buyers' Bill. I do not even know that the hon. member ever considered the question.

The Minister for Mines: I will go through the files and see what you thought about it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But as soon as the matter is taken up by the executive of the Primary Producers' Association that body adopt the Bill presented to them by the

Chamber of Mines, and the Minister for Mines in accordance with the position he occupies in the party has no alternative but to agree to introduce the Bill.

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member knows that the Premier's conference asked that the Bill should be introduced so that there might be uniformity throughout Australia.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that the Bill has been asked for by the Chamber of Mines for many years past—this and other Bills as well—and the Premier's conference perhaps also requested that the Bill should be introduced, but no definite proposal ever came forward until it was submitted through the channels of the Primary Producers' Association. They drafted the Bill and sent it along as a matter of courtesy to the Minister for Mines. Those are the plain facts of the case. The same executive was also able to appoint a deputation consisting of three or four of its members to call upon Ministers.

The Minister for Mines: That is not an unusual course.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the unusual course was that they appointed a deputation to wait on the Minister for Education, the Minister for Agriculture, and the Colonial Secretary. It must have been a very important matter that they desired to discuss when it required the presence of three Ministers of the Crown. The deputation went along and when the Press accompanied them in the ordinary way to report the proceedings they were told that the deputation was to be a secret one. Therefore the Press were excluded. The public were afterwards informed that the object of the deputation was to discuss questions relating to the wheat pool. I want to know why this executive has been able to exercise sufficient influence to obtain a secret interview with Ministers concerning matters of great public interest. Is it contended that anything relating to the wheat pool does not concern the general community? What right has this body to decide when the Press shall be present at a deputation of such a nature? I recall the time when the Labour Party were in office, members now sitting on the Government benches were in opposition, thundered across the floor of the House allegations of secret dealings with regard to the administration of the party to which I belong. They were always clamouring for us to come out into the open.

The Minister for Agriculture: There was no necessity for secrecy in our case.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Why were the Press not admitted? The executive of the Association discussed in private matters with three Ministers, two of whom belonged to their Association, and who take their instructions from that executive.

Mr. O'Loughlin: Not the three.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, the Colonial Secretary does not belong to that party.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He might belong to it before the next election.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The subject of the interview should have been discussed in public.

The Minister for Agriculture: It could have been discussed in St. George's-terrace.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then, why was it not discussed in public? It is all very well for the Minister to make that remark now.

The Minister for Agriculture: It was a matter of tactics.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was a matter of great public interest. Does the hon. member consider that a deputation from an important political organisation has the right to wait upon three Ministers of the Crown and secretly discuss matters affecting the general welfare of the people? Does he stand for that kind of thing? Does he say that that kind of thing is right? If the Minister declares there is no reason for excluding the Press, why was not a statement made to that effect?

The Minister for Agriculture: It was a foolish course to adopt.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps it was the foolish practice of unsophisticated bucolics. But it could hardly be said that the experienced Minister for Education was unsophisticated enough to make a statement of that kind. I protest against the secret and underhand influence of this executive in the direction of being able to go to the Commissioner of Railways and get wiped out no less a sum than over £4,000 in connection with wool and £393 in connection with wheat—charges which the Commissioner had previously refused to remit. We find that it was only when pressure was brought to bear and the influence of the executive of the organisation was exercised that the Commissioner thought it would be good tactics on his part, having regard to the position of the Government and his Ministerial chief, to agree to the request.

The Minister for Mines: I gave you the reasons yesterday in answer to your question.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but they did not fit in with the report of the deputation. The Minister declared that the Commissioner was justified in remitting the charges on wool but the report of the deputation declares that a great deal of trouble was experienced, and it was only after pressure was applied that the Commissioner yielded.

The Minister for Mines: Argument, not pressure.

Hon. P. COLLIER: After considerable argument, then. It is little wonder that we have a deficit when this outside irresponsible body are able to control members and through their members control the Government. When they first took office in 1916, the Government of the day, because the Country Party members held the balance of power in this House, immediately remitted charges all along the line, charges with regard to fertilisers, district railway rates and other items,

amounting in the aggregate to something like £100,000 or more.

The Premier: They had nothing to do with the reduction of freights. You cannot blame them for that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They had in 1916.

The Premier: No, they did not.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That was part of the bargain.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When the late Hon. Frank Wilson took office, he was promised the support of members of the Country Party in this House at that time, conditionally upon his making those reductions, and I can quote that to the Premier if he wishes it.

The Premier: We had that framed beforehand.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But that was one of the conditions, and from that day to this, every demand made by the Country Party has been acceded to by the Government, because this was necessary in order to preserve their governmental existence. We see the same thing in connection with the wheat pool. Let us now turn to the wheat pool. The Government, I understand, propose to continue the wheat pool for the coming season, so far as this State is concerned. I do not know how they are going to do it, or whether it will be practicable without the co-operation of the Eastern States. So far as I am concerned, I offer no objection to a wheat pool, not even to the establishment of a permanent wheat pool. I have made my position perfectly clear in this House on more than one occasion. I would not be one to throw the farmers of the country back at the mercy of the wheat buyers, and I do not want to see the wheat growers ever get back to the time when they will have to sell their wheat for 3s. or 3s. 6d. a bushel, as they had to do in pre-war days. The farmer, just as any other worker in the community, is entitled to a fair return for his labour, and I would see that the price of wheat for local consumption—even if we cannot govern the price for overseas sales—was fixed at a rate which would ensure to the farmer a fair and even generous return for the labour he expends in producing the wheat. But when it comes to taking complete control of the wheat pool, such as the Country Party have done in the past year or two, and fixing a price for wheat for local consumption which, in all the circumstances, is extortionate, I say it is time to check their power of control.

Hon. T. Walker: To regulate it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. It is nothing short of a scandal that the consumers of this country are at the present time paying 9s. a bushel for wheat for local consumption. Again, as showing the influence of this organisation, when the price was 7s. 8d. per bushel, before it was raised to 9s. per bushel last year, the members of this organisation in this House and the executive outside of the House, declared that for the season's wheat, that is for the year we are now in, the price they should receive for wheat for home consump-

tion should be based on the world's parity. Their representative went over to Melbourne to a meeting of the Wheat Board with the fixed determination that the people in this State should pay the world parity price.

The Premier: That was the law.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was not. When they found out over there that there was a tendency for the price of wheat in London and other parts of the world to fall, they decided that world's parity for the whole of this year would not be too good for them. It was realised that the price might fall even below the then price of 7s. 8d. per bushel and, in order to hold the consumers of this country at their mercy, they said, "We will charge 9s. per bushel for the whole of this year, from January to December, regardless of what the price might be in other parts of the world." That price was endorsed by the present Government. They were not committed to it by reason of the fact that the price had been fixed by the Wheat Board in Melbourne. It was open to the Government of this State to fix any price they liked.

The Minister for Agriculture: They struck a good average.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know that they did. I do not know what the wheat has averaged.

The Minister for Agriculture: Over 9s.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I would like to see the information. We are told from time to time by members of the board that the price realised up to date has averaged 9s. or over. We do know, however, that there have been sales of a considerable quantity of wheat at much below the price of 9s. We know that wheat has been sold to Germany even for 7s. 7d. a bushel and six months' credit given at that. This is a nice state of affairs. If a year or two ago I, or anyone associated with this movement, had declared that when the war was over we ought to forget the strife of the past and feed the Germans by supplying them with wheat at a lower price than we supplied it to our own people, what would have been done to him? He would have been gaoled and references would have been made to the German gold he was receiving. He would have been stigmatised as a pro-German and a disloyalist if he had dared to suggest that the Germans should be supplied with our wheat at a lower price than our own people.

