

making a board, such as this board, supreme and above the law, and in its being able to do as it likes. It is a positive danger to the community. As the law now stands, anyone outside a certain radius of Perth can draw a tooth, which is a dangerous operation, and can perform a surgical operation in dentistry in which there is risk of life, but he cannot come to Perth and make a set of teeth, because that is where the profits lie, and where he is entering into competition with those who have this great and narrow monopoly.

Mr. Davies: Do you include mechanical assistants?

Hon. T. WALKER: Any person who proves to the satisfaction of the board that he is of good character, and for not less than 10 years has been engaged in the work as an operative assistant to a registered dentist in Western Australia, and then after that passes an examination in practical and surgical dentistry. If he has been for 10 years an operative, doing the work, and has proved his fitness, and then passes an examination, he is entitled to be registered.

Mr. Mullany: What number of persons will be affected?

Hon. T. WALKER: I think they could be numbered on the fingers of both hands. At the same time if only one man was concerned it would not be justice to keep him out. We should recognise those who have the burden of the work on their shoulders and are entitled to the distinction of registration, and give them an opportunity of practising for themselves. No doubt some of them will remain as operative workers, employed by some of the big firms, and will not want to be independent, but others may require to start for themselves. If their character is right and their skill is right, and if their intellectual attainments are right, we should not shut the door upon them. The principle is a simple one. I am only following the course already adopted in other lands. I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

On motion by the Attorney General, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.55 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 30th January, 1918.

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

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

PRIVILEGE—PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTION OF REPORTS.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.45] asked the Speaker without notice: Is Mr. Speaker aware that the annual departmental and other reports have not been distributed to members this year, as has been done in previous years? Will Mr. Speaker make inquiries into the matter, and see that the reports are distributed to members for their information when discussing departmental matters, particularly the Estimates, as surely it is not intended to prohibit members having information regarding the administration of the various departments?

Mr. SPEAKER [4.46]: In reply to the hon. member I desire to say that I was not aware that the reports were not being printed and circulated until my attention was drawn to the matter just before the House met. I was, however, aware that the Treasurer, who controls the Government Printing Office—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But not this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Treasurer had issued instructions, on the score of economy, that reports, which might have been considered superfluous, should not be printed. I suppose the subject-matter of the hon. gentleman's question comes within that category. I feel sure it is not the intention of the Treasurer to prevent hon. members getting necessary information, and I believe arrangements have been made for an hon. member who desires to have a departmental report, to have that report furnished to him in the House for purposes of reference and convenience and for the conduct of business.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [4.48]: With reference to the reports of the Public Works Department and the Water Supply Department, these have been ready for the printer for some time, but under the circumstances detailed by Mr. Speaker, the printing of these documents has not been carried out, and the reports have been laid on the Table of the House in typewritten form. If the House desires that they shall be printed, a motion to that effect may be moved, and they will be printed.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you want to prevent hon. members seeing what you are doing?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member has no right to make a remark like that. The reports have not been printed for the simple reason given by Mr. Speaker.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Treasurer is not going to take charge of this House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I feel rather strongly on this matter because I find that the report of the Railway Department and also other reports have been printed, yet the reports of two departments which, to my mind, are very important, have been presented to the House only in typewritten form.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The report of the Railway Department has not been distributed either.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.49]: Seeing that the Government have decided to make a departure from a practice which has obtained hitherto in this House, regarding the

printing and circulation of reports, I think it would have been advisable for the Premier to make an announcement to members as to which reports should, and which should not, be printed. On looking through the reports on the Table of the House, I notice that some have been printed, notably those of the Railway and Mines Departments, as well as a few others. On the other hand, there is the report of the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage, and a number of others, which are merely typed. What is the guiding factor in discriminating between what should and what should not be printed? Inasmuch as members have been expecting that the practice of past years would be followed, and as they have been waiting for the reports to be handed to them, it would be well for them to be informed of the intentions of the Government. Do Ministers expect that one typed copy of the report of the Water Supply Department, now on the Table of the House, will meet the convenience of all members, particularly during the discussion on the Estimates? If they do, the idea is ridiculous. I am dealing with the position as a matter of privilege, and I think I am justified in doing so because there has been a departure from the practice previously followed. I understand that economy has been the order, not only in connection with the printing of reports, but as paper is so scarce, it has extended even to portions of this building. I believe instructions have also been given to cut down the salt allowance in the dining-room.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy-Moore) [4.51]: It is due to the House that I should make a statement in regard to this matter. I am unable to give details regarding the reports which are to be printed, and those which are not to be printed, but the Government are of opinion that economies can be effected by not printing many of the reports of the departments. Some of them are very long and it is thought that they are not read by hon. members.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They are read.

The PREMIER: It is desired to cut down those reports as far as possible and to omit all superfluous matter, that is to say, matter which is not of material interest.

Hon. P. Collier: I agree with you there.

The PREMIER: Instructions have been issued to the various departments to cut down their reports as far as possible. True, some have been printed and others have been placed on the Table in typewritten form. The reports which have been printed are those which are circulated in the outside world, such as the railway report. That has a wide circulation, and it is supplied to railway departments in various parts of the world. It is necessary, therefore, for that document to be printed. However, the Government are in the hands of hon. members. It is the desire of the Government to economise as far as possible, particularly at this time when paper is scarce.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Look at the size of the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture.

The PREMIER: If the House desires that the reports should be printed as formerly, an instruction has merely to be given. But I

would like hon. members to consider the question carefully, and if that is done I think they will agree with me that it is necessary that we should practise economy in this direction.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [4.55]: I think this matter is distinctly one of privilege and therefore I propose to make it such by concluding my remarks with a motion. I appreciate the desire of the Government to save money and to make financial ends meet, but I venture to think that they are taking a step which will lead to disaster. The House cannot deliberate without knowledge, and it cannot save money unless it is aware all the time what is going on, and that can only be done by placing at the disposal of members all the documents which members have in the past been in the habit of receiving, and which can only be studied by being taken to their homes or to their offices.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member intends to move a motion of privilege, I think he will be rather stretching the question. I would suggest that he should give notice of motion so that the matter might be fully discussed.

Hon. T. WALKER: With all due deference to you, Mr. Speaker, if ever a matter did affect the privileges of this House, this does. It is a time-honoured custom, and it has been recognised in every Parliament of the world as an essential of Government.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If the Treasurer is running the country, why not sack the lot of us?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): On a point of order; I would like to know what the hon. member is talking about.

Mr. Troy: Is the Honorary Minister in order in rising to a point of order and making a remark such as he has done regarding another member who is speaking? I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to call the hon. member to order, because his was merely an interruption.

Mr. SPEAKER: Though it may appear that the matter before the House is an urgent one, and should be dealt with as a question of privilege, I suggested to the member for Kanowna that he should give notice of motion and discuss the question more extensively at a later stage. I really think this is stretching the question of privilege.

Hon. T. WALKER: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for pointing that out, but so long as a matter of this kind comes within the scope of privilege, I respectfully submit that I can discuss it as such. It is a matter affecting the welfare of the State, and particularly its financial welfare, especially as the Estimates are so close at hand.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): On a point of order, what is the question before the House?

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Kanowna intends to conclude his remarks with a motion.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): As laid down yesterday on a question of privilege, an hon. member can make a statement, but he must not enter on any controversial subject. My point of order is that the hon. member is not speaking to a motion

and that he is introducing controversial matter.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. member has intimated that at the close of his remarks he will move a motion. I repeat that I believe he is rather stretching the question of privilege, but I am not prepared to rule the member for Kanowna out of order.

HON. T. WALKER: I would not for a moment reflect upon the view taken by you, Mr. Speaker, as to stretching the question of privilege, but I believe nothing more affects the well being of this Assembly than the withholding of printed reports. I can conceive nothing more affecting the privileges of members than the deprivation of necessary information. As a matter of fact the cost is trivial. The information may save the country thousands of pounds of expenditure. This information, properly assimilated and utilised, might be the very means of correcting the errors or non-adjustments of the finances of which we hear so much at the present time. If we allow this action to pass without protest we do not know where we shall end. We might conduct this Chamber as they did in the mediæval ages, in the rude Parliaments of those periods, absolutely in the dark so far as public observation is concerned. There is talk even now of curtailing "Hansard."

HON. P. COLLIER: It has been curtailed.

HON. T. WALKER: That is true; it has been curtailed already, and there may be further steps in regard to the restriction of public observation of our proceedings. Nothing could be more dangerous. However, what I am at present emphasising is that every member is entitled to know everything that is being done in every department of State, and the mere sneer that some members do not read the printed reports is unbecoming of any Minister. It is true that not every member reads from A to Z every line of each report of each department and sub-department; but those of them who are interested in the study of the departments have an opportunity of doing so if they have the reports, not merely upon the Table of the House—where they are in the custody of the Clerk, and whence, it seems, they are removed from time to time—but in their own possession, as is their undoubted right. It is the right of every member to be in possession of that information. We are to be deprived of it now. It is a belittling innovation. It is that kind of cheese-paring which does not square the finances, but makes the Chamber look paltry and ridiculous, and, with all respect, the Government themselves contemptibly mean, devoid of an appreciation of the great duties they have to perform. Information is not rendered costly by reason of its being put into type. It is there to save the State. It is part of the machinery by which the State is governed, by which the State is saved unnecessary or thoughtless expenditure. It is more than invaluable; it is an absolute necessity. That hon. members are sometimes neglectful of their duties, and do not acquire all the information open to them is a regrettable feature of our public life; but no more than that. There should not be the

excuse that they cannot get the information however zealous they may be in the performance of their public duties. I sincerely trust the Government will require but little urging to accept my motion. I trust that the motion will not require to go to a vote, that the Government will see that this innovation is a step in the wrong direction, which, if persisted in, may lead to an outburst of public indignation of no light character. I trust that the Government will accept my motion and that we shall get over the difficulty without protracted debate. I move—

"That it be an instruction of this House to the Government that the custom of distributing the printed reports of Government departments be not departed from."

The Minister for Railways: You do not require them printed in extenso?

HON. T. WALKER: No; merely such parts as furnish information. Useless verbiage can be cut out, but let us have the reports printed, so that every member can take them home and study them if he so wishes.

MR. SPEAKER: I suggest that the hon. member delete the word "instruction" from his motion. The word is open to misinterpretation, and even without it the motion, I think, expresses all that the hon. member wishes.

HON. T. WALKER: I have no objection to the elimination of the word.

MR. SPEAKER: I will have the motion amended accordingly. I wish now to draw the attention of members to the Standing Orders. No. 137 reads as follows:—

Any member may rise to speak to order or upon a matter of privilege suddenly arising.

No. 138 reads as follows:—

All questions of order and matters of privilege at any time arising shall, until decided, suspend the consideration and decision of every other question.

Something must be decided. On looking at the "Manual of Procedure," by Ilbert, we find this on privilege:—

A motion on a question of privilege suddenly arising is entitled to immediate precedence over all other business. A motion on a question of privilege may be made before the commencement of public business, although the question does not suddenly arise, but any such motion should be made at the earliest opportunity.

For that reason I did not feel justified in ruling the hon. member out of order.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [5.7]: Only very few reports have not been printed. The departments have all had instructions to cut down their reports as far as possible. In these departmental reports are frequently found matters not of great public interest, not material to the interests of the State, merely questions of history in connection with the working of the department, and so forth. Owing to the great scarcity of paper, it was considered by the Government that we could cut down some reports. Still, most of them have been printed. Of the few reports which the Government did not consider to be of material interest to members, it was thought that by placing typewritten

copies on the Table members would be able to get all the necessary information. At the same time the Government have no desire to curtail any information due to hon. members. Indeed, the Government consider it their duty to meet the convenience of hon. members. I admit that it is not easy to go carefully into a report merely laid on the Table. Very few members may be interested in some one report, while another report may be of vital interest to a dozen or more members, all of whom desire to see it immediately. Therefore, perhaps, it is well that the reports should be printed in such form that each member may be able to take away a copy and quietly digest it in his own home. I have no objection to the motion. It is the desire of the Government to meet hon. members in regard to such matters, and possibly it will not entail very great expense to print such reports as have not been printed up to the present. The Government will endeavour to have these reports cut down to the minimum, without interfering with their efficiency. I shall be pleased to accept the motion and endeavour to carry out the wishes expressed therein, which I feel to be reasonable.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.12]: I am glad that the Premier has agreed to the motion. Until to-day it was unknown to me that the usual procedure had not been carried out this year. I made inquiries as to what had become of the Railways report, which it has always been customary to distribute to members so that they might acquaint themselves with its contents before discussing the Estimates. I was informed that, under instructions, these reports were not to be distributed as usual, that if members wanted a copy of any of them they could come along and ask for it.

The Premier: No, that is not correct. Such reports as have been printed will be circulated.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I was surprised to find that even the Speaker himself, the only official here to protect the privileges of members, was not aware of this. It is quite new to me that the Government should interfere in anything affecting Parliament. Parliament controls itself. I made inquiries with a view to finding out how we should set about securing the information with which we should be freely supplied. The report of the Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Department is of considerable interest throughout the State, and more particularly in the metropolitan area, for the reason that the undertakings of the department in that area return thousands of pounds in profit, while in most other parts of the State they represent a loss. Immediately the House adjourned the report of that department was taken from the Table. Surely hon. members are not expected to read that report and carry in their heads all the information it contains in regard to the finances of the department! Yet members are frequently called upon to supply such information to inquirers. If the financial figures of that report were printed, and hon. members had them at home, those figures could be readily turned up when required. I have

seen in the Press a few extracts from that report, extracts which the Press seemed to think necessary to the informing of the general public. I hope there will be no further occasion for a protest such as we are making this afternoon, because I hold that it is the duty of members to see that they secure every information in regard to the workings of the various departments. It is possible that a Country party man may want the Lands Department report and would not care a hang about the Railway Department's report, and only ask for the Lands report because it contains information of value to him. It is our duty as members to see that we get all these reports.

The Minister for Railways: The railway report was placed on the Table and an order given for its distribution before the adjournment. I am making inquiries into the matter.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Instructions were issued that these reports were not to be distributed as usual, and new members especially must realise that they require the information contained in them. We have been told that we are backward in looking after the interests of the country, and the only way that we can do so properly is to have these reports furnished to us. If we are not to have the reports, and if these are not to be freely circulated, it is about time the country dispensed with the services of us all, for we are no longer any use here. If the country thinks that one man is sufficient to manage the affairs of State let the country give him full control and kick us out altogether, thus saving the £300 a year each of us is paid. I know that a lot of rubbish is printed in some of these reports, matter that is not required by the public, and also that these reports could be cut down in a great measure. There is, however, in these reports information that is necessary for the carrying on of the business of the country, and every hon. member should be in possession of that information.

Mr. SPEAKER [5.17]: The motion as amended is as follows:—

“That in the opinion of this House the custom of distributing printed reports of the Government departments should not be departed from.”

Before putting this motion I should like to remove, what I have gathered from the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) to be an impression which appears to have grown up with regard to the connection which the Speaker has with these reports. As Speaker and Chairman of the Printing Committee, I wish to point out that I only control the papers that are printed in connection with Parliament. I have nothing whatever to do with the printing of Government or departmental reports. These are printed by the Government Printer, and, I presume, by the authority of the Treasurer or some other Minister. I may say in fairness, perhaps, to the Treasurer, who is absent, that he told me that he had cut down a lot of the reports that he deemed to be superfluous, that this would

effect an economy, and that it would not affect the convenience of the House or hon. members one iota. I do not remember the date on which he issued these instructions, but it was not long ago. He has since been out of the State. I was in close touch with the Treasurer in reference to economies in the printing of Parliamentary matter generally. I assume that he issued instructions to cease the printing of reports, and that a number of the reports that now lie on the Table were printed before these instructions went forth. That, at all events, is my assumption. It was only the intention of the Treasurer to prevent any waste so far as the printing of reports that are laid on the Table is concerned. I also wish to point out that before reports are laid on the Table of the House they are placed there by resolution of the House.

Question put and passed.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Broome Local Court Admiralty Jurisdiction.
 - 2, Local Option Continuation.
 - 3, Industries Assistance Act Continuation.
- Transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MOTION—CENSORSHIP BY FEDERAL AUTHORITIES.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [5.25]: I move—
 "That in the opinion of this House the censorship as exercised generally by the Federal Government, and particularly in regard to industrial matters and grievances of returned soldiers, is against the best interests of the people of this State."

To deal with the censorship as it is applied in Australia, and has been applied during the last 12 or 18 months, it will be necessary for me to go back some considerable time in order to traverse the events which have transpired in the Commonwealth, as well as the actions of certain people with regard to the censorship. I intend to deal with the matter of the censorship under three headings. Firstly, I want to deal with the censorship as it applies generally; secondly, I want to deal with it as it has been used for party purposes, particularly during the last two referendum campaigns; and thirdly, as it has been applied with regard to the late industrial trouble throughout the Commonwealth. Although repeated requests were made to the Federal authorities by the State Executive of the Australian Labour Federation in Western Australia for some relaxation of the censorship in Australia, we got practically no redress until on the 19th September, 1917, the following letter was sent by the general secretary of that organisation to the Prime Minister:—

My executive is forced by experience to the belief that the censorship is being grossly prostituted for political purposes. We are not alone in this belief. Practically every paper in this State has complained of abuses in the censorship, and in short the conduct of the censorship has long since be-

come a by-word with the people of this State. Only recently the "Sunday Times" of Western Australia declared that the censorship was responsible for the falling off in enlistments, because it was hiding the true position regarding the war. The leading paper in this State, the "West Australian," has time and again declared that the censorship has long ago exasperated all sane people. Not only is the censorship responsible for hiding the true position of the war but it is also responsible for hiding the true position of the strike situation in the Commonwealth, and worse than anything else it is guilty of preventing soldiers' grievances from being discussed in the columns of our newspapers. My executive is of opinion that if ever any subject justified the appointment of a Royal Commission it is the conduct of the censorship. We hope that the Federal Government will have a Royal Commission appointed at an early date to clear this matter up. Until it is cleared up by a Royal Commission the people of Western Australia at least have no confidence in the war news or strike news that has filtered through to them from the offices of the censors.

The reply to this letter is as follows:—

With reference to your letter of the 19th September on the subject of war news, etc., I am directed to inform you that the following report on the matter has been furnished by the Deputy Chief Censor:—"1, The declaration by the "Sunday Times" that the censorship in Australia is hiding the true position regarding the war is not true in fact. Scarcely a line is ever deleted from the war cables that have passed the Press Bureau, London. If, as alleged, such news is hidden the censorship in Australia is not responsible. 2, The censorship was and is not responsible for hiding the true position of the strike situation in the Commonwealth. News and information concerning the strike was and is at all times freely allowed publication. 3, The discussion of soldiers' grievances in the newspapers is not prohibited when such grievances are bona fide. It is only ex parte statements of imagined wrongs, and untrue or unduly exaggerated accounts of grievances which are deleted.

I wish to draw hon. members' attention to paragraph 3. The Deputy Chief Censor says that the statement that soldiers' grievances are not permitted publication is wrong, and that all bona fide grievances are allowed to be published. I would point out that this officer is the sole judge as to whether such grievances are bona fide or otherwise. No man, or dozen men in this country have the right of taking upon themselves of saying whether a returned soldier has a genuine grievance or not. It is up to the general public and to the man himself, who has a perfect right to take this course, to ventilate the matter if such is desired. On the first phase how the censorship has been used generally, I wish to refer briefly to a statement which was made only some three weeks ago by Senator Pearce. The Federal Minister for Defence practically issued a challenge to the news

papers of the Commonwealth, to the effect that not one journal could produce any item of war cables which, after passing the London censorship, had been interfered with in Australia. All the leading journals of Australia immediately accepted Senator Pearce's challenge, and there was not a solitary daily newspaper in the Commonwealth but could produce bundles of cables received and censored here, portions being cut out and refused publication in Australia. The Sydney "Sun" was the first newspaper to meet the challenge. On the following Sunday the "Sunday Times" of this State also met the challenge, and even went a little further, printing a passage which had been censored from a war cable and telling Senator Pearce that if he disbelieved the statement he could come along to the "Sunday Times" office and see the original message as censored. The "Sunday Times" added that it was prepared to show Senator Pearce dozens of other censored messages. The "West Australian" had a leading article on the subject, and offered to satisfy the Minister, if he liked to visit the office of the newspaper, that any number of locally censored cables could be produced.

Hon. P. Collier: Even "Sparks" was indignant over it.

Mr. MUNSIE: The latest issue of the "Bulletin" which has arrived in this State—and the "Bulletin" is the great conscriptionist paper of New South Wales—also takes up the challenge of the Minister for Defence, and goes so far as to say that his statement is absolutely incorrect. And there is not the slightest doubt that it is absolutely incorrect. The statement of the Minister for Defence is only in keeping with dozens of other statements made by that hon. gentleman during the last 12 months. Moreover, after recent happenings in the Federal Parliament I personally do not believe there is any self-respecting citizen of the Commonwealth who is prepared to take the word of any member of the present Federal Cabinet. I hope hon. members will bear with me while I go back some time to give the beginning of the war censorship business and its operation. Going right back to the beginning, I find that on the 2nd September, 1916, the following appeared in the "Sydney Morning Herald":—

In answer to an inquiry as to what length the opponents of conscription could go in expressing their opinions on the platform, the Prime Minister made the following statement:—"Everybody will be allowed full freedom of speech, limited only by consideration of the safety of the country and recognition of the fact that we are in a state of war."

In reply to the question put to him the Prime Minister actually made the statement that everybody would be allowed full freedom of speech. I regret—and I wish to emphasise this—that the same question was not put to the same gentleman on the same day as regards the Press—to what length the Press of Australia might go. We know to what extent freedom of speech could be indulged in during the referendum campaign.

Mr. Troy: The newspapers could go to any length so long as they supported conscription.

Mr. MUNSIE: As regards freedom of speech, one could say practically anything one liked so long as one was supporting conscription, but one had to be exceptionally careful as to what one did say if one was opposing conscription.

Mr. Troy: "I'll have you!"

Mr. MUNSIE: After making the definite statement that the fullest freedom of speech would be allowed, Mr. Hughes on the 4th September, 1916, had a conference with the executive of the Australian Labour Federation, or rather with that portion of the executive which controls New South Wales. The executive listened to the arguments of Mr. Hughes, and, after hearing the whole of them, turned down his proposal by 21 votes to five. That was the effect of his arguments. On the next morning the following instructions were issued by the Censor to the Press:—

Until further notice it is not permissible to publish (1) attacks upon the Prime Minister personally, as distinguished from legitimate criticism of Government proposals; (2) abuse of anti-conscriptionists, who must not be called shirkers, loafers, and the like—

Fancy the Prime Minister of Australia directing through the censorship that anti-conscriptionists must not be called shirkers or loafers.

Hon. P. Collier: He called them names a thousand times worse.

Mr. MUNSIE: There is not on either side of the conscription question a single man who has uttered one-tenth part of the abuse in which the Prime Minister himself has indulged. He has, not once but a hundred times, called every anti-conscriptionist throughout the Commonwealth Hun and pro-German. And this is the man who issued instructions that anti-conscriptionists were not to be called shirkers or loafers. I want hon. members particularly to notice the third prohibition issued on the 4th of September, 1916—

(3.) any statement, other than legitimate criticism, which may hinder the execution of the Government proposals.

I wish to know what any of these instructions had to do with the Empire? What would it have mattered if Mr. Hughes had permitted absolute freedom of discussion on the three subjects which through the censorship he barred? Would it in any way have affected Australia or the Empire? Certainly not. Again on the 4th September, 1916, the Censor—he was pretty frequent with notices on this particular occasion—notified the Press—

Until further notice it is not permissible to publish (1) any reference to secret sessions of the Commonwealth Parliament other than the fact that a secret session is to be held or has been held; (2) any report in respect to deliberations of caucus meetings of the Labour party or the Liberal party other than those made by the Prime Minister or by the leader of the Opposition respectively; (3) any resolution for or against conscription or the Government; (4) any resolution inciting resistance to the proposals of the Government, or any resolution as to any law in respect thereto.

This embraces practically everything. Under the War Precautions Act, and regulations is-

sued thereunder, the Prime Minister could practically gag every man in this country if he so desired, and on any subject he chose. Things were progressing a bit, however, and the Prime Minister was beginning to discover that all the people of Australia were not of the same opinion as himself regarding censorship. After the meeting between Mr. Hughes and the New South Wales Executive of the Australian Labour Federation, a meeting of the council of the Political Labour party in New South Wales was called at the request of Mr. Hughes. The council consists of two representatives of each of the affiliated organisations. The object of this meeting was to give the Prime Minister an opportunity of addressing the council. He attended the meeting and did address the council. Senator Ferriks and Mr. Stewart, the Melbourne general secretary of the Australian Labour Federation, also attended the meeting. After the address by Mr. Hughes, the meeting considered the questions submitted, and again turned down the Prime Minister's proposals by a vote of 116 to 60, only four short of a two to one majority. Strange to say, on the same day the following instructions were issued by the Censor to the Press—

Until further notice it is not permissible to publish in the Press any reference whatsoever to the Prime Minister's discussions with Labour conferences and similar bodies. This instruction applies to past and future conferences.

I wish to impress on hon. members that I shall not quote anything or read anything that is mere hearsay. In this debate I intend to restrict myself to quoting only that of which I have absolutely positive proof, in the form of the signature of the Censor. Some hon. members might otherwise contend that I have quoted statements emanating from unreliable sources. The whole of the facts I am about to place before the House I can vouch for in every respect. I repeat, I shall quote nothing except what has the signature of the Censor attached to it. It is only recently that I have been able to get a little further information, and also confirmation, with regard to that meeting in Sydney. It was reported that when the Prime Minister was leaving Sydney for Victoria on that occasion, he gave a statement to the Press. It was not known whether it was the Prime Minister himself or the Prime Minister's secretary who handed the statements to the Press for publication. But I have here a copy of the statement which was handed to the Press in Sydney at that time. This statement appeared in the "Sydney Morning Herald's" issue of the 7th September, 1916. Let me say here that the "Daily Telegraph," which is a leading newspaper of New South Wales, point-blank refused to publish the statement, knowing it to be untrue. I was a trifle critical or sceptical as to where the information came from; but, lo and behold! I happen to have a copy of the statement here.

Hon. P. Collier: Read it.

Mr. MUNSIE: I am not going to read anything except what I can vouch for as signed by the Censor. However, the statement of which I have a copy here was published in the

Press. The Prime Minister, before leaving Sydney on that particular occasion, not only used the censorship as a means of suppressing information from the Australian public, but attempted to go a little further, in the other direction, and to use the censorship itself for the purpose of advertising William Morris Hughes. I hold in my hand a copy of the statement then issued to the Press for publication, a copy signed by the Censor himself. I wish, however, to draw particular attention to the heading of the matter which introduces the statement. The heading reads as follows:—

The following is furnished to you for publication; no comment, and no other reference to the subject, is permitted.

Talk about a dictator! Did ever the Russian Czar, in his palmiest days, attempt to control the Russian people as Mr. Hughes did on this occasion the Australian people? Here is the statement that was allowed to be published:—

Mr. Hughes at the Trades Hall Council, Sydney. Beyond the bald statement that he had attended a specially summoned meeting of the Trades Hall Council and that he had laid the position of the Government and the country plainly before them, Mr. Hughes could not be induced to say anything about what may fairly be regarded as perhaps the most momentous meeting in the history of unionism in Australia. Some day the full story may be told. In the meantime much must be left to conjecture. But at least this is certain: At the meeting, which began at eight and did not finish until nearly midnight, about two hundred delegates signed the roll, and Mr. Hughes made a great speech and had a great reception. It is true that many opponents of his policy were present, but on the other hand, as the meeting proceeded it became apparent that he had at least as many enthusiastic supporters. His speech not only made many converts, but created a new atmosphere. He was assailed by many questions, and a hostile speech by Senator Ferriks. But when the meeting closed a vote of thanks to him was carried by acclamation, amid loud cheering and some booing. It is not too much to say that at this, the first meeting at which Mr. Hughes has been able to get direct to the representatives of unionism, as distinguished from the secret junta that pretends to represent it, the Prime Minister created a profound impression.

The Prime Minister was practically responsible for the statements which were circulated that the Labour movement was being controlled by juntas. First of all he meets the executive, who turn down his proposition by 21 votes to 5. He refuses to allow any mention of that to be made by the Press of Australia, and he demands that the council of all the unions shall be called together. The council is called together, the Prime Minister comes along again, airs his eloquence at that council meeting, and the meeting decides against the Prime Minister by 160 to 60. Then the Prime Minister supplies a statement to the Press for publication, and on the same

day he issues this instruction, "No report of the Labour council meeting last night to be published." This instruction is issued to every Press in Australia. That is pretty strong. After leaving Sydney he went to Adelaide for the purpose of addressing a Labour conference which was then sitting in that city. Mr. Hughes was a busy man; everybody realised that, and he had to leave again that afternoon for the purpose of getting back to Sydney. Mr. Hughes addressed the conference and, knowing that he had to leave on the same day, and that there was no possible chance of the conference discussing the proposal as submitted by him, Mr. Crawford Vaughan, the Premier of South Australia, moved that as Mr. Hughes had to leave to catch his train, the conference should carry a vote of confidence in him. The delegates at that conference pointed out that it would not be right to carry such a motion at that juncture. They had not discussed Mr. Hughes' proposal, and it might be thought that the conference were sympathetic with regard to conscription. Mr. Vaughan's reply was, "What nonsense; how can people say that when you have not yet discussed it." However, the motion was carried and Mr. Hughes left for Melbourne. On the very next day, not only in Melbourne but throughout Australia, the Press held up the Adelaide conference as something grand to look to, because they had supported the Prime Minister of Australia in opposition to their fellow-workers in New South Wales and Victoria. Mr. Hughes had issued instructions that the fact that the vote of confidence in him had been carried by the Adelaide conference should be published broadcast, particularly in Victoria and Western Australia, and the very next day he issued a further instruction prohibiting any contradiction of that statement in the Press. What I want to know is, how can the people of the Commonwealth give a fair decision on any subject when we have a man of that character at the head of affairs? Personally, I have no faith whatever in Mr. Hughes, especially after going through this censorship business. I would not care what Mr. Hughes had to say in the future, I would not believe in him. Knowing that Mr. Hughes was going back to Sydney, and that he intended delivering his policy speech in Sydney on the Monday night, the Sydney "Worker" of the week before, printed an article in defiance of the Censor, and headed that article "Hughes the dictator." The paper explained to its readers the position as it obtained with regard to the Adelaide conference. They did that in defiance of the Censor. They had some backing, and I honestly believe that a prosecution would have followed but for the influence of some of those connected with the newspaper. As a matter of fact, Mr. Hughes had gone so far that the whole of the representatives of the Press in Sydney decided to meet him on his return and put forward the request that, unless he was prepared to relax some of the instructions he had issued with regard to the censorship, it was their intention to boycott him and to not publish one statement he might make in the future. That brought him

to heel. Mr. Hughes immediately issued fresh instructions and he amended his order as follows:—

From Censor to Press, 22nd September, it is permissible, (1) To publish arguments, resolutions, notices, cartoons, etc., for and against conscription and the referendum.

It will be remembered that only just previously Mr. Hughes prohibited, through the Censor, the publication of any resolution either for or against conscription. The order from the Censor to the Press continues—

(2) To criticise adversely, or to support the policy of the Government, provided that the publication of such matter (a) does not reflect on and is not offensive to Great Britain or any of our Allies; (b) does not incite a breach of any Federal or State law, or any sort of strike; (c) does not contravene any of the provisions of the War Precautions Act, or regulations made thereunder.

Here again Mr. Hughes has amended his instructions to the Press. According to the first two paragraphs he has definitely allowed them to do something which he prohibited them from doing previously. But, in the last clause, there is the dragnet; he can, if he so desires, issue any instruction through the Censor under the War Precautions Act and its regulations. Following on that again, there is another instruction from the Censor to the Press reading—"No reference is to be made in the Press to proclamations published in Broken Hill by anti-conscriptionists." No mention was to be made of these one way or the other in the Press. I have one or two other instructions here which I shall read. From Censor to Press 5/9/16, "No references whatever are to be made in the Press to the proposed one day a week strike at Broken Hill." From Censor to Press 4/10/16, "The Press is requested not to publish any references to a proposed cessation of work for the purpose of holding a meeting, or any other purpose in connection with the subject of conscription or the referendum." From Censor to Press, "(1) It is not permissible to publish any references whatever to a proposed strike at Broken Hill on Wednesday the 4th inst.; (2) It is not permissible to publish any direct or indirect references to the stoppage of work anywhere for the purpose of holding meetings on Wednesday the 4th in connection with the question of conscription; such references to these meetings as do not imply a stoppage of work or strike are permissible." Another one from the Censor to the Press is dated 2/9/16 and reads, "It is not permissible to publish the following:—(1) The following question addressed by Mr. Cook to the Prime Minister in the House of Representatives yesterday, 'What would happen if the referendum failed? Men would still have to be got somehow,' and (2) the Prime Minister answered, 'Australia will not fail.' No reference may be made in the Press to this question and its answer." It does seem strange to me that a public question agitating the minds of the people of the Commonwealth should not be permitted to appear in the newspapers, a question which

was asked on the floor of the House by one Minister of another. Only those few scattered people who are privileged to read Federal "Hansard" will ever know anything about this question and answer.

[The Deputy-Speaker took the Chair.]

Hon. J. Mitchell: Federal "Hansard" circulates widely.

Mr. MUNSIE: I admit that, but I am well within bounds when I say that not 5 per cent. of the people see it, let alone read it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Mr. Cook was not a Minister at that time.

Mr. MUNSIE: He was leader of the Opposition when he asked that question. Another instruction from the Censor to the Press dated 16/9/16 reads, "The Press is requested not to publish, or allude in any way, to the speech made by Mr. Hanna in the Commonwealth Parliament suggesting that certain facts, revealed to members at a secret session, should be told to the electors." I want to know what is the good of the people of Australia electing members to the House of Representatives if one of their number gets up on the floor of that House and makes certain statements which are not allowed to see the light of day. I have carefully read Mr. Hanna's speech and I fail to see where he gave away any secret which was told him at that secret session. He, however, did make several valuable suggestions to the public of Australia, and because he made those suggestions the instruction which I have read was issued by the Censor to the Press. Again, only those few who read Federal "Hansard" will be privileged to know what Mr. Hanna did say. When things come to such a pass the position is scandalous, and especially when we remember that that kind of thing can happen in what is supposed to be a free democracy. Again, on 29th August, 1916, the Censor issued the following instruction to the Press:—"No reference must be made in the Press to remarks that Cabinet Ministers in the Commonwealth Government are proposing to resign." Most of us are aware why that notice was issued by the Censor to the Press. We have had a particular gentleman here lately and we have learnt a little of Federal history. We were given to understand that at that particular time Mr. Hughes, as Prime Minister, had an absolute majority of his Cabinet with him and that the Federal Parliament was behind him, but we know now that several members of his Cabinet have threatened to resign and one has made a statement to the Press that it was his intention to resign. Immediately thereupon Mr. Hughes issued instructions to the Press absolutely prohibiting the people of the Commonwealth knowing that there was such a thing as dissension in the Cabinet and that it was the intention of any Minister to resign. Again, on 1st August, 1916, we have the following letter from the Censor to the Press:—

The publication of the manifesto on conscription issued by the National Executive of the Australian Trade Union Congress is prohibited.

I well remember that during the first conscription campaign in Western Australia those of us who were on the "anti" side were repeatedly told that it was only a small coterie that had met in Melbourne without any authority whatever from the trades unions or the individual unionists, and had decided to oppose conscription. That is where the word "junta" originated. That congress represented over 300,000 Australian unionists. They met and arrived at certain decisions including the decision to issue a manifesto in connection with no-conscription. The moment it was determined to issue that manifesto the Censor issued his prohibitive instructions. First of all the manifesto was submitted to the Melbourne "Argus" for publication. The "Argus," as in duty bound, handed it on to the Censor, who cut out portions of it. The remainder was published. As soon as that appeared in the "Argus" Senator Pearce, as Minister for Defence, forced an entry into the Trades Hall, Melbourne, and seized the whole of the manifesto. It was then decided to wait upon Senator Pearce by deputation. As showing the position which impelled the deputation to wait upon the Minister, let me read the following, which was sent by Mr. J. M. McKay to the Sydney "Worker" for publication, but was censored:—

Condemned by Executive of P.L.C. Federal members in attendance. They are the headings. The letterpress is as follows:—

The position arising out of the seizure of the anti-conscription manifesto of the Trades Union Congress was discussed by members of the Political Labour Council at a meeting held on Friday and Saturday last, Federal members representative of the State of Victoria were present, and the question of the military raid was exhaustively discussed. Several resolutions bearing on the question were passed, amongst them being the following:—"That this executive, sitting at the seat of the Commonwealth Government and consequently possessing a more intimate acquaintance with the Commonwealth administration than can be possessed by the executives of other States, regrets that in the interests of the Labour movement it has been constrained to make the following statement:—1, That this executive has long been dismayed by the administration of the War Precautions Act by the Defence Department. 2, That this executive has not made this protest earlier because it was convinced that through the pressure of his responsibilities Senator Pearce was often ignorant of the proceedings which he had by his signature authorised. 3, That Senator Pearce cannot evade personal responsibility for the recent suppression of the anti-conscription manifesto of the Trades Union Conference, inasmuch as he has (a) by his own admission authorised the seizure of copies of the manifesto, (b) ratified and approved a night raid upon the Trades Hall, Melbourne, at the obtaining of an entry under threat of force. (c) Personally suppressed portions of the manifesto which have al-

ready been passed by the Censor, and published in the "Argus" newspaper. (d) Defended his action by groundless charges of sedition and disloyalty."

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

As I have said, it was decided to wait upon the Minister for Defence by deputation, with a view to urging him to relinquish the attitude he had taken up and remove the embargo from the document. When it was declared that Senator Pearce had himself suppressed certain portions of that manifesto which had passed the Censor, the Minister indignantly denied it. He challenged any of the authorities of the Trades Hall to prove that he had suppressed anything in the manifesto which had passed the Censor. Prominent among those present at the deputation were Senator Findlay, Mr. Mathews, M.P., Mr. Hanna, M.P., Mr. P. Moloney, M.P., Dr. Maloney, M.P., Senators Barnes and McKissock, Messrs. Fraser, Gill, Blackburn, Holloway, Bennett and Stewart. At the outset Mr. Mathews raised the point as to whether the Press was to be admitted. Some argument ensued, at the conclusion of which the Minister said he could supply them with a copy of the report. The copy I have in my hand is from the shorthand notes taken by Senator Pearce's secretary, and is signed and supplied by Senator Pearce himself. I make that statement because I propose to prove that Senator Pearce is a liar.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What has that to do with the motion?

Mr. MUNSIE: Everything. Senator Pearce has said that he never used his position as Minister to censor anything in that manifesto which had been passed by the Censor for publication in the "Argus." I will prove that he did so under his own signature. After the whole position had been explained to Senator Pearce, Mr. Bennett asked why the "Argus" had been allowed to publish the lot. The Minister said that was an incorrect statement, that the "Argus" had published only what the Censor had allowed them to publish, that it was a fact that he himself had cut out more than the Censor had cut out. Senator Pearce himself made that statement to the deputation, and he has since had the brazen impudence to come before the people and deny that he censored anything passed by the Censor. With a view to determining what they would be permitted to put in the manifesto, Mr. Stewart asked the Minister if they could refer to the fact that before the war shipping companies had been carrying wheat at 7d. per bushel, and that they were now charging 3s. 9d. In answer to this and similar questions, Senator Pearce said he could only repeat his answer to the previous deputation, namely, that they must submit what they proposed to publish. I have here a complete copy of the manifesto, including the censored passages. Personally I cannot see anything wrong in any of those censored passages. In order to afford hon. members an opportunity of judging for themselves, I propose to read the complete manifesto, which is as follows:—

Fellow unionists—Conscription is the law in Great Britain and in the Republic of the French.

That was allowed by the Censor to be published. Then the Censor struck out the following:—

In both countries conscription has been used to render null and void all the achievements of trades unionism, to destroy customs, rights, and practices, to dilute and whittle away, to put unskilled in the place of skilled, women in the place of men, children in the place of adults. In both countries conscription has been used, not merely as an instrument of national defence, but as a bludgeon to break down the standard of the industrial classes. In both countries conscription commences, not in the seizure of the body for slaughter, but in the proclamation itself. From that moment every subject within the prescribed ages is a potential subject of the sword. From that moment every industrial is a slave, every act of protest a crime, and every workman who rises in indignation against the destruction of some hard-won right or privilege of his occupation is seized, interned, deported or conscribed. In both countries the industrial magnates, the controllers of ocean transportation, and the great financiers, have been permitted to wax fat on the blood of slaughter.

Every one of those statements is absolutely true. Yet they were not permitted to be published, nor was the following:—

In both countries the suspension of trade union conditions, the coercionist, and the suppressive practices permissible under conscription have made trade unionism a mere name, a memory of the past, have made the workers the helpless victims of every Gradgrind. These things have happened in the land where "Britons never shall be slaves," and under the banner of Republican France. In neither country have the toiling multitude been permitted to express an election opinion upon the economic serfage created by conscription—no more than if they had been inhabitants of the most absolute despotism.

They permitted the following to go in:—

The principle of conscription is one thing, its practice quite another. In principle it is an instrument of national defence. In practice it is made an instrument of working-class subjugation.

Then they suppressed the following:—

It is so under the Kaiser and the Czar. It is so under the Union Jack and the tricolour of France, and since in Australia we have seen a slavish imitation of the laws, regulations, verbiage, and practices of the Imperial Government—

Here they remove the embargo and permit the publication of the rest of the sentence, as follows:—

It behoves the organised toilers of Australia to speak and act before the clock of trickery is permitted to strike the hour of doom. Because, when the proclamation of conscription is made, the hour is past, the democracy is too late, its lips are sealed, it can speak no more; every man is a soldier,

subject to the laws, the decisions, and the abrupt penalties of the drumhead. We place no value on the promises that conscription will not mean for the workers of Australia what it has meant for the organised working classes of other lands.

Then they suppressed the following:—

We remember the promises made during the passage of the War Precautions Act, and under it and its regulations we have seen suppression of speech and Press, imprisonment of workmen, and unpunished brigandage on the part of the predatory interests. Control of the metal resources of the continent by men who were the intimates of the Germanic interests they introduced and fostered; control of primary products by the wheat sharks; control of shipments by Bell, by Darling, and allied interests; control of Commonwealth financial arrangements by bankers and stock-jobbers; to all these is to be added, if possible, control of the lives and working conditions of the wage-earners by the bugle and the drawn sword of militarism—such are the contrasts that confront us.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. MUNSIE: I have concluded reading the whole of the resolutions to Congress that were censored as well as the portions that were permitted up to that stage. The balance of the manifesto as submitted was not touched, and it is not my intention, therefore, to read any more from it. I do, however, want to read one or two other extracts from memoranda issued by the Censor to the Press. Here is one dated 8th August, 1916, from Censor to Press—

The Press is requested to refrain from publishing the resolution of the Storemen and Packers union referring to the Minister for Defence and the censorship.

On the 10th August, 1916, a memorandum from the Censor to Press reads—

The publication is prohibited of any statement or suggestion that there are sufficient reinforcements for the Australian Imperial Forces to last until next January. It will thus be seen that the Press were not to be allowed to infer from figures given by the military authorities themselves that there were sufficient reinforcements to last up to any given period. The Press are not permitted to make any reference whatsoever to this, or even to put forward any suggestions that there were sufficient reinforcements to last up to the end of January. Following on that there is a memorandum from the Censor to Press dated 27th August, 1916, as follows:—

Administration of justice:—Press to Censor, publication of the address to the bench by the defendant Sinclair during his trial at Broken Hill on the 25th instant is prohibited.

Here I wish to comment on the actions of the Censor, or on the actions of those who issued the instructions to the Censor. Here is a man charged under the War Precautions Act with an offence. He makes a statement in his own defence in open court, and the public and the Press of Australia are not permitted to men-

tion anything the defendant said in his own defence from the witness box. When people do things like that the people of Australia should be in a position to know who is responsible and what is actually being done, and why it is being done. Here also is a communication which was sent by Mr. Evans, the New South Wales secretary of the P.L.L. to Mr. Archie Stewart, the general secretary of the Australian Labour Federation, Melbourne, which was suppressed—

New South Wales executive to-night ratifies conference decision to oppose conscription of human life for service abroad.

That telegram was sent by Mr. Evans after the executive for New South Wales had again met. Following upon the council having decided on a certain course the executive again confirmed the resolution, and endeavoured to notify the general secretary in Melbourne, but the telegram was suppressed and never reached him. That is not the only instance of the kind. At least a dozen telegrams sent by the secretary in New South Wales to the secretary in Melbourne did not reach their destination. The result was that no communication was being received back, and the New South Wales people thought that something had happened. Accordingly they sent a message from New South Wales to Victoria to find out what had been done and why no replies had been sent to the telegrams. They discovered that none of the telegrams they had been sending had been delivered, and that this was the reason for no replies having been sent. It was at this particular time that the discovery was also made that it was not safe in the Trades Halls of Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, or Brisbane to even speak over the telephone. They found that the telephone communications to the Trades Halls were being tapped, and that listeners were being put on in order that they could overhear all the conversations that took place between the Trades Halls, and of course report to the authorities. I want to know why, if it was necessary to tap the telephones between the Trades Halls, it was not equally necessary to tap the telephones between other executive organisations.

Hon. P. Collier: The Employers' Federation, for instance.

Mr. MUNSIE: Why were not the telephones of the Chambers of Commerce and Manufacturers and of the Employers' Federation of Victoria and New South Wales also tapped? Why were the gentlemen belonging to these organisations allowed to confer in peace and send telephone messages to whom they liked without interruption?

Hon. P. Collier: Or the executives of the Farmers & Settlers' Associations?

Mr. MUNSIE: Because these happened to be Trades Hall telephones they were tapped, and listeners being put on to hear what was being said. The matter then came to this: that if they wanted to get any information passing between State and State they had to send such information by messenger. All that cost money, but they had to do it. Any message from New South Wales to Victoria, and vice versa, was then sent by messenger. This was the only way in which they could hold communication between the States. It

was desired to call a general conference in New South Wales of the whole of the trades unions of that State, and notifications were sent out with that object. Not one of these notifications, however, was received by any of the trades unions. The result was that when they wanted to call this conference they were obliged to send messengers throughout New South Wales in order to get the congress held. This happened prior to the first referendum campaign. Then, again, they wanted to send literature from Victoria, where they were having it printed, to New South Wales. They started despatching literature in the ordinary way, but discovered that it was being held up and not being despatched. They then decided they would send it by rail. They personally delivered it to the railway department, and saw that it was put aboard the train, but it never reached Sydney. They then decided to send a messenger with the literature, but the authorities stopped the messenger and searched his box, and took the literature out. They were evidently not going to be beaten. I will tell the House what the organisations concerned then had to do. They procured a gentleman who was prepared to wear the garb of a parson. He put on this garb and they packed the literature in his trunks, and despatched them to the railway station for New South Wales. The gentleman himself got aboard the train. The railway authorities allowed these boxes to go on, and the reverend gentleman appeared at the other end, collected his boxes and got the literature out. That was the only way in which it was possible to send the literature from one State to the other. People talk about this being a free country. If, however, Australia has come to his pass, that people have to go to extremes of that description in order to get literature passed from one State to another, it is time something was done to remove the persons responsible for this state of affairs. I wish to give an illustration of something which happened locally. Mr. McCallum, the general secretary of the A.L.F., was at this time in the Eastern States, and desired if possible to know what things were like in Western Australia. For that purpose he sent the following telegram to Mr. Clifford, Trades Hall, Kalgoorlie:—

Please wire me opinion of goldfields on conscription. Appearances at present are that proposals will be defeated by substantial majority in three largest States. Kind regards. McCallum.

That telegram was never received in Western Australia. Why the authorities should suppress a telegram of that description is more than I can understand.

The Minister for Works: Were any inquiries made?

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes, but no satisfaction was obtained. Mr. McCallum wired again, and this message was received. Mr. Clifford replied—

Special meeting Sunday morning re your wire. Council divided and dealing finally special meeting Sunday morning. Personally strongly against proposal. Your personal views will greatly assist if wired not

later than next Saturday. Regards, Clifford.

To that message Mr. McCallum replied as follows:—

(Clifford, Trades Hall, Kalgoorlie. Reply your request my views on proposal. Am uncompromisingly opposed. Evidence not wanting here that cheap labour is at the back of the whole scheme. Great excitement here. Martial law expected. God help Labour if proposals carried. Wire council's decision.

That message also was suppressed. It never reached this State, or at all events never reached its destination.

Resolved that motions be continued.

Member: Were inquiries made?

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes; with no result. Receiving no communication from Mr. Clifford in reply to the second wire, Mr. McCallum despatched the following message:—

Clifford, Trades Hall, Kalgoorlie. Please advise if you received my reply to your wire time for Sunday and decision. McCallum.

I wish hon. members to observe how this telegram was delivered. I hold in my hand the telegram as delivered. Hon. members will observe that the message is not on a telegram form, but on an ordinary piece of paper. Mr. Clifford replied as follows:—

No wire received from you. Possibly censored. Council by large majority decided against proposal. Clifford.

That message was received by Mr. McCallum in the following form:—

No wire received from you. Possibly delayed. Council by large majority decided against proposal.

Mr. McCallum again telegraphed—

Clifford, Trades Hall, Kalgoorlie. Fact you not received my wire sufficient indication my opinion. See Needham.

At that time Senator Needham was on his way to Western Australia, and that is how we obtained information. When Mr. McCallum despatched the second telegram, the New South Wales Censor wrote to him asking him to call and see him, the Censor. Mr. McCallum did so. He states that the argument waxed pretty hot. The Censor told Mr. McCallum that the telegram had been stopped by him. Mr. McCallum wanted to know why, and the Censor stated that the reasons why the message had not been sent were that it contained certain statements likely to lead to misunderstanding, and that in it Mr. McCallum had suggested that martial law might be proclaimed. On the very day that Mr. McCallum had lodged this censorship message for transmission—I want to state this in justification of Mr. McCallum's opinion—the "Sydney Daily Telegraph" published an article—in pretty large type, as hon. members will observe from the copy I hold in my hand—under the following headings: "Act of Civil War. Revolution averted." The Censor permitted the publication of that article, but Mr. McCallum's telegram was suppressed because it contained a suggestion that martial law might be proclaimed. Another point taken by the Censor was that

Mr. McCallum had no reason for suggesting that coloured labour was at the back of the proposals. I contend that there was every justification for that statement of Mr. McCallum. I say so on the authority of the Censor himself. If Mr. McCallum had no justification for making such a statement, why was the following notification issued by the Censor to the Press:—

I am directed to inform you that no reference whatever is to be made in the Press to the arrival or expected arrival in Australia of a batch of Maltese immigrants.

Further, I wish to mention a lettergram sent by Mr. Ryan, the Premier of Queensland, on the 25th October, 1916, the 28th October being referendum day. The lettergram was despatched to Mr. Clifford, Trades Hall, Kalgoolie, on the 25th October; and it was placed in the letter box at the Trades Hall at about 10 minutes to eight on the evening of the 28th October, after the vote had been taken. It was sent with the intention that it should be published in the Press, in order to allow the goldfields public to know Mr. Ryan's opinion on the referendum proposals. On the 29th October the following message was left at the Trades Hall, once more in the letter box:—

Lettergram from Brisbane dated 25th should have been indorsed "delayed by interruption to line."

It seems rather a strange coincidence that just at that particular time the line should be interrupted, and that the Telegraph Department should send along a notification a few days later that the interruption had occurred and that the lettergram ought to have been indorsed accordingly. My opinion is that the lettergram was deliberately held up in order that the goldfields people might not know Mr. Ryan's opinion. I wish to say a few words regarding other aspects of the subject. A letter was sent from England by Mr. McGrath regarding the first Anzac vote. The letter reads as follows:—

I see Billy has determined to break up the party. I tip he will get the shock of his life when the vote from the boys over here is counted. It is a rare thing to meet a private who says he is voting conscription. If you get this before the vote is taken, you can say that conscription has failed here. It has been useful in dragging in the toilers. The other classes either get exemption for business reasons, or go to work in munition factories. The Australian sees what is going on, and will give conscription a great big no, or I have been most unfortunate in meeting only those opposed to it.

I ask hon. members whether there is anything wrong in that letter, written by a soldier at the Front and a member of the Federal Parliament, and expressing his opinion as to what the first conscription vote of the boys at the Front would be. In my opinion it is only an ordinary letter. Still, when submitted to the Press for publication, it appears as follows:—

I see Billy has determined to break up the party. I tip he will get the shock of his life when the ——. It is a rare thing to meet a private ——. If you get this before the ——.

The rest is censored. In my opinion it is nothing short of a scandal that either a Censor or anyone else should treat such a letter in such a fashion. Nothing in that letter could be of any advantage to the enemy in any shape or form. The only result which might accrue from the publication of the letter would be to give the people of Australia the truth; and Mr. William Morris Hughes did not want that.

Hon. P. Collier: The letter was not for the benefit of Billy.

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes; and that was the whole trouble. A great attempt was made during both referendum campaigns, and in fact is still being made, to prove that the present Labour party are controlled by the I.W.W. Every member of the present Labour party has been accused of being an I.W.W.-ite.

The Minister for Works: By whom?

Mr. MUNSIE: By Hughes and Pearce, and in particular by Lynch. By others it has been said that if the whole Parliamentary Labour party are not controlled by the I.W.W., yet the trade unions are so controlled, and especially the A.W.U. It is said that the I.W.W. influence has crept into the Australian trades union movement, and that the A.W.U. in especial is practically controlled by that organisation. Now I propose to read, not from the "Worker"—I might be prosecuted for having that paper in my possession—but from an old issue of the I.W.W. paper, "Direct Action." The date is the 4th November, 1916. This paper gives absolute proof that the executive of the A.W.U. and its principal officers have nothing whatever to do with the I.W.W., and that they scout the I.W.W. as an organisation. Under the heading "Two significant Letters," the paper publishes the following:—

Australian Workers' Union, Head Office, St. Andrew's Place, Sydney, 20th October, 1916. Mr. Frank Bristow, representative Yarra Yarra Station, via Holbrook. Dear Sir, I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 15th, enclosing cheques valued £3 12s. and £1 9s. As requested, I have paid to the No Conscription Fund P.L.L. the cheque for £3 12s., being amount collected by the boys on behalf of the fight for the No Conscription, and herewith enclose receipt for same. Under no circumstances whatever would we pay money over to the I.W.W., an organisation that for the past two years has been vigorously attacking the union in the columns of its paper, "Direct Action," and in the domains of other States. I had occasion, in the past, through the "Worker," to point out the insidious workings of this German-American organisation, and this organisation cannot be used as a catspaw by them. We have no control over individual members in this respect. Cheque herewith returned. Yours fraternally, (Signed) E. Grayndler, general secretary, per C.A.A. Enclosed cheque and receipt. Seeing that they are so free with their tongues, saying that the executive have been caught and are being controlled by the I.W.W., I want to know what reply they can have to Mr. Grayndler, the general secretary of the A.W.U., who rubs it in pretty hard. In reply

they sent the following letter, which was also published. It reads—

To the Defence Committee. Gentlemen, be pleased to find enclosed cheque £1 9s. towards the expenses of men committed to trial. I am directed to forward you the enclosed letter which will explain why this money did not reach you before. Please return letter as soon as convenient. The enclosed sum, subscribed by the shearers here, does not bind them to holding with the views of the I.W.W., but is from a feeling of sympathy with men who are up against the laws of the country, and they wish to see them get a fair trial. Yours, etc., (sgd.) Francis Bristow, Shed Rep.

I want to deal briefly now with the late industrial trouble which took place in the Commonwealth, and in doing so it is my intention to refer to the attitude of the Commonwealth Government and the Censor in regard to the returned soldiers. I have repeatedly made the statement that letters written by returned soldiers to the Press have been suppressed. The Prime Minister, in a letter which I read at the beginning of my remarks, contradicts that, but I can produce six letters which I have, all of which have been submitted to the Press and by the Press passed on to the Censor, who refused to allow them to be published. I will read the instructions which have been issued on this subject. This is from the Censor to the Press, "I herewith return pull headed, 'Soldiers and Sailors,' which must not be published at present until after inquiry. I enclose memorandum dealing with such matters founded on War Precaution Regulation 28. If you desire it I will gladly forward it to the War Committee for inquiry."

Hon. P. Collier: The Censor has not been allowed to slow down on the job like the I.W.W.

Mr. MUNSIE: The instruction goes on—"In view of certain disparaging criticism, if not of an exaggerated character, directly tending to weaken discipline and to discourage recruiting, arrangements are now being made whereby any complaints can at once be made, subject to inquiry, and if necessary steps taken to remedy them. The Press are requested, on receipt of complaints, to submit them to the Censor for inquiry before publication, or to refer them to the Commandant or the department concerned in order that inquiry may be made as to the facts, if necessary. Further representations can be made to the Minister or the War Committee." I have here a statement which was published in a newspaper in Western Australia and it is not the statement of a red rag, as they term some of us, but it is the statement of one of their own organisers, Mr. Watson, who was out organising on behalf of the Soldiers and Sailors Dependants Association. Some time ago this gentleman spoke at Bunbury and I have a copy of the report of his remarks as it appeared in the "South-Western Times." Unfortunately, and the member for Bunbury will agree with me, the "South-Western Times" does not reach many people in Western Australia, but when the editors of other newspapers in the State saw Mr. Watson's

remarks, they expressed a desire to republish them. A copy of the report was sent to the Censor, who returned it marked N.T.B.P., which means "Not to be published." The statement is headed "Soldiers and Sailors," and starts, "Some plain speaking by organiser Watson was indulged in at Bunbury last week." The "South-Western Times" reports passages like this—I will not read them all but I will only quote those which are worth reading—

Similar cases of hardship he quoted, many outrageously symptomatic of official wrong-headedness, and then horrified his listeners by stating in all seriousness that he was carefully selecting the mild cases, letting his audience infer that when they became educated, the particulars of the really "hard" cases would be divulged for their edification. Some of the cases he quoted the association had succeeded in obtaining some measure of redress for; others had been brought up with a round turn by rearing of regulations, laws, and rules that he confidently asserted were never contemplated by the original framers. He then scathingly referred to an official in the Pensions Office. That individual he characterised as a slacker. He has personally seen just a few weeks back a poor lad shuffling along with the aid of two sticks, grasped with difficulty by his apparently palsied shrivelled hands, applying to this hulking strong man for information as to when his pension would be due. The man behind the counter asked when the soldier had put in his application and the boy replied "Sometime in April." The fellow behind the counter, whilst carefully manœuvring his own finger nails, superciliously demanded the exact date, and the applicant confessed he did not know. Then the storm burst. He had the utmost difficulty in keeping quiet, whilst the slacker, in receipt probably of about £5 a week, insulted the war-worn soldier making application for a pitiful 30s. for the same period.

That is sufficient to quote. I read it for this purpose: there are cases mentioned by the organiser of the Soldiers and Sailors' Dependants Association, and I can produce other such cases of individuals themselves being desirous of letting the public know how they have been treated, and having written to the Press the Censor has refused permission for the letters to appear. That is not giving the returned soldiers a fair deal, nor is it giving a fair deal to the people of the State. I will read a few more instructions from the Censor to the Press. Here is a startling one, "The figures quoted by the Prime Minister on the 16th December, 1917, regarding the casualties in the British army are prohibited from publication." Is that giving the public a fair deal? I maintain it is not. Instructions of that description should never have been issued. Here is another instruction, which is one of the strongest ever issued by a censor in this or any other State, and this one went throughout the Commonwealth. It is dated 3rd December, 1917, "Publication is prohibited of a statement by Mr. Catts, M.H.R., upon which he is being prosecuted. The fact that he is being

prosecuted for a statement offensive to the allied powers may be published, but not the statement itself. This instruction applies to both ordinary news items and reports of court proceedings." What is the inference to be drawn from that? From the very day Mr. Catts was summoned for making a statement alleged to be offensive to the allied powers, there was never a day but what one of the Press in the metropolitan area and in some of the principal cities in Australia ridiculed Mr. Catts as a disloyalist. What was this wonderful and serious charge which was laid against Mr. Catts? He was summoned for making a statement that there were six Australian divisions, and that was an absolute fact. When the trial came on for this enormous offence for which he was blackened throughout Australia by the Press, the court, without asking Mr. Catts to go into the witness box, dismissed the case and gave five guineas costs against the Government.

Mr. Teesdale: That shows how honest the Government were.

Mr. MUNSIE: The Government were so honest that they issued instructions like those which I have read. They were satisfied so long as they gagged the Press and allowed the public to believe that Mr. Catts, as a member of the Labour party, had made some awful statements. They led the public to believe that Mr. Catts had said something terrible about the British Empire and they refused to allow the Press to publish the actual statement which he did make. Here is another instruction from Censor to the Press dated 27th November, 1917, "Until officially announced, the publication of any alleged result of the soldiers' vote on the present referendum is prohibited." I take it from that that the Prime Minister was beginning to get a bit doubtful as to what the result would be. He wanted to get in early and his desire was to prevent the public getting any information until he was sure of the result. Here is another instruction which is a scandal. Some little time ago a Royal Commission was appointed by the Federal Government for the purpose of inquiring and reporting upon the administration of the Naval and Defence Department. That Commission drafted its report and submitted it to Parliament and the taxpayers of the Commonwealth will have to pay the expenses of the Commission. The moment the report is presented, instructions are issued by the Censor that publication of the report of the Royal Commission is prohibited unless released by the Prime Minister or the Minister for Defence. I want to know what is the use of appointing a Royal Commission to inquire into the administration of naval and military defence when the report of the Commission is to be suppressed. It seems ridiculous to take a stand like that. Here is another instance. We have been told repeatedly that all the returned soldiers were opposed to the trades unionists in connection with the last industrial upheaval, and we were led to believe that, throughout the Commonwealth, all the returned soldiers were carrying resolutions against the strike which was then in existence. People who were in Sydney at the

time, and who came over here afterwards, told us that processions were being held by the strikers, and that on one occasion such a procession was headed by 600 returned soldiers, who thus showed their sympathy with the strikers. Some of us doubted the accuracy of this in view of the absence of any reference to it in the Press. Here we have the explanation of that silence. It takes the form of another instruction from the Censor to the Press, dated 25th August, 1917, as follows:—

Publication of statements to the effect that returned soldiers are in sympathy with or assisting the strikers, or taking part in strike meetings or processions, is prohibited.

Everything was prohibited that was likely to allow the public to get at the true position. Some 20 or more telegrams regarding the industrial trouble were lodged in the Eastern States for transmission to Perth, but were never delivered. Two delegates were sent from Western Australia to the Eastern States with the object of furnishing us with reliable information as to the progress of the strike. Throughout the industrial trouble the inferences in the Press were that the various Labour executives were responsible for the strike spreading. My own opinion was and is that the last industrial upheaval was practically organised by the New South Wales and Federal National Governments. It is all very well for members to say "Oh." Prior to the industrial upheaval, daily communications were passing between those two Governments, while on the other hand it is certain that the Labour executives in the Eastern States did their utmost to prevent the strike spreading. Let me read two telegrams which, although accepted in the East, were not delivered in the West. The first was sent by Mr. Watson to Mr. McCallum in Perth, as follows:—

Strike officially declared off. Engineers resume work Tuesday.

Is there anything wrong with that telegram? One would think that information would have been welcomed by the people of Western Australia, notwithstanding which the Censor suppressed the message, and it has never yet reached its destination. Another telegram from the same source reads as follows:—

Defence committee declared strike off for railway men, Eversleigh and Randwick engineers, who are resuming work tomorrow. Will be attending meeting tomorrow of waterside and transport workers, who will be considering position.

That telegram was sent, not in code but in plain language as I have read it, yet it was suppressed by the Censor. I have here three other telegrams sent by one of the delegates who went from here to the Eastern States, Mr. Keneally, the general president of the Railway Engine-drivers, Firemen, and Cleaners' Union of Western Australia. He was sent over to use his influence in the direction of bringing the strike to a close. On arriving at Adelaide Mr. Keneally conferred with the executive of the local railway engine-drivers. Afterwards he went to the telegraph office to wire the result of his interview back

to Perth. When he and Mr. Watson entered the telegraph office and handed in their telegram, the man behind the counter read it, turned it over to see the name on the back, and remarked "J. J. Keneally." Mr. Keneally said "Yes." Then the official went away and remained away five or six minutes. On his return he accepted the wire and the payment. That wire has never yet been received at this end. What was the reason for suppressing it? It reads as follows:—

Arrived here yesterday. Leaving for Melbourne to-day. Things Adelaide normal. Trouble spreading in the East. Will advise you Melbourne.

The message was addressed to Mr. Backshall. The department took Mr. Keneally's money and, notwithstanding the suppression of the telegram, neglected to refund it. It seems to me a case for investigation by a Royal Commission.

Hon. P. Collier: If they had Hughes in Russia they would depose him in the proper way, as he should be deposed.

Mr. MUNSIE: I can understand why the following telegram was suppressed; simply because it expresses the opinion of the executive against the extension of the strike. Addressed to Mr. Backshall, Trades Hall, Perth, it reads as follows:—

Working on strike defence committee and must advise no extension. Large processions here regularly. Poverty very acute. How Western Australia.

Mr. Pickering: Is that a certified copy of the telegram?

Mr. MUNSIE: No, but I can produce a certified copy. I do not read telegrams the accuracy of which I cannot vouch for, nor do I read statements of the Censor which bear not the signature of the Censor. These are copies of the telegrams. Here we have the chief executive officer of the organisation which, in Western Australia, was chiefly responsible for saying whether or not the strike should be extended. That gentleman wired to Western Australia advising an extension of the strike.

Mr. Davies: Was that telegram suppressed?

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes. It has never reached Mr. Backshall.

Mr. Davies: What reason do you ascribe for that?

Mr. MUNSIE: The reason that they wanted the strike to extend.

The Minister for Works: What good would that have done?

Mr. MUNSIE: In my opinion they wanted the strike to extend in order that they might get all the unions implicated. They believed that under the then conditions they could defeat the unions and so be in a position to carry the conscription referendum. Fortunately the unions defeated that little plot. The third telegram reads as follows:—

Backshall, Trades Hall, Perth, Western Australia. Great distress amongst members here. Money wanted to save life. Treat as urgent and wire. (Signed) Keneally.

That also was suppressed. It was sent from Sydney.

The Minister for Works: You do not give them credit for much cleverness.

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not. They were clever to an extent. They succeeded in keeping the people of Australia in the dark for a time but, as in most things that they undertake, they overstepped the mark, and the people came to realise what and who they were. If they had been a little more reasonable they might have had a little better success, in respect to at least their second attempt. However, I am pleased that notwithstanding the suppression of the true position, whether from the Federal political standpoint, the war standpoint, or the industrial standpoint, the people of Australia are determined to resist the shackles of conscription.

On motion by Mr. Pickering debate adjourned.

RETURN—RAILWAY PASSENGER TRAFFIC, GERALDTON DISTRICT.

On motion by Mr. MALEY, ordered: "That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing:—(1) The receipts from passenger traffic and number of passengers carried on the Geraldton-Yuna line for the three weekly trains prior to, and since, the inauguration of the new time table; (2) the same particulars regarding the Geraldton-Northampton line during a similar period."

PAPERS—MINING LOAN, PHILLIPS RIVER.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.30]: I move—

"That all papers relating to the loan granted to the owners of the Flag Mine, Phillips River, be laid upon the Table of the House."

The Minister for Mines: I have no objection to the motion unless the hon. member makes the allegations which he did the other night.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Minister has no objection to this motion I will not take up the time of the House in debating it. As to whether or not I shall make allegations depends upon what I find after having perused the papers. In the meantime I will formally move this motion.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—FAIR RENTAL LEGISLATION.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [8.33]: I move—

"That in the opinion of this House the time has arrived when the Government should introduce legislation for the determination of fair rents for dwelling houses, business houses, and other premises."

In New South Wales some time ago legislation of this kind was introduced. This legislation acted as a deterrent to unscrupulous landlords with respect to unnecessarily raising rents beyond a fair value. It is true that the Act has not been made much use of there according to the information which has been placed at my disposal by the Attorney General. Several hundreds of people, however, have appealed before the board in New South Wales and

had their rents reduced under this legislation. For some time past the necessity for legislation of this kind in this State has been discussed, and it was thought that the Royal Commission which was appointed to deal with the cost of living would take up this question as being a matter which would come within the scope of its inquiries. It has, however, not yet done so. We find that some people of late have been increasing their rents abnormally, more especially when we consider that we are living in a time of war. The reason they give for doing this is one which I do not think any hon. member would support. There are some business premises at Fremantle with which I wish to deal. There is one building containing two very small shops in High-street upon which a rental of £32 10s. a month plus rates and taxes was being charged. This rent, however, has now been increased to £44 per month. There was no reason for raising the rent, such as an increase in trade. Business has actually decreased instead of having increased, and the consequence of this increase in rent was that the person occupying these shops could no longer make a living there, and was obliged to leave and go elsewhere. There is also the case of a particularly small shop situated at the corner of High-street and Market-street, Fremantle, occupied by a clothier, the rent of which has risen from £26 per month plus rates and taxes, to £43 7s. per month. This kind of thing has been going on for some considerable time.

The Attorney General: Is it the same owner?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, a Jew. The reason I ask the House to pass this motion is that all landlords are not alike. It is necessary, therefore, that we should introduce legislation of this description for the purpose of protecting householders and the occupiers of business places from unscrupulous landlords. I can, of course, give the names of some landlords who are dealing fairly by their tenants and reducing rents during this time of war. Unfortunately, however, we have to deal also with unscrupulous landlords, and it is my object by legislation to deter other landlords from following in their footsteps. There is scarcely a building in this locality of Fremantle the rents of which have not been raised during the last month or so by at least 25 per cent. Men have been driven away from established businesses because they are unable to obtain a livelihood there, and have now been obliged to look elsewhere. We know that some landlords have been compelled under the Water Supply and Sewerage Act to provide new sanitary arrangements, to have their dwellings connected with the sewerage scheme, and some of these landlords have been raising their rents on these dwellings to such an extent that although they have been given six years with interest at six per cent. in which to pay the Government for these installations, they have charged their tenants such a rent that at the end of six years the connections will have been made at no cost whatever to the owner. Some of the rents of the buildings I have in mind have been raised from 2s. 6d. to 4s. a week because of the sewerage connections, and

in one case a man has had his rent raised by 5s. a week, the reason given being that the sewerage installations have rendered this necessary. No doubt the extra conveniences supplied to some dwellings constitute an extra cost, and the landlords may be justified in putting on a slight increase to provide interest for his increased expenditure. I do not think, however, it was the intention of Parliament, when this sewerage scheme was formulated, that the tenant should pay the cost of the connections during the period that the Government were providing the money for the landlord. In two cases that have been brought under my notice the landlord was asked the reason for the increased rental. It was pointed out that business had not improved, and that there had been no increase in trade to warrant the difference in rents. The reply was that the Commonwealth Government owing to the war were being compelled to increase taxation, and that if the Commonwealth Government put on increased taxation to pay for the war the landlord must pass it on. In other words, the landlords intend to exempt themselves from any increased taxation rendered necessary to provide for the safety of Australia and other parts of the British Empire. Whilst many of the best of the young men of Australia are away in France, Egypt, and other places fighting for our safety, these miserable curs and wretches refuse to contribute one penny of their incomes to pay for the safety of their property, which is ensured by the lives and limbs of our men at the Front.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. Troy: Who did these buildings belong to?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I would rather not divulge any name. These people were asked, "Suppose the war continues and increased taxation comes along, what will your position be in regard to rents then?" The reply was, "We will increase your rent accordingly." I got this from a business man of repute in Fremantle, and he said at the time, "I was never more inclined to knock a man down than I was then when I realised that my relatives were fighting for such curs." This gentleman was too old to go to the war himself. I ask hon. members whether they are agreeable that this kind of thing should continue. Such legislation as I suggest would not be a great expense to administer. Officers could be appointed as a board, and provision could be made as in New South Wales for legitimate repairs and outgoings. I maintain it is the duty of every member of the House to see that every person, no matter who he is or what he is, should meet his just dues in the way of taxation, and that these dues should not be placed on the shoulders of other people. I was hoping that this House would request the Government to introduce a Bill to provide means whereby persons who are occupiers of dwellings or business premises could make application when extortionate rents are being charged, especially during war time, and that

these applications could be dealt with fairly before a board which would be appointed. Extortionate rents do exist as well as unscrupulous landlords, and that being the case it is necessary that some legislation should be formulated to protect the public against them.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [S.43]: This is an important matter, and one which the Government have not had time to fully consider. The hon. member has quoted certain instances in which no doubt there is some hardship, but it is not usual to legislate in this House for only special cases.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I can only quote the cases that are brought under my notice.

The PREMIER: The question of rents is regulated by the law of supply and demand. I have not heard of excessive rents being charged as a general rule up to the present, and as a matter of fact I think that rents have actually decreased.

Hon. P. Collier: Not in the poorer class of houses.

The PREMIER: Before the Government can pledge themselves to legislation of this description the matter will have to receive careful consideration. We also require to be perfectly satisfied that we are justified in submitting such legislation to the House. I do not like this form of instructing the Government to introduce legislation for any purpose.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is not the first time it has been done.

The PREMIER: I am quite prepared to accept the motion if it is amended to read, "That the time has arrived when the Government should take into consideration the advisableness of introducing legislation" for this purpose. I am unable to accept the motion in the form in which it is now submitted. The Government have to fully consider any matters regarding which it is proposed to legislate before submitting them to the House. I do not think the Government will be justified in introducing legislation of this kind, which is novel in Western Australia, without looking carefully into it. We have quite enough legislation in this State already. It would be unwise to overload our Statute-book with legislation of this kind, unless there was some real and good reason as well as proper grounds for doing so. I should not be prepared to introduce legislation merely because of the instances of high rents quoted by the hon. member. In every walk of life and in every class of business some people will be found who overcharge. Only one particular case has been given to-night. We are not told that the practice is general in Western Australia.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There have been dozens of such cases.

The PREMIER: I hope hon. members will pause before agreeing to this motion, which I must oppose. The Government will be pleased to inquire into the matter, and if the condition of the people is found to be embarrassed by reason of improper treatment in this respect we will then consider the advisability of asking the House to take action. But the question of rents is a question of supply and demand, and it would be unwise for this

House to introduce legislation of the character indicated, without good and sufficient grounds for doing so.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [S.48]: I am rather surprised at the grounds of objection raised by the Premier to this motion. In the first place the hon. gentleman takes exception to its wording. He says that it is an instruction to the Government to introduce legislation of this kind. In that regard I think I am safe in saying that the motion is couched in the terms usually employed when there is a desire to obtain from the House an expression of opinion on such a matter as this. It ought not to be above the dignity of the Government to take an instruction from the people's representatives gathered together in this Chamber.

The Premier: But the question has not been debated.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am dealing now with the objection taken by the Premier to the wording of the motion.

The Premier: There is to be an instruction without any debate.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I submit that this is the proper tribunal to give instructions to the Government. If it is not permissible for this House to give directions to the Government upon a matter of this kind, or upon any other matter of public interest, then I do not know of any other body in the State that ought to give instruction to the Government. May I be permitted to say that the Premier's objection becomes most astonishing when we have regard to the fact that irresponsible bodies, not representing the electors in this Chamber or in any other way, are in the habit of giving instructions directly to the Premier and the Government on matters of policy. Did the Premier take exception to, for instance, the instruction given to his Government last week by an executive meeting in Perth and consisting of 12 or 14 members, a junta, the executive of the Farmers and Settlers' Association? That body gave direct and specific instructions to the Government that they must not for a moment dream of increasing railway freights and fares. Further, they gave instructions to the Government that they must not on any consideration proceed to dispose of the implement works—a State trading concern—notwithstanding the fact that the present Government came into office, and ousted their predecessors, principally on the question of State trading concerns.

Mr. Troy: Solely on that question.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The present Government won to office practically on the plea that they were opposed to interference with private enterprise by State trading concerns. But the irresponsible junta that met in Perth last week, comprising 14 members of the Farmers and Settlers' Association and 10 members who represent that association in this Chamber—

Mr. Pickering: Were you there? You seem to know all about it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I was not there. The "Primary Producer" supplied me with all this information. The junta are not even at the pains of saying that "in the opinion

of the executive" it would be unwise for the Government to increase railway fares and freights. They issue positive instructions to their members of Parliament that they must not support such increases. The junta thus go infinitely further in the matter of instructing the Government than does this mild motion, which merely purports to obtain an expression of opinion. Therefore I think I am justified in saying that the Premier spoke with a good deal of insincerity when opposing the motion on the ground that it represented an instruction to the Government. Again, the Premier says the matter is regulated by the law of supply and demand. I am astonished that the Premier should use such an argument after three and a half years of war, in which not only the Government of this State, but the Government of every country in the civilised world, have interfered with the law of supply and demand. That law has, in fact, been knocked entirely out of existence. If there is one thing the war has done more than another, it is to upset the whole theory of the law of supply and demand. The State, the nation, and the Empire, it has been found, are not secure if we trust to the law of supply and demand in war time. The necessities of the situation have in all countries imposed innumerable interferences with the law of supply and demand. The Governments of all the countries engaged in the war, right along the line, have been compelled, in the interests of national safety, to abrogate the law of supply and demand. And the Premier now comes forward with that objection to this proposal. All price regulation proposals represent interference with the law of supply and demand. Why have we so many price fixing boards sitting in Australia, interfering with the law of supply and demand? Why has the wheat pool been established to interfere with the law of supply and demand? Where would our farmer friends be if they had had to trust to the law of supply and demand for the disposal of their wheat during the past two or three years? Therefore I contend that whatever arguments or objections there may be against this proposal, they do not lie along the argument or objection as to the law of supply and demand. If the Commonwealth Government and the various State Governments have found it necessary to establish tribunals in order to fix the prices of the commodities required in daily life, surely it is just as essential that there should be some board or tribunal to regulate the amounts chargeable for rent. As a matter of fact, rent is one of the most important items in the ordinary worker's budget of expenditure. If we are justified in fixing the amount that the baker or the butcher or the grocer may be allowed to charge for the goods he supplies to the public, why should the landlord be immune from this principle which has been generally adopted during the past two or three years? Why should the baker and the butcher and the grocer have to submit to price regulation, and the landlord alone, amongst our private enterprise friends, be permitted to charge whatever he may be able to extract from the pockets of his tenants, in accord-

ance with the law of supply and demand? Let me point out, too, that the law of supply and demand does not operate in this matter. In normal times, we know, the supply, in erection of houses, would progress side by side with the demand for house accommodation. But we know perfectly well that, after three years of war, building operations have almost entirely ceased, ceased because of the high prices charged for material, ceased because of the difficulty, in many cases, of even procuring the necessary building material. Galvanised iron is unprocurable at the present time at almost any price, and we know perfectly well that galvanised iron is one of the main items in the erection of buildings. So that supply has almost entirely ceased in the matter of house accommodation, more particularly as regards the poor class of house, during the past year or two. But the demand is going on all the same. Is the landlord to be permitted to take advantage of the fact that the supply has ceased whilst the demand continues? Is he to be permitted to take advantage of that fact in order to raise his rents?

The Minister for Works: Is he taking advantage of it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Undoubtedly. The gentleman will find that that is so particularly as regards houses in working class suburbs, the three, four, and five roomed houses wherein the workers mostly dwell. The rents of such houses are out of all proportion to the wages or incomes of the majority of the tenants.

The Minister for Works: My personal experience is the other way about.

Mr. Davies: I think it was admitted in the Arbitration Court that rents had increased.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think so, too. In fact, one need only spend a few hours inquiring into rents of houses in working class suburbs in order to find out that rents have been and are being raised. It is impossible to obtain anything like a decent house, capable of accommodating a man and his wife and four or five children under decent conditions, for less than £1 a week. If a man in receipt of £3 per week has to hand out £1 by way of rent, how is he to maintain his family on the balance of his wages? There is, in fact, a better case for the regulation of rents than there is or has been for regulation of the prices of many commodities, because as regards these there has been the ordinary supply and consequently a tendency to keep down prices. In the matter of house accommodation, on the other hand, the supply has not kept pace with the demand. Moreover, this is not a novel idea. Legislation for the fixing of rents has been on the Statute book of New South Wales for some years. If one turns up files of the New South Wales papers, one can find any day in the week reports of cases tried in a court, presided over by a judge, for the fixing of fair rents.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The court has fixed the rents of about 600 houses.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If one turns to the files of the Sydney newspapers there will be found in them reports of cases which have

been brought before the tribunal to deal with rents, and the tribunal in each case has determined the rents. In almost every instance, too, it will be found that the rents have been reduced. If the necessity for a tribunal like that exists in Sydney, we are justified in assuming that it exists here too. There would be a limited number of cases which would come under the observation of the member who moved the motion, and if what he related exists in his electorate, we can rest assured that a similar condition of things exists in other parts of the metropolitan area as well. The motion was placed on the Notice Paper some few weeks ago and the Government have had the opportunity to give it some consideration. They have not been over-busy too, it will be found that the rents have been dawdling in a lackadaisical fashion waiting for something to turn up. It is really a Micawber-like existence that we are living.

The Attorney General: You mean on your side.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On the Government side. The responsibility rests with the Government, not with the Opposition. We are in the glorious position of being, for the time, irresponsible critics. The Government should have given this matter some consideration.

The Premier: We did so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Government had done so, we should have had something definite told us, instead of which the desire to shelve the matter has been expressed. This is one of the questions which has been allowed to stand over longer than should have been the case. We have had price fixing for years, and there has been no attempt to limit the amount landlords have been allowed to charge as rent. I understand the member for Katingan is going to move the adjournment of the debate. I would prefer that members expressed a definite opinion on the matter, instead of adjourning the debate and allowing the motion to get to the bottom of the Notice Paper, where it will remain until the end of the session. The motion merely affirms a principle which has been adopted ever since the outbreak of war.

Mr. Davies: How long has it been in operation in New South Wales?

Hon. P. COLLIER: About three years.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): The Labour party there say it is not effective.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Labour party say that, it is not because they are opposed to the principle. It may be that the Act is not as effective as it might be. The Labour party there certainly endorse the principle.

Mr. Troy: According to Knibbs, the reduction in rent law has been in force in New South Wales since 1915 and Knibbs also shows that there has been a continual increase in rents in Western Australia.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And the Premier says, let us shelve the matter. I support the motion and I appeal to members not to go back on us.

Mr. THOMSON: I move—

"That the debate be adjourned."

Motion put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	24
Noes	..	..	..	11

Majority for .. 13

AVES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Money
Mr. Brown	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Davies	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Draper	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Durack	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Stewart
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Maley	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Brown

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Troy
Mr. Collier	Mr. Walker
Mr. Green	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Jones	Mr. O'Loghlen
Mr. Lutey	

(Teller.)

Motion thus passed.

MOTION—GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY, PROPORTIONATE FARES.

Mr. GREEN (Kalgoorlie) [9.12]: I move—

"That in the opinion of this House, the fares from Kalgoorlie to Adelaide on the Great Western Railway should be reduced to a proportionate basis commensurate with its nearer proximity to Adelaide as compared with Perth. That in accordance with this motion it is desirable for the Government to enter into negotiations with the Federal Government with a view of making a substantial reduction on the fares from Kalgoorlie east on this basis."

There have been several meetings held on the goldfields on the subject of the fares charged from Kalgoorlie to Adelaide. Meetings were also held prior to the opening of the line shortly after the announcement was made as to what the fares would be. All sections of the goldfields are unanimous on this question and it was decided that when Mr. Watt paid a visit to Western Australia a deputation representative of all the goldfields municipal bodies and roads boards should wait on him and that representation should be made to him in the direction of bringing about a greater reduction in the fares. At one time it was proposed that the fares from Kalgoorlie eastward should be on the same basis as the fares from Perth. An objection was raised against making a low reduction and it was held that in America and other countries where similar railway systems prevail, the fares were regulated on a capital to capital basis. After considerable agitation it was shown that in more thickly populated countries than Western Australia the distance of 375 miles, which is the distance between

Perth and Kalgoorlie, was regarded as the distance between capital and capital. The Federal Government appreciated this point and granted a concession to the extent of recognising Kalgoorlie as a capital. That reduction, however, amounted merely to 10s. less than from Perth on first class fares, and 6s. 6d. second class. The fare from Perth to the Eastern capitals is not a high one. First class from Fremantle to Adelaide is £7 10s., and from Kalgoorlie £7. From Melbourne to Fremantle it is £10, and to Kalgoorlie £9 10s. The second class fare from Fremantle to Adelaide is £5, and from Kalgoorlie £4 13s. 6d., and so on, pro rata, to the other Eastern capitals. Coming westwards from Melbourne the first class fare is £2 10s. less from Adelaide, while the second class fare shows a reduction of £1 13s. 6d. as against Melbourne. This for a distance of 482 miles. On that basis the fare from Kalgoorlie eastward should be 39s. less than from Perth first class, and 26s. less second class. We recognise that this is a question to be dealt with by the Federal Government. Owing to the abandonment, for good reasons, of the celebrations in connection with the opening of the Great Western Railway Mr. Watt did not come West, and consequently it remains for me to get, if I can, a sympathetic hearing in this Chamber. I desire the sympathy, not only of our direct National friends occupying the Treasury bench, but also of that party allied with them, that party whose watchword is decentralisation. On the basis of justice, and in accordance with their avowed policy, on this occasion we ask that party to vote with the gold-fields members and the members sitting on this side of the House. We are asking merely for a fair deal. Public meetings at Kalgoorlie, no matter by whom they may be addressed, are not as important nor do they carry weight so effectively with the Federal Government as would a resolution of the Legislative Assembly. If he would, the Minister for Railways could enlighten the Chamber as to the amount the Federal Government allow the State Railway Department upon each fare taken out from Perth to Adelaide. I understand that amount is in the neighbourhood of 30s. first class and 25s. second class. Therefore, it seems only fair that the Federal Government should be asked to allow the gold-fields people to pay the same amount as they receive not for a passenger coming from Perth or Fremantle. It is curious that a person desiring to travel from Laverton or Norseman, which are far closer to Adelaide than is Perth, has not only to pay, as from Kalgoorlie, a fare within 10s. of what has to be paid from Perth, but has in addition to pay a fare amounting to considerably more than is represented by the journey from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie. Seeing that finance does not enter into this question, and that the Government are a National Government, representing, as we are so frequently told, the people as a whole, and not any one class; and seeing that they are backed up by a section of the House which, when it once gets its attention off super and wheat, reduced railway charges, and the thousand and one concessions which have been given to the far-

mers, will have time to practise its professions of decentralisation, I hope that both the Government and their supporters will vote for the motion with a view to moving the Federal Government in this matter.

On motion by the Minister for Railways debate adjourned.

MOTION—COLLIE COAL COMMISSION, TO ADOPT RECOMMENDATIONS.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [9.21]: I move—

"That in the opinion of this House the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission on the coal industry should be given effect to."

It is necessary at the outset to point out that Collie coal is no new subject in the House. It has been debated here on numerous occasions, and many serious attempts have been made in the House to deal with the technical difficulties that surround the industry. I am moving to-night on behalf of the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson), who is absent in France. Were he here to-night he would be moving in the same direction. This Royal Commission originated as the result of a proposal to put into effect the Government policy for the increase of railway freights. When an all-round increase was contemplated on the carriage of commodities, coal was included, and it was owing to the strong representations made by Mr. Wilson that the Royal Commission came into being. The personnel of that Commission won confidence and respect. It consisted of Mr. Simpson, now Public Service Commissioner, Professor Woolnough, who was the chairman, and Mr. Wilson, the member for Collie, who, one might say, was born in a coal mine and has been associated with the industry all his life. I need not say much in regard to the merits or demerits of Collie coal, but I wish to point out that most of the electrical plant in Perth, the tramway system, and all the industrial concerns of the metropolitan area, are to-day being driven by power won from Collie coal. Prior to the outbreak of war Collie coal was fast becoming established as a bunkering fuel. The P. & O. Company were using it extensively, and the Germans, with their commercial instinct, were prepared to utilise Collie coal in large quantities. As the result of their bunkering experience with Collie coal, they have put on record reports showing that the coal suited the purpose admirably. Arguments for a more extended use of Collie coal by the State are unnecessary. The point I have to deal with to-night is the discrimination between certain coal mines on the Collie fields. If Royal Commissions are not to become a farce in Western Australia it is about time that Parliament took some notice of their findings and recommendations. I am aware that we have two Royal Commissions sitting at present. The Collie Coal Commission sat for a considerable period, and cost some thousands of pounds. The commissioners prepared a voluminous report, and we have from them certain findings and recommendations, which serve to demon-

strate that after exhaustive inquiries the members of the Commission were able to bovrilise their ideas in a summary, to which I now ask the House to give approval. Since the Commissioners report was presented and laid on the Table, great discontent has arisen in the railway service, owing to the fact that the engine-drivers have objected to burning some of the Collie coals. Most members understand that the industry at Collie consists of half a dozen mines. It is claimed by the railway engine-drivers that some of the mines produce a commodity superior to that of the other mines. I am not aware of all the conferences that have been held, but certainly conferences have taken place between engine-drivers and the mine owners. More recently the Minister for Railways arranged a conference between representatives of the whole of the mines on the Collie field. I made application to be allowed to attend that conference, not with a view to participating in the discussion, but merely as one interested, without, however, being possessed of that knowledge which I would like to have of the intricacies of the coal industry. I wanted to hear the clash of thought and the conflict of opinion between those men whose bread and butter depend upon the industry. I regret that I was not present at the conference, and that I have not been able to find out much about the trend of the discussion.

The Minister for Railways: All parties were represented.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: So I understand, but I regret that I did not hear the discussion, so that I might have been au fait with the arguments. As a result of those conferences, we find that there is an element of doubt as to what is to be the next move. I am apprehensive myself that certain strong representations will be made which, if given effect to, would strike a reeling blow at the Collie coal industry and practically cripple the town itself.

The Minister for Railways: It would not limit the output.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No. The argument advanced by the locomotive drivers against the attitude adopted by the Minister up to the present is that he has not disclosed his hand. I am not going to say anything disparaging as to the attitude of the locomotive drivers; I am convinced that if I were an engine-driver human nature would prompt me to take up a similar attitude.

The Minister for Railways: We are merely trying to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I hope I am not doing anything to retard that. I am pointing out the difficulties that lie ahead, and I am going to appeal to members that if it should come to a question of whether a greater degree of comfort and convenience is to be given to locomotive drivers, we shall have to consider the injury which might thereby be done to the industry. It will be for the House to say whether they will pin their faith to the further development of that primary industry, or concentrate the coal consumption of the Railway Department in one or two mines.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It may increase the output.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The output cannot well be increased. While one mine may be able to supply all that is necessary, no hon. member will contend that a one-mine town in any part of the world is any good. The element of competition is brought about by firms trying to develop better seams, trying to get a better commodity. That spirit should be encouraged.

The Minister for Railways: Then you are in favour of competition?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes, when it means a better fuel. I feel that if the proposal which has recently gained prominence is given effect to it will not only concentrate in the hands of one firm the entire coal consumption of the Railway Department, but it will mean the dismissal of some 300 men and, later on, when the supply is safely in the hands of that one firm, they will be able to dictate their own terms as to the selling price of the coal.

The Minister for Railways: You are unduly apprehensive.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I may be. After all, I want to know why there was this desperate fight if we had not some grounds for being reasonably apprehensive. I am speaking for five out of the six companies operating at Collie, for the whole of the employees of the mines, and for the whole of the townspeople.

The Minister for Works: Will not the price of Newcastle coal regulate the price of Collie coal?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is not a question of price. It is a question of whether the Government are going to alter the present policy.

Hon. T. Walker: It is a monopoly.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There has been abundant evidence to prove that Collie Coal is improving. There is one particular mine at Collie, the Westralian, in which they discovered a particularly good seam.

The Minister for Railways: Lately?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes. And let us hope that this will be the means of bringing a better commodity from the whole of the coal fields. What I desire to emphasise is the effect that an alteration of policy would have upon this very important industry.

The Minister for Railways: You are not confining yourself to the adoption of the report.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I wish to make my position perfectly clear. If the Minister will assure me that there is no proposal to change the policy in regard to that laid down, namely, the equal distribution of orders, I am prepared to admit that there are many parts of the report which can well stand over. I have moved my motion with the object of emphasising one particular finding of the Royal Commission.

The Minister for Railways: And what is that?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is the equal distribution of orders, the one thing which threatened to jeopardise the existence of the Collie coal field and of the town of Collie.

The report, which is voluminous in character, contains the evidence of experts who were examined before the Royal Commission and also that of professors, engine-drivers, farmers and others interested in this particular industry. I should like to briefly run through a summary of the report, not the whole of the report. With regard to most of the arguments adduced and conclusions arrived at there is unanimity of opinion between the employers on the one hand and the employees on the other, as well as on the part of other people, who are convinced that the recommendations of the Royal Commission can be given effect to. Many of the proposals would perhaps not be practicable owing to the want of material and money, but the majority of them the persons concerned in or affected by the industry were in agreement upon. The geological portion of the report provides for an extended system of boring which, of course, is carried on in many coal fields, with the object of getting better material. There is no desire to prevent anyone from trying to develop new seams which should be of advantage to the State, and there is perfect agreement on this point.

The Minister for Railways: Do you agree to distributing the orders given amongst all new finds?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I cannot say particularly as to that. If people find a better quality of coal and want to share in the Government trade, I would not be a party to placing any barrier in their way.

The Minister for Works: Would you pay to the different coal mines the value of their coal at a uniform price?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We pay a uniform price, and it is contended by the owners that the Government are getting an all-round uniform quality of coal.

The Minister for Works: The Commission do not say that.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They have got their price fixed.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes, in accordance with the selling price of Newcastle coal.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Higher.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is not higher, but in proportion only. I will deal with that point later on.

The Minister for Works: If it is proved that the quality of the coal differs, the price should differ.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is a question of whether the House thinks that this is the best course to adopt. If the quality of the coal becomes so superior in one mine in comparison with what exists in other mines no doubt there will be a proposition put forward to that effect. So far we have not had any experience of that.

The Minister for Works: Why not base the price on the proved calorific value?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There is not a great difference.

The Minister for Works: Yes, there is.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The findings of the Royal Commission do not say there is, or the Commission would not, as a more practical body of men than we are, recommend an equal distribution over a period of the next six

years. Other proposals such as dealing with the timber on the mine leases and hydraulic stowing can well afford to wait until more money is available; but the dirty coal proposition is causing a good deal of concern amongst some of the owners.

The Minister for Railways: And in connection with the Railway Department.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Railway Department to-day and the railway loco drivers are framing an indictment largely on the question of dirty coal having been supplied. We can let equal distribution stand so far as dirty coal is concerned, for under the agreement the Commissioner of Railways is amply protected, as he is given power to reject dirty coal and to close up any portion of a mine which under inspection has proved to be dirty.

The Minister for Railways: How many policemen would you want?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Commissioner has his inspector there, and the companies have volunteered to pay for an inspector to police the commodity coming out of the mines. If the State under that proposal does not get a fair crack of the whip, I do not know what it wants.

The Minister for Railways: It is a new proposal.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is a proposal which has to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Willcock: What happens if one half of the seam is good and the other half is not?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The seam will have to be subject to Government inspection. If coal is put out which does not meet with the requirements of the trade and the approval of the inspector it is condemned, and the firm penalised, and this firm will not be allowed to persist in that practice.

The Minister for Works: Do you agree to discriminating between the mines?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I cannot disagree if it is part and parcel of the contract entered into by the Minister for Railways, and by the hon. gentleman himself when he occupied that position. The Commissioner is amply safeguarded in that he has power to deal with companies who do not play the game as traders with the department.

The Minister for Works: Without any political influence.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I have not tried to use any, but have merely tried to use my efforts in the direction I have outlined to-night. Another recommendation of the Royal Commission was that Collie coal, which rapidly disintegrates in the atmosphere, should be covered both in store and in course of transit. The objection put forward by the Commissioner of Railways is that tarpaulins are unprocureable and costly—at all events they are unprocureable. The Commissioner suggests that, apart from the costly use of tarpaulins, it will be possible to get hessian covers which would protect a great deal of the softer coal from the wasting influence which affects it. Consequently, this may be advanced by the Minister as one of the proposals which is not now practicable, on account perhaps of lack of material or lack of money. If it is seriously advanced as a reason why that portion of the report should not be given effect to,

I am not particularly keen upon the adoption of these items provided I get an assurance on the one particular matter, namely, the equal distribution of orders which is disturbing the peace of mind of people in this country.

The Minister for Railways: In essence, you are advocating equal distribution of orders.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes. There is no mistake in my attitude there.

The Minister for Railways: I do not mistake it.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The sampling clauses of the report will be agreed to by all parties concerned. The inspection clauses, which provide for the most rigid inspection in order to procure the best commodity for the department which has to pay the price, presented no difficulties so far as the companies and the employees were concerned. There is also a recommendation that superior coal, if found, should be subject to a bonus. That is a fair proposition which all will agree with. If a poorer quality of coal is put upon the market, the people who supply it will be penalised.

The Minister for Railways: When was the suggestion made to the firms? Has there not been a bonus since then?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There has been an increase in the price and the Minister knows why. It is not a bonus. If a better quality of coal is found the companies get a bonus over and above the fixed price.

The Minister for Railways: They get a higher price. The suggestion was for a bonus on the then existing price.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No. The report of the Commission with regard to this matter is on all fours practically with what is done in other industries. If a commodity better than the standard that is being purchased is produced, a bonus is paid in the shape of an increased price. The calorific value of the coal is not a question which we need to discuss now. So far as I know both the soft coal and the hard coal as supplied by the various mines are practically on a par one with the other. I admit that there are certain localities where the soft coals are being utilised, but I understand that there is not a large quantity being put upon the market as the Scottish Colliery mine is closed and the other is only putting out a small percentage for the particular area of country over which that coal is consumed. That is what I am given to understand.

The Minister for Railways: Do you contend that 50 per cent. of soft coal should be used?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I do not intend to answer that question because I am not in a position to do so. We are not getting 50 per cent. of soft coal.

The Minister for Railways: They had a contract to supply it.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: When the time comes that this portion of the contract or agreement is put into force, that will be the occasion for taking the hurdle. It is not the question at issue to-night, at all events it is not one of the main questions that are being brought under the notice of the Minister.

The Minister for Works: What objection is there to the value of the coal so far as this is proved to-day?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am not quarreling about the value of the coal. If Collic coal was paid for at the same rate in proportion to its value to Newcastle coal, there would be an advance of 3s. on the ton, from 13s. to 16s. 1d.

The Minister for Railways: We are paying according to contract.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes, and in the circumstances the contract is a pretty good one for the railway department.

The Minister for Works: And not a bad one for the collieries.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No. An hon. member of the Country party says that Collic coal is no good to the farmer. We have evidence to show that harmful results have come from the use of Collic coal, but other farmers have put up alternative proposals which may overcome the difficulty.

Mr. Harrison: They are wiser to-day.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Farmers and Settlers' Association executive journeyed to Collic and consulted with the business people and the traders there.

Hon. P. Collier: They are supporting it to-day.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: They sent their chief head hunter to the Royal Commission, and he gave evidence that so far as the farmers were concerned there was not much tangible opposition.

Mr. Harrison: That was a St. George's-terrace farmer.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I do not want to see a conflict of opinions between the St. George's-terrace farmer and the rabbit farmer who has just interjected. There was a certain proposition put forward which might minimise the difficulties existing in regard to the farmers' troubles. The proposal with regard to excessive ash everyone agrees to. Engine-drivers have on many occasions had reasonable grounds for objection on this score, and their objections are entitled to consideration. The Commission have put up a suggestion for an improved design of engine. I understand that in 1902 a select committee of the House inquired into the merits of Collic coal, and examined the then Chief Mechanical Engineer, Mr. Rotheram. The evidence of that gentleman shows that he could have designed an engine having in view the exclusive use of Collic coal. He gave that assurance to the committee. Since that time something like 170 locomotives have been put upon our railways and not one has been altered in design for the particular by the department to use Collic coal.

The Minister for Railways: That is not a fair statement.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There have been slight alterations, but there has not been the design recommended by Mr. Rotheram before that select committee. On looking up Mr. Rotheram's evidence, one is convinced that it would be a wise move on the part of the Government to have at any rate one engine designed in America on the lines laid down by him. Then, if that engine were a success—

The Minister for Railways: You cannot suggest that every effort has not been made by the department to use Collie coal.

Hon. P. Collier: The coal proprietors say that no effort has been made. I am not saying, however, that all they assert is correct.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: On the question of engine design I believe the coal proprietors have a fairly good case, and that the department will be well advised to be guided by Mr. Rotheram's evidence. It is ten years ago since Mr. Rotheram first advocated the construction of special engines. His opinion can only be tested by the actual construction of such an engine. Some of our leading public officials to-day will not agree to any radical change at all; and that, in my opinion, applies to the Chief Mechanical Engineer.

The Minister for Railways: That is not quite fair. It is not fair to say that the Chief Mechanical Engineer has not tried.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I think he might extend himself a little more. I realise that he is doing something; but if he were doing all that he is capable of doing there would have been no occasion for the Royal Commission to make these recommendations. There should have been a trial made of spark arresters.

The Minister for Works: Royal Commissions are always asked for when people want to get more money out of the State.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I do not think the Minister for Works suggests for one moment that there is on the part of the people interested in the Collie coal industry a desire to get more money out of the State.

The Minister for Works: On the part of some of them there is.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Then I contend Western Australia has particular reason to be glad that it has the Collie coal industry within its borders. Although the summer embargo is supposed to apply, it will be found that Collie coal is being burnt only because Newcastle coal is not available. If it were not for Collie coal, there would be no trains being run. It is just as possible for fires to be started by Newcastle coal as by Collie coal.

Mr. Harrison: I have been on a train when several fires were started by Collie coal.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Some farmers have the idea at the back of their heads that by standing with the railway men in the fight for concentration of orders in one or two mines, they are going to do something for the farming industry. I do not know that the railway locomotive driver is particular as to what coal causes fires. If the proposals put forward by the locomotive drivers are carried into effect, there is not going to be any less Collie coal used. No one can demonstrate that the Proprietary coal sends out fewer sparks than any other mine's coal.

The Minister for Works: The best steaming coal gives out the fewest sparks.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Royal Commission recommend that two spark arresters, the "Rotary" and the "Cairns," should be given a trial. I myself have had experience of making certain requests to Mr. Hume, and I have found him possibly conservative. Perhaps he is right to be conservative.

The Minister for Railways: I have not been long in the Railway Department, and I have had 20 spark arresters proposed to me.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We are apt to look upon people with new inventions as cranks.

The Minister for Railways: I give every one of them a chance.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: To the extent of giving the invention a trial?

The Minister for Railways: No.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Minister simply gives the inventor a hearing?

The Minister for Railways: If I think a proposition impossible, I will not spend £300 or £400 of the country's money in giving it a trial. But I give every inventor a trial to the extent of inquiry.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is the one point of difference I have with Mr. Hume. Mr. Hume is under the impression that all men who come forward with propositions are cranks. I believe that possibly a considerable number of them are cranks. But I also think that in the multiplicity of cranks there is sometimes found a genius. The Minister for Works will agree with me in that. I would have liked to listen to the conference at which these proposals were discussed. The Minister will agree that I am somewhat handicapped by not having been privileged to listen to the discussion by men who understand the position perhaps better than anyone in this House does. I may point out that people were admitted to the conference whom at the outset it was not proposed to admit. The Minister would have conferred on me a great favour by permitting me to hear the views of Mr. Hume expressed at the conference. Not having had that opportunity, I am handicapped.

Mr. Teesdale: Is there not a record of the proceedings of the conference?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I do not know. At all events, no record has been published. If I see the record, it will be by favour of the Minister; and merely to read the record is not the same thing as actually hearing the discussion by men who are keenly critical and who engage in exhaustive debate of the subject. With regard to spark arresters, Mr. Hume said at the conference that he had one in operation between York and Merredin, the results from which were splendid. He was asked how many engines were fitted with this spark arrester, and he answered, one. He was asked why more engines were not so fitted, and he replied, because the utility of the spark arrester had not been properly demonstrated. If Mr. Hume is prepared to say that the spark arrester fills the bill, I am hopeful of good results. Mr. Hume said last year that he had the best spark arrester known to date; and the result of that knowledge is that we have to put on a summer embargo every year in order to prevent Collie coal being used in areas where it is said to do considerable damage to crops and grass.

The Minister for Railways: Mr Hume's statements show that he is not above making an improvement on the best.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If Mr. Hume carries out the Royal Commission's recommendations,

I shall be particularly pleased. Bins and stages represent a matter on which all parties can agree. As regards breaking the coal, one company has already installed a plant; and the Railway Department could instal, for less than £1,000, a plant that would meet all requirements. The economic value of the commodity to-day in comparison with Newcastle coal is as 8s. 9d. to 12s.; or rather the respective prices recommended by the Royal Commission are 12s. and 8s. 9d. per ton. Judge Edmunds, with Mr. Hughes, fixed coal prices for the period of the war. Western Australia came under those provisions, and consequently the price of coal advanced in this State. Therefore, as regards coal, nothing can be said about profiteering, nor can it be alleged that the Collie coal industry is receiving a special subsidy.

The Minister for Railways: Except that immediately prior to the Federal price fixing an increase in price was granted by the State Government.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: In that case the State Government must have been convinced that the article was worth more money.

The Minister for Railways: But they were not anticipating a further increase in prices.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Neither were the Railway Departments of the Eastern States anticipating that Mr. Hughes would authorise Judge Edmunds to fix the price of coal there. That having been done, however, Western Australia has in fairness to be included in the agreement. I think all parties will agree that Western Australia should share in any benefit provisions affecting the coal industry. The economic value to-day is 13s. as against 16s. 1d. Quotation from Clauses 223 and 224 will amply demonstrate that. The distribution of railway orders is the one contentious point, the one rock on which parties may split. There are other proposals for farming out orders which we can agree to. In the event of one mine not being able to supply its quota, another mine comes to the rescue.

The Minister for Railways: Yes; but it must be a mine with coal of equal quality.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The Commissioner is always protected as to quality by the agreement. The Royal Commission recommend that railway pumping stations should utilise Collie coal, particularly where it can be economically used over a period of time. As regards the bunkering of State steamers, I understand that results up to the present are not as satisfactory as could be wished. I am sorry for that, and I think every member of the House will regret it. The first shipment or two on the "Eucla"—I happened to travel on the boat—were successful. I am grateful to the Government for at any rate giving Collie coal a trial on the State steamers, because without trying it themselves they could not with any logic or force recommend it for the transports. Transports are passing through very frequently, and they could use a fair quantity of Collie coal.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: A lot of it is going this week.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am very glad to hear it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If the orders are not spread over the mines, the bunkering trade of Western Australia will be spoilt.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I was about to refer to that point. I am quite convinced that there is only one just course to adopt, and that the present policy would be satisfactory to five out of the six companies, to the whole of the employees, and to the whole of the townspeople. That policy is one which I think the Minister will allow to continue. As regards briquetting, there is another recommendation by the Royal Commission, and it has been given a successful trial by one of the companies. The Commissioner of Railways has an idea that he is compelled under the equal distribution of orders to take inferior coal. That is an idea I want to disabuse his mind of, by pointing out once again that he has the power to reject any coal, that he need not take any coal unless it conforms to the standard set down in the tender he has accepted. A one-mine town is no good, the opportunity for employment is gone, and the mines which would not share in the Government orders would be dismantled. Only a few additional men would be employed in the favoured mine, and the time would not be far distant when that mine would control the whole supply and dictate terms. The Proprietary mine, which has been singled out for special favour, has with commendable foresight prepared for eventualities. Whether they were able to foresee what was going to happen, or whether they thought there would be a Minister in power in 1918 who would yield to the desire of the loco. drivers, I know not; but I do know that there has been great development in that mine, a development out of all proportion to the likely trade, and by concentrating on that one mine the whole of the orders, the result would be that, in addition to the 70 men now employed there, another 50 men would be employed, and the mine would be able to supply the whole trade, while 300 men would walk out of Collie to look for work. My argument is that we are not going to improve the coal trade by giving all orders to one mine. In addition to depriving a big number of men of employment, we will take away that interest which the bulk of the miners have in the other five mines and in the town itself. A lot of them, it must not be forgotten, are working shareholders in the mines, and many of them, too, are at the Front. I ask the House whether we are going to deal a reeling blow to an industry which promises to develop into something good. We hear to-day that the slogan is "Produce, produce," and initiate new industries. The Minister for Industries, I am glad to say, is discovering one every week, and if we are ever to be a manufacturing State, coal will be the one essential to success; therefore, we should encourage the industry. The only means laid down by the previous Government to get equal distribution, and to give every mine a fighting chance, was to produce a better commodity.

The Minister for Railways: Irrespective of what it supplies; is that your contention?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No. The Minister can see the fallacy of that observation. If the mine supplies an inferior commodity to-day it is penalised, and the Commissioner for Railways has more power in that agreement of his than was proposed in any recommendation made by the Royal Commission.

The Minister for Railways: He must take a sixth from each mine.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: But if any particular sixth is not up to the standard he can reject it. How long then will the mine live? The employers do not contend that they are supplying dirty coal. They have offered to pay the wages of an inspector on each mine, so as to make sure that the commodity is what is required. Then, if it was not up to the standard, out it would go. The Commissioner has imposed a lot of fines; he has not closed up a mine, but he has the power to do so.

The Minister for Works: You know that the mines have been dealt with gently.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am only asking now that they should be allowed to live. If any proposal is put forward to deprive miners and many shareholders in those mines of their livelihood, and bring about the dismantling of the mines, the result will be disastrous on the town of Collie. I have discussed the matter with some of the loco. drivers, and I say, if it comes to a conflict of opinion, it is better for us to save the industry, even if we have to provide a little more for the convenience of the drivers. We do not want the industry to go to the wall.

The Minister for Railways: No one suggests that.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If the proposed policy is carried into effect and practically all the orders are given to one mine, no other will be able to live, because it is known that the mines cannot exist without Government trade. When the bunkering trade started the industry was well on the way to success. We know that the German steamers used practically nothing but Collie coal, while the P. & O. and other liners took large quantities.

The Minister for Railways: Some still do.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: But of course we know that there are few steamers on the ocean compared to the numbers of a few years ago. We wish it were better coal, but it is the best we have, and realising that, I am only asking members to give their approval to the policy laid down, a policy which has worked satisfactorily for all except some of the drivers. The department would not have raised any question but for the action of the loco. drivers.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): They are good judges, too.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am not saying that their judgment is altogether wrong, but even if it be sound and logical, this House is not justified in taking the serious step of injuring an industry to the extent of closing down four or five of the mines at Collie.

Mr. Harrison: Was that ever contemplated?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes. If the Minister is prepared to give me an assurance that one item recommended by the Royal Commission, to operate for the next six years, that there shall be an equal distribution of orders, the Commissioner being protected under his agree-

ment against dirty coal, I will withdraw this motion. Then the recommendation in the report can be put into effect, but if it is proposed to set up a Cabinet decision, or ask the House to approve of a change of policy, which will mean the concentrating of the whole of the Government trade in the Proprietary mine, then there will be only one alternative and one result. The Minister will agree with me that four or five of the mines will have to put up their shutters. Will it be a fair thing to the people of Collie, and to the 300 miners who have homes established there, to divert into one channel the whole of the Government trade, so as to meet difficulties which can be overcome? The railways, we know, are the biggest consumers of Collie coal. Gradually this fuel is becoming popular as a domestic fuel, but the bunkering trade, for the time being, has gone, and that being the case, if we concentrate the orders on one mine we will say that that mine has the best coal and we shall be doing the harm to which I have already referred. Suppose the Proprietary mine strike a dirty seam, as they do in every mine.

The Minister for Railways: You are now basing your arguments on assumption.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There is a good deal of assumption about the proposal to deprive those mines of their existence. We are assuming that there is no remedy. If there is dirty coal, and a rigid inspection will make it clean, or prevent dirty coal from going into the locos., then by all means let us have rigid inspection. If farmers are suffering from disabilities, owing to sparks, science can be applied in order to get a better spark arrester than we have. Mr. Hume admitted at the conference that the one he has will he thinks fill the bill. There are men in Australia who have fitted up locomotives in Canada and the Argentine with spark arresters which have been successful. These should surely be given a trial. I believe the Premier would be willing to do so; at any rate he should be anxious to exhaust every possible means of getting the best mechanical device possible in order to cope with the difficulty. In other countries the problems have been solved.

The Minister for Works: They have not been solved.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): There is not an effective spark arrester.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I know that the Commissioner of Railways got out of a lawsuit in Bunbury by establishing the plea that there was not an effective spark arrester in the world.

The Minister for Works: There is the biggest fortune in the world for the man who can invent a successful spark arrester.

Hon. P. Collier: How about applying yourself?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We should make an attempt to overcome the difficulty before we carry out any drastic policy. There are improved designs in locomotives.

The Minister for Railways: You do not suggest that an attempt has not been made?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I say that an attempt has been made to close up several of the mines in Collie. I say that absolutely and

definitely, and I am going to ask the Minister not to deal a death blow to the industry.

The Minister for Railways: I certainly will not do anything of the kind, but I am going to get a fair deal for the railways of the State.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: And I will help the Minister. But do not try to overcome one difficulty and create a dozen more. I am just pointing out, as the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) would point out more effectively were he here—because he has been connected with coal mining almost since he left the cradle—what would happen to the town of Collie if a serious blow were dealt to the industry.

Mr. Davies: If you had an effective spark arrester would that overcome the difficulty with the engine-drivers?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No. I admit there are many difficulties in connection with the industry, but the spark arrester is a big factor in the development of the Collie coal industry, because every year we have to put on a summer embargo which gives a setback to the trade. We do not want to make things unpleasant for the firemen and drivers. I believe that if an appeal were made to the patriotism of those men they would be very ready to assist in trying to solve the difficulty.

The Minister for Works: Get an efficient spark arrester and the other difficulties will disappear.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We can only keep on trying. Everywhere we find differences of opinion. Here in the House experts are differing. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Willecock), a practised loco. driver of 20 years' experience, says that damping the coal makes it worse, while the Honorary Minister (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott) declares that it should be kept wet. To me the outstanding recommendation of the Royal Commission is that concerning the equal distribution of orders. The late Minister was wise in his day and generation when he adopted that policy. That system has worked with entire satisfaction to everybody, until to-day we have the mine-owners asking that it be continued. Had I been at the last conference doubtless I would have gathered a good deal of information on this question of equal distribution of orders among the mines. All that I desire to point out to-night in asking for the sympathy of members is that, in the event of this suggested policy of concentrating orders in one mine with a mere fraction allotted to another mine, being put into effect, the remaining mines must go out of existence, some 300 workmen will lose their employment, the shareholders in the mines—mostly working men—will suffer considerable loss, and I doubt whether the railways will get a permanent supply of superior coal. To secure superiority of commodity we must have competition. The element of competition will always prompt the mining companies to vie with each other in their endeavours to produce a superior article. There is nothing more detrimental to the reputation of any of these companies than to have fines frequently inflicted upon it.

The Minister for Railways: What did the Commissioners say in respect of the bunkering coal?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: They asked that rigid inspection be made. However, that is not a matter of urgency, because the bunkering trade will not be here for some years to come.

The Minister for Railways: I am not saying anything against Collie coal.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: But I am afraid you are going to do something against the industry, against the town of Collie itself. In accordance with the rigid party lines which characterise proceedings in Parliament, there are on the Government side of the House many members who would stand by the Minister even though he proposed to wipe out Collie.

The Minister for Railways: You do not wish to embarrass me in arriving at a decision?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am appealing to those members before any decision is arrived at. I have endeavoured to put the case as it appeals to me, from the viewpoint of those who have sunk their money in the mines and in the town of Collie. If western Australia is ever going to feel its feet as a manufacturing State, there is at Collie an ideal centre for the development of manufactures, boasting as it does coal, wood, and water. Thus far the coal has been a valuable asset to the State; but let the work be concentrated in one mine, and the time will come when it will be a curse, not only to the engine-driver, but to the taxpayer and the people at large. I ask members to support the motion, believing as I do that the alternative to the adoption of the Royal Commission's report is the destruction of a potentially big industry, a catastrophe that will bring about a condition of affairs just as black to Collie as is the coal that comes out of its mines.

Mr. WILLECOCK (Geraldton) [10.21]: I move an amendment—

“That the following words be added to the motion:—‘With the exception of those words contained in paragraph 231 of the Commission's report.’”

That is the paragraph with which the hon. member has been favouring us for the past hour. With every other member I desire to see as much as possible of the native coal used. The report of the Royal Commission is very interesting. It deals with the subject from both the geological and the industrial standpoints. Some 16 years ago we had another Royal Commission on the subject of Collie coal, Dr. Logan Jack being the sole commissioner. Viewing the matter broadly, it seems to me that so long as Collie coal is used it does not matter seriously to the people from which particular mine it comes; so long as the consumption of Collie coal remains what it is it ought to satisfy everybody. I have had many years of locomotive firing and driving, and my experience leads me to believe that some Collie coal is fairly satisfactory, but not nearly up to the standard of Newcastle. The railway men have been practically carrying the Collie coal industry on their backs for years past. Notwithstanding that everybody has admitted that, generally

speaking, it is a very unsatisfactory fuel, the railway men have continued to use it under all sorts of conditions, and have practically let themselves be treated as slaves, in order to prove which is the best fuel. Now, after 18 years' experience, they say there is only one Collie coal satisfactory from all points of view, namely, the Proprietary coal. The member for Forrest seems to think that the present proposal must lead to the elimination of three or four of the mines. As I know the proposal, it is that two of the mines will each get one-sixth of the order, while some of the other mines will be cut out, as they do not produce coal of a satisfactory quality, in fact some of it is scarcely coal at all.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What percentage of the order is to be given to the Proprietary mine?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Two-thirds. The Westralian mine is in a very bad way, and possibly would not be able to keep afloat even with the continuation of the railway order. I understand that the developments in that mine are not looking well. It is proposed to give two-thirds of the order to the Proprietary, which produces coal really satisfactory from the railway point of view. Some surprise has been evinced at the fact that the proposals of the railway men and of the department were very similar. This coincidence is due to the fact that the Proprietary coal is of good quality. One of the great causes of dissatisfaction with Collie coal is that it fluctuates considerably in quality. One can get a good trip with Collie coal to-day, and next day, working with coal from the same mine, one cannot get along at all. Paragraph 56 of the Royal Commission's report reads as follows:—

In the case of the Co-operative and Westralian seams some of the bottom coal is so extremely inferior that it is a matter of opinion as to what should be called shale and what coal. It would be wise for those two companies to discard the whole of their inferior coal for railway purposes.

They would not take the advice tendered to them by the Commissioners. In both the Westralian and the Co-operative mines the seam is divided by a bar of shale. On top of this bar the coal is of good quality, but below the bar the coal is of very poor quality, is very dirty, and absolutely unsatisfactory for locomotive purposes. The policy of each company has been to mix the two coals, and so long as the result reaches the calorific value demanded the company is satisfied to send it along to the department. In the words of the Commissioners, "apparently they consider that is a perfectly legitimate process." Perhaps the gold-mining members will understand me when I say that in connection with high-grade and low-grade stuff, in order to economically work the mine the two grades are often put in together. That might be legitimate in a gold-mining sense, but so far as the output of coal is concerned this low grade stuff is of no value and is only a detriment. So far as fuel on the railways is concerned, this inferior coal goes in with the good coal and deteriorates the value of the whole output from that particular mine, and gives a very unsatisfactory result.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You do not know that Newcastle coal is uniform?

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is uniform in its cleanliness. The mines from which Newcastle coal comes are practically all of a uniform grade, and the fact that this is not so in regard to our Collie mines is one of the great disadvantages under which the industry here labours. Railway men say that so long as the present policy continues it will be very unsatisfactory to them. It is detrimental to Collie coal and the conditions are such that the people concerned are not prepared to put up with them. A proposal has now been formulated that the same order shall be given to the Co-operative coal mine, which is the mine spoken of in connection with the bunkering trade by the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen). A good percentage of the bunkering trade is done with Co-operative coal. The great objection raised by the hon. member in connection with the bunkering trade is absolutely eliminated by this latest proposal that the coal which has been used almost exclusively for the bunkering trade should not be cut out. Although the coal is unsuitable for locomotive use on main lines, the company should still retain its percentage of the railway orders. Under this arrangement the Government will still take the amount which they formerly took from this mine.

The Minister for Railways: At the same time we wish to encourage the bunkering trade.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The proposal is to take two-thirds of the Proprietary coal, and leave the Co-operative coal which is another hard coal and the most suitable coal for bunkering purposes; also the Cardiff coal.

The Minister for Railways: There is no proposal emanating from the Government.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I will take the Minister's assurance in that respect.

Hon. P. Collier: Is it proposed to cut out the Westralian coal?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, altogether. The Scottish is closed down, and that is not affected. The Premier coal is a very light, fine coal, and gives the members of the Country party much concern in their particular electorates. Before an engine using this coal has gone 30 miles the smoke box is full of light ash, and the coal creates an innumerable amount of sparks which set fire to the surrounding country.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Do not sparks originate from any other coal than Collie coal?

Mr. WILLCOCK: If a coal is used which is of reasonably good quality and steam can be maintained with it, the engine will not have to be worked in such a way as will cause sparks to be thrown broadcast all over the country. If bad coal is used, and some of our coals are bad, and the engine cannot be got along with it, as the steam goes down, it is necessary to use more coal so that the blast becomes heavier, with the result that sparks are thrown out all over the place.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Has not the Proprietary mine put out bad coal as well as the other mines?

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is more uniform in character.

The Minister for Railways: It is a hard coal and clean.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is the main feature of it, although it contains a certain amount of ash and clinker. On the whole it is uniform and of good quality. The Westralian mine contains a bar of shale and occasionally the roof falls in. On one occasion when visiting Northam the Royal Commission found a piece of shale weighing a hundredweight lying on a tender ready to be used, and this came from the Westralian mine. If this mine had been worked properly over a period of 15 years and the work could have been done from the top portion of the seam and that particular coal only issued from the mine, it might have been possible as the Commission suggest to get a satisfactory coal from the Westralian mine.

Mr. Green: Do you know that the locomotive drivers on the fields say that the coal should be taken from different mines?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Their evidence is before the House in the report of the Royal Commission. Witnesses were brought from all over the State, and almost invariably every driver said that the Proprietary coal was the best for locomotive use.

Mr. O'Loughlin: I think a meeting was held prior to that evidence being given.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not know.

Mr. Lutley: Are you blaming all but the Proprietary mine?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I say that the Proprietary mine puts out coal of a uniform quality, and that though it contains a certain amount of ash and clinker, these are not in proportion to that existing in the coal from other mines. In addition to the Proprietary and the Co-operative mines there is the Cardiff mine, the coal from which is soft, and from this mine it is proposed that the present railway order should be maintained. It is proposed that one-sixth of the railway orders of the State should remain with the Cardiff company.

The Minister for Railways: That can only be used locally.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Sufficