

owing to the blunder, apparently, of a printer in the first place, and the oversight of a reader in the second place. Several words have been omitted in the interpretation of "adopted child" in Section 2 of the principal Act, and consequently the interpretation in that Act reads absolute nonsense.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: How did it remain undiscovered so long?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I suppose the measure was not administered to any extent. The principal Act is 60 Vict. No. 6 (1896). The paragraph was intended to read, and probably in the draft was, as follows:—

"Adopted child" means any child concerning whom an order of adoption has been made as herein provided; and "adopting parent" means any person who is, by any such order of adoption, as herein provided, authorised to adopt a child; and, in case of an order being made in favour of a husband and wife on their joint application, shall mean and include both husband and wife.

In the print of the Act the words "has been made as herein provided; and 'adopting parent' means any person who is, by any such order of adoption" have been omitted. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.51]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, the 17th August.

Question passed.

House adjourned at 4.52 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 5th August, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: 1, Return of receipts and expenditure of the Western Australian Government Railways for the quarter ending 30th June, 1915. 2, Reports under Sections 54 and 83 of the Government Railways Act, 1904, for the quarter ending 30th June, 1915.

QUESTION — AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, JUTE IMPORTATION.

Mr. HARRISON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it considered by his department to be in the best interests of agricultural development that the present methods of selling jutes at the value of contents contained therein should be continued? 2, What was the estimated loss to the industry, taking the returns for the 1913-14 harvest, under present methods in respect to jutes for (a.) wheat exported, with bags, say, at 7s. per dozen, and wheat at 3s. per bushel on the farm as mean values; (b.) wheat used and milled in the State, taking similar values; (c.) chaff at £3 10s. per ton on the farm and jutes at 6s. per dozen, with an average of 28 bags to the ton?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: I would like to ask the hon. gentleman to postpone this question until next sitting.

QUESTION—CHARTERED STEAMER "N2": RENT AND CONDITIONS.

Mr. MALE asked the Premier: 1, Are we to understand from the reply given to the leader of the Opposition yesterday that the Government has secured the use of the steamer "N2" free of any charges, or is there a rent to be paid in addition to the terms and conditions stated yesterday? 2, If so, what amount of rent or charter money has to be paid?

The PREMIER replied: 1, The Government received the steamer free of charter charge in consideration of the vessel being put in a seaworthy condition and maintained in such condition. Docking, repairs, and insurance involved an expenditure of over £5,000 by the State. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—POISON AREAS, CLASSIFICATION.

Mr. S. STUBBS asked the Minister for Lands: Is it the intention this year to reconsider the present classification of poison areas in the Great Southern District?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: It is not intended to re-classify any land, but a Bill will be introduced dealing with the re-pricing of land. This will include poison lands, which was the subject of investigation and report by a Special Board in 1914.

Mr. S. STUBBS: Will it be done this session?

The Minister for Lands: Certainly.

Mr. S. STUBBS: And some relief afforded to the unfortunate persons concerned?

QUESTION — EXPEDITIONARY FORCES, LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO PARLIAMENTARY OFFICIALS.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS (without notice) asked the Premier: Following on the intimation given yesterday by the Premier of his intention to move for leave of absence to members of Parliament

joining the expeditionary forces during the whole period they are away, I desire to ask if he would favour a similar or any concession as regards leave and salary being granted to officers of Parliament who might enlist.

The PREMIER replied: I fear that the matters contained in the question are those for consideration by the committees controlling the various officers of both Houses, and are entirely beyond the scope of myself, either as Premier or Treasurer; although I take it that the concessions already granted to the public servants would naturally also be granted to officers of either House of Parliament.

BILL — FREMANTLE MUNICIPAL TRAMWAYS AND ELECTRIC LIGHTING ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Minister for Works and read a first time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. MALE (Kimberley) leave of absence for two weeks granted to the member for North Perth (Mr. Smith) on the ground of ill-health.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Mr. GILCHRIST (Gascoyne) [4.40]: I owe it to the Gascoyne district to take this opportunity to reply to reflections made upon the pastoralists of the North-West during the recess. In April the Minister for Lands made a statement to the Press which contained this paragraph—

After the attitude of the Legislative Council on the Vermin Board Bill when wealthy squatters were encouraged to repudiate their liabilities under an agreement by which £65,000 was obtained from the State, I am prepared to expect anything from my political opponents. Reckless as they are undoubtedly becoming, it is very satis-

factory to know that the Government have full legislative authority to protect the State's funds against this latest attempt to prevent the collection of arrears of agricultural land rents, etc., and according to the best legal authorities, it is not necessary for us to write off the £9,000 due from the Gascoyne pastoralists under the Vermin Board Act. I, therefore, propose to go straight ahead with a view of getting this amount paid.

In the *Geraldton Express*, a newspaper which is in the fortunate position of having exceptional opportunities of knowing the Ministerial mind, I find an article published in February last under the headings—"A Generous Legislative Council."—"Fortunate Gascoyne Squatters." After dealing with the two amendments proposed, while the amending Bill was before that Chamber, the article concludes—

The Assembly refused to agree to the course adopted by the Council, and the Bill will probably be shelved, with the result that the 36 pastoralists of the Gascoyne, including some of the wealthy men of the State, will be able to get away with £66,000 of the people's money. Truly, the Legislative Council ought to be proud of its handiwork.

A section of the Gascoyne people is charged with conspiring with members of another place to bring about a deadlock by which they would be able to repudiate their honourable obligations to the Crown to the tune of £66,000. I absolutely deny that there ever has been from an authoritative source the slightest suggestion of repudiation. On the morning of the day I spoke on the amending Bill in this House, I attended a meeting in Perth of these Gascoyne pastoralists who happened to be in the City at the time, and discussed the position fully with them. The opinion was unanimous that the Government should be asked to take over the fence and maintain it out of the general revenue, in the same way as the other great barrier fences of the State are maintained. The opinion was almost unanimous that in the event of

the Ministry refusing to accede to the wish of the meeting the fence should be abandoned. There was not one dissentient from the principle laid down and adopted at the beginning of the meeting, that whatever happened the liability of £66,000 must be shouldered by the pastoralists within the fence. I have never heard of anybody proposing repudiation of this debt.

The Minister for Lands: Did you read the debate?

Mr. GILCHRIST: Everybody admits that a mistake has been made, and we desire to cry a halt before the burden becomes altogether unbearable. At the end of January I attended a meeting in Gascoyne which was more representative of the Lower Gascoyne pastoralists, and afterwards addressed the following letter to the Minister for Agriculture—

At a meeting of ratepayers of the Gascoyne Vermin Board district held here on Saturday night the following resolution was passed:—"That the Government be approached and asked to take over and maintain the fence out of general revenue, and that the Government levy upon the ratepayers a fixed rate of 6d. per 100 acres for the period of thirty years to cover interest and general fund on the £66,000 owing." In the event of the Government declining to maintain the fence, it was unanimously agreed, but with much regret, that the fence would have to be abandoned. In either case there is not the slightest suggestion that our obligations should be in any way repudiated, and the burden of the £66,000 will be honourably faced. I am asked to point out however, that the fence has been protecting Crown lands (unleased) and that all leased lands are actually Crown lands, and the present rental places the Government, to a certain extent, in the position of landlords. The ratepayers claim, therefore, that the State should shoulder some of the burden, even as the road board is doing in regard to reserves within the vermin board district.

Mr. James Gardiner: At the present juncture £66,000 would be rather acceptable to the Treasury.

Mr. GILCHRIST: They would not get the whole of the £66,000 paid at once anyway. Neither of the two meetings I attended in Perth and at Carnarvon lent the slightest colour to the suggestion that we ever plotted, or even desired the repudiation of the debt as it stood when the Minister made his statement to the Press. When the amending Bill was before the Legislative Council, that Chamber was willing to pass it if the Government would agree to reduce the maximum tax to a shilling per 100 acres, in other words, to double the rent on the land, instead of it being trebled as it is under the existing arrangement. As the one shilling rate would raise £4,400 per year, it can readily be understood that this amount, if fixed for 30 years, would pay not only interest and sinking fund on the £66,000, but even cover maintenance, which is reckoned by the officers of the department, once the fence is placed in order, to cost £1,200 per annum. If this amendment had been agreed to by the Ministry, the Bill would have been passed, and there would not have been any litigation, or irritation, and the collection of arrears would have been placed beyond question. The Minister for Lands states that "wealthy squatters have been encouraged to repudiate their liabilities." I need hardly point out to the House that the wealthy squatters within the fence, who can be counted on the fingers of one hand, have never lost any sleep over the vermin tax, heavy as it is. If the men within the fence had all been wealthy, there never would have been any agitation, and I would not now be making an appeal on their behalf. It is because many of the men inside the fence are struggling beginners, and are finding themselves cruelly handicapped, and their holdings jeopardised, that I again press this matter on the attention of the House and the country. I placed before the Minister the case of two steady young men, born in the State, who with their father had taken up land. One of the sons was working the property while

the father and the other son were driving wool teams in order to keep things going. So far these men have not been able to get assistance from the financial institutions and they are finding the vermin tax almost prohibitive. I know of other instances which together make a strong case for revision of the position. A man who has been hard hit by the drought writes to me as follows—

I notice the Government are going to repair the fence and enforce the old Act. I cannot understand why they are going to do so when it is the wish of the squatters concerned that it should be abandoned, as they now find the fence was a mistake in the first instance and useless as a means of keeping out rabbits. One reason why it is so is that the fence runs across all the creeks and watercourses in its track... Every time it rains heavily enough to make the creeks and watercourses run the fence will be washed away... Up to a few months ago, there had not been many washaways owing to the drought, yet the upkeep of the fence has been very heavy. What must it be when we have rainy seasons?

There is a point raised in this letter which is worthy of serious consideration, and it is that the Minister has authorised heavy expenditure for making the fence rabbit proof again after the numerous washaways of the past nine months, and that he has determined to continue the upkeep of the fence and all the heavy burden of this most remarkable tax in face of the distinctly expressed wish of the local pastoralists who are the only persons concerned in the matter. This raises the question, which must be considered fundamental, as to the right of priority of the wishes of a locality with regard to its own purely local affairs over the wish of the central executive.

Mr. James Gardiner: Who particularly asked for the fence; was it these same squatters?

Mr. GILCHRIST: The late Minister for Lands, Mr. Bath, declared a few years ago that "centralisation of authority had had a most pernicious effect on politics throughout Australia," and the pro-

sent Labour Premier of New South Wales said; "I regard the right of every people to self-govern themselves as one of the fundamental principles of progress and liberty." In the United States political right, like material development, proceeds from the outback to the centre, instead of vice versa, as seems to rule in Australia with crippling and disastrous effect. At the present time practically all Europe is at war, largely in order to vindicate the right of local opinion in Serbia and Belgium. To my mind an executive is not created to be a kind of dictatorship, but to hold the balance between localities in matters of general concern and to register and carry into effect the wishes of a particular locality with regard to its own local affairs, by which other localities are not affected to any appreciable extent. We people of the Gascoyne district contend that the State as a whole, or any part of it outside the Gascoyne, could not be affected by the abandonment of this fence, and we therefore claim the right to demand the abandonment of a work which we initiated ourselves, and for the maintenance of which we have been paying ourselves, the heavy debt of which we readily accept as a debt of honour which will be fully discharged in due time. If the Ministry, who are the real owners of the Gascoyne leasehold lands, decide that this fence must be maintained, upon them the burden must fall; upon us will fall the liability for the £66,000 principal, but upon the Rabbit Department the cost of the maintenance of the fence, as upon them falls the cost of the other barrier fences, towards all of which, by the way, the Gascoyne people have to contribute. In the Governor's Speech appear these words, "My advisers fully conscious of the great struggle proceeding between the Empire as a whole and its enemies, and feeling that now is a time above all others when all persons should act in concord and good fellowship, are not desirous of introducing controversial legislation." In what contrast is the decision of the Federal Government to plunge the whole of the Com-

monwealth, in this time of Imperial danger, into all the bitterness and disunion involved in the Referenda proposals, for which prominent Labour members and Labour officials admit there is no urgency. I can claim to be no party bigot, but I strongly resent this glaring attempt to take advantage of the absence of brave men on the battlefield and the pre-occupation of those who remain in the absorbing issues raised by the life and death struggles of the nations of Europe. I cannot follow the argument of the member for Forrest in that excellent speech he delivered last night, when he said that at the Adelaide Labour Conference he spoke strongly against the motion that the Referenda proposals should be again introduced, on the ground that the time was not opportune. The hon. member declared that he was losing faith in Federation because he found that of late the Federal Government had been showing a propensity for trenching upon State sources of revenue, and other local prerogatives. Yet he declared to this House that he was going to take the platform in order to advise the people to pass the Referenda proposals. Let me say that I despise that fetish of solidarity that is causing some men to surrender their own emphatic judgment and to teach the people the contrary of what they themselves believe, I sympathise with those courageous Labourites, who have not been unknown in this Chamber, who are finding that this Referenda coercion spells political martyrdom. The member for Forrest declared that the one argument with him in favour of the Referenda is that the Upper Chamber in this State is standing in the way of democratic progress.

Mr. Bolton: That is true.

Mr. GILCHRIST: Would it not be more reasonable, and safer for the hon. member to enter upon a campaign for the abolition of the Legislative Council?

Mr. Bolton: We have for years past fought for that.

Mr. GILCHRIST: It would be better for the hon. member to do that than to hand over to a Parliament, meeting on

the other side of the Continent, powers and rights which, once surrendered, can never be recovered. I assert that the Ministry has never once made any serious attempt to affect the position and power of the other Chamber in regard to measures passed by the Assembly. I am as radical and as democratic as the members of the Ministry.

The Minister for Lands: You used to be.

Mr. GILCHRIST: And I am now. When I am convinced that Parliament, and Executive are, as they should be, free and untrammelled institutions legislating and administering by their own volition, and responsible only to the whole of the people of the electorates, then I will co-operate whole-heartedly with the Ministry for the institution of the unicameral system. Meanwhile the Federal Government have decided that these referenda proposals are to be submitted to the people in December next. Doubtless all of us will take the platform on that occasion, and I admit I do not relish it. What right have we to disunite the people and turn them aside from the almost superhuman task which is facing us, and which demands the concentrated untiring purpose of all the people of all the scattered parts of the allied Empires? On Tuesday night the Premier accepted the olive branch held out by the leaders of the two Opposition parties but did not make light of the difficulties in the way of a truce. He and our deputy leader asserted that the Imperial crisis did not demand the surrender of private principles, but that those principles should be asserted in a manner the least galling and irritating to those whose principles were different. Eliminate the desire to irritate, and we soon reach a basis on which to co-operate. I refuse to believe that there is a gulf fixed between Labour and Liberal, coinciding with an irreconcilable separation of Labour from Capital. The Minister for Lands—I am sorry to have to quote again from him—in his Northam speech said the Liberals were now quite united because well drilled by the secretary of the Employers' Federation. A

few days later he explained to the Press that:

The Employers' Federation gets, as I said at Northam, into direct communication with Liberal members. . . . I drew attention to the matter merely to show that party government to-day is class government, and that the employing class have materially strengthened their organisation by securing the services of the secretary before mentioned.

I have not the pleasure of knowing the gentleman who has earned the eulogy from the Minister for Lands, neither do I know his organisation. I have never heard either mentioned in meetings of Liberals, nor in conversation among Liberals. I feel quite sure there is not that class division of party in this House, otherwise we would not see several employers of labour sitting on the Ministerial side. If I were conscious of any pressure attempted to be exerted upon me by the Employers' Federation or any other outside organisation, I would resent it, and would not criticise any attempt on the part of industrial organisations to do similarly.

Mr. Foley: Did not the leader of the Opposition last session read his speech from a speech which appeared in the Chamber of Mines' journal, which is controlled by the Chamber of Mines?

Hon. J. Mitchell: No.

Mr. GILCHRIST: I do not care what the leader of the Opposition did. The Minister for Lands said nothing about the leader of the Opposition or any other person. He said the Employers' Federation was getting into direct touch with the Liberal members. I say it is not. I have never heard the organisation, or any of its works, mentioned at any meeting of the Liberal party.

Mr. Foley interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Leonora has already addressed the House and is not entitled to interrupt. When I call order he must keep order.

Mr. GILCHRIST: It is a common assertion of our opponents that there is an alliance, actual or tacit, between the Liberals and the land owners, merchants

and monopolists. It is a pure figment of the imagination. I say conscientiously that I know no class, section or clique, and all we ask is for a similar assurance from Ministers. I am going to quote from the late manager of the State Implement Works, but in no carping spirit. He said—

Early in the year the Minister verbally instructed me to discharge three men, Briggs, White, and Anderson. Previous to this members of "our party" engaged at the works freely stated that these men had to go, because they were Liberal supporters. After interviews and letters, the Minister summoned me to his office and told me that members of the Cabinet had decided the men must go, and that I would be sorry if I still refused to dismiss them. . . . They were three of the best men at the works.

It is not unfair that we should ask from the Ministry a clear and unqualified statement in regard to this charge of victimisation of men because of private political opinions. Let us know once and for all, to clear the way for a political truce, whether outside industrial organisations have been allowed, and will in future be allowed, to interfere with administrative matters, or to foist upon the country a new principle: if a man thinks for himself he shall not work. When that is made clear we can drop the shibboleths of party warfare, and, as the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Bolton) says, get down to business. The Premier said on Tuesday night that he was in the dark as to the policy of the Opposition with regard to the new trading enterprises. We ask, is there any ultimate objective in the minds of Ministers? Is it the intention that ultimately all avenues of industrial enterprise, however small, are to be closed by the State? If that is so, the position is much simpler for the public and for us. If it is not so, every new proposal for a State trading enterprise must be accompanied with good and convincing reasons for the outlay. The existence of a harmful monopoly; unsatisfactory quality or price of the article or service given by private firms; a pressing need for uniformity, or for a

definite, strong, public grip of an industry in the national interest—one of these must be proved. And, once established, the industry must be placed upon a severely business footing, above the reach of political interference, and run without sentiment and without class or party consciousness. In the controversy in the newspapers between Mr. Davies, the late manager of the State Implement Works, and the Minister for Works, the Minister wrote—

No person was more astonished when taking over control of these works from the Agricultural Department than I was to find that after two years of management by Mr. Davies it was impossible for him to give me the cost of one machine or farming implement manufactured there.

A few days later he wrote—

I can only again repeat in regard to costs of work that Mr. Davies on no occasion has submitted to this office the cost of any agricultural implement manufactured at the works.

On the other hand, Mr. Davies wrote—

At the close of last year it was discovered that no correct record was kept of farmers' accounts. No one knew who had paid or otherwise. To meet the difficulty it was decided to send all accounts along to any person who had had goods from the works, whether they had paid or not. Accordingly this was done, and the farmers gave me a bad time, not knowing that the clerical branch was under the control of the accountant of the Public Works Department.

The Minister's admission and the late manager's undenied assertion prove a lamentable lack of business method, and are no advertisement for State ownership and the nationalisation of all industry. In conclusion, let me say that a political truce will be welcome if it is genuine and honest,—a complete cessation of party tactics, impartial treatment of political supporters and opponents in the apportionment of Government employment, and a full, free, and candid taking of the House into the confidence of Ministers with regard to the financial concerns of the State.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [5.12]: I must congratulate the hon. member on his excellent speech. When he mentioned the gulf separating Labour and Liberal it occurred to me that he should have said "workers and Labour," because the application might be misunderstood. There is no shadow of doubt that to-day more than ever it is apparent to the worker that his interests are bound up with the interests of the employer. The worker realises that if there is danger to anybody it is to the man who holds property and to the man who must secure a day's work in order to obtain his daily bread. The worker and the property owner have always had a great deal in common. Unless we are very careful in administering the affairs of the country there will be a slackening of employment, and the day labourer will be the first man to suffer. The hon. member asked, can we have peace and preference? and the Attorney General interjected that there was no preference. I say there is preference to unionists.

The Attorney General: Do not you prefer a good thing to a bad one every day of your life?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, certainly; but I like to be allowed to make the choice when opportunity offers. If a man is wanted by the Federal authorities for any position in the State, the Federal officials have to send to the Trades Hall. The same thing obtains in regard to those employed by our State Ministry. Will the Ministry say it is not so? Will they say there is no such thing as preference to unionists in the timber industry? Most certainly the principle obtains. There is preference undoubtedly, and while preference exists can Ministers reasonably ask for peace?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): If you do not want peace, have a go.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I propose to deal with the Honorary Minister later on.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister). Take it how you like.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think with other members that the interests of the country should now be the first consideration and every person in the State should be subject to equal treatment. If it is not so, then we on this side of the House still have some very serious work to do. It has been claimed by every speaker that there ought to be no party warfare. There never was a time when party warfare from our point of view was so unnecessary. Ministers can be left to destroy the party which they represent. There is no need to criticise them for party purposes, but we have a duty to the electors which we cannot ignore.

The Attorney General: Your duty is to serve the Empire.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We cannot allow extravagance to continue. If we are to serve the Empire we have to do our best with this great country. We have to do our best to supply men and money; we must see that there is no waste; we must see that production is increased to the fullest possible extent. Nine months ago we heard this same tale; we were told that we should have peace. War had only recently been declared, and the Premier appealed to every member of the House to help him in the government of the country. I remember an offer made to him by the then leader of the country party, the member for Irwin (Mr. Jas. Gardiner). He said that we were all responsible as partners in or directors of this great concern—the State—and offered his assistance. I do not know whether it was availed of, but I know that my assistance was not.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Assistance!

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The assistance of members on this side of the House has not been sought.

The Attorney General: What assistance do you offer?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The last nine months have been the most disastrous this State has known. The administration has never been worse than during that period when Ministers have been supposed to have a right to seek the assistance of every member of this Chamber.

We have built up the deficit during the past year by an additional £560,000. Apart from that there have been many disastrous acts of government during the past nine months. We know that the Premier has put up a very good defence; he always does. Anyone who sat here during the past week could have nothing but admiration for the Premier. No doubt the Premier has ability. He has shown his deftness more than once in this Chamber. No doubt he has a strong personality, but, without doubt, he lacks experience and has not the vaguest sense of responsibility. In the administration of the affairs of this country the Premier has shown no sense of responsibility.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: No State in Australia has been looked after so well.

The Attorney General: Never was a Premier so conscientious to the country.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Nor has the Premier shown any great application. I believe there have never been members on the Treasury bench who have been so disinclined to work.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Get out!

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: You are making a joke.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The present Administration undoubtedly represents the greatest failure Western Australia has ever known. If we take the position as it existed four years ago and compare it with that of the present time, we find that when the Liberal party left office this country was at the very highest point of prosperity. Let anyone ask the people in the street their opinion of things to-day. I was out driving the other day and gave a working man a lift. He said he was working on one of the schemes set going by the present Minister for Lands. He said, "I have got work under the Government but the Government do not treat us as well as we were treated by the Liberal party when they were in power."

Mr. O'Loughlen: Did you buy him a drink?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: He had not the faintest idea who I was. Hon. members may smile, but never before in the his-

tory of the State was there a time when men were offered five days work a week. This man was getting five days work a week.

The Attorney General: Did you have a drought or a war?

Mr. Munsie: You paid them six bob a day.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That was paid by the Labour Government.

Mr. Munsie: No, it was paid by the Liberals for years.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, it was paid by the Minister for Lands in the administration of which the present Minister for Lands was the chief lieutenant.

The Minister for Lands: That is incorrect.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have the names and will give them to the Press.

The Minister for Lands: I say you cannot.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Four years ago there was prosperity on every hand. There was no unemployment; there was no soup kitchen. Everybody got his chance. To-day as a result of four years administration by the Labour Government what is the result? The Honorary Minister has a soup kitchen. I believe Mr. Brown, who led the unemployed up here, is supervisor of beds.

Mr. McDowall: Surely you do not contend that that is a result of the administration?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The power of the Premier was never greater than it is to-day, and, of course, he was never so near his downfall. He is very much nearer to it than the Attorney General admits.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Never was any one of us so near death. Every day brings it closer.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Every time the Premier gets up to speak he is applauded. I admit he is very clever, but his is very foolish cleverness which has resulted in the present state of affairs. He has been very clever in stifling criticism. He knows that neither party opposite is strong enough to force its opinions on the Government. The Attorney General knows that only yesterday the leader of

the Country party offered the Premier his support if he would only be frank.

The Attorney General: Frank Wilson.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I admired the attitude taken by the Premier. He laughed the offer away—brushed it aside. The speech with which the Premier followed showed that if he were half as capable as an administrator as he is when on his defence, he would be magnificent. The Premier would have us believe that he has never refused us information; never deceived the House; never deceived the public. He would have us believe that he told all there was to tell and told it all the time.

The Attorney General: Do you make an accusation?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes.

The Attorney General: That he has deceived the House?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I say we have never got information. The Government hid the powellising agreement from this House for 16 months.

The Attorney General: It is a very serious charge—deceived the House.

Mr. Munsie: This is the truce they are offering.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I offered no truce at all.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: You are accusing the Premier of being deceitful.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Has the Premier given us information?

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Yes.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Has he given us accurate information?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Yes.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: My answer to both questions is "No." Only yesterday he attacked the statement made by the deputy leader of the Opposition who had said that the *Statistical Abstract* showed the trading concerns as having resulted in a loss in cash of over £200,000. That was an absolutely true statement. The loss in cash is over £200,000.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): No.

Mr. McDowall: If you say that, you must admit you know nothing about cash.

The Minister for Lands: Did you supply the deputy leader of the Opposition with the figures?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No; he is quite capable of getting them for himself. True, there are some assets, but what have they to do with the statement?

Mr. McDowall: Can you make up a profit and loss account without putting in stock?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Government have paid away over £200,000 more in connection with trading concerns than they have received.

Mr. McDowall: If an asset is created, it is not a loss. It does not go into the profit and loss account. I am astonished at an ex-bank manager talking like that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. gentleman from Coolgardie makes very serious mistakes himself. The other day I said in this House that the present Treasurer had spent two millions more than was spent by the present leader of the Opposition when Treasurer four years ago. That statement is perfectly true.

Mr. McDowall: Can you produce it in *Hansard*?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, certainly I can.

Mr. McDowall: I challenge you to do it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am not allowed to quote from *Hansard* of the present session.

Mr. McDowall: I challenge the hon. member to find it at any rate.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This accountant from Coolgardie stated that the difference between the revenue received four years ago and now is only £1,200,000. He does not understand the difference between revenue and expenditure and yet he attempts to pose as an authority on accountancy. I was trying to make it clear that the deputy leader of the Opposition was perfectly right when he said we were over £200,000 down in cash on our trading concerns. There is no one foolish enough to suppose that we can carry on sawmills without having timber on hand, or implement works without having work in hand. Everyone knows

there is an asset beyond this cash, but what we say is that the Government have taken revenue to the extent of over £200,000 to help the trading concerns.

The Attorney General: Converted cash into an asset.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: And that is the very thing which at this moment the Ministry cannot afford to do, as I will show later on. I do not wish to contend even that the Government cannot show a profit on every one of their trading concerns. I do not know whether they can or not; what I am anxious about is the cash statement. That is absolutely everything that the deputy leader had before him when he made his statement, and indeed everything that hon. members had before them. Until this statement was made by the deputy leader, we had never had any statement before of the nature made by the Premier the other night. This statement will relieve the minds of a great many people. I was relieved to know—

The Attorney General: What are you grumbling about if you have already got it?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I say we should have had it two years ago.

The Attorney General: Before some of the works were even started, I suppose.

Mr. McDowall interjected.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We had a statement and balance sheet dated 30th June, 1914, that was presented to us a day or so ago. Is that satisfactory? If the Government hide their balance sheets and statements in this way, how are we to know what happens? I am not going to criticise State trading concerns to-day, because I believe we should give the present Minister for Works an opportunity of showing what can be done with them. But I do not want Ministers to misrepresent statements that are made here in regard to these works.

The Attorney General: Who has done so?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: They all do it. Only yesterday the Premier did it. I want to see the present Minister for Works given a chance. He says, "If the works do not pay I shall close them down."

Very well, then, let us leave him to do it. But let me give Ministers a bit of advice.

The Attorney General: Thank you.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Let them take the advice offered by the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) when he said that what the Government wanted was working capital, that the Government should not draw from ordinary revenue to provide working capital for their trading concerns. Because of these trading concerns, the deficit has increased by nearly £250,000.

The Attorney General: No.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Government say they have £250,000, or more, worth of assets. That is all very fine. My advice to the Government is to get their capital, and when they make a profit put it into their revenue.

The Attorney General: Yes, pa.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I beg your pardon.

The Attorney General: Yes, daddy.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Lord deliver us, I would not be the father of that! An attempt was made the other night to show where the State sawmills, the State brickworks, etc., were all equally State trading concerns, and should be treated alike. As a matter of fact, however, a State railway or a State harbour is a public convenience, and a convenience that can only be a monopoly, no matter who owns it.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Do you believe in State sawmills?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We cannot have competitive railways or competitive harbours.

Mr. Munsie: You have got them in this country. Take the Midland Railway, for instance.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Now there is this difference in regard to the State brickworks. In respect to this undertaking, I say there were enough brickworks established here to supply the people with all the bricks they wanted. In spite of that, the Government came on the scene and put into the industry nearly £30,000 in order to compete with the people who were already established. The State brickworks are, therefore, very different. The member for Swan (Mr. Nairn) was

quite right when he said that competitive undertakings were very different from State railways.

Mr. Munsie: We realise that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Agricultural Bank does not compete with other banks.

The Minister for Lands: I say it does compete with other banks. You can get advances from other banks for agricultural propositions.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Agricultural Bank was established for the purpose of making advances for the improvement of the broad acres of Western Australia and the public estate. The Minister knows very well that no bank in the world will lend money to people who borrow from the Agricultural Bank.

The Minister for Lands: They do.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: They cannot do so. What does the Minister know about banks? Of course he may know all about Powellising contracts. A man can go into the Lands Department and pay £5, and get a selection; but can he take that lease to any ordinary bank and get an advance upon it? Not he! Ordinary banks have no machinery such as the Agricultural Bank possesses. A man can go to the Agricultural Bank and say, "Here is my lease. I will clear 500 acres if you will advance me £500 upon it." The Agricultural Bank possesses the machinery and employs the methods to enable it to give advances to settlers by way of progress payments. That is one of the reasons why that institution was brought into existence. When a man has established himself and developed his holding he very often goes to a private bank. Why not? After all, he is freer when he goes to a private bank.

Mr. Munsie: He pays a little more interest too.

The Minister for Lands: But he does not do it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Until he does that he cannot expect the ordinary bank to take these leases over. The Agricultural Bank, after all, is a bank set up to develop the public estate. If there is a failure the estate, of course, reverts to the Crown, and the improvements upon

it become an asset, just as the scantlings at the State sawmills are considered to be an asset to-day.

Mr. George: Better than that, I hope.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier was unfair when he referred to the Wyndham freezing works agreement. He said in his opening remarks that the previous Government had made such arrangements as to give a certain party control over the works. The Minister for Lands knows that the real position was that a certain sum of money was to be provided for any person who would build the freezing works, under conditions which safeguarded the interests of the small man, absolutely. The Premier had no right to say that we were neglectful, under our proposals, of the interests of the small man.

Mr. O'Loughlen: How would you enforce the conditions laid down?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That would be done under the agreement.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Suppose they broke it, how would you enforce it? All you could do would be to withdraw the subsidy.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There was no subsidy.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What else could you do? Nothing.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The lawyers could settle that; but even the Attorney General, a lawyer himself, sits silent.

The Attorney General: Do you want me to make a noise?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Tell us how he would enforce it?

The Minister for Lands: We sit silent in order to hear your answer.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: By the usual process, they would be taken to court and compelled to obey the law. They could, for instance, have been called up before the resident magistrate at Wyndham for this purpose. The Liberal party passed a vote for the work, but the vote lapsed in 1912. The present Government sent the Hon. Mr. Johnson up to Wyndham to report. He reported that all the stock from Wyndham that was fit to be sold could be sold on the hoof, and that it was of inferior quality and unfit for freezing. On the 25th February last he

came to this House and obtained a vote for the work. At this particular time he was negotiating with Mr. Nevanas.

The Minister for Works: Not when he was up there.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: In February, when we discussed the matter in the House and the member for Kimberley (Mr. Male) asked for information, the Minister for Lands failed to give us any. He had no information to give. He was having plans prepared, and if the price was right would go on with the work. He had been negotiating then for the previous 12 months. Mr. Nevanas had been asked to report, and had been paid to report long before that. Why were we not told? Why was this hidden from us? The present Minister for Works, with his usual frankness, has allowed me to look at the file. I am not going to discuss the file to-day. Apart from this, it is very interesting. The contract was for £155,000, and it was let without tenders being called. It was a secret contract made between the present Minister for Lands and the Government, and Mr. Nevanas, and the price was £155,000. Why were not tenders called, or the public or Parliament told what was going to happen when the vote was sought? Can the Minister say? When we discussed the matter on the 25th February last, why were we not told?

The Attorney General: It was not completed.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It was in the air, and had been going on for nearly nine months. This secret contract was let. No one had the slightest idea what was to happen.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: When was the contract let?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Just after the House adjourned.

The Minister for Works: It was let some time after that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Not three weeks after.

The Attorney General: Yes, it was.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think the Government should certainly be censured for letting a contract for work to cost £155,000 without first calling for tenders,

and without allowing Parliament to know what they were doing. When they discussed the vote before Parliament I do not doubt that they knew what was intended to be done, because they had already paid Mr. Nevanas £1,000 to make a report. I am not blaming the present Minister for Works because he was not in it then.

The Minister for Works: I am taking all the blame.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Why this secrecy?

The Minister for Works: I am getting used to it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Will the Attorney General tell us?

The Attorney General: What secrecy? There was none.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There was absolute secrecy.

The Attorney General: None whatever.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Until the Press got hold of the information no one knew that the contract had been let.

The Attorney General: It has not been let yet.

The Minister for Works: The Press always come regularly to us for information.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Attorney General is quite wrong; the contract was let.

The Attorney General: It was not.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Then why did you pay Nevanas over £3,000 by way of compensation on the material?

The Attorney General: We did not pay anything of the sort.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: A contract was let; it was well established by correspondence. And now the Government have let Mr. Nevanas off. There never was a time when he could not get out of anything he had undertaken and with advantage to himself. There never was a time since negotiations were started when it was not possible for him to leave the Government with the baby, and they have been left with the baby. Why was this? Why has there been this bungling and bad management? The Premier came along yesterday and said, "I have let Mr. Nevanas off, but I am going to spend by

day labour £50,000 more in order to achieve the same results."

The Minister for Works: He did not say that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: He did.

The Minister for Works: That was only the estimate given by the department for the work, namely, £205,000.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It must be an estimate, of course, because the work has not been completed. The undertaking, however, may cost £50,000 more than that estimate. Mr. Nevanas had undertaken to complete these works for £50,000 less than we are going to have them erected by day labour for, according to the estimate provided by the Government. We must leave people to judge for themselves if that is the way they wish their business to be carried out.

The Minister for Works: That was the estimate, either by contract or by day labour.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Are the Government going to build through the medium of day labour?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then it is to be done by day labour. The Minister has admitted it.

The Minister for Works: It does not make any difference whether the estimate was for the work to be done by contract or day labour.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think the public may rest assured that they are going to pay at least £50,000 more than if Mr. Nevanas had been compelled to carry out his contract. If the country has sums of £50,000 to throw about, of course that is all right. The Premier stated that we wished to break down the Cabinet system. We have never had any such wish, nor have we ever desired that Ministers should disclose their intentions before consulting Cabinet. What we do object to is, of course, the caucus. To the Cabinet system we have never objected. How could we object to it? The Premier in his speech here said that the farmers were responsible for the deficit, and only a few minutes before making that assertion he informed me that not one penny of money taken from revenue had been

advanced by the Industries Assistance Board. Throughout the country as well as in this House, however, the Premier has stated that the farmers had created the deficit.

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. Munsie: He has never said it yet.

The Attorney General: There has never been such an unjust statement made as that which you put into the Premier's mouth.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: As a matter of fact, £20,000 less was spent on agriculture last year, in connection with the Lands Department, than in the previous year. Indeed, the expenditure on the Lands Department for last year was the lowest on record. Again, if hon. members will turn to the Mines Department they will find that the expenditure there last year was lower than in any year during the past decade.

Mr. Munsie: That statement is not correct.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think if the hon. member looks up the figures he will find I am right. But not only have the Government spent less—they have actually raked in something like £84,000, according to the Premier, of the £500,000 advanced by the Industries Assistance Board to the farmers. The Government compelled the farmer by threats of forfeiture, to pay his land rents and water rates and, I suppose, his machinery bills. So that the revenue has really benefited. The farmers, it appears, have had very little of the £500,000, whilst the revenue has had transferred from loan over £80,000. And still the Premier goes about the country asserting that the farmer is responsible for the deficit.

Mr. Munsie: He did not say anything of the kind. What right have you to say he did?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: He has said it time and again.

Mr. Munsie: You cannot produce the statement.

The Attorney General: Why cannot you be just?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am perfectly fair and just. Next, I should like to refer to the Industries Assistance Board.

I do not intend to criticise the board, who, I believe, have done as well as any board could have done in the circumstances. The Government are responsible for any shortcomings of the board; the Government were too late in starting the work. I observe that in the Governor's Speech, which has evidently been written by the Attorney General, His Excellency has been made to say that the great majority of the farmers have been assisted. That is a libel. Not more than 20 per cent. of the farmers of this State have been assisted by the Government.

The Attorney General: The speech says nothing of the kind.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Speech says—

Not only have they supplied the great majority of them—that is, the farmers—with seed wheat and fertilisers, but with the actual necessities of life, both for themselves and their stock.

The Attorney General: You are sticking in the words "the farmers."

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Did you supply fishermen with seed wheat?

The Attorney General: What does the Speech say?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It says—

Not only have they supplied the great majority of them—

The Attorney General: Who are "them"? Go back to the antecedent.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Let me read further—

The Government, realising the difficulties of the settlers—

The Attorney General: Yes; the settlers.

Mr. George: Are not the settlers farmers?

The Attorney General: They may or may not be. Settlers are newcomers on the land, not old-established farmers.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I accept the Attorney General's apology, and will not proceed further with the matter. The Attorney General says the Speech does not refer to farmers, because a farmer is not a settler.

Mr. McDowall: According to the Farmers and Settlers' Association there

is a difference. The association use both words.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There is no doubt whatever that the Government wished it to go forth that they had helped the majority of the people on the land to put in their crops—that they have assisted the great bulk of the people on the land.

The Attorney General: You have been corrected.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No. The Attorney General apologised, I understood, for inserting these words in the Speech. We know that there are over 20,000 producers in this State, and I shall be very surprised indeed if the Government have assisted 5,000 of them. According to the Speech, the Government have imported £250,000 worth of flour, wheat, and other commodities. Of course, some of these importations went to the farmers; and I understand the Government insist that the farmers who have been supplied shall be charged at the average cost to the Government. That is to say, if the average cost of chaff was £10 per ton to the Government, all the farmers shall pay £10 per ton, and similarly with bran. I should like to know if it is not enough for the farmer to pay the actual value of the stuff he gets, without also paying for the Government's mistakes. We know that a lot of bran and pollard was imported from the Argentine, and the freight on that, we are told, was something over £5 per ton, whereas the ordinary freight paid by ordinary merchants was about £3 10s. per ton. It is a fact that at the time the Government paid freight at the rate of £5 per ton from the Argentine, ordinary merchants were bringing maize from Java and bran and pollard from Japan at freights of between 35s. and 40s.

The Minister for Works: Were they bringing those commodities here?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: They did bring them here, with the result that the Government cannot sell their bran and pollard. The Government are now calling tenders for the sale of their bran and pollard in lots of 500 tons.

The Minister for Works: That is because the drought broke up and the farmers got plenty of feed for their stock.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No matter what had happened, there would have been a loss to the State of many thousands of pounds owing to the blunders of the Government in making these importations.

The Minister for Works: The importations were necessary in order to keep the cattle alive.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: They were never necessary. Merchants who know their business got fodder from Java and Japan at a freight of 35s.

The Minister for Works: Merchants who knew their business refused point blank to bring meat here to feed the people.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, they did not. At all events, I am discussing the mismanagement of the Government in connection with the importation of bran and pollard. As regards wheat, I venture to say a good deal of the imported wheat will be carried over to next year. We know the agreement which has been made between the Government and the flour milling companies. We know that the companies have protected themselves to the extent of paying the Government for wheat only as they use it, which is wise on the part of the millers. If they cannot sell the flour, moreover, they do not pay at all. It is a heads-I-win-tails-you-lose sort of agreement. The Government are bound to lose under it all the time. I am not blaming the millers who secured the contract; I think they showed business acumen; but I am blaming the Government for having made such a contract. The millers are being supplied with wheat which will cost them nothing until they sell it as flour. Week by week they merely give the Government a cheque for the stuff they have actually used. Is that good business for the country? Are these Ministers who can be trusted in bad times to look after the country's interests? In connection with this matter I wish to mention that but for the action of the Grain and Foodstuff Board we in Northam would be compelled to buy our flour in Perth. It

was the intention of the Government to bring all the wheat from the country districts to Perth, but the Grain and Foodstuff Board had promised that the wheat should remain in the country and it remained there. They are honest men—

The Minister for Works: Some of them are.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: And they made their statements in honest fashion. They are all honest men. There is another point in connection with the wheat business. The Argentine wheat was bought at a price which necessitated the Government's charging £18 10s. per ton for flour. I believe that the wheat was landed here at something like 8s. 4d. per bushel. But the local farmer was paid only 6s. 9½d. for his wheat. He had to contribute to the revenue something over 1s. 7d. per bushel as a special tax. Now, the wheat taken from the farmer at this low price was not sold to the consumer at a correspondingly low figure. The consumer was charged a price based on the 8s. 4d. per bushel. Accordingly, the difference of 1s. 7d. per bushel went into the revenue, and that difference represents a special tax imposed on the man who had a few bushels of wheat when the season was done.

The Minister for Works: I hope that is true.

Hon. J. MITCHELL. It is quite true. I ask, is it a fair thing? That is the point. Had the Western Australian farmer produced his wheat in the Argentine, the Western Australian Government would have given him 1s. 7d. per bushel more for it. Notwithstanding this criticism, I do not wish to reflect very severely on the work of the Grain and Foodstuff Board, because I know exactly what has happened. I am not going to criticise the members of that board, because I know they have had great difficulties to contend with. Again notwithstanding my criticism, I consider the Government deserve some credit for the work they have done.

Mr. Munsie: But you did not feel disposed to give it to them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes I did, and I acknowledge it here.

Mr. Thomas: The very first time in your life.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Government deserve credit for what they have done for the farmers, but I do not think that they have any occasion to boast because any other Government might have done better. I am pleased to see that a Bill to amend the Land Act is to be brought forward. For four years this has been promised. Four years ago every member on the Government side of the House was pledged to support a reduction of the price of land; it was part of the policy of the Government. A great many members on the Liberal side of the House were also desirous of supporting the reduction of the price. But in the four years which have passed we have heard very little about it. Last year the Minister for Lands promised to bring in the Bill but he did not do so. The price at which land is being sold is still far in excess of 15s., which I understand is the maximum price to be charged.

The Minister for Lands: That is not correct.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is, according to the Premier's minute attached to the report of the special board, but I do not wish to anticipate the Minister. The uncertainty, however, is having a bad effect on land settlement. It is unthinkable that this question of the price of land can be used to buy votes throughout the country year in and year out, and election after election. I hope the Government will fix the price and finish it once and for all. The price is an important question in connection with land settlement.

Mr. Foley: You admit you took no risk in putting up the price when you were dealing with the land?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I believe I acted reasonably. I did not wish to night to discuss this question but since I must, I may say that when I determined on a scheme of land settlement, it had the effect of changing Western Australia from an importing to an exporting country. The broad acres of the State

will yet help us out of our difficulties. We are looking to the farmers to-day to save the situation and they will undoubtedly do so. When I determined to fix the price of land, I did not propose to sell it under the conditions which obtained before my time. I did not propose to say to the selector, "Go into the bush and put in your pegs," and then leave him there without roads or water supply.

Mr. Willmott: You should have adopted our scheme of railways before selection.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: When I set out to put people on the land I thought, and rightly too, that the price of the land ought to be more or less according to its worth. For instance, a block near a railway should cost more than a block away from it. Is there anything wrong with a scheme such as that? Is there anything wrong with charging the man who has land in the vicinity of a proposed railway a higher price than for land some distance away?

The Minister for Lands: The only thing wrong about it is that you had no railways anywhere near the land.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is not true.

Mr. Willmott: You only had theoretical railways.

The Minister for Lands: Imaginary railways. Take the Wongan Hills land, there was no railway there when it was settled.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We passed the Bill authorising the construction of that line. The Minister for Lands went there and said to the people, "If you return me to power I will cancel the authority to construct this railway." The Minister knows well that he held up the construction of this railway for a year. We were told by the present Minister for Works that this railway line would not pay axle grease, whereas it is now one of the best paying lines in the State. Ministers should blush with shame at the mention of the Wongan Hills-Mullewa railway. I was dealing with the price of land and endeavouring to explain to the House the system I adopted. I have been abused from one end of the State to the other

in connection with land settlement. Every other man who wanted a vote abused me; even members of my own party did so. They were of the opinion that I was not right in putting up the price of land. I always held that a block nearest a railway should fetch more than a block 10 miles away. The Minister for Lands says that we had no railways then but he forgets that we sent out a very capable board of advisers to fix the routes of the railways we intended to construct. This board consisted of the then Surveyor General, whose death we all regret very much, because he was a most capable officer whose interest was entirely in his work. We also sent out Mr. Paterson, the manager of the Agricultural Bank, and Prof. Lowrie. Were those men not capable of saying where the lines were to go? Then there was also Mr. Muir, a most capable railway man who was connected with the Works Department. All those gentlemen went out and marked the maps.

The Minister for Lands: I can give you instances where you promised land at 15s. near a proposed railway, and 27s. 15 miles from it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There must have been some mistake.

Mr. Willmott: The farmers suffered by these mistakes all the time.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. member knows nothing at all about it. He knows as much as other critics know, and that is nothing. Yet he criticises just as freely as if he knew a good deal.

Mr. Willmott: I can blow you out on the subject.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We intended to provide all the facilities necessary for marketing the produce of the farmers. Another thing that has been mentioned in connection with land settlement is the question of water supply. The Minister for Works went to my town and attacked me on this question. He knew very well what happened. He knew that the first work I undertook was the provision of water supplies, and he also knew that in my opinion the Works Department were too slow, and because of that I stepped in and gave the control to the Agricultural

Department and appointed a Public Works Department engineer to see that roads were cleared and water was provided. That was done immediately after I became Minister for Lands. The Minister cancelled all that and then went round Northam and said that I left the people without making proper provision for water supplies. In 1910-11 there was spent on roads £17,473 and on water supplies £27,800. We put down 76 tanks in that year and 17 wells, and there were in progress of construction 43 tanks and five wells. The largest tank was of a capacity of 11,000 gallons and another was of something over 4,000 gallons. It is true that the Minister for Works who followed me spent much more money in the next year, but he only completed 106 tanks and put in 84 wells. He employed boring parties all over the State and the work cost 6s. 9d. a foot.

The Minister for Lands: If you did so much in regard to water supply, why was it necessary for me to do all this?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Of course it could not all be done in one year. We had 25 parties out when the Minister took office, and those parties were engaged in the work of providing water and clearing roads.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not wish to detain the House at any great length on the question of land settlement, because we will be able to discuss it later; but I hope hon. members will realise that they are not justified in saying the Liberal party put men on the land and left them there without conveniences, or that we did not clear roads and make provision for water supply as rapidly as we could. Under the present Government the civil servants have been reduced to 44 hours per week, with, of course, a corresponding reduction in their salaries. The public offices are closed on Saturday at great public inconvenience and without any substantial good resulting. The Government had no right to make these changes

without consulting Parliament. The Minister for Education has had to close his schools and turn the children away one day in every three weeks. Surely with all the money the Premier has had there could be no real necessity for this. The Government know that the cost of living has gone up day by day, notwithstanding which they have made it impossible for civil servants to earn their full salaries. I notice, too, that the Government have asked members to agree to a reduction of their Parliamentary allowances.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): How do you like it?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not mind it, but I think it was altogether wrong on the part of the Government to have made such a request to members just after the close of the session. I have signified my willingness to submit to the reduction to the end of July, and for just as much longer as the Government likes. I have told Ministers that I will agree to support a Bill to bring about a reduction in a constitutional manner. If they will bring down a Bill to reduce Parliamentary allowances during the whole period of the war it will have my support.

Mr. Foley: They are doing it without the Bill.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: They cannot make any such deduction without authority from members themselves, or by an alteration of the Act. I think the proper method to employ is that which I have indicated. Recently the Government steamer "Western Australia" started for London, but shortly afterwards returned to port. At Fremantle some of the men were placed on trial for having refused duty. In the course of their evidence before the court, two of the engineers said the vessel was not seaworthy. The captain said she was, but had been forced to return for repairs. The magistrate found the charge proved, fined the men, and sentenced them to be imprisoned until the time of sailing. It was said at the trial that an appeal would be made to the Government. I would like to know if the Government were appealed to by the

solicitor defending the men, and what was done when the appeal reached them. Were the men allowed to stay in prison until the vessel left, and do the Government think it was fair to have put the men in prison at all, seeing that the engineers declared that the vessel was unseaworthy? For my part I think it was a scandalous thing to do. However, I suppose we will get the information when the Minister deals with the matter of the sale of the vessel.

The Minister for Lands: You had better give notice.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Perhaps I had, for I can easily believe that the Minister will not give any information without pressure being brought to bear.

The Minister for Lands: The trouble is to know what you want. Put it down in writing.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I will put the Minister down presently if he is not careful. I propose now to deal with the financial position.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I thought you had to catch a train to Northam.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am still here, thanks to the interjections. During the past four years the Government have had in revenue £19,935,441 as against £13,928,737, which the Liberals had in the preceding four years. In other words, the Government have had six millions more revenue than was enjoyed in a similar period by their predecessors, in addition to which the present Government have borrowed £8,311,563 more than was borrowed in the preceding four years. They will say that a different method of book-keeping, and their trading concerns, account for this additional revenue. Within reason, that is true, but it is not the whole truth. The position four years ago was this: that our investments in railways, harbours, and gold-fields water supplies returned £928,329 over and above working expenses. The interest and sinking fund bill amounted to £1,046,000, and so the debit to general revenue for interest and sinking fund was only £117,671. Hon. members will realise that this is not a very large sum as compared with the vast proportions of

the bill to-day. Last year the railways, harbours, and goldfields water supply returned £864,221. But we have a set-off in cash against that of £221,417, the balance of expenditure over the revenue of £557,010 in connection with the trading concerns, so the total amount earned by investment available to meet the interest bill of £1,546,652 is £642,804. We have only £642,804 to work upon, leaving the general revenue to pay the balance of the interest bill of £1,546,652. That is the position that marks the financial danger to-day. The deficit amounts to, roughly, £1,200,000. That has to be paid, but the additional interest bill is going to last for all time, and before long we shall have to debit revenue to cover the interest outside the earnings of our investments. The total loan indebtedness to-day is £36,400,000, showing a tremendous increase during the past four years, an increase of something like £12,000,000. Here again there is danger, because we have been spending from loan and revenue over eight millions a year, as against £4,600,000 four years ago. How is this expenditure to be maintained, and if it is not to be maintained, how are men to be kept in work? Enterprise is being discouraged. Everyone is threatened with higher taxation and higher railway freights, and everything possible to discourage enterprise has been done. The Federal Government propose to borrow twenty millions in Australia, and the war expenditure, we are told, will amount to 45 millions. We know we have to find our share, either by way of loan or of taxation, to the extent of something like three millions. These are two very serious situations, and now we are told that we shall have to depend upon our own resources. To-day we are getting three millions of loan money supplied by Great Britain at the rate of £250,000 per month. This will finish in October. We ought not to delay. We ought to take into consideration just what the situation is. It is of no use to wait until trouble overtakes us.

Mr. O'Loughlin: What do you suggest?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I will suggest something presently. It is of no use shutting our eyes to the fact that we have

invested our money badly during the last four years. Harbour works have been put under way at Bunbury. It would be interesting to know how much the Government intend to spend on them. The expenditure on railways is not at all in proportion to the total borrowing. The Premier says he has done his best. No doubt he has done his best to raise revenue from every possible source. He has threatened the farmers with forfeiture if they do not pay their rents, and he has advanced money from loan funds in order that these rents may be paid, and the proceeds have gone into revenue. The Government have also advanced money to the farmers to pay for water. They have increased the freight against the farmer and the fares against the people of the country, including the metropolitan area.

Mr. Thomson: Quite right too.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not think it was right to increase freights against farmers.

Mr. Thomson: I was referring to the increase in fares in the metropolitan area as well as in the country.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier must remember that his gross revenue has been magnificent. He has had a terrific amount of money to spend and he has spent it. The Government should tell the House how they propose to finance the State in the future.

The Minister for Mines: You were going to suggest something.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I intend to do so, but the Premier should have told us. The Minister knows that our deficit last month alone increased by £150,000, and we had to find £30,000 in cash for trading concerns. There is no possible chance of the Premier spending eight millions of money during the next two years. There will be no possible chance of raising such a sum and consequently something must be done if the people are to be kept employed. The Premier in his happy way asks, "What is the deficit?" He said Victoria had a worse deficit than ours, that, while ours amounted to only £567,000 last year, Victoria's totalled £1,500,000. As a matter of fact, the *West Australian* gives Victoria's deficit for the

year as £540,000, or less than ours. Then it must be remembered that Victoria has a population of 1,500,000, against 325,000 in this State.

Mr. Thomas: That should be an argument against having a deficit at all.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No; in bad times there is no reason why a State should not have a deficit, but Victoria's gross revenue is very much greater than Western Australia's, and that State can better afford to have a deficit than we can. The Premier does not mind the growth of the deficit; it will be two millions before we are much older. While I thought it my duty to produce these figures relating to the finances, because the public ought to know where they stand, there is a silver lining to the cloud. We cannot, however, stand idly by in face of the present situation. Something must be done. I warn the Premier that "something" means economy and means much more than knocking off a few pounds here and there from which no good can result. If we are to have true economy, money must be expended in the proper directions and put to its proper use. Instead of setting up socialistic enterprises we must develop the natural resources of the State. We must develop agriculture and get population to help us to do it. We must develop the pastoral industry, and to do that it is necessary to encourage people to go out and stock the land and spend money on it. Under the Act the term for which the Minister can issue leases is too short to justify people incurring the expenditure. The Government should give attention to the question of extending the leases and setting up a longer term under the new leases. It is of no use asking people to develop a pastoral holding under a 10 or 12 years lease. The Government must get back to the term of 28 years at least. Ministers might laugh, but unless they encourage people to produce all the wealth possible and to create all the employment possible, there will be a crisis. The mining industry should be encouraged. Never was there a time when prospecting could be so easily undertaken as at pres-

ent. Water is plentiful everywhere, and gold discoveries are frequently being reported.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Is it not encouraging the pastoral industry to supply means of transport?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: State steamers?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There were steamers before the State vessels were bought. It would have been better to have utilised the £100,000 spent on State steamers to provide water supplies on pastoral lands. May I point out that in the past ten years we have multiplied the area under crops in this State by five. I believe the present area can be multiplied by five during the next ten years if we immediately set to work in the right way. The agricultural possibilities of Western Australia are undoubtedly great. We can produce wheat, fruit, meat, potatoes, etc., as cheaply and economically as they can be produced anywhere in Australia, and we have proved it all along the line. Our primary industries should produce no less than 12 millions of money this year and, were it not for the fact that we have a good season from Wyndham down to Eucla, where everything looks promising for an abundant return and fair prices, the outlook for this State would be black indeed. Additional taxation will be necessary for carrying on the war, but no one will object to paying the money because it will be possible to meet it from the enormous value of the return from our primary industries. If there is money available to spend, let me urge the Government to go on with the work of building railways, opening up harbours, and providing settlers with other necessary facilities, in order to enable them to develop the land. Let us leave no stone unturned to bring every possible acre under crop.

The Minister for Lands: It is a bit late to start this season.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is never too late to start. The Government should encourage private enterprise. If they wish to restore confidence they must

make the people feel that their money, when invested here, is safe, and that they will be encouraged and assisted by the Government so long as the conditions under which they ask men to labour are fair. The Government might well take a lesson from the Midland Railway Co. who are up and doing. They have a special agent visiting the State and dealing with a portion of their land. The member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) spoke of the need for constructing a spur line. I am not quite clear what he meant, but I know that the Midland area is a valuable asset to Western Australia. It does not matter who works that land so long as it is worked. I welcome the hon. gentleman's statement that the company now intend to make a special effort. That is just what is wanted in the State. The population problem will probably prove much more difficult than the financial problem. It is hard to get settlers, but no matter how great the difficulty we must get them because it is the only way to guarantee the future success of the people who are now here. If the present population is to bear the whole burden of the last few years, it will be considerable. If we can spread that burden over a much greater number of people, it will prove very much lighter. The Premier urged us to be optimistic. No matter how we feel or how black the outlook might seem, we are to be optimistic. He appealed to us to be cheerful, evidently as Voltaire's man felt in his time of trouble, though we might have some difficulty in looking as cheerful as he did. It is of no use being anything else than cheerful. We must be optimistic and we have a right to be, because there is justification for it. The country justifies our optimism. In conclusion, I hope the Government will realise exactly what the position is, that they will realise it now and endeavour to do what is right by the State. During this debate members of all parties have offered their help to the Government. All are willing to help, but the best help, I think, will come from criticism levelled at the Government. If we can get the State on the right track once more, there

should be no doubt about its future prosperity.

Mr. THOMAS (Bunbury) [7.57]: There can be little doubt but that the member for Northam exerts a most soporific effect—I was nearly asleep. The hon. member should take first prize in a political marathon race. He reminded me of Tennyson's brook—men may come and men may go, but had it not been for the train leaving in half an hour, the hon. member would have gone on for ever.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I have earned my money and you never have done so in this House.

Mr. THOMAS: I do not think the hon. member has, but it is not my purpose to indulge in any unkind criticism. My first intention was to say how very much I appreciated the very kind expressions uttered by members during the course of the debate, and, largely to express my appreciation of the fine utterances made, I propose to occupy the time of the House for a few minutes. In listening to the debate last afternoon and evening, I was struck by its high tone generally. It is a pleasing interlude, a sort of oasis in the vast desert of political squabbling we have from time to time to find that, under the influence of strong feelings of a national character, this Parliament is capable of rising above its ordinary tone and taking a higher and better view of things in general. Among the many speeches of an excellent character delivered I listened with extreme pleasure indeed to the utterances of the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner). On the occasion of the tabling by the Premier of a loyal motion, the speech made by the member for Irwin was instinct with sympathy and sentiments that do him credit. He expressed himself in language most felicitous, and the feeling behind it carried a measure of conviction to every member present in the Chamber. I have heard many good speeches delivered in the House and outside it, but I have never heard any speaker hold his audience so completely as the hon. gentleman did on that occasion. I agree with the hon.

member in some of the remarks he made in regard to the Auditor General, and his little exposition on that occasion conveyed to me a new understanding, threw a new light on the office occupied by that important Government official. I think the member for Irwin (Mr. Gardiner) was quite correct when he said that it is the business of the Auditor General to conduct the members of the Ministry, or individual members of it, as the case may be, through the intricate mazes of bookkeeping and auditing, and to assist them in the difficult work they have to do, instead, on the contrary, of sitting back and waiting until little errors and mistakes are made which he should have prevented and then adopting the part of an ordinary common or garden critic. The constructive is the highest form of intelligence that the human being possesses, and that is the sort of intelligence this country wants. We have all too many destructive critics, and I do not think the Government need employ experts for that particular purpose. Possibly, had the suggestion of the member for Irwin been carried out some time ago, many of the objections now raised by members of the Opposition with regard to the light thrown upon the working of trading concerns and other things would have been obviated, and this House would have been in fuller possession of that information which seems to be so ardently desired by members. I myself should like very much to be closer in touch with the working of these concerns. I think every member has a right to see that as much information as possible is provided for them. Apparently, for some reason or another, that information is never available until it is so belated as to be of little value. If that could be overcome it would indeed be a very desirable consummation. The member for Swan (Mr. Nairn) in a very fine, logical and friendly speech, which I much admired, dealt with many questions and expressed many opinions with which I heartily agree. He spoke at some length and some fervour on the education question. While he has at all times been a

strong advocate of economy in administration, and while he and the members of his party have always talked about cutting our garment according to our cloth, he launches forth in a tirade against the Minister for Education because that hon. gentleman has "dared" under the stress of the troubles we have upon us to-day to make the slightest reduction in the hours of attendance of children at the public schools. The hon. member seemed to be under the impression that that little alteration was to stand in perpetuity. Having that impression he took advantage of the occasion to launch forth with fiery eloquence in support of the system of free and compulsory education, and all the good things that come in its train. It comes rather late in the day from the hon. member to begin teaching the Labour party as to what that party ought to do in the matter of free education. It has been a plank of the Labour party's platform ever since it has been in existence, and for the past 20 years, day by day, week by week and year by year, that party has fought persistently and insistently for the accomplishment of one of the grandest and noblest principles we have ever stood for.

Mr. Nairn: Then why go back upon it?

Mr. THOMAS: If the hon. member never goes back upon his principles more often than the Labour party have gone back upon theirs he will be all right—I was going to say something else. As a result of that 20 years' agitation, of fighting for the principle that we then believed in and most people did not believe in, we have reached this stage, that for the first time in the history of Western Australia, and possibly in Australia or any part of the world, we have absolutely free education from the kindergarten to the university. In spite of troublous times, the most troublous times Western Australia has ever known, under the difficulties of drought, war, and other disabilities, the Labour party have not hesitated to put into effect the platform they have advocated for so long. It is cer-

tainly rather late in the day to come here and tell us that we are backward in carrying out that principle. We have never been backward in carrying out that principle or in putting it into effect. And how are we depriving the children of that principle now? All hon. members of this House know that the great need of this country is economy, and the one thing essential in our administration is that it shall be economical. We have attempted to stem the financial stress by means of putting an additional taxation upon the people in order to meet our just requirements, but that was denied to us on every occasion that it was sought. The last resort, objectionable as it is to every member of the Labour party, just as objectionable to me as it is to anyone else, that we have had to fall back upon has been that we have been forced to make a reduction in the hours of labour of the men employed in the various Government departments. By the action of our opponents we have been driven to do this. We had no other course open to us but that, and no hon. member can deny it. We might have turned men out on the streets or reduced their wages, but we did not do that. What individual, who possessed a spark of democracy to-day, would have advocated such a course? We have, therefore, asked them to work fewer hours for correspondingly lower pay. As every other branch of the public service has had to give half a day in every week, in the ordinary course of events the same thing has been applied to the staff of teachers in Western Australia. I believe that altogether something like 20 days will be lost in a period of 12 months, if it continues as long as 12 months.

The Attorney General: The instruction has gone forth that extra home lessons should be given to the children.

Mr. Thomson: They are not getting them in our district, at all events.

The Attorney General: Then I am sorry for the hon. member.

Mr. THOMAS: I think the hon. member's children must be all grown up by this time, because most of us who have boys or girls going to school have the

constant complaint that they are getting too much home work. The small loss of time which has been effected will be no serious detriment to the education of the children for the coming year. I am not sure of that, and I am open to conviction on the point. At all events, it is only a temporary arrangement brought about by conditions over which we have no control. I deprecate the idea of any hon. member trying to take credit for discovering a mistake, or what he claims to be an error, which has been committed against the best interests of the State itself. No other course was open to the Government than this. One individual may claim that as he has a railway in his district, it would be fair for every other section of the service of the State to economise, because, in his opinion, this railway, or whatever else it may be, is of national importance. He will say, "Economise where you will, but do not come near my electorate." A man may have one pet theory, and say, "You can touch whatever else you like, but this one thing is mine." Much as I regret that any stoppage of the onward course of our educational system must take place, that anything whatever had to be done in this respect, I recognise that the Minister for Education has been forced by circumstances to do this. I trust that the good feeling which has marked the inception of this session, and that the expression of good-will towards men given voice to by my hon. friends will be more than merely a pious expression of opinion. I trust that throughout the session good feeling will prevail and that consideration will be given to every measure which is introduced—and there are not many—and that this consideration will be fair, honest, and generous. If this is done I would be safe in asserting that the product of the present session of Parliament will be the finest on record in Western Australia. In my opinion too much valuable time has been lost in the past in idle bickering and idle recriminations which have irritated members on both sides of the House, and have produced a condition of mind certainly not conducive to the creation of the best

legislation. If a kindlier feeling could be engendered in all sections of this small community of ours, I am satisfied that our minds would be more free from the shackles of what I may term "party suppression," and that a better product will be the result. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Gilchrist) in the course of a very forceful and eloquent speech upon the Vermin Board Act, seemed to think that he had very strong cause for complaint against the Minister for Lands. The hon. member loudly voiced his complaint in respect to the assertion that there was anything in the minds of his friends in the way of repudiation—I would not like to use that word myself. The hon. gentleman's arguments were more forcible than convincing. After dilating on the point, he drew our attention to the fact that a meeting of these gentlemen had been held in Perth, and stated that they said at this meeting that they did not want to go in for repudiation, but desired that the Government should take the responsibility of the work, or very largely so, and relieve them from their financial burden.

Mr. Taylor: That is only a Gascoyne way of putting it.

Mr. THOMAS: I may say that as a matter of oratorical pyrotechnics, I must give the hon. gentleman the palm. For exalted rhapsody, to say nothing of sublime flappedoodle, the hon. member has—

Mr. Thomson: What about party criticism?

Mr. THOMAS: Well, I will not go on with that. It is merely giving expression to what is after all a ruling passion. Joking apart, I admired the hon. member's utterance very much. I think the Chamber has seldom listened to a finer oratorical display than we have had this afternoon from that hon. gentleman, apart altogether from whether I agree with him or not. Speaking on the Federal Referenda, I must say that the hon. member somewhat raised my "dander." He declaimed, with very fine effect, against the Federal Government for having dared at such a time as the present to suggest bringing for-

ward a referendum which was going to disturb the serenity of the people, when already they had their eyes fixed upon the terrific conflict which is taking place in Europe. The hon. member used fine language, which unfortunately I cannot imitate just now. In referring to the Labour party he spoke, among other things, of their political coercion, and said that it was leading them on to political martyrdom. Perhaps the hon. member knows more about the coercion that is prevalent in the Labour party than I do, but if there is not more coercion than I have had an opportunity of observing or experiencing up to the present, then it is an invisible, unknown quantity. Again, the hon. member spoke about the shibboleth of party warfare, and used a number of other expressions of that description. While urging us to bury the hatchet, so to speak, he was by his method and his manner urging on his own people to greater efforts of party warfare than ever. He said, "At a time like the present there is no excuse whatever for introducing distracting and conflicting proposals of this nature to disturb the people." I suppose, if that is the case, that we should all sit at home, we should have ceased to attend to our business, we should lie within doors and dream all day of the war going on in Europe and see if we can assist by doing that. Why is it that business men continue to go forth into the business marts and to conduct their affairs as effectively as before? How is it that the ordinary channels of commerce are still open?

Mr. Gilchrist: Some of them are not.

Mr. THOMAS: How is it that the wheels of industry are still moving?

Mr. Thomson: I urged you not to raise party conflict.

Mr. THOMAS: But the hon. member should bear in mind that the question of giving to the Commonwealth increased power for the protection of its people is not and never can be a party question. That is where hon. members, in their desire to find fault with this particular proposal, are unwilling to look at the truth.

Mr. Thomson: It is a matter of opinion.

Mr. THOMAS: How can it be a party question?

Mr. Thomson: Well, it is.

Mr. THOMAS: The Federal Government are merely asking the people of Australia to decide for themselves whether or not they will give increased power to themselves.

Mr. Gilchrist: And the people have turned it down twice.

Mr. THOMAS: In giving increased power to their representatives in Parliament the people are putting increased power into their own hands, because the laws which the majority of the Federal Parliament makes, a majority of the Federal Parliament can unmake. Why should the people fear to trust themselves, and how can it be said that it is a party question when the endeavour is to give a greater democratic power to the people of the Commonwealth as a whole?

The Premier: It would not be a party matter when the power is conferred, because the power will be given to everybody, and not to our party alone.

Mr. THOMAS: I have not the slightest doubt that the referenda have been turned down more than once.

Mr. Gilchrist: Hear, hear!

Mr. THOMAS: But it has to be remembered that a certain individual at the head of one of the biggest monopolies in Australia is alleged to have given, and under cross examination before a Royal Commission, could not deny having given, £50,000 to help to throw political dust in the eyes of the people in order that the proposals might be defeated. Since that individual could not deny the fact of the contributions of £50,000 when on oath, it looks to me as if there was a big interest inimical to the people themselves that is being hidden behind certain party pretences at the present time.

Mr. Gilchrist: Is that a charge that we have bribed the people to vote against the referenda proposals?

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Mr. Knox did, the sugar combine did.

Mr. THOMAS: It was stated in the Federal Parliament by the Federal At-

torney General, whose words I am using, that Mr. Knox under cross-examination before the Royal Commission, asked if he gave £50,000 from the funds of his company to help the Liberal campaign against the referenda, said he would not answer the question, and on being further asked "Can you deny it?" replied "No." What was the result of that contribution of £50,000? If I remember rightly—and I am only speaking from memory now—before the referenda went to the people the price of sugar throughout Australia was £21 or £22 per ton. So soon as the referenda had been defeated, or within a month or two of their defeat, up went the price of sugar by about £2 per ton. And since the sugar combine turn out about 200,000 tons of sugar per annum, it follows that with one hand they gave £50,000 to deceive the people and with the other hand proceeded to plunder the people of £400,000 in the coming year.

The Premier: That is business.

The Minister for Mines: Business acumen.

Mr. THOMAS: And the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Gilchrist) says it is a disgrace to the Labour party and that they will be rent asunder by contending factions in their own ranks if in a time like this, when, as he says, our brave soldiers are far away on the battlefield, they attempt to place before the people a referendum intended to protect the people themselves. Is it a crime that we should seek to do that? Is it right because there is war in Europe to-day that we should permit the war of the combines and monopolies to be waged upon the people of Australia? If it is fair to fight our enemy on another shore, is it not a fair thing to fight the enemies of the Australian people within the boundaries of Australia? A man is as good a democrat and as good a soldier who stands up in the firing line here and fights for the welfare of the people in the internal administration of Australia, as is he who goes to Gallipoli to fight with the Allies.

Mr. Thomson: What was the result of the Royal Commission on the sugar industry?

Mr. THOMAS: The result was that we found that on account of the limitations of the Federal Constitution we could not carry the inquiry by Royal Commission to the limits that it was intended to go. We found that we could not compel witnesses to give evidence which would prove what the sugar combine had been doing in the past.

Mr. Gilchrist: Is it not a fact that Senator Henderson and Senator McGregor and several other prominent members of the Labour party have worked for combinations, worked to bring about combinations, in coal and shipping and tobacco?

Mr. THOMAS: I am not my brother Henderson's keeper, and do not know all the things he may have said in the course of a long political career. It is possible that he may have said something in favour of something of that kind in special circumstances, but I am perfectly satisfied that he never advocated a combination such as this. There is practically only one sugar refining company in Australia. The company have the whole of the sugar industry within their grip.

Member: There is more than one sugar refining company.

Mr. THOMAS: There is practically only one. It is true there is another company in New South Wales, but it is a very small concern.

Member: There is another in Queensland.

Mr. THOMAS: Probably they are all the one affair.

The Premier: In a large measure, the increased cost of living in Western Australia during recent months has been brought about by the attitude of the shipping combine, who have increased freights by 100 per cent. in some cases. We cannot touch them.

The Minister for Mines: Commercial Huns.

Mr. THOMAS: I understand that the profits of the sugar combine amounted to £300,000 for last year. That is the figure at which the profits are shown, but as a matter of fact that says nothing about the combine's watered stock, or their various methods of making their profits look a great deal less than they really

are. I have no doubt their profits in truth amount to double and treble of what they are represented to be. Are we, because we are fighting a war in another part of the world, to sit down and say "You tyrants may go on and steal from the people as long as you like; we have got their thoughts directed into another channel; we will keep them occupied by waving the flag and chanting the National Anthem; we will keep their thoughts directed there, and you can go on with your nefarious practices and fill your pockets as much as you please; our sympathies are with you"? And not only have we the sugar combine, but we have the tobacco monopoly, which instead of enriching a few gentlemen of the cent. per cent. persuasion ought to be pouring hundreds of thousands of pounds into the coffers of the Federal Government, and so helping to defend the shores of Australia to-day. Then we also have the coal kings and the beef buccaneers, and what is possibly the worst of all, the shipping combine. The shipping combine have got Australia within their grip. There can be no question of that. Some time ago, as the result of a strike in Fremantle, the lumpers got a rise of three-pence per hour. In consideration of that increase the shipping combine put up freights 5 per cent. and surcharged passenger fares 5 per cent., thus taking anything from one shilling to two shillings back for every extra three-pence paid to the workmen employed. And, of course, the people say "Disgusting fellows, these beastly low Labour chaps! They are never content. Here they are striking again! Never satisfied, no matter what you do for them. Here they are again, wanting another three-pence an hour." There is not a word said about the shipping combine taking something like 2s. per hour for every man that works.

The Minister for Mines: And in the Old Country they have increased the price of coal to the consumer by about 10s. per ton.

Mr. THOMAS: In England, where the men went out on strike—I saw this in one of the newspapers—the coal owners during the first ten months of the war cleared

an extra 25 millions of money, and the men were working under an agreement made 30 years ago. The men, of course, had no right to ask for anything. As someone suggested, "They should be taken out and shot, these beastly low-down fellows." The employers are perfectly entitled to draw an extra profit of 25 millions in 10 months, but what right have the working men to ask for another 3d. per day? "Shame on them!" And it is because we take a hand in the interests of the people in Australia, because we say any time is right when we can loosen the grip of monopoly strangling the growth of young Australia, our eloquent friend asserts that the referenda are a disgrace to the Labour party, and that we ought to be ashamed of making such an attempt. I cannot recall the hon. member's exact words, but that was the effect of them. At such a time as the present, he says, which is sacred to our national feelings, the referenda should be turned down. I ask, should the people be starved and plundered *ad infinitum*? The hon. member practically says "What do we care so long as we can make you sleep a little longer?"

Mr. Bolton: He uses the words of the Employers' Federation.

Mr. THOMAS: What were they? I sincerely trust that there will not be any contribution of £50,000 forthcoming this time to assist either one side or the other to fight the battle. I trust there will rise up in the minds of the politicians and public men of Australia a desire to fight this time on clean lines. I trust that there will be no hitting below the belt, and that there will be no taking advantage of the predominance of ownership of Press and purse to mislead the people. I am as satisfied as that I stand here this moment, if these issues are placed clearly and fairly before the people of Australia they will be carried by a two to one majority.

Mr. Gilchrist: Not they.

Mr. THOMAS: I did think the hon. member was a democrat. I did think that, apart from the narrow lines which divide party, the hon. member had a great deal of feeling in common with the democracy of Australia. But when he

says that it is not to the interests of the country and not for the benefit of the people that the referenda should be carried, I am satisfied that his conception of democracy is a very remarkable one indeed.

Mr. Gilchrist: My position is that you can do it yourselves as a State party.

Mr. THOMAS: Do what?

Mr. Gilchrist: Fight the monopolies.

The Minister for Works: I tried to fight the patent medicine men myself.

Mr. THOMAS: I must say the hon. member uses a remarkable argument. He contends that we should fight monopolies within the State, whereas in point of fact those who are protecting the monopolies are so thoroughly entrenched behind their big guns, behind their privileges and the restricted franchise, that we have as much chance of combating them as this body of Parliament formed into an army would have of shifting the Germans out of France. And to tell us that we ought to deal with monopolies within our own borders! That may be a very good way of throwing dust in the eyes of the people, but I do not think that any one who has given a thought to the subject will claim that the States have the power to deal with monopolies. In any case there are many monopolies that extend beyond the borders of any one State and, therefore, cannot be dealt with.

Mr. Gilchrist: The Constitution gives the Federal Parliament the right to deal with monopolies extending beyond the borders of the State.

Mr. THOMAS: I have not the slightest doubt that they will attend to all that. If it is desirable to deal with these things why should we refuse the power to our Parliament? Does any hon. member here distrust the Parliament to which he belongs? Does any hon. member fear, in the final analysis of things, that anything that can be done to the detriment of the people will be done? So free is the Press of Australia, and so great is the power of the people, that no matter what Government might be in power, it would be compelled to call a halt. The power asked for is as much for one party as

for another; because we seek to secure it, others seek to obstruct it, and so the game goes on, and the people of Australia have to suffer in consequence. There is only one matter in the Governor's Speech that I want briefly to refer to and it is the proposal to introduce a Bill to provide for a referendum on the earlier closing of hotel bars. If there is one thing more than another that the present national crisis has brought forcibly to our minds it is the extravagance indulged in in many directions by the people. The Premier proposes to provide for the restriction of horse-racing, a wise step to take. In England the Prime Minister has asked the people to economise in their expenditure, so that if the war is protracted they might have the means of financing it. In Western Australia the same condition applies and in my opinion there has never been a time when the people should more properly be given a voice in the question as to whether the existing condition of affairs should go on, or whether it should be altered. From inquiries made from my friends who have a more intimate knowledge of the teetotal side of this question, I find that something like £8, or £8 10s. per head, is spent for the whole of Western Australia on liquor, making the total drink bill in round figures something like 2½ millions sterling per annum. At a time when we are up against the gravest of difficulties any nation has ever had to face, when money is scarce and the prospect is that it will be even more scarce in the future, is it wise to have at every step we take an additional temptation for men to spend the little they have and swell the drink bill to its present enormous proportions? What a credit it is to Western Australia that it spends 2½ millions annually on intoxicants alone, equalling between £8 and £9 per head per annum for every man, woman and child in the State! How many little children who walk the streets to-day bare-footed could be provided with boots! How many women who are poorly clad could be warmly clothed if that 2½ millions of money were diverted into other

channels! In my opinion no bigger question faces our people to-day than the one of controlling the expenditure on liquor. It is the bounden duty of Parliament to do something to help those who cannot always help themselves. There would be less poverty, less distress and less need for the Government to help people in times of trouble if we took from them the power they have to spend money to excess on alcohol. I do not want to pose as a puritan. I have consumed a reasonable amount of whisky and have thoroughly enjoyed it, but the remedy I would support for the better control of the liquor trade is the referendum, and the Bill to provide for this I sincerely hope will be passed by both Houses of Parliament, so that the people may be given the opportunity to say whether they will have the hotel bars closed at six o'clock, or at any other hour they like up to 11 o'clock. Let the people say whether in the time of a crisis such as the present when everything we hold best and dearest is at stake, when we need every effort to secure for us ultimate victory, the hotels should or should not be closed at an earlier hour, so that the consumption of liquor might be restricted. If the good sense of both Houses passes the Bill I am firmly of the opinion that the referendum will result in a majority for the closing of hotels at six o'clock. Statistics have gone to prove that about three-fourths of the drunkenness takes place after six o'clock and it has been claimed that the working man will not have time to get a sufficient quantity of liquor before that hour if he knocks off work at five o'clock. I am sure, however, that he will find time to get a fair amount of it, just as other people will do. It has been claimed that if the hotel bars close at six o'clock that a serious result will take place in the way of unemployment, that many people will be thrown on the Labour market and that the Government will be impoverished because they will have to find work for them. I find, however, that out of every pound spent in the manufacture of beer and spirits something like 4s. in the pound is spent in wages, whereas in

the manufacture of boots, furniture, and other things something like 15s. out of every pound goes to labour. If the 2½ millions to which I have already referred were diverted into other channels, it would provide from three to four times the amount of employment that is being given to-day. Where then does the argument come in about the loss of employment? We would have more men owning their own little homes, there would be happier families and better clothed women and children, while better men would form the backbone of the community. If this thing is done, it will not be for to-day or to-morrow, or for the duration of the war, but we will never go back on it, and in 10 years' time we will reflect and wonder how the existing condition of things to-day was ever allowed to go on.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Would you provide some measure of protection for the licensees who have taken long leases?

Mr. THOMAS: I would. The publicans in many instances to-day are not making even a profit, but in any case I am not out on a crusade against any individual. The publican is no worse off than any other person at the present time. If the best and most sober and upright, and most religious members of this House were put in charge of hotels, and they found themselves up against the proposition of making those hotels pay, they, by force of circumstances, would be compelled to run the traffic for what it was worth, and it would be the duty of the Legislature to make it impossible for them to do that. We owe a solemn duty to the country, and if members do not take advantage of it, it will be an everlasting disgrace. I think it is somewhat discreditable to find that the people who have pretended to fight the temperance campaign are not to-day attempting to strengthen the hands of members of Parliament to carry the Bill for the referendum through both Houses. Why are not the temperance advocates doing something to convince the majority of the people and members of Parliament that

such a measure as is proposed by the Government is desirable.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: They are getting ready.

Mr. THOMAS: I think it will be necessary to have all the agitation possible to convince the people of Western Australia of the desirability of bringing about the early closing of hotel bars. The full blast that they can bring to bear upon public opinion will be required if this Bill is to find its way through the Legislative Council. I trust that if no other good follows as the outcome of the labours of this session, that this measure will find a place on the statute-book of Western Australia.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [8.42]: It was pleasing to hear the hon. member who just sat down speaking in such a determined manner on the question of the early closing of hotels. I consider, at a juncture like this, that the people should have the opportunity of deciding whether the hotels should close at an earlier hour. I have no doubt that if the question goes to the people it will be decided by a big majority that the sale of liquor should be confined to restricted hours. The womenfolk, at any rate, will vote solidly for the earlier closing of hotels. Like my friend the member for Bunbury, I am not a teetotaler, but I am not what may be called a temperance crank. The Governor's Speech is brief and the addresses which have been delivered by hon. members have likewise been brief, and it is my intention to follow on similar lines. We have felt the war cloud hanging over us and we find it difficult to touch on matters which might be termed purely parochial. I was very pleased to see that resolution passed, expressing confidence in those directing the affairs of the Empire, and containing also an expression of optimism, that we will come out on the right side. Similar expressions are required in reference to the affairs of our State. We want a spirit of optimism, a belief in the future of our own country. I believe that Western Australia will prosper in spite of any Government, whether Liberal or Labour.

The Premier remarked that certain members were candid enough to admit that the Government had rendered all possible assistance to the farming community; and he went on to say the Government did not claim any credit for that, because it was essential in the interests of the State. When, last session, I declared it was the duty of the Government to assist the farmers, that by so doing the Government were only protecting their own assets, I was jeered at. I am pleased indeed to find that the Premier and his supporters have realised that the farming community should have due consideration. The Premier also stated that, not having any harvest to carry, the Railways had lost approximately, £190,000. It goes to prove that if we take care of the country, the towns will take care of themselves. It should be the duty of the Government to foster our primary industries. We heard a good deal from the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) in regard to the coal kings and their monopoly. As a matter of fact, there are no greater supporters of the coal kings of New South Wales than our Government. In the 1913-14 report of the Commissioner of Railways, we find that the Government imported coal to the value of £94,254, and used our local coal to the value of £90,680. When hon. members speak of monopolies they should bear in mind their own industries. I would like to draw attention to the fact that the money sent out for imported coal does not pay wages in this State, does not pay rates and taxes here, and does not help to educate our children. I trust the Government will determine to use nothing but our local coal on the Railways. I know it is said that it is not suitable to our locomotives, but I maintain that we should make the locomotives suitable to the coal, and not import coal suitable to the locomotives. If the amount of money annually sent out of this State to foster the so-called coal kings were spent here it would be of vast benefit to the community. The question of whether the Government did right or wrong in entering upon the State enterprises is

purely a matter of opinion. In any case those enterprises should be capitalised. In respect to the implement works, the Minister for Works ought to welcome a select committee. If he is so sure that he is on the right track he should have nothing to fear.

The Minister for Works: I have nothing to fear.

Mr. THOMSON: Then the Minister ought to welcome a select committee.

The Minister for Works: No man who resigns should have an inquiry made into his case.

Mr. THOMSON: It has been asked, should our Railways and harbour works be considered State enterprises. The member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) dealt fully with that, and I do not propose to labour the question. In my opinion a public enterprise is or should be a public utility, of benefit to the whole community. In respect to the State Sawmills, things are not perhaps just as we would like them. Indeed, in respect to the whole of our State enterprises, there is abroad a feeling of distrust, and I think the Government would be wise to appoint some sort of commission of investigation. It would serve to set the public mind at rest.

Mr. Foley: Do you consider the present abnormal time opportune?

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, because if anything is found to be wrong it could be rectified and the enterprises established on a proper footing when normal times returned. I propose to relate an incident which came under my personal notice, and which serves to create doubt as to the manner in which affairs are being administered in some of our State enterprises. The Public Works Department called tenders for the erection of a building, and specified that the timber to be used in the structure was to be secured from the State sawmills at a price of 20s. per hundred delivered on trucks at the nearest railway station. The price at which the contractor could procure the material from local merchants was 13s. per hundred. Of course we can easily make our State enterprises pay if we are going to compel contractors to pur-

chase material from the State mills at 20s., notwithstanding that the same class of material can be purchased elsewhere for 13s.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Did you get any explanation?

Mr. THOMSON: I did not require any; the facts were irrefutable.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The department could have supplied an explanation.

Mr. THOMSON: This is not an isolated case.

Mr. Taylor: Were those prices quoted in the specifications?

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, on trucks at the railway station. The contractor brought the specifications to me and asked if I thought it was a fair thing. Again, the department called tenders for a bridge in the Denmark district, specifying that powellised karri was to be used. Powellised karri at Denmark railway station costs £6 6s., to which must be added 5s. for cartage, or £6 11s., whereas jarrah could be delivered on the spot at £5 per load.

The Minister for Works: Probably the engineer preferred powellised karri.

Mr. THOMSON: But it is not good business to cart material huge distances and pay enormous railway freights when the material is procurable on the spot. This was for a bridge, and we know that jarrah is a splendid timber for bridges.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Not splendid. It is reasonably good timber, but not splendid; it never was.

Mr. THOMSON: I am only quoting these instances as showing why there is a certain degree of distrust in regard to our State enterprises. In view of the large amount of money we have invested in these enterprises, one can only hope that all is well, and that they will return a profit. But in the face of instances such as I have quoted one wonders whether things are quite right.

The Minister for Works: If you had asked me about this I would have made inquiry. It is the first I have heard of it.

Mr. THOMSON: I gave the information to the Press. This is old; it happened some months ago.

The Minister for Works: I see; it is a political matter.

Mr. THOMSON: No, it is not. If the House had been sitting at the time I would have brought it before the House. I merely quote the instance as explaining some of the distrust manifested in respect to our State enterprises.

Mr. O'Loughlen: As a principle, do you believe in State sawmills?

Mr. THOMSON: I am not prepared to say I do.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Your party started two of them.

Mr. THOMSON: The State sawmills are not going to injure the big firm, although probably they will have the effect of closing down small millers, men who cannot stand up against the competition of the Government.

Mr. O'Loughlen: If the State mills charge prices such as you have quoted, the small private mill need have no fear.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: We cannot have a monopoly in State mills.

Mr. THOMSON: That is the point. Apparently the Government are desirous of obtaining a monopoly to supply our public departments with material from State enterprises. Some hon. members may regard it as right that the Government should charge 50 per cent. more than one has to pay to a private individual, but that is not my view.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): That is not done.

Mr. THOMSON: I tell you I can produce the specification.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I say you are wrong.

Mr. THOMSON: I am right. If a private individual is desirous of purchasing jarrah from the State mills he will get it at a considerably lower price than those mills are charging for material for public works.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I think you are making an absolutely false statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon member must withdraw.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I withdraw.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not in the habit of making false statements in the House.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You have not been here long enough to acquire a habit.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope I never will. Whenever I make a charge against the Government I shall be able to substantiate the charge.

The Minister for Works: If you had brought that complaint to me it would have been rectified at once. It is the first time I have heard of such a thing taking place.

Mr. THOMSON: I am merely stating what has happened and giving a reason for the distrust in our State enterprises.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Do you know whether that is still existing?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We had some distrust regarding the chaff merchants at Northam and have not heard too much about it from your side of the House.

Mr. Wansbrough: That does not clear this matter up.

Mr. THOMSON: The Honorary Minister will not put me off the track with the chaff he is trying to throw about. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister for Lands on bringing his inspectors together and giving them instructions to spread agricultural knowledge throughout the various districts they visit. This was a step in the right direction and the Minister deserves commendation for having initiated the movement. I would like him to go a step further and confer with the Education Department with a view to having agricultural subjects taught in the country schools. The leader of the Country party referred to bulk-handling of grain. I admit this is not a time to urge the initiation of any scheme which would involve a large expenditure of money. The member for Nelson expressed the hope that the Government would consider the question of preparing a site at Albany for the installation of bulk-handling. The Minister for Lands will remember that a large deputation waited upon him at Katanning and

made that request, and I am pleased that in a private conversation with the Minister I learned the Government had not lost sight of the proposal. I believe that in due course bulk-handling will be initiated in this State. The Premier estimated that we would have 18,000,000 bushels of wheat. That, at a cost of 3¼d. per bushel for bags, means that the cost to the farming community will be £243,750.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): It does not; not by a long way.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Honorary Minister doubts me he can figure it out for himself.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I know it does not. You will not get as much for bulk as for bagged wheat.

Mr. THOMSON: It would pay the farmers in this State to undertake a direct tax in order to have bulk-handling initiated, because in a short space of time the whole of the money required for bags would be saved. The present system results in waste to the community, and if we could save only a half of that £243,000, the country would be better off for the adoption of bulk-handling.

Mr. Foley: Whom would you tax to provide it?

The Minister for Lands: You must get an increased price from the other end for your bulk wheat.

The Minister for Works: You would only get the price for ungraded wheat.

Mr. THOMSON: I am merely dealing with the question of bags and there is certainly cause for reflection. Personally, I think the sooner we adopt the bulk-handling system the better.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You look at only one side of the question.

Mr. THOMSON: I know more about the wants of the farming community than the Honorary Minister. I would prefer to see more flour exported from the State, so that we could retain the huge amount of money being sent away every year for the purchase of bran and pollard. During the six months ended May, we imported bran and pollard to the value of £60,814. This is one of the reasons why

I am not an ardent federalist. I am what some people would call a little Australian. Western Australia joined the Federation at least 25 years too soon, and we are not in a position to foster our industries as Victoria and New South Wales were able to assist theirs. If we had not joined the Federation, I believe we would have been in a better position financially than we are to-day. Dealing with education, we have had laid before us an excellent report from the department. The Minister for Education remarked that compensation had been made for the shorter school hours by giving the children extra homework. I made the statement that that did not apply to my district, and I here reiterate it. The regulation has not had effect in my district, and that is one of the grievances I have. Recently I met a group of children in Perth and asked them why they were not at school. The reply was, "The Government are too hard up to pay the teachers; therefore we have to have one day off every three weeks." It is pitiable to hear such remarks from children.

Mr. Foley: They are great readers of politics.

Mr. THOMSON: The statement was made to me and I say it is pitiable that children should be placed in a position in which they could make such remarks.

Mr. Foley: It has been hammered into them for political reasons.

Mr. THOMSON: Some members can never see anything beyond political reasons. I believe a majority of the teachers would have been quite prepared to work full hours at their present salaries.

Mr. Munsie: And you would have made just as great a complaint about the reduction of teachers' salaries.

Mr. Foley: Better to do that than charge for education.

Mr. THOMSON: It is amusing to hear members maintaining that salaries have not been reduced. It is farcical to contend that such is the case. Salaries have been reduced.

Mr. Munsie: They have not.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member would have a most difficult task to convince the wife of a civil servant that she

was not receiving less money every week for housekeeping.

Mr. Munsie: No one would attempt to prove that.

Mr. THOMSON: Then why will the hon. member persist in stating that salaries have not been reduced?

Mr. Munsie: Because the husband is giving less service to the State.

The Attorney General: He has received a *quid pro quo*.

Mr. THOMSON: That is purely a matter of opinion. Touching one phase of the war, everyone must admit that technical education has proved a tower of strength to the German nation.

Mr. Munsie: And the nationalisation of coal mines.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): And natural brutality.

Mr. THOMSON: The lesson we can learn from the war is that we must give our children more technical education. The Government have done much in this direction. They have provided facilities, but there is one great weakness. While providing facilities for those intellectually clever and studious and desirous of improving themselves, there is a great difficulty in that a majority of the children on reaching the age of 14 and leaving school, have no further desire to acquire knowledge.

Mr. Foley: They have greater facilities in this State than in any other.

Mr. THOMSON: They may have in the hon. member's district, but they have not in mine. I am referring to the matter as it affects my district. In the cities and more thickly populated centres, the facilities are available, and this order of things should apply to the whole State.

The Attorney General: How could you find the money for it?

Mr. THOMSON: I will explain where I consider the money could be found. Supporters of the Government are asking for helpful criticism.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We are not asking for anything; we take all you give us.

Mr. THOMSON: While members say they are desirous that there shall be a political truce, the unfortunate part is

that they consider the criticism helpful whenever it is to the liking of the Government, but if we criticise any particular portion of their administration we are accused of introducing party politics. That is the attitude of some members on the Government side.

The Minister for Mines: You have never made a speech that has not been complaints from start to finish. You have complained more than all the rest put together.

Mr. THOMSON: And with just cause too. Whenever I have been in a position to commend the Government I have done so, but if I have grievances, and if I consider my constituency is not getting justice, I will voice my complaint. Under our system of education at present infant classes are nothing more or less than State nurseries. It would be interesting to get a return of the number of children under five years of age attending school. I consider we are paying an enormous amount of money to nurse the children in our schools. Instead of taking the children at five years of age, I advocate raising the age to six years.

The Minister for Mines: Six is the compulsory age now.

Mr. THOMSON: Children are received at from four and a half to six years.

The Minister for Mines: From two and a half I think.

Mr. THOMSON: The schools should take no children under the age of six years, and the money being spent on the kindergarten and Montessori systems should be utilised to give the children technical education. If boys and girls, on leaving school, were compelled to attend classes on one or two afternoons or evenings each week, the outcome would be that employers would benefit as a result of the technical knowledge acquired by the children. I think it would be practical to give them one or two afternoons off, and not necessarily the whole afternoon. I think that the money we are spending, on playing at school on the part of children under six years of age, could be better spent by giving our boys and girls technical education, and by compelling them to attend.

The Minister for Mines: That policy would hit the sparsely populated agricultural centres more than any other part of the State.

The Attorney General: I would like to know what would be said at Katanning if we stopped taking children under the age of six.

Mr. THOMSON: That has not troubled the Minister very much when the Government have been saying all over the State that the children should have one holiday in every three weeks. I think the same thing would apply. I maintain, with all respect, that the suggestion I am offering is a good one. It would be of better advantage to the boys and girls to have the compulsory technical education that I have mentioned instead of their time being otherwise wasted—at all events, it is a waste so far as the State is concerned when we turn our infant schools into State nurseries.

The Minister for Works: A child of five years of age is a very good thing to have in a district when you want to make up the requisite numbers for a school.

The Minister for Mines: The trouble in this State is that when children have gone through a course of higher education there are not sufficient openings for them to be employed. They should rather go out upon the lands of the State.

The Attorney General: They want children even under 14 to be relieved from compulsory education now.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope, at all events, those are very few in number.

Mr. Munsie: They are at all events equal to the number of those who are complaining about the one day's holiday in three weeks.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member for Hannans is apparently the authority for the Minister. He gives us all the information required, and it is unnecessary to apply to the Minister.

Mr. Munsie: And it is reliable information too.

Mr. THOMSON: It has been forecasted, but it is not in the Governor's Speech, that we will probably have

brought forward this session increased taxation proposals.

The Minister for Mines: Where is that forecasted? It must be a wireless gone astray.

Mr. THOMSON: The Government are in this position that they must get revenue. We, as a party on this side of the House, have been accused of turning down the income tax proposals of the Ministry. The statement has been made that if we had passed those proposals the land would have been flowing with milk and honey. People always omit in making that statement, however, to say that that tax was being imposed purely to find work for the unemployed.

The Minister for Mines: That could have been struck out easily.

Mr. THOMSON: If a tax is to be introduced I know of no form of taxation fairer than the income tax. I am a believer in that tax, and the more I have to pay to the Taxation Department on that score the better I like it. If the Government are considering the introduction of such a tax I would say to them, "Do not tax the other fellow; tax yourselves as well." I consider that the Government should reduce the amount to at least £100.

The Minister for Mines: Reduce what?

Mr. THOMSON: The exemption. My reason for this is that it would enable the Government to tax single men and women who are receiving fair salaries, and have no responsibilities and no ties.

Mr. O'Loughlen: How do you know they have no responsibilities, particularly the single women?

The Minister for Mines: How would you tax the single women when the men have gone away to the front?

Mr. O'Loughlen: And women who are out of work.

Mr. THOMSON: If single women are out of work they would have no tax to pay. There are scores of single men who have been receiving fair salaries and have no responsibilities, but are getting off scot free. Sufficient consideration has not been given to the married men.

The Minister for Works: We were all single at one time.

Mr. THOMSON: Possibly we were. I do not propose to deal with that question. The Government are asking for helpful criticism. This is not carping criticism. I throw out that suggestion because I believe in it. I would like to urge upon the Government, seeing that they have to look round for revenue, the necessity for seriously considering the introduction of a tax upon amusements.

The Premier: We introduced a Bill to provide for that.

Mr. THOMSON: I am convinced that if the Government introduced a tax on amusements entirely by itself it would be carried.

The Premier: Why by itself? They could have made it by itself by amending the other Bill if they had wished to do so.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Government are looking for revenue I suggest that course to them.

Mr. Heitmann: Why tax men for the amusements they go to, when others prefer to put their money into the Savings Bank?

Mr. THOMSON: I would tax amusements because I regard them as the superfluities of life. In my opinion all luxuries should be taxed.

The Premier: Amusements are not the superfluities of life.

Mr. THOMSON: They are one of the luxuries of life.

The Premier: They are a necessity.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It would be a poor world without a little of it.

Mr. THOMSON: If the people are desirous of going to picture shows, or to a racecourse, or any other place of that description, they will cheerfully pay any extra tax that the Government may like to put upon them.

Mr. Heitmann: The question is, is it a fair thing to tax them?

Mr. THOMSON: I say it is fair.

The Premier: If you think it is fair, why did you not help to pass it when it was here?

Mr. THOMSON: I am pleased at the brevity of the Governor's Speech. I should have liked to have seen an amendment introduced of the Roads Act. The

road boards have had several conferences, and are of opinion that there are matters of vital importance which require to be amended in that Act.

The Minister for Works: I have read their conference notes and cannot find anything very vital.

Mr. THOMSON: It is a matter of opinion as to whether this is vital or not. In the opinion of the Roads Board Conference, it is desirable that these amendments should be made. In reference to the freezing works, I am not going to enter into any discourse on the contract system or any other system. I consider it is a wise step to introduce these freezing works into the North-West. I hope the day is not far distant when we shall have freezing works in various portions of the State. One feels diffident about touching on matters affecting one's own constituency at a time like this. During last session there was passed a Bill for a railway from Nyabing to Lake Pingrup. These people are anxious to know when it is going to be started. I would like the Minister for Works to make some announcement. I know he is placed in a difficult position owing to want of cash, but I hope that is not always going to be the case.

The Minister for Works: It will take its ordinary position with other railways.

Mr. THOMSON: When the hon. Mr. Johnson was Minister for Works he toured the district, and gave the people a definite assurance that he would have a survey made of the line from Ongerup to Needilup.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You do not say the Minister for Lands made a promise?

Mr. George: Did he ever make anything else?

Mr. THOMSON: I regret to see that Ministers are casting reflections upon one of their colleagues.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The most promising man in the House.

Mr. THOMSON: When Ministers doubt the promise made by one of their colleagues what are the people to think? I hope these matters will be attended to in due course. I trust at a later period

when the Estimates are being discussed to deal with one or two matters, and to have a little more to say then.

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [9.25]: I was very glad to notice in one part of the Governor's Speech that there were no Bills to be brought before us of a party nature. I was hoping that the same element which appeared in the Speech would be found expressed in our debates, but already the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) has become militant. He brings in all kinds of matters which are of the utmost party importance. If this session of Parliament is to be brought to a close without party matters being discussed I think we ought all to set the example. The member for Bunbury is not an unimportant member of "our party," and he should be kept quiet. So far as I am personally concerned, I desire to say that the views expressed by the deputy leader of this side of the House (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) are mine precisely. The temperate method adopted by the deputy leader in addressing the House is to be commended by all sides. I am sure that every member on this side of the House, at all events, was very pleased indeed with the way he placed the business before the Chamber. Speaking on the question of the war—because it seems to me to be the all-absorbing topic—I want to say that in the Eastern States the other day, when everybody was bustling about recruiting—especially in Victoria—and hustling up men, bands playing, Ministers of the Crown and members of the Opposition touring the country and sounding the big drum, and rounding up the men, I felt proud to think that we back here in Western Australia, without all that paraphernalia, were still able to hold our own in the matter of recruiting.

The Attorney General: And did more than the Eastern States in comparison.

Mr. ROBINSON: Before the week of that big beat up we were ahead of all the other States in Australia. Owing, however, to that big beat up Victoria, I think, now takes the lead.

The Attorney General: In proportion to the population.

Mr. ROBINSON: So far as Western Australia is concerned, whether it is proportionately or otherwise, I repeat that I felt proud of the country to which I belong. I do not think it is necessary for us in Western Australia to adopt a campaign of that description. Men of all shades of opinion, of all beliefs, and of all classes in the community have joined together in this great movement, and have worked together shoulder to shoulder to help the Empire to fight its battles. It is not only in this way that we in Western Australia have to be gratified. I think we should be very gratified indeed at the bountiful disposition of the rainfall, at the appearance of our country, and of our crops and grass, and the general outlook. I think, despite many things that we have heard, we have before us in Western Australia a very prosperous time. But whilst we look on that side of the picture, I want to ask the Treasurer to look on another side; and this is not by way of any criticism at all. The Federal Government are about to place a loan of 20 millions of money on the market. The effect of the placing of this loan on the Australian market, I venture to say, will be more felt in a State like Western Australia than in any of the other States. New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland are comparatively rich States. Western Australia is not a rich State comparatively, and if the savings of the people now in our Savings Bank and in the ordinary banks of credit are used for the purpose of taking up this Federal loan—as I am sure they will be used—then I think that money must necessarily become what is called tight, hard to get hold of. If that is the state of the market, it will be equally difficult for the Treasurer to get money. It may be said at once to me “What do you propose?” I am not proposing anything at all. I am pointing out the probable state of affairs. I do say, however, “Do not let us wait until Western Australia is depleted of money and then see what we are to do.” Now is the time to make inquiries.

The Premier: We are making them.

Mr. ROBINSON: Despite my high opinion of the Premier, I do not think the whole of the financial brains of the community are deposited on the Treasury bench. Pretty good brains are to be found there, and I am not running them down. I always stick up for the Treasurer, especially after visiting the Eastern States and seeing other men. But I do say there are plenty of men in Western Australia with experience in financial matters who might be called in to offer opinions or to give advice. There is not a country in the world that at this juncture has not relied on its commercial men to help its Government, and I fail to see why we in Western Australia should not follow the example of other countries. At all events I hope the Premier will give some effect to that suggestion.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Whom would you advise us to call in?

Mr. ROBINSON: I would not advise the Honorary Minister to call in anybody, because if he had the best advice in the world offered to him he would still follow his own. My suggestion is offered to the Premier and Treasurer, who is amenable to reason, who will listen to reason when he hears it. There are some people who will not. Whilst on this subject I wish to express my regret that though the Governor's Speech says, in effect, that party politics are to be eschewed—

The Premier: We have never indulged in them.

Mr. ROBINSON: I hope the hon. gentleman will not take away my good opinion of him by making statements like that. I was about to say that the Premier is talking or thinking of another State steamer.

The Premier: Thinking? I have gone beyond thinking.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Premier has gone beyond thinking. I understood that Parliament would be consulted, or at all events told, before the actual consummation of the order took place.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary

Minister): No. The business will be done in the usual way.

Mr. ROBINSON: If that is so, then surely the Premier is not considering the effect the Federal loan will have on Western Australia. Even a State steamer requires to be paid for, because, so far as I know, we have not yet acquired State shipbuilding yards. No doubt those will come in time, but at present, if we want a State steamer—

The Premier: Suppose you were offered one as a gift, would not you take it?

Mr. ROBINSON: I am not going to answer a hypothetical question. If you produce to me a man prepared to offer you a State steamer for nothing, I would advise you to hand that man over to the custody of the Honorary Minister. The time is not opportune for the Treasurer even to think about enlarging his State enterprises. It is all very fine for the other side of the House to maintain that this is not a party question. If one is on the Government benches, one can say anything and actually believe it. But the people of this country, who have to find the money, are not going to believe it. I contend that the purchase of a State steamer at this juncture is a party question, and the money is money, that the country cannot afford to lose and, in fact, I do not believe will be able to pay.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I wish we had 20 State steamers to take some of our products away at present.

Mr. ROBINSON: I wish we had some of them to take some of our people away. Before we can consider fully whether it is advisable to have another State steamer or a larger State milk supply, or a larger output of Government bricks or stone, we want before us something better than 12 months old accounts. I am not saying that with any feeling of bitterness at all, but merely as plain, ordinary, business common sense. If a trading house were to present to its shareholders a balance sheet of 12 months ago, the manager would be suspended. What is the use of presenting to this House to-day a balance sheet for June of last year?

Mr. McDowall: That may be so, but you could not well have the later balance sheet.

Mr. ROBINSON: We should have a profit and loss account every three months. How in the name of fortune the Treasurer of this country without such information knows how to finance this country, I do not understand; and I am sure he does not understand either. The hon. gentleman is simply drifting. However, I was relying on statements made by the Treasurer during the last session. He said there was no reason why we should not have those accounts and he would see that he got them. I believed him. Where are the accounts? I want the accounts. It is no use at all showing me accounts 12 months old. I want the accounts of the last 12 months, or the last nine months. I ask again, will not the Treasurer tell us that he will have those accounts here before this session closes, or say within the next month?

The Premier: I cannot give you any definite promise in that respect.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Treasurer may say, as he has said before, that the Government cannot get the accounts audited. If the Auditor-General cannot audit the accounts, then let the Premier get in some other auditor, or else give us the accounts as they are. I do not care whether they are audited or not.

The Premier: We have an Audit Act which lays down that we must have the accounts duly audited by the Auditor-General.

Mr. ROBINSON: That is a great big bogey, like the gas that the Germans hide behind. I want the Treasurer to treat us not as children, but as men like himself. If I said such a thing as that to the present Treasurer when he happened to be on this side of the House, he would laugh at me. For the life of me I cannot understand why the Treasurer not only treats this House so, but treats the whole country so. He may say "I cannot get the accounts." But the Premier has nothing to do except to say "I want those accounts," and he can have them. If he cannot get them, he has nothing to do but to call in the member for Irwin (Mr.

James Gardiner), who offered the Premier his assistance last session, and that gentleman will have the accounts out within a month.

The Premier: In that case you would be asking questions of the Auditor General. I cannot instruct the Auditor General.

Mr. ROBINSON: That is not the point at all. The Auditor General cannot audit the accounts until he receives them from the departments. It is the people who delay the making up of those accounts that I should deal with. How the Treasurer knows what he is going to spend or what he is going to do, if he does not know what is spent for 12 months afterwards, I fail to understand. Or does he know it? If he knows it and does not tell us, it is wrong. If he does not know it, he is groping in the dark, like a ship with her lights out.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): He is going to grope for some time yet.

Mr. ROBINSON: Ships with their lights out sometimes go on the rocks, when they have lost the power to propel themselves.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We are not on the rocks yet.

Mr. Foley: A ship puts out her lights when there are enemies about.

Mr. ROBINSON: Sometimes there are enemies on board, and I think the hon. member who has just interjected is one of them. During the last session I advocated to the Treasurer a particular method of keeping accounts, which I am glad to know the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) approves.

Mr. O'Loghlen: The Treasurer at that time told you you were a marvel, do you remember?

Mr. ROBINSON: The Premier has not told the hon. member what he thinks of that hon. member. If, however, the hon. member interjects again I shall tell him what I think of him. I am not annoyed by these interruptions, which simply have the effect of delaying the House and those who interject. I simply go back. It may be play to some members on the other side of the House, but

I hope the constituents who returned the member who is continually interjecting in his silly way will recognise, when elections come round, that silly men of that description are not wanted in this Parliament. I do not want that hon. member here.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Once you were silly enough to send a candidate down to my electorate. Send another one down.

Mr. ROBINSON: During the last session I advocated here a particular method of keeping accounts.

Mr. O'Loghlen: That is tedious repetition. You told us that twice before.

Mr. ROBINSON: I shall go on until hon. members opposite listen to me. For the fourth time—I advocated last session that there should be a capitalisation in each trading venture, and that before further money was spent in that trading venture the House should be given reasons for the necessity for the further money. If that simple method were adopted, criticism from this side of the House would largely be cut away. We are now talking in the dark of what we know nothing about.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I am not worrying about your criticism.

Mr. ROBINSON: But the country is worrying, and there will come a time when the Honorary Minister will be made to worry. I repeat that it is the proper thing for Ministers to supply information and to capitalise the trading accounts in the way I have suggested. I am glad to note that the Governor's Speech forecasts a referendum on the liquor question. Personally, I am an advocate of what is known as the 8 to 8 movement; and I am very sorry that the Government, who have the power, did not take upon themselves to exercise it when they were asked by the people last year to close the hotels at 8 o'clock. They are now throwing the matter entirely on the people and they will be given the answer. Why they are asking for the power to close the hotels passes my comprehension. I have no doubt about the result of the referendum, and this is a matter upon which the member for Bunbury and I are at one on. On

the question of education—I am sorry the Minister for Education is not in his seat—I always commend that hon. gentleman for his administration of that department. I have done so before and I repeat it. But I think one mistake he has made, and to which the member for Swan has already referred, is with regard to compelling the children to stay at home on one day in every three weeks. It may seem a small affair but it is a great deal in a child's life. Some members have interjected that it is to teach them politics. Every child wants to know why it is compelled to stay at home on one particular day. The child's father will perhaps give one explanation and someone else will give another, but the truth will dawn on that child, as the member for Kataning has stated, and it is perfectly right that the Government cannot afford to pay the teacher's salary. I was glad to hear that the arrangement was merely a temporary one, and the sooner it ceases the better I shall be pleased. During last session I moved in the direction of a committee being appointed from this House to co-operate with a committee from the other House to deal with amendments and differences that might arise in regard to Bills. That joint committee met, and if the session had lasted a little longer it would have arrived at a solution of the difficulty. I desire to say now that on the first convenient opportunity I intend to move that that committee be re-appointed to continue the labours it began last session, and I hope this time those labours will be carried to a successful conclusion, and that the effect will be the elimination of a lot of bitterness in discussion.

[The Deputy Speaker (Mr. McDowall) took the Chair.]

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [9.50]: I intend to be very brief in my remarks but I cannot let the occasion pass without reverting back to the last Address-in-reply. I think it was on the night of the 8th December, when the member for Irwin, the then leader of the Country party, gave utterance to sentiments which, had they been placed under the

heading of the speech delivered by the new leader of the party two evenings ago would have been found to be almost identical. The sentiments that were uttered by our leader, so far as we have been able to see up to date, have been supported generally this session. It is now a generally accepted idea that a truce should now prevail, and as a member of the Country party I am quite willing and prepared that this truce should be carried through to its legitimate conclusion, so that the greatest good might be done to the greatest number. The Ministerial side of the House say they welcome criticism so long as it is not of a carping nature, but at the same time, as the representative of the York electorate, there are certain things that I require some information about, and I feel sure that Ministers will be prepared to furnish it. There are certain things which are making the atmosphere rather heavy at the present time and I ask that these will be cleared up, and that the suspicion which prevails that proper British fair play is not being dealt out to certain individuals will be removed. Ministers will admit that in all my transactions with them I have endeavoured to be as fair as possible, and in asking for information I hope that straightforward answers will be given, particularly in regard to the State Imple- ment Works.

The Minister for Works: You can have the papers on the Table.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Certain matters have been placed before me which make me rather doubtful, but the Minister assures us that everything will be found to be correct, and I hope that that will be so. The member for Leonora, speaking last evening in connection with the proposal to amend the Mines Regulation Act, made an appeal for fair consideration for that measure. I can assure the hon. member that I have seen a great deal of the suffering that is prevalent amongst miners, and I am speaking on behalf of the party generally when I say that anything that can be done will be done to ameliorate the condition of those men who are undergoing what is practically

a living death. I gather that a Bill has already been before this House and the inference I drew was that it was unreasonable in its scope. We do not know what the scope of the proposed Bill is likely to be, and before it is introduced we would like to get some information about it, but I can assure the House that if the measure will be for the benefit of the miners and calculated to better their working conditions, it will receive our earnest sympathy and consideration. With regard to the Land Act, I was delighted to hear that an amending Bill was to be brought forward this session. As members know, at the conclusion of last session, the Country party almost to a man entered a protest when the Bill was dropped at the end of the session. More particularly did that measure affect my electorate and the neighbouring electorate. They were looking for relief from that measure, and those who had gone out on to waste spaces, and were endeavouring to battle through, had hoped to derive some measure of assistance with rent arrears. The association of which I am a member has as one of its principles that the Government should allow those outside the $12\frac{1}{2}$ mile radius from a railway to hold their land for the first five years free from rental, or until railway facilities are provided. The taunt has often been thrown across this House that farmers should pay their debts. This taunt is, to my way of thinking, cowardly, thrown out as it is to a body of men who are deserving of the best we can give them so that they might win through. I will give an instance of a gentleman who this year is unable to foot the bill. I will suppress his name but any member can have it after the debate. This gentleman attended a lecture at Scarborough, delivered by Mr. Ranford, who dilated upon the great country which was waiting in Western Australia to be occupied, and that land could be got at from 10s. 6d. an acre, that schools were provided for children, and that railways would be built before the crop was ready to be taken off. So far as the school is concerned, one of this gentleman's boys had to walk $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles until a farmer

living closer to it agreed to house the lad, who then spent only the week ends with his parents. The individual in question is 26 miles from a railway. He applied for the land when he came here and experienced great difficulty in getting it. He finally met Mr. Ranford, who had come out from England a fortnight later, and Mr. Ranford gave him a letter to the officer in charge of the Litho. Department, upon whose strong recommendation he took up the land he is now settled upon, land which is mostly morrell country. He has farmed in every possible way, but the three or four bad seasons, and the distance he is from a railway, and the cost of clearing the land, which amounted to 30s. an acre, have resulted in the swallowing up of the £2,000 capital which he brought with him and now he has had to apply for help from the Assistance Board.

The Minister for Mines: Did he have £2,000?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: He did. The threat was made a little while ago that all arrears of rents were to be taken out of the first year's crop. This occasioned a great deal of alarm, especially as the amending Bill was dropped last session.

The Minister for Works: That Bill would apply all round and not to any one party.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The Bill, I understand, is to be reintroduced and will remedy the position. I would like to state what has taken place in some of the other States. In Queensland possession is given on payment of half of the cost of survey. In South Australia payments were extended under existing agreements to 64 years with special exemption for the first 10 years. In New South Wales possession is given on one small payment, and nothing further is demanded for five years. The Victorian Lands Commission, sitting in 1914, found that rents for the first four years should be very low, provided the lessee resided and improved, and also that it was useless to defer rents and then demand payment in full out of one harvest, as it left the settler in a worse position than before. Obviously it is un-

fair to take all the rent out of the profits of one year's crop. In reference to the Yilliminning-Merredin line, I must say the people out there have had bad treatment. At a banquet at Bruce Rock the late Minister for Lands definitely promised them the line. Many of these people are living 30 miles out, and it means ruin to them if they are not to have the railway. The Minister has since declared that he did not say exactly what he was reported to have said, but I can assure the House that I was there and heard it. Some of the settlers in that district have to cart water 15 miles, and are 26 miles or more from the station. They have been hanging on waiting for the railway, and it completely broke them up when they learnt the other day that the Premier had told the Esperance people that the Esperance line would be built straight away.

The Minister for Works: The Yilliminning railway was authorised after the other.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: In regard to the Industries Assistance Board I am in sympathy with the member for Beverley (Mr. Wansbrough): Probably I have handled more cases through that board than has any other member. In all I dealt with some 400 cases.

The Minister for Mines: All in your own electorate?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Not all of them. Mr. Camm, Mr. Byrnes, Mr. Lowes and other members of the board have been most helpful to me in my endeavours to get assistance for various settlers, but I must say I cannot see why it should be necessary for farmers to get their representatives to interpose on their behalf. When we find six or seven letters sent to the board without attention it suggests that something is wrong.

The Minister for Mines: They have had so much to do, and so little time to do it in.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Some extraordinary things have occurred. Last week a man told me that he had asked for two

tons of super, and that when he went to the siding he found two tons of brar waiting for him. Many appalling things have occurred in connection with the board, and whilst we cannot hold Mr. Camm responsible, we must admit that there is something radically wrong. In the early stages of the operations of the board Mr. Paterson and Mr. Sutton were each taking a prominent part, but I cannot help thinking it was a great mistake to put those gentlemen on the board.

The Minister for Works: You said last session that Mr. Sutton was one of the best of our men.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Yes, but he should have been relieved of his other duties.

The Minister for Works: He was.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: No, all day long department after department was ringing him up on subjects outside the scope of the Industries Assistance Board. He had too much to do, and neither he nor Mr. Paterson was given a fair chance to carry out the board's work. I am sorry the Minister for Railways is not here, because I desired to bring under his notice the question of handling the crop. I have been assured by his secretary that something has been arrived at, but I would have liked a definite assurance from the Minister in public. I am sorry, too, that the Honorary Minister (Hon. R. H. Underwood) is not here, for I wished to congratulate him on his good sense in falling in with the wishes of the ladies in regard to the maternity hospital. I referred the other night to the carriage of newspapers on the railways, and the incident was published in the newspaper under the heading of "Tax on Knowledge," and it finished up with the word "Laughter." It may have been amusing to the Premier, who treated it in light and airy fashion, but it is not amusing to the people most concerned. The other day I was on a siding when the mother of a boy at the front asked me if I had the latest newspaper, and if I had any news of what was going on. This was only an isolated instance, but I have come across dozens of the sort. There appears

to be no arrangement between the Federal postal authorities and our Railway Department in regard to the carrying of mails.

Mr. HEITMANN: Of course there is.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Well, no mail is carried on that railway, or on the Wongan Hills railway, either.

The Minister for Mines: That is a matter for the postal authorities.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I do not know what the arrangement is, but there seems to be something in the way of mails being carried on that railway. Apart from the weekly mail it is impossible for the people up there to get newspapers except by paying 3d. freight. It is no trifling matter to those people. It is all very well for men in the City, who get their morning paper, and in the afternoon get their *Daily News*.

The Minister for Mines: The country people have much to be thankful for in being spared the *Daily News*.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Mr. Gregory has brought up the matter in the House of Representatives, and I believe he interviewed the Minister for Lands when that gentleman was in Melbourne recently. It is to see if the postal authorities cannot be shaken up in some way that I have brought this matter forward. I have little more to say this evening. Sufficient has already been said on the question of patriotism. We all feel the gravity of the present position. Many members have their sons at the war, and we who are left must see to it that when they come back they suffer no detriment for their patriotism.

Mr. GREEN (Kalgoorlie) [10.15]: As the Governor's Speech was very brief and as most members who have spoken on the Address-in-reply have also been very brief, I intend to follow the example set. In common with other members, I noticed mention of the bountiful rains which have fallen throughout Western Australia. For the first time for two or three seasons the so-called dry areas are going to come into their own as regards the production of wheat. It is quite cheering to go into these so-called dry areas at present and find men who 12 months ago were exceed-

ingly pessimistic as to the outlook, speaking in the most hopeful terms of their intentions for the future. Only a few months ago many settlers in those portions of the State were talking of leaving the country, but I am pleased to know that with the return of rain there has been a return of optimism, and I think that these portions of the State will rank as one of the leading wheat-producing belts in the whole of the Commonwealth. It is expected that Western Australia will produce 20 million bushels of wheat this year, and if this optimistic forecast is realised it will be an increase of 50 per cent. over the last good yield in 1913. The Minister for Lands has predicted that we will require six million bushels for home consumption and seed wheat, and that will leave 14 million bushels available for export.

The Minister for Mines: It is a risky thing to venture into the realms of prophecy.

Mr. GREEN: Seeing that the season is so promising it is as well to look on the bright side when other things around appear so dark. The Commonwealth exported 42 million bushels of wheat in 1913, which was a fairly good year. If Western Australia exports 14 million bushels this year, it will be equal to one-third of the Commonwealth exportations in 1913. That goes to show of what any resident of this State must necessarily become more firmly convinced the longer he resides here, namely, that Western Australia must undoubtedly become one of the greatest States of the Commonwealth in all respects. It has been mentioned times without number that our gold production represents over one-half of the production of the Commonwealth, and it is cheering to think that the production of wheat will in two or three years place Western Australia in the leading position among the States of the Commonwealth. When we remember also that we are the leading timber State of the union, it makes one realise that Western Australia must shortly become a very important factor in the Commonwealth. Reference is made in the Speech to the number of miles of railroad which has been opened. Western

Australia with its sparse population of 330,000, or thereabouts, has a mileage of railroad very little below that of any of the sister States. We have one mile for every 100 of our population, or over twice the mileage per head of the average for the Commonwealth. This means development, and if there is one thing more than another which this large State, covering, as it does, one-third of the area of Australia, and having only a small population requires, it is money. I am not too sanguine as to what the position in regard to the public works policy will be after October next. It is vain to attempt to burke the fact that this State will be in a very parlous condition as regards its public works policy after October unless the war is ended before, and none of us is sufficiently sanguine to think that such will be the case. As it is impossible to borrow money from the Old Country during the war, and as the Commonwealth is absorbing the available capital for its war loan, there is only one avenue from which the State may derive funds. The key-note of truce pronounced by the deputy leader of the Opposition in his excellent speech the other evening, will have to be borne out in a tangible way by the direct Opposition and those on the cross benches by supporting the Government in passing taxation proposals of some description. If such proposals are not brought forward this session it will be necessary to introduce them early next session, and we shall then see the attitude towards Western Australia of the so-called patriots who are asking the unemployed to go to the front as a means of obtaining employment. The Bill providing for the taxation of incomes and amusements, sent to another place a few months ago, was turned down, and yet if hon. members in that Chamber were accused of not being patriots they would feel highly indignant at the accusation. What did the proposals mean? They meant that a man getting £157 per annum would be required to pay 5d. per week; a man getting £300, such as many members of this House have to depend upon, would have to pay 1s. 2d. per week, and a man

getting £1,000 per annum would have to pay only 9s. 5d. per week, or an amount which members in this House receiving £300 per annum are at the present time voluntarily subscribing to the funds of this State. It is hard for me to believe that gentlemen, who on the one hand claim to be patriots and on the other withheld those proposals from the statute-book, are in earnest, and it is time the workers hesitated about taking the advice to go to the front when instructed by men of that description. The member for Swau (Mr. Nairn)—I regret he is not in his seat—stated last year, during the unemployed trouble, "It is not possible to give every worker a full day's work and a regular day's wage in these particular times." The Government at the time admitted that such was the position. Consequently, as the taxation proposals were turned down, the Government had to seek other ways of saving money. The proposal was then made that each public servant should forfeit 7.89 per cent. of his working time, for which he had to suffer a corresponding reduction of income. No one would suppose for a minute that these employees would be paid the same wages for working less time. As a natural corollary, the Education Department had to fall in line with other departments of the service, and rightly so. Because of the turning down of the taxation proposals for which the hon. member's friends in another place were responsible—there is not the slightest doubt that the Liberal party in that so-called non-party House were responsible—our children are losing one day's schooling in every three weeks. To accuse the Government of being lukewarm towards education because they were forced into this position is absolutely unfair. The hon. member must know that through the present Government we have a free school of mines, free technical school and a free university. This is one of the few places, indeed the only place, so far as I recollect where there is free education from the kindergarten to the university, and for this the present Government are responsible. Our expenditure on education is

1914 was £357,000, an increase of £93,000 per annum over the expenditure during the last year of the term of the previous Government. That ought to supply a complete answer to any statement with regard to the alleged laxity of the present Government towards the education system. The ex-leader of the Country party, in dealing with the State trading concerns, rightly pointed out that they, to many members on the Opposition benches, were like King Charles' head to that well-known character in "David Copperfield." The member for Swan has made it clear time after time that he differs from the Labour party, principally because they have gone in for State enterprises on lines which he considers bring them into competition with private concerns. He has frankly said many times that he is prepared at all times to uphold the Labour party in securing the highest wages possible for the manual labourer, but I would like to ask him and other members of the Opposition who have made a strong point of attack on these trading concerns which particular one they desire to have abolished? Would it be the milk supply, a small concern in itself, but one which has been responsible for saving the lives of hundreds of children in the Children's Hospital, and which has supplied with beneficial results the metropolitan hospitals also? I make bold to say that the hon. member would not favour the abolition of the State milk supply. Would the hon. member have been against the workers' homes scheme which was responsible for building 1,500 homes in the metropolitan area and other parts of the State and which have been responsible undoubtedly for the drop in the rents in the metropolitan area? I would further make bold to say that he would not be against that particular proposal, and that he would not be prepared to go and fight that workers' home scheme on the public platform. Would he then be against the State Implement Works? If he were so, I take it he would be at sixes and sevens with certain members of his party who

represent country districts. Such a hide-bound Tory as the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson), when it comes to State enterprises, would be very loath to say that he was against the control of the implement works by the State. Would he, then, be against State steamers and other State enterprises? If so, he would be against the avowed policy of the present leader of the Opposition, who declared upon the public platform, when seeking re-election in 1911, that if the meat trouble continued he was prepared to put on steamers for the North-West in order that cheap meat might be brought to the doors of the people of the metropolitan and goldfields areas. Whilst State steamers have been the common point of attack with many members in this Chamber sitting in Opposition? I think we can make this assertion without fear of contradiction, that whatever Government get into power in this House there is none that would dare to abolish the State steamers which have been instituted by the Scaddan Government—that, notwithstanding the most venomous attacks made upon it by the members of the Opposition and the daily Press of the metropolitan area. The State steamers have undoubtedly been responsible for lowering and steadying the price of meat throughout parts of the State in the South-West in the metropolitan area, and in the goldfields districts. As Mr. Knibbs, the Commonwealth Statistician, has pointed out, Western Australia has been the only State in the Commonwealth where the price of meat has not increased during the past two years. To my mind, at any rate, the State steamers are solely responsible for that position of affairs. The State steamer route along the North-West coast of this State is the only route along the coast of the Commonwealth where the fares have not increased during the last two years. That, too, is solely due to the inauguration of the State steamship service. Would the hon. member, or any of his colleagues, say that the State sawmills have been an

altogether bad undertaking? Is it not a fact that a large area of our timber country, the karri country in particular, has not yet been handed over to private hands, and that the fact of our having State sawmills has made it possible for the Government, being interested in the enterprise, to keep a sufficient number of men at work who had been thrown out of private employment in the timber industry, and whose employment represented an amount in wages of £100,000, which they would not have received through the timber industry if the State had not embarked upon it? Even if the State sawmills are bearing the distress of this particularly bad time of industrial depression, which naturally follows upon the war, other private sawmills are similarly feeling the effects of the times. So much has this been the case that a gentleman who stands for private enterprise, pretty well on all occasions, rose in his seat in another place and had the temerity to ask the Government for assistance for privately owned sawmilling works, in the South-West, because of the parlous condition into which they had fallen. Would any member of the Opposition be game, after a visit to the State brickworks, to assert that these are not a success at the present time? I contend that with the workers' homes in operation, and that with the vast amount of public works going on which require bricks for their proper construction, it was absolutely necessary, owing to the high price of bricks that was being maintained in the metropolitan area, that these works should be established. In that area the price of bricks was £3 5s. per thousand, and the Government did quite right to step in and supply that commodity themselves to the building public. It may be news to hon. members opposite, who have not visited the brick works, to know that bricks are being made by the State for 35s. per thousand, and that the price of bricks to the private buyer before the inauguration of these works was £3 5s. per thousand. This has been one of the beneficent results which has followed in the

train of many of our State enterprises. They have had the effect of steadying the private exploiter, and the private employer and supplier has had of necessity to keep his prices in line with that of the State enterprises in many cases. With our Government enterprises paying, there is no reason in the world why the private employer should not continue to keep prices at that level and still make a fair profit. There is one other matter in the Governor's Speech which of course is very pleasing to me as a goldfields member, and that is the intimation that the Mines Regulation Act is to be brought forward again this session. I appeal, as other members have done, to those sitting on the opposite side of the House to see that the miners of this country are given every consideration, and that so great a proportion of the industrial workers in this State receive a fair deal by being helped through the medium of this particular legislation. No one who has resided on the Goldfields for any number of years, as I have done, can fail to be struck by the fact that numbers of men, whom one could call to mind several years ago as being healthy and robust, have in 99 cases out of 100, where they continued to follow up the mining industry, had their health ruined because of the dusty and unhealthy conditions under which they work. The matter of wages is not one that comes into the question at all. There is a matter far above the question of wages, and that is the question of health. It is not only of primary importance to the worker himself but it is a primary importance to the dependants of the worker, the wife and the family. It is nothing less than inhuman and cruel that in a country like Western Australia, which is regarded as the workers' paradise, and is the workers' paradise in many respects, this deserving portion of the community should be neglected so long for the sake of dividends. I contend that this small alteration which is required will not affect the question of dividends to any appreciable degree. Even if it did so I think that our position would not be more responsible or less weighty on that account, and that it would be just as neces-

sary for us to see that healthy conditions exist in that industry, and which can be made to exist in that industry just as in any other. Surely these men are worthy of as much consideration as any other portion of the community. They have not been less loyal or less brave than any other section of the people. As a matter of fact, when the call came from our great Empire to Australia for men to enlist for the front the proportion of men who enlisted from the mining industry, according to Mr. Knibbs, is shown to be second only to that of the Shearers' Union. The proportion of miners who have enlisted for the front has been 8.24 per cent. of the total number able to enlist, that is between the ages of 18 and 45. Others, however, who were not in unions averaged, according to Mr. Knibbs, who is not a Labour politician, but is the Government Statistician and a man of repute and ability, showed a proportion of only four per cent., which is less than half of what the miners' union contributed towards this great struggle in which we are engaged. The average for the whole of the unionists of Australia is 6.77 per cent. It is not my desire to draw comparisons, and indeed it would be somewhat unseemly to draw comparisons, between the number of unionists eligible to go to the front who have enlisted, and the proportion of non-unionists; but I think we should take note of the fact that the men who are so frequently cavilled at as having no stake in the country, did, when the great call for help came from the Empire, send 6.77 per cent. of their number to the front as against four per cent. of non-unionists. That is on the figures of Mr. Knibbs. I do not desire to detain the House, but I wish to mention also that the miners of Western Australia and the miners of Broken Hill were the first to land at Gaba Tepe. They were the men picked to land first, because of the fact that they were well accustomed to the use of digging tools, which was necessary to entrench themselves against the fire of the enemy. It is a proud record that the miners of the Commonwealth, the miners of Western Australia and Broken Hill, were the first to land on

what has already become a red letter day in the history of Australia. I trust, therefore, that the class of men who have done so much for the prestige of British arms will receive some consideration at the hands of members of this Chamber. Moreover, an industry which has already paid 25 millions in dividends in this State alone can surely afford decent conditions under which the miners may continue their ordinary employment. The present war naturally overshadows everything else, as the member for Canning (Mr. Robinson) has said. It is a time such as this that takes the bitterness out of party feeling, because we recognise that we have all to stand shoulder to shoulder to meet the common enemy. I cannot refrain from expressing my regret that in this age, after 2,000 years of Christianity, and after thousands of years of the evolution of civilisation, we who pride ourselves upon having advanced so far along the road of enlightenment, should find ourselves in what may be termed the cradle of our race in Europe involved in a fratricidal struggle. Because, whilst we are now inclined to say harsh things against the Teutonic race, we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that they are a wonderful race, and that the British, as well as the other nations of Europe, have much to learn from the Germans. From what I know of the German people, of German acquaintances of mine in Australia, I feel sure that it is really not the German people who are responsible for the present struggle. That responsibility rests largely on the Prussianising system that unfortunately has grown up in the German Empire. So far as the future is concerned, my personal view is that Hague conventions, and methods of that kind, are absolutely futile for the prevention of war. The only hope, in my opinion—and I trust I may not appear partisan when I say it; I do feel it deep down in my heart—the only hope for the world is that Labour Governments should come into power in every civilised country. Without any fear of contradiction I make the assertion that if the Social Democratic party had been in power in Germany, the

present war would have been impossible. That is the spirit of the working classes, at any rate. The idea of the working classes was voiced to some extent by a small band in Berlin when war was declared between France and Germany in 1870. That band sent the following message to their French comrades: "We are the enemies of all war. Solemnly we promise that neither the sound of the trumpet, nor the roar of the cannon, neither victory nor defeat, will swerve us from our common purpose, the union of the toilers of all countries." Whilst we, as representatives of the workers, now that this great struggle is upon us, recognise that we have to go shoulder to shoulder, and whilst we are prepared to bear our share of the brunt of the fighting, nevertheless we contend that there is a better and brighter future, which will arise when the working classes get into power in a democratic Germany of the future. I thank hon. members very much for their kind attention.

On motion by Mr. Heitmann debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.46 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 10th August, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Statement by the Auditor General respecting the auditing of trading concerns.

By the Attorney General: Statutes 17 and 18 of the University of Western Australia.

By the Minister for Works: Regulations 1-6 under the Industries Assistance Act, 1915.

By Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the year ended 30th June, 1914.

NOTICE OF QUESTION—BLACKBOY HILL CAMP.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington): I give notice that to-morrow I shall ask the Premier: Will he make inquiries from the Commonwealth Government as to: 1. Whether it is a fact that at Blackboy Hill Camp, where there are about 3,000 men now in camp, only three water taps are available for the use of the men and for washing up purposes? 2. Whether it is a fact that at the camp there are seven shower baths, which are not available for the men between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m.? 3. Whether it is not in the interests of the volunteer movement that better sanitary arrangements be immediately installed? 4. If these questions are answered in the affirmative, will the Premier use his influence to have more suitable arrangements made?

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe): I have nothing whatever to do with it. There is a member for the district in the House of Representatives, and there are six Senators representing the State. If the hon. member wires to one of them he can get the information; I cannot give it to him.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, JUTE IMPORTATION.

Mr. HARRISON: asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1. Is it considered by his department to be in the best interests of agricultural development that the present methods of selling jutes at the value of contents contained therein should be con-