Mr. Underwood: They only sold to Germany because nobody else would buy it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I suppose they sold to Germany because it was a good business deal. I am not complaining of the sale to Germany, but I am complaining, and I am justified in complaining too, that we are selling to Germany at a lower price than to our people. This is nothing short of a scandal.

The Minister for Agriculture: We are selling it at market value at the day of sale.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But we are not selling to our own people at that same market value. That is the difference. If we can sell it to

Germany at 7s. 7d. or 8s. a bushel, or whatever the market price is, and we are charging our own people 9s. a bushel, we are robbing our own people to the extent of 1s. 5d. a bushel.

The Minister for Agriculture: You ought to review the circumstances of the previous year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Never mind the previous year. The Premier will say that we ought to assist our producers. I will go as far as the Premier in assisting the wheat growers and other producers legitimately, but we should not go so far in assisting our producers as to penalise our consumers. We find, too, that wheat has been sold for gristing into flour, for export to the islands to sell to the coloured races, at about 7s. a bushel. For months past it has not been possible to purchase one bushel of wheat in this State for gristing into flour for local consumption for less than 9s. a bushel, while at the same time large quantities of wheat were sold for as low a figure as 7s. for gristing into flour for export to the islands and to South Africa, so much so that we read in this morning's paper that the South African Government have had to put a duty on flour to prevent dumping. We in Western Australia are paying £20 a ton for our flour to-day, and flour has been sold in South Africa for £16 9s. 3d. a ton.

Hon. T. Walker: Our flour, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. Is that an equitable arrangement? Will any member say that such a condition of things would be permitted to continue were it not for the controlling influence of the primary producers' executive?

Mr. Latham: It has existed for many years, you know.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What has?

Mr. Latham: This parity price.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, it has not.

Mr. Latham: Review the meat markets. You have been selling your meat at a higher price here than on the London market for years past.

Hon. T. Walker: Do two wrongs make a right?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It might be said that we had cheap bread during the war, bread as cheap as any part of the world. But that is beside the question. We ought to have had it. The farmer would not have been able to sell his wheat at all; his wheat would have been quite unsaleable but for the backing and security he obtained from the Government of this country, and what security had the Government got? Why, the backing of the whole of the people of this country, and that backing which enabled the farmers to get those high prices has been used to fleece the very people who stand as security for those prices.

The Minister for Mines: That does not catch the point that the executive of the primary producers influenced the Government to continue the wheat pool. They never approached the Government until after the announcement was made.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Officially they may not have done so, but we know that ever since the commencement of this year, day after day, demands have been made by representative men of the association, both in Parliament and out of Parliament, that the wheat pool must be continued.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Each member had a letter.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier knew perfectly well when he made the announcement that the pool would be continued. He knew that the whole organisation, both inside and outside of Parliament, demanded it and wanted it.

The Premier: No, the situation demanded it.

Mr. Pickering: There are other States that realise the same position.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Apparently this will be the only State with a wheat pool.

The Minister for Agriculture: And New South Wales.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. I do not know if a wheat pool can be successfully organised by the two States.

Mr. Munsie: What will be the good of a pool here if there is none in South Australia?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I can see great difficulties in successfully organising a pool with some of the States standing out. I can only hope that the Government will be able to organise a pool for the benefit of the farmers.

Mr. C. C. Maley: A compulsory pool?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: God help the Government if they do not get one, especially in regard to the Industries Assistance Board.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the farmers are going to have the benefit of a pool, that is the organised power of the Government of the country, to assist them to obtain a fair price for their wheat, they, in return, should be prepared to sell their wheat for home consumption at a fair and reasonable price, and 9s. per bushel is not a fair and reasonable price. No support of mine will be given to the continuance of a pool unless the price of 9s. a bushel is reviewed. It is not too late to review it now. The farmers have had seven months of it already.

Mr. Latham: Western Australia cannot do it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Western Australia can do it. The hon. member is mistaken in making that statement. That matter was thoroughly discussed in this House last session. Each State is absolutely free and independent with regard to the prices it fixes for wheat for local consumption. There is nothing to prevent this State to-morrow reducing the price of wheat to any amount it thinks fit.

The Minister for Agriculture: If it did so, what would the position be with regard to the other States?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister knows that what I say is correct. I want to ask

members of the Government if they think it a fair thing to be selling our wheat to Germany, and to the Asiatics in the Islands, and to South Africa, at 7s. or 7s. 7d. a bushel and charging our own people 9s. a bushel?

The Premier: You know we sold to our own people at 9s. when the export value was over 10s.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And at 4s. 6d. a bushel when you could have had an open market.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We sold wheat, in the earlier years of the war, for local consumption, at much below the parity price. I admit that, but although it was below the parity price of 4s. 6d. or 5s., it, nevertheless, was much higher than could have been obtained without the support of the Government of the country.

The Minister for Agriculture: But that wheat which is going to Germany is probably costing the purchasers about 30s. per bushel, on the basis of the rate of exchange.

Mr. Corboy: What are we getting out of it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: And those purchasers are getting six months' credit as well.

The Minister for Agriculture: For which they have to pay.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This is the attitude of hon. members opposite, who three or four years ago declared that never again would Australia trade with Germany. When Mr. Hughes returned from England last year, he said on the wharf, "If you want ever again to trade with Germany, you will have to get some other Prime Minister; I will not do it."

The Premier: He is not really doing it this time.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He is doing it to this extent, that the Australian Wheat Pool would not have been possible without the support of the Commonwealth Government. The Premier knows that.

The Premier: But the Prime Minister has nothing to do with the sale of the wheat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If Mr. Hughes still holds his opinion of last year with regard to Germany, he would simply tell the Australian Wheat Pool—

Hon. T. Walker: He approved of the sales to Germany, approved of them in the Federal House.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. But this is really by the way. Again I say it is an absolute scandal that we should be selling wheat for export at a lower price than our own people are paying. Although the general public of this State are getting wheat at 9s. per bushel, those people who require wheat for poultry or pig raising, or other purposes not calling for first class wheat, have been compelled to pay as high as 11s. and 12s. per bushel. Hon. members know that men who embarked their all in poultry farming and pig raising around Perth have been ruined, as a result.

The Minister for Agriculture: The other night they declared in the Bohemia Hall that they were never so prosperous.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They made no such declaration as that a few months ago. I could take the Minister down to Bayswater along the banks of the Swan and show him various poultry farms off which the owners have walked, leaving behind them their few hundred pounds of invested capital; and this owing to the price of wheat being too high.

Mr. Latham: Or were eggs too cheap?

Mr. Pickering: The poultry farmers could pass on the high price of wheat.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not indefinitely. When the price of an article or a commodity reaches a certain point, further increases in cost cannot be passed on, simply because the people refuse to buy the article or the commodity. Most assuredly, people in general were not buying eggs at 3s. and 4s. per dozen.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They had not the money to buy them. I did not have an egg for three months; I could not afford it. And other people found themselves in the same position.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I want to tell the Premier that if he is about to take steps to introduce legislation constituting another wheat pool, I hope he will introduce it at a very early date. I do not want this House to be discussing Bills dealing with the continuance of the Wheat Pool at a stage of the session when it is too late for us to reject such measures, when the Government have already committed the country to certain expenditure and to a certain policy, and it is impossible for us to retrace our steps. I hope the Premier will afford the House a very early opportunity of discussing the matter—an opportunity sufficiently early to enable us to decide, free and untrammelled, what shall be done, without the Government being committed in any way. For my part I shall try to see that the people of this country obtain wheat for home consumption at reasonable prices before I give any support to the continuance of the Wheat Pool.

The Premier: Honours under the wheat scheme are fairly easy, you know.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I presume the Premier is referring to the price of wheat during the earlier stages of the pool. We are now told by the Minister for Agriculture that the wheat of last season sold to date has averaged over 9s.

The Minister for Agriculture: For oversea.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I mean for oversea. I do not know why there has been so much secrecy about the matter. We are given no definite information. Occasionally a statement to the same effect as that made by the Minister for Agriculture to-day is made. If the position is as stated, it is rather strange that such large quantities of our wheat should be sold to the East Indies and to Germany at a price considerably below

9s. I consider, however, that 9s. is too high. The previous price of 7s. 8d. was a very fair and profitable price to the grower, and fair to the consumer as well. The fact that the growers' representatives declined to continue selling wheat at that price will react to the detriment of the farmers in the very near future.

The Premier: You cannot blame the farmers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am referring to hon. members who profess to speak for the farmers and to represent them.

The Premier: The farmers would not have fixed the price at 7s. 8d.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When the price was fixed at 7s. 8d., the farmer was well satisfied.

The Premier: He was satisfied.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He was very well satisfied. I remember that at the time we were touring the wheat belt, every little gathering of farmers by the roadside, on learning that the Government were going to guarantee 5s. per bushel for that season's wheat, was highly delighted; and right through that tour the Premier was a hero to the farmers.

The Minister for Agriculture: The price guaranteed was "not less than 5s."

Hon. P. COLLIER: Very well; it meant that the farmer was satisfied even if he did not get more than 5s. When, subsequently, the price was raised to 7s. 8d., the farmer was still better pleased. But the price was being fixed by the representatives of the growers. The consumers have had no say in the matter. If this State is going to continue the wheat pool, and as a result ensure the farmer higher prices than he could obtain in the absence of the pool, then I say the consuming public are entitled to representation on the Wheat Board, who fix the price of wheat. The fixing of the price ought not to be left entirely to the man who has the wheat to sell.

The Minister for Agriculture: I cordially agree with you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Very well. I hope the Minister will remember that when the Bill is being drafted. The farmer, let me point out, always has had to submit to someone else fixing the price at which he should sell his wheat. It is the buyer that has always fixed the price of wheat, and not the seller and grower. But I would not entirely deprive the farmer of a say in the matter. At the same time, the purchaser, the consumer, must have a voice in the business as well. The farmers would be well advised, I consider, to concede some measure of relief in this direction.

The Minister for Agriculture: We will take the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) to represent the consumers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Such an appointment would work out to the advantage not only of the consumers, but also of the wheat growers. I hope that as the result of experience in recent years of co-operative handling of wheat, even if the Government should step

out of the business after this season, the farmers will have been enabled to organise some scheme by which they can continue on a co-operative basis, instead of finding themselves at the mercy of the wheat buyers as in the pre-war days. For my part I would be prepared to continue Government assistance to the wheat pool beyond this season if necessary, or until such time as the farmers are organised to such an extent as will enable them to free themselves from the clutches of the profiteering wheat buyers. I call to mind the fact that Mr. John Darling, a South Australian wheat buyer, died leaving an estate valued for probate at £1,770,000. That amount of money was accumulated in the course of one man's lifetime, practically in 30 years. It was a sum which, in large part, really belonged to the South Australian farmers. I hope the wheat growers will be able to relieve themselves of such a position in all the years that are ahead of us, as well as during the few years that are immediately past. Next I desire to refer to the position of the labour market in this State. Of course it is not a singular or an uncommon thing that we should have a very considerable number of unemployed in Western Australia. I am free to admit that during my visit to the Eastern States I found considerable numbers of unemployed in nearly every capital city; at any rate, unemployed were numerous in Melbourne, in Sydney, and in Brisbane. And so we have them here as well. But I would like to draw the attention of the Minister for Mines to the fact that unemployment is at present extremely acute in Boulder. From inquiries I made, and from information that has reached me through various sources, I believe it is not an exaggeration to say that there are fully 1,000 men out of work scattered about the various goldfields to-day. It is a very hard thing to place those men in employment, I know. The Premier seems to take up the position—and I appreciate his difficulty in finding work for a large number of men suddenly thrown out of employment—that unless all the men who are out of work will accept the employment that he offers, then he has no further responsibility in the matter. Now, we cannot send every man who is out of work to clear land, any more than we can find work for every man at his customary calling. But it is not reasonable to expect tradesmen, clerks, miners, men who have followed particular occupations in various parts of the State for a number of years, suddenly to undertake the heavy and exhausting work of clearing land. Besides, I venture to say that men who have had no experience of that work would not earn very much at land clearing, though it may be true that experienced men can make good wages at it. I think the Government should endeavour to find some other opening for the men I have in view. Would it not be possible to start some public works which would help to relieve the situation? I know of hun-

dreds of men who have been for many years, possibly 20 or 25 years, in the one mining town, and have never followed any occupation but mining since their boyhood. Many of them are now middle-aged, or even further advanced in years, and they are wholly unfitted for any such work as that offered them by the Premier, namely, land clearing. The position on the goldfields is almost a desperate one. Unfortunately, the mining industry has been taking what may almost be termed a downward plunge during the past year or two. Whilst the production of gold has been declining for 15 or 16 years in this State, it is unfortunately true that during the past six or 12 months, and especially during the past six months, the production has gone down almost with a run, with the result that 500 or 600 miners in the Kalgoorlie and Boulder districts were thrown out of work. Hundreds of these have been out of work now for five or six months—men who have saved a little money and are now living on their capital.

The Minister for Mines: Is not the position to some extent due to the cost of production?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Undoubtedly, to some extent. I do not know how we can meet the situation. Every increase in mining costs, every rise in the price of mining requisites, each raising of railway freights, tends to bring some mining proposition below the profit-earning point, with the result that a number of men are thrown out of work. The same thing applies to large numbers of men in Perth, I understand. Therefore, I do hope that the Government will endeavour to devise some means by which those men can be placed in work. There is, of course, land settlement, with which subject is wrapped up the subject of immigration. Let me say at once that whilst I stand, and always have stood, for a policy of immigration, I am not prepared to support any policy which will continually bring into the State considerable numbers of men and women from overseas, whilst we are, at the same time, unable to find profitable employment for our own people who are now in the State. That is a position which cannot be justified. As a matter of fact, it does not seem fair to the people we propose to bring in. It is not a very encouraging introduction to the State for the newcomers to find that we have hundreds of our own people who cannot secure employment.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do you not think that by coming here they will create more employment?

Hon. P. COLLIER: In certain circumstances they will. If we are going to absorb them in production, they will perhaps in turn create employment.

The Colonial Secretary: Only a certain class of immigrant is now coming out. There are no tradesmen among them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I understand that the only stipulation is that they shall be ex-service men. Doubtless there are in England considerable numbers of ex-service men who

are tradesmen, just as in Australia. The hon. member will not tell me that if a man had been a tradesman in England and applied to come out as an ex-service man he would be refused?

The Colonial Secretary: It has been decided that they shall not come out as tradesmen?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That applies to all who are coming out. It does not matter what trade they have been following, they have to go on the land; but if a tradesman in the Old Country were willing to go on the land here, he would not be refused a passage.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Under the overseas settlement scheme, he would not be refused a passage even if he came out as a tradesman.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know where we are going to settle them all.

The Colonial Secretary: Some 200 came out the other day, and all were placed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes but where, on the land?

The Colonial Secretary: On farms, to gain experience.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We owe a duty to our own people first. Much as we desire to encourage a suitable class of oversea immigrant, we owe a duty to our own people. If we have land available for settlement, we ought to afford residents of the State an opportunity to acquire that land.

The Premier: We always have done so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But we cannot do it. I have spoken to officers of the Lands Department and asked where I could advise a number of men from the goldfields to go to obtain land, and the answer I have got was that really they did not know where there was any available.

The Premier: Only to-day I agreed to throw open some Esperance land, especially for miners. They can get as much land as they like in the South-West.

Mr. Munsie: I had a man applying for three months. He went to the department a number of times, yet they say they cannot find him a block in the South-West for some time to come.

The Premier: I will get him a block tomorrow morning.

Mr. Munsie: Well, your secretary cannot do it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There would be no difficulty in getting 400 or 500 men from Kalgoorlie and Boulder willing to go on the land.

The Minister for Mines: But that is objected to up there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Who objects?

The Minister for Mines: The local tradespeople.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But that is a stupid idea. If we cannot find work in the mines for the miners, we must send them somewhere else. It is stupid to say, "You must not take them away; they must stay here and buy our pickles and jams and other goods."

The Premier: There will be 400 blocks available at Esperance.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Have I the Premier's assurance that these blocks will be reserved for goldfields men?

The Premier: I do not know whether they will take all of them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But if they do desire to take the lot?

The Premier: If they let me know that they want them, I will see that they get them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There will be no difficulty in getting hundreds of goldfields people to take land anywhere the Government may advise them to go. They are willing to take land anywhere if assured that they will be able to make good.

The Premier: Are we not in partnership in regard to 50?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. The Premier proposes to place 50 men from the goldfields in a community settlement in October next. But 50 men are only a drop in the ocean.

The Premier: That is all they asked for at the time.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but there are four times 50 clamouring to get away and go on the land if possible.

The Premier: I do not know of them. They can get this Esperance land. They can get 800 blocks in the South-West if they want them. Those blocks are already surveyed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I shall be able to get a good many men for those blocks. We have a duty to our own people who desire to settle on the land.

The Premier: I have always had these men coming along asking for land, and I have never failed to do anything I could for them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I want to assure the Premier that I am not making these statements by way of complaint. I admit that the Premier has done very much, perhaps more than any other man in the State, to settle men on the land, and I know that he is still desirous of continuing the policy of land settlement as rapidly as he can. I hope that in pursuance of that policy he will make available as soon as possible a number of blocks in the South-West, or other part of the State, which will enable those out of employment on the goldfields to strike out for themselves, and not sit down in hopeless fashion as some people would have them do.

Mr. Stubbs: Side by side with the proposed settlement of these people on the land, it will be necessary to construct railways. It is of no use dumping men down 40 or 50 miles from a railway.

The Premier: No man is ever sent 40 or 50 miles from a railway.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I understand that the blocks in the South-West referred to by the Premier are fairly close to existing railways?

The Premier: The transport is quite all right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If necessary, when we exhaust the possibilities of settlement along existing railways, we shall have to extend our railway system; but I am going to oppose the construction of new railways for the purpose of settling a few score of settlers here or there at great expense while we have considerable areas of land unused along existing lines. Dealing with the question of the settlement of returned soldiers, the Premier informed us that 5,506 certificates had been granted, and that 3,954 men were settled on the land. But that leaves 1,552 men who obtained certificates but have not taken up land.

The Premier: I do not know where they are.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No doubt a considerable number of them altered their intention after obtaining the certificates, and did not go on with it. I know of a large number who were unable to get land, and I know of numbers who spent a great deal of money travelling around the State trying to find suitable land. Still, I think the number settled, namely 3,954, constitutes a very good record, considering that we did not expect that we should settle that many when the policy was entered upon. I want to say again, and incidentally to endorse the sentiments expressed by the member for York, that the policy pursued by the Government has not been a sound one. The Premier informed me to-day in reply to a question that of the 3,954 men settled, 1,900 odd have been settled on single farms which have been purchased for them. We have total commitments amounting to £4,383,000 of loan money. We are borrowing money, a considerable sum each year, in order to carry on this soldier settlement policy. If that money is going to give us a return, if it is not going to further embarrass our finances—

The Premier: It will not do that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We ought to see that loan money put into this proposal is put in with a view to increasing production.

The Premier: So it is.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But what is the benefit to the State, except that we spent perhaps a couple of million pounds in buying out 1,900 farms in order to put 1,900 others in their places? It will not increase the area under cultivation by one acre.

The Premier: Oh yes, it does.

Mr. Latham: Some of the estates were cut up.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But those 1,900 purchases were single farms. As a result of those transactions we shall not increase the production of wheat by a single bushel.

The Premier: Yes we shall.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Only to the extent that the new farmer will be a better one than the old, and I doubt if, on the whole, that will be the result.

The Minister for Mines: A lot of the farms purchased were not actually worked, except to the extent of complying with the Act.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is very desirable from the soldiers' point of view that he should secure an improved farm, but from the State's point of view it is not good policy. All our land settlement should aim at bringing an increased area under production.

The Premier: I entirely agree with that. Every acre of Crown land within the settled wheat area has gone to soldiers. We could do no more.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is not much more Crown land left?

The Premier: Not within the wheat area, not first-class land.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Government had not any Crown lands available for soldiers in the wheat areas, and so they had to buy somebody else out.

The Premier: In the wheat area, yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is what I say. At the same time we propose to pursue a policy of immigration year after year, by which we are going to make new settlers.

The Premier: Not wheat farmers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Probably they will be settled in other parts of the State. I understand that the great majority of the soldiers would not take up any other than wheat land, and that a great many of them have gone on to wheat lands who were not there before. It is not a good policy for the State. It reads well to say that we have settled 3,954 soldiers.

Mr. Mann: You get quicker returns.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know in what way that applies. If a man has been farming in the wheat belt and has worked his farm to its full productivity, and he sells it to a soldier, I do not see how there can be a quicker return from such a farm.

Mr. Mann: The soldier gets a quicker return.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I appreciate the fact that soldiers desire to secure improved farms rather than do the pioneering work in unimproved country.

Mr. Mann: Some of the soldiers were not fit to do pioneering work, and this was done in order to get them quickly settled and enable them to derive a quick return.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not complain of that. I do say, however, it is going to further embarrass the finances of the State to borrow millions of money in order to buy various farms on which to place new farmers without there being any increase in the volume of production.

Mr. Money: The original object of soldier settlement was to benefit the soldier.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not without regard to the welfare and interests of the State. The amount involved works out at an average of about £1,100 in each case.

Mr. Mann: You would not get much of a wheat farm for less.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. One probably would not get 1,000 acres of wheat farming land, if it had been much improved, for less than £2 an acre.

Mr. Mann: I think the Government made a good deal in almost every case for the soldiers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not say that they paid too much. I do, however, know of many soldiers who were dissatisfied because they were unable to persuade the board to buy farms for them at the price that they were willing to pay. Soldiers have said that they could get farms for about £2 10s. per acre, but the board considered the price too high. To this extent the board were protecting the interests of soldiers.

Mr. Money: In some cases they were the means of a good option being lost.

Mr. A. Thomson: Sometimes, unfortunately, the soldiers lost the opportunity of securing a good property.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Unfortunately, in some cases they have paid too high a price for their land.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have not the information which would enable me to judge. From what I know I believe that the purchases which have been made by the board have been pretty sound, and that on the whole excessive prices have not been paid. That is the impression I have gathered.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know how a number of the large holdings in the South-West have turned out. Last year it was stated by men who were in a position to judge that high prices were paid in some cases. For some time after these lands were acquired and subdivided, a number of the blocks remained on the hands of the Government.

Mr. Munsie: There are still some on the hands of the Government.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know whether they still have on their hands any considerable area of these re-purchased large estates.

The Premier: No.

Mr. Munsie: There are some left.

The Premier: They represent the tail end.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On the whole I believe they have done well. I want the Premier to bear in mind that he has a responsibility towards our own people.

The Premier: I accept that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Wherever we have good men who are willing to take up land, he should do his best to see that they are supplied with it.

The Premier: I accept the responsibility.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I now desire to revert to the question of finance.

The Premier: You have finished giving advice on that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I was only scouting round the fringe of the matter the other night.

The Premier: You cannot discuss it twice in one session.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe I can, subject to the ruling of the Speaker.

The Premier: I hope the Speaker will rule that you cannot do so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let me preface my references to the finances by saying that I do not approach the question in any party spirit. The "West Australian" stated the other morning that my object in moving to reduce Supply was merely from a party motive. The inference is there that anything I may say this evening on that question will be merely in furtherance or in pursuance of a party spirit or done from party motives. It is strange how people can say that it is always the other fellow who is actuated by party motives. If a person does not agree with another, or one writer does not agree with another on any subject, it is the other fellow who is actuated by party motives; he of course is entirely free from any such thing. I suppose that in the past when Labour started out on its financial career, building up small deficits, and night after night in this House, and day after day in the columns of the newspapers, the Government were attacked unmercifully for their financial administration, it would be contended that these attacks were not actuated by party motives, but were made merely in the interests of the country. It is no justification, because I feel compelled to criticise the financial administration of the Government, for anyone to say that I am actuated by no other than party motives. I appreciate the difficulties confronting the Treasurer at the present juncture. I know what they are. He has very great problems to face in connection with the financial position of the State. I do not for a moment say that the position in which we find ourselves is due entirely to the administration of the Premier or of his present colleagues. He has inherited many of these difficulties, but that does not alter the fact that the position as it is at present has to be faced, and that some alteration in policy will have to be adopted. If the responsibility for the present position of the finances rests not wholly with the Premier, I say that the responsibility does rest with the Government of putting forward some policy that will meet the situation. There can be no escape from that. If I compare, as I propose to do, the financial administration of the party now in power,—not the Premier—and which has been in power for the past five years, with the years that have preceded it, I am not doing so from any party motives.

Mr. Davies: Oh, dear, no!

Hon. P. COLLIER: If it appeared to me that Governments of recent years had been lax in their handling of the finances, I would be wanting in my duty if I did not point it out. In the Speech there is no reference whatever, not the slightest hint, to any proposals dealing with the situation. The Premier has told us that when we hear his Budget statement we will then know the proposals of the Government in regard to

the finances. I think we ought to have had some lead at the opening of Parliament. The Government have been in recess for seven or eight months. The elections have been over for four or five months, and there has been ample time for Ministers to devise some policy or put forward some proposals to meet the situation.

The Premier: It is entirely a matter of these public utilities.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, I know. The Premier points out what are the causes of our deficit. These are easily ascertainable by going through the figures. We see where these losses are occurring year after year, the losses on our railways, on our business undertakings, and in other directions. The fact that these losses are continuing year in and year out surely points to the need for some definite proposals to stop the drift, and for something being done at once to meet it. It is not sufficient to say, "I cannot help it. It is not our fault. The railways have lost £300,000 and something else has lost another large amount."

The Premier: I do not mean that. The railways have to say what they can do before I can say what should be done.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The railways ought to say what they can do before the House meets. If a business man is running a big business containing a number of large departments, and there is a loss of £10,000 a year in one department or another, it is not sufficient for the manager of such department or departments to say he cannot help those losses, but the directors immediately set about finding a way to prevent those losses. If the railways, for instance, are largely responsible for our financial position, something must be done with them.

The Minister for Mines: The whole of these matters are not solely under the control of the administration. Last year an amount of £93,000 had to be found by way of retrospective increments; a strike held the railways up for a fortnight or so while the pay had to go on in many cases. We cannot handle a position of that sort.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When the Government find themselves confronted with such a situation and are called upon to disperse largely increased amounts, because of higher wages being awarded, they must set about seeing in what manner they can counteract that and balance the situation.

The Minister for Mines: That is an argument against approaching the arbitration court. What is the use of getting anything when, after it is secured, it is cut out in another direction.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. If the Minister is involved in an additional expenditure of £100,000, because of increased wages and salaries from which he cannot escape, he has to endeavour to effect economies which will counter-balance this increased expenditure on wages.

The Minister for Mines: Side by side with these increases there is also the question of

a reduction in the hours of work, with the result that you cannot reduce costs except by cutting out services.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Something will have to be done to reduce the expenditure.

The Minister for Mines: If you cut out services, you cut out the aids to industry. It is not a simple problem.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not say it is. I began by admitting that the Government were faced with great difficulties. It will be necessary for them perhaps to pursue a very unpleasant policy and to adopt proposals which will create a good deal of discussion and possibly trouble in the country, and which will prove very unpopular.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In dealing with the financial position of the State, it might be well to examine for a few moments the history of our deficit. The financial year 1911 closed with a small surplus of £13,000. During the five years which succeeded it, covering the life of the Labour Government, we turned that small surplus into a total deficit of £1,360,000. That was the record of the Labour Government financially. We left office with a deficit of £1,360,000. It is instructive to note that our last year of office resulted in a shortage of £348,000. The Government that succeeded the Labour Government in 1916 had, as a result of their first financial year in office, namely to 30th June, 1917, a shortage on revenue account of £700,000. I venture to say that nothing had transpired in the commercial or industrial life of the State to justify an increase of the deficit in one year from £348,000 to £700,000. It is well to remember that the Labour Government had experienced the first two years of war, the closing down of our timber mills, the lack of shipping and the general paralysis of trade that followed the outbreak of war. These effects were experienced by the Labour Government for two years.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And a very severe drought.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, one of the worst droughts in the history of the State. The first year in office of the present Ministerial party resulted in more than doubling the deficit. That cannot and never has been accounted for except by laxity in administration on the part of the Government by giving concessions, largely, as I pointed out earlier in the evening, to the section represented by the Country Party in this House, concessions which resulted in the loss of more than £100,000 in revenue. There must have been slackness in administration to increase the deficit in one year by such a large amount. In the next year it was followed by a deficit of £705,000; in the third year by a deficit of £652,000; in the fourth year by a deficit of £668,000; and in the fifth year, the year which has just closed, by a deficit of £686,000, or a total addition to our accumulated deficit in five years of £3,411,000. This

does not take into account the £177,000 shortage in July of this year. In five financial years the deficit was increased by £3,411,000. There must be something wrong.

The Premier: We are paying a lot more in wages and salaries, to begin with.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am coming to that.

The Premier: And a lot more by way of sinking fund.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not account for it. Dealing with the financial year 1916-17, the year of the change over from the Labour Government to the present party in office, there was no increase in wages, and the increased payments by way of interest and sinking fund were very small. There was no important change by way of increased wages or expenditure, and no change in trade and commerce occurred in that year to justify an increase of the deficit from £248,000 to £700,000. It should not be forgotten that the party now in power took office after having proclaimed throughout the whole period of our Ministerial life that we were running the country into bankruptcy. They gave a solemn pledge to the people of the State that they would restore the finances to a sound position without imposing additional taxation or going in for any retrenchment in the Public Service. The result has been as hon. members know. We have an accumulated deficit of £4,773,000, or, with the July shortage added, £4,948,000, or £52,000 short of the five million mark.

Mr. Munsie: And it will soon reach the five million mark.

Mr. Money: And the people have just returned them again.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That will not help the position.

Mr. Munsie: Returned them on misrepresentation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Unfortunately the people of the country do not take any interest in financial matters. The hon. member will probably have experienced this himself, that when addressing the electors, the one subject which would tend to drive the audience out of the hall or induce them to indulge in extensive yawning would be a dissertation upon finance. They do not want to be bothered; they do not care. I am sorry to say that very few candidates at the recent elections made any effort to enlighten the public or stir up any interest in the subject of the financial position of the State. If the reports of candidates' speeches as published in the Press may be taken as an indication, this question was generally glided over with the statement, "I stand for a policy of sound and economical administration."

The Premier: What did you say?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Or else it was "A well thought policy of immigration." This was the sort of platitude that was doled out to the electors, "a policy of sound and economical administration, a well thought out policy of immigration." Then the subject

was passed over, and candidates got on to the question of roads and bridges.

The Premier: That is what you said.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, I tried to pin the Premier down to the financial position. I tried to make it the issue of the elections. Had I succeeded in doing so and had the judgment of the electors been pronounced accordingly, the hon. member would have been occupying a seat on the Opposition side of the House to-day. But with the aid of his numerous candidates and a very loyal and strong Press, the Government party managed to side-track the financial issue.

The Premier: No, we faced it well.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As a matter of fact the Premier kept on right up till election day repeating that we would close the financial year with a deficit of £400,000. "That is not bad, is it," was his comment, "reducing the deficit this year to £300,000?" The Premier spoke as if the financial year had already closed, notwithstanding that it had still three months to run. The people believed him.

The Minister for Mines: Well, you could not deny it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I was denying it, because all the time the Premier was saying this he had a deficit of £650,000, or £250,000 over his estimate.

Mr. Pickering: He must have been counting on the June surplus.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This, then, is the position: after five years of office the Government, who were returned to power pledged to restore the finances to a sound position, have added to the deficit to the extent of £3,411,000. That would not be so bad if we had had a falling revenue throughout those five years, but what is the position?

The Premier: I have the exact position for you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In the year just closed the Treasurer received by way of revenue £2,126,000 more than was received by the Labour Government during its last year of office.

The Premier: Largely from the railways.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not matter; the Treasurer received £2,126,000 more than was received in the financial year ended June, 1916, the last year in office of the Labour Government. The present Premier, who has been Leader of the Government for just two years, received during his first year £926,000 more than was received in the year previously.

The Premier: It cost far more to get it.

Mr. Munsie: That is due to bad administration.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I shall deal with that. The present Treasurer received £926,000 more during his first year in that office, and in the year just closed he received £918,000 more than in the previous year.

The Premier: From trading concerns; it was not revenue at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Or in the two years he received a total of £1,844,000 more than was received by the Treasurer previously.

The Premier: But it cannot be regarded as revenue.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Here is the point: When a Treasurer finds himself in receipt of an ever increasing revenue each year,—

The Premier: I never see it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps not.

The Premier: The Treasury receives it and pays it out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is where the failure of the Government comes in. They have kept on paying it out.

The Premier: There is no failure about it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When the total sum flowing into the Treasury is constantly increasing, there should be opportunities to economise and cut down expenditure in such a way as to reduce the deficit.

The Premier: What about the Arbitration Court awards?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Before ever the Arbitration Court interfered with the administration of the present party, namely, in their first year of office, they had a deficit of £700,000.

The Premier: It did interfere with us.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It did not. It does not seem to matter, so far as results are concerned, whether wages increase or not, whether the total revenue increases or not, the expenditure always outstrips the revenue. The increase in expenditure is always in excess of the increase in revenue, and so we end up the year no better than the preceding year. It should be remembered, too, that the Government have succeeded in keeping the deficit within its present limits only by imposing greatly added burdens upon the taxpayers of the country. In 1916 the taxpayers of this State paid £407,000 by way of direct taxation; last year, under the same heading, they paid £955,000, the result of enormously increased taxes. Last year the Treasurer received £334,000 from income tax as against £91,000 in 1916: he received from land tax £57,000 compared with £47,000 in 1916; from dividend duty he received £244,000 as against £103,000; from totalisator tax £57,000 as against £12,000; from stamp duty £177,000 as against £64,000, or a total from direct taxation of £955,000; and again may I refer to the increased charges generally. I mention these facts in order to show that, whilst the Government have been faced with great difficulties in the way of meeting increased wages and increased costs all round for the requirements of the Government—

Mr. Mann: And the Wyndham Meat Works.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is an instance tending to show how not only are the public misled by the Press, but how a member of this House takes his information from a scraggy line or two appearing in the newspaper. A leading article, recently published,

made a rather light reference to some remark of mine on the Wyndham Meat Works, and that has been quite sufficient for the hon. member. Will the hon. member tell me what has been the result of the operation of the Wyndham Meat Works?

Mr. Mann: I wish you to tell me.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Wyndham Meat Works have, no doubt, contributed somewhat to the financial position.

The Premier: The member for Perth wants to know the particulars from you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Nobody can know anything on this subject beyond the information supplied by Ministers. And that brings me back to the point of my demand for publicity regarding the State trading concerns. Hon. gentlemen now in office said that the Labour Government were smothering up the position. Now that those gentlemen find themselves in possession of the Treasury bench, they are free to supply the country with full information on the subject. We have had hardly one audited balance-sheet of the State trading concerns placed on the Table of the House, although the State Trading Concerns Act declares that the balance-sheet of each concern shall be furnished by the 30th September. We have not even had them for last year, for the year 1919-20; merely a statement regarding that year has been laid on the Table of the House. I could very usefully engage the time of the House in quoting from the speeches of the Premier, and of those associated with him, as to the absolute need for the Government of which I was a member, the Labour Government, doing something to stop the drift in the finances—and this at a time when we had only a shortage of a few hundred thousand pounds.

The Premier: A few hundred thousand pounds?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

The Premier: A shortage of £540,000.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier now has as many millions deficit as we had hundreds of thousands. The Premier always did talk in millions. He is never satisfied unless he has round figures—the fine, round, rolling sound of millions. Even in the matter of a deficit he is not content with anything short of millions. I think it is a fair thing that we should ask the Government what they propose to do about the financial position.

The Premier: All right; we will tell you if you give us a chance.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am thinking of the days when I shall be on the Treasury bench, and I want this financial mess cleaned up before I go there. I shall make one or two suggestions before I sit down, but I have not yet reached that point in my remarks. By the way, the present situation is really a nice one. The Government meet Parliament without having even a scintilla of an idea or of a proposal for dealing with the financial position, and they say to the Opposition, "Give us a policy; please tell us what we shall do." It is not the function of an Opposition to supply a Government with a policy. Where

does the much-vaunted principle of responsible government come in when those charged with administering affairs of State sit back helplessly and say, "Tell us what to do; what would you do?" The responsibility rests upon Ministers of putting forward a policy to meet the situation in which the State finds itself. If the Government had done that, probably much valuable time would have been saved in the discussion of the Address-in-reply. The Government ought to come forward with some proposal. We cannot eternally drift at the present rate. The Premier knows that; he has said it over and over again in years gone by, even at a time when our accumulated deficit had not reached half the amount at which it stands to-day. Even then the Premier and those associated with him said that the drift must be stopped or else bankruptcy was in front of Western Australia. What do the Government propose to do now?

The Premier: We will tell you.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Strike oil.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The result of the past five years' administration—and this is where, incidentally, I make my first suggestion—shows that our finance during that period has been lax and loose and without any control whatever.

The Premier: That is not so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Or largely without any control.

The Premier: No, that is not so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: So much is evident from the departmental expenditure, which has increased all along the line even more than it should have done, allowing for increases of wages. Departments which have been practically idle, which have not latterly been doing one quarter of the work that they were doing in the years when this State was carrying out a huge public works policy with loan money, have, nevertheless, largely increased their expenditure.

The Premier: Which departments do you refer to?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Several departments.

The Premier: I do not know them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even at this late stage the Government will have to begin by making a serious and determined effort to carry out that policy to which they pledged themselves before this country five years ago, the policy of effecting economies in administration. Ministers will have to do that, and it is for them to find ways and means of doing it, even though in giving effect to that policy they should create a good deal of trouble and unpleasantness. Economy in administration has got to be effected, and the longer it is postponed, the more serious and the more painful will the operation be. That is just the position: Ministers will have to effect economies. Having regard to this State's revenue, I do not say that it would be a wise policy to attempt to reduce the deficit except by a gradual process. However, what we ought to aim at in the opening session of this Parliament is the cutting

down of the annual deficit. If we could lessen it by, say, £250,000 this year, that would reduce the shortage to £400,000. Then, if next year we could reduce that shortage by another £100,000—

The Minister for Mines: If we have a free run with the railways, we will do better than that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Minister achieves anything like that, he will have done pretty well for one year. But Parliament must insist that the Government shall enable the country to turn the corner and come back. We must reduce the annual shortage, which has been recurring for years. Then, in the course of five or six years, or probably even a longer period will be required, we can get back to a balancing of our public accounts. We shall do very well indeed if we can revert to a balancing in six or seven years. However, the present Government have utterly failed to administer the affairs of the State as economically as was done by the Labour Government. It was a perfect nightmare to Labour Ministers—and the Minister for Mines knows it—the way we were attacked from all quarters because of our alleged failure in finance. It cost us many sleepless nights. Labour Ministers sat down so tight on expenditure that not even a sovereign was expended in a Government department without the closest examination and scrutiny beforehand. I think that, without any boasting, and in all honesty, I can claim on behalf of Labour Ministers that because in their last two or three years of office they sat down tight on expenditure, the Labour Government was able to keep the deficit within limits. During our last year of office we had a deficit of £384,000, and during our five years of office we did not impose £1 of additional direct taxation on the people of this country. But now direct taxation has increased by £559,000. The Ministry that immediately succeeded the Labour Ministry, and has been in office ever since, has not exercised that tight, keen, close control of the expenditure of public funds which is so essential.

The Premier: I say we have.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I say Ministers have not. A tight grip on the public purse may mean only a small sum of £500 here, and £1,000 there, but it all mounts up. There are grants which are justifiable in times when the State is in a flourishing condition, but which are absolutely unjustifiable when the State is hard up.

The Minister for Mines: There are some outside institutions which the Government have to assist more in hard times, when the public are hard up, than in good times.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am afraid our genial Premier has not yet acquired the hard-hearted essential of being able to say "No!"

Mr. J. Thomson: He has been a bank manager.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Premier handled his bank in the same way as he handles the State Treasury, I should have very much

liked to come along to him for an overdraft. But one reads from week to week of deputations to the Premier wanting £500 or £1,000, for this or that, and the Premier invariably gives the amount.

The Premier: I would like to do that, but I am afraid I do not do it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: These are times when the Premier and his Ministers must say "No!" regardless of what row may be kicked up.

The Minister for Mines: And members of Parliament must say "No," also.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is true, and I venture to say that no Minister can complain of any unjustifiable importunity from members of the Opposition. The Premier will acknowledge that in recent years I have always stood by the Government when they have said "No." I have not supported requests for the expenditure of public funds here, there, and everywhere throughout the State. It cannot be done, and Ministers must learn to say "No" even if people suffer great inconvenience and disabilities.

The Minister for Mines: But all that will not get us over our difficulty.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No; but it is something on the way. This is one thing I complain of: for years past, whenever the question of economy in administration has been raised here, the reply has been, "Even if you sacked the whole of the public servants, that would not get over the difficulty; it would still leave you with a deficit." That policy is one which means, if it means anything, that to save half-a-crown is not worth while if one cannot save a pound.

The Premier: Two hundred civil servants have gone since your time.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and I am afraid they have drifted out to old age pensions, and ill-health, and poverty.

The Minister for Mines: The cost of rendering services is the trouble.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that that cost has increased largely of recent years. But Ministers have to realise that we must make a start some time, that the present drift cannot continue indefinitely. I say that Ministers should apply themselves closely and determinedly to their departments, in these hard times that are ahead of them, and see that where expenditure can be cut down it is cut down unflinchingly. In the circumstances in which we find ourselves, the State is not justified in employing one solitary individual who is not able to render full service for the salary or wages that he receives—full service, I say. I think economies can be exercised in many of the departments. I do not desire to labour that aspect of the finances. Our financial position is to a certain extent due to the fact that we have a heavy interest bill upon borrowed money expended upon the construction of public works.

The Premier: That is our trouble.

Hon. P. COLLIER: During the first three years the Labour Government were in office,

we constructed 500 miles of railway. Every one of those railways had been passed by Parliament during the time our predecessors were in office. We were engaged for three years in constructing railways authorised by the previous Parliament.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They dressed up the window.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We provided money for harbour improvements, water supply, railways, and other necessary utilities. The fact is we have not got a sufficient number of people in this State and we are not developing our resources quickly enough to keep the services supplied working at full capacity, and we have to pay interest on the money expended in connection with those services.

The Premier: That is our trouble all right.

Mr. Money: Our railways are too extensive for our population.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As I have mentioned before in this House, we have a mile of railway for every 87 persons in Western Australia. In Victoria there is a mile of railway for every 460 persons and in New South Wales there are 370 people to every mile of railway. That is to say, in Victoria 460 people are busy providing freights and so on for the railways as against 87 persons here. We are over-built so far as the railways are concerned.

The Premier: Do not forget that 1,000 miles of the railway are on the goldfields.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know that that alters the position.

The Premier: In Victoria the lines run mostly through agricultural districts.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The trouble in Western Australia is that we have had to build about 400 miles of railway to connect the outer districts with the metropolitan area, and that great length of railway has to pass through a good deal of unoccupied and unproductive country. That, of course, adds to the difficulties of our position. We have all these railways and other public facilities provided for our small population. That leads me to the position wherein we are forced to take determined steps to bring into productive use all the land possible which is adjacent to the railway lines already constructed. We must cease building railways. Unfortunately, railway construction over long distances was inseparable with the development of our agricultural areas in the earlier days, and we have miles and miles of railways pushed out to serve a few score people. Settlers were sent out for a hundred miles or so and that necessitated the construction of a hundred miles of railway for them. Then others would settle a hundred miles away in another direction and another long stretch of railway would have to be built to serve their requirements. In this way, enormous lengths of railway had to be constructed to serve the purposes of a few thousand people.

The Premier: The land is held and occupied.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I agree that the lands in the wheat belt in the newer areas which have been settled within the last 10 or 15 years are being brought into use and production as quickly as possible. The settlers there are doing their best in the circumstances, and I believe that, with a favourable season or two and with a fair price for their products, we shall see a very rapid expansion in the wheat areas. At the same time, we have considerable areas of land in the older settled portions of the State which are served by railways, but which are not producing to anything like their full capacity.

Mr. Corboy: Some are not producing at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I daresay that land is not producing more than from 10 to 25 per cent. of its full productive capacity. We cannot afford to borrow more money to open up virgin country while we have considerable areas close to existing railways which have not yet been brought into full production. We must cease such operations and endeavour to force the land into use. There may be different opinions as to the best method to be adopted to bring about such a result. One has only to travel along the Great Southern railway, portions of the Eastern railway, and along the South-West line, to appreciate that you can go for hours through first-class land carrying only one or two families who represent the total population on those holdings.

The Premier: I would like to know where such blocks are situated.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier is always concerned about these older areas, but he knows that in some of the parts I have referred to the land is in the same state as it was 30 or 40 years ago. We have reached a stage in our history where we should review our land taxation. We must readjust our legislation to meet the circumstances as they exist at the present time. In every other State that is being done. The amount of money accumulated in land values in the shape of unearned increment—I am talking of city lands as well as country areas—is enormous and it is time that the lands were made to contribute something more towards the State coffers. If we refrain from taking the necessary steps, even by way of indirect taxation as was the case in past days, we will simply be extending an invitation to the Federal Government to invade our functions. The Federal Government has done that to a certain extent already. The Federal land tax carries an exemption of £5,000 but I would not be surprised to see at any moment that the Federal authorities have decided to reduce that exemption. The Federal Government will hesitate to impose taxation where the State has already imposed taxation, but they will not hesitate to act if we neglect our opportunities as I have indicated. We have got to see that every acre of land held close to the railways is brought into production whether

we accomplish this fact by way of resumptions or taxation or purchase direct for closer settlement. The land should be taken over and subdivided so as to encourage production. If that were done, it would solve our troubles with the railways. If we can add thousands or at any rate hundreds of settlers to those using our railways, we will provide extra freight and so help our railways to become profitable concerns. There are two ways by which economics can be effected and the financial position rectified. The first is strict and rigid economy in administration and the cutting down of expenditure. I hope this House, regardless of party political interests will insist upon Ministers cutting down their expenditure.

The Premier: You must remember that awards have increased wages and salaries.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You raised the rates to meet them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On the other hand, instead of reducing the expenditure, the policy of the Government is, apparently, to meet the increased railway expenditure by imposing taxation or increasing charges for the services rendered. It is quite the easiest way to deal with this difficulty because the adoption of that method means less adverse comment and less criticism. If I may say so without giving offence, that is the lazy way of meeting the situation. It is quite easy to meet an extra hundred thousand or so by increasing the rate of charges or imposing taxation upon the people. That is much easier than burning the midnight oil in order to discover the remedy for the position.

The Premier: The Minister does not manage the railways.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is true, but the Minister can give instructions to the Commissioner. The Premier surely would not contend that the Minister for Railways should sit back and say "The railways do not concern me. The Commissioner is in charge of that department." The Minister can tell the Commissioner that he must reduce his expenditure. When I was Minister—and perhaps the present Minister has done so too—I told him on more than one occasion that he must effect economies. It is the responsibility of the Commissioner to the Minister to show the way economies can be effected. We do not pay our Commissioner of Railways £2,000 a year to sit down in his office and allow the railways to run themselves.

The Premier: I do not think the Commissioner is doing that now.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The staff has been increased. There are more engineers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not for me to say what reductions should be made, but at a later stage I will show where increased expenditure has been incurred without rendering any effective service, where innovations have been brought about without any necessity. It might be all very well if

the condition of affairs in Western Australia was most satisfactory, but in view of the financial position to-day, these innovations should not have been introduced. This is not the time when we should start putting buffet cars on country lines travelling over long distances, serving comparatively few people merely for the sake of collecting 9s. or so per trip. The old system under which passengers were able to have a cup of tea or other refreshments at stations along the line, served the purposes very well indeed. The Commissioner might very well have refrained from incurring expenditure in providing the facilities I have referred to.

Mr. Munsie: As, for instance, providing a shower bath at a place where the train stops at midnight.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have noticed a number of these things which require attention, although I admit many of them may be small alterations and innovations, which, however, have involved the department in increased expenditure. If the Commissioner of Railways fails in these smaller matters, he is likely to fail in the greater things connected with the railway administration. I can assure the Premier that I will give him every assistance possible, so far as I can honestly and legitimately do so, in his difficult position regarding the finances. He will not find me complaining unduly or supporting those who complain because they have suffered from the exigencies of the financial position of the State. I have not done it yet, and I do not intend to commence now. Our financial position resolves itself into this: that we are in pawn to people outside the State. We are being drawn upon by the Commonwealth authorities unduly and I endorse what the member for Carnarvon has stated. We got no consideration from the Federal Government during the five years I was in office and I do not think, no matter what party may be in power, that we can expect consideration from the Federal authorities. According to the attitude of the Federal Government, Western Australia constitutes something which may be drawn upon whenever they choose to do so. They are levying taxes upon us to-day which, if the money were available to the State Government, would largely relieve us of our financial difficulties. It may be considered somewhat undignified for one politician to criticise other politicians, but I have no hesitation in saying that most wilful extravagance is indulged in throughout the Commonwealth by the present administration. They are quite prepared to levy taxation wherever they can, without regard to the effect it will have upon the development of the State. Moreover, we have to pay tribute every year to money-lenders abroad, we have to find interest and sinking fund on our loans. I believe it was a false policy for the States to embark upon so extensive a borrowing policy as they have done in past years. Because of the recklessness of that policy we are pledged right up to the hilt to money-lenders

in other parts of the world. That is one reason why we are unable to sell the products of our own land at a reasonable price to our own people; we have to extort higher prices in order that we may be in a position to pay tribute to money-lenders in other parts of the world. Except where essential, our borrowing should cease. We have over-pledged ourselves, and we are now pledging the credit of posterity, while by our deficits we are becoming still further indebted to foreign money-lenders. I wish to say in conclusion that I shall be only too pleased to assist the Government wherever I can, with a view to helping the State out of its difficult financial position.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.17 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 9th August, 1921.

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

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBERS.

Hon. W. J. George (Murray-Wellington) and Mr. E. B. Johnston (Williams-Narrogin) took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

PAPERS—STATE TRADING CONCERNS.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [4.36]: I have here the balance-sheets for the year 1919-20 of the following State trading concerns:—State Saw Mills, State Implement Works, State Quarries, and State Brickworks. I would draw the attention of members to the fact that the reports of the Public Works Department laid on the Table of the House last year contained the unaudited balance-sheets of these concerns. I shall be glad if hon. members will put aside the ignorant criticisms which have appeared in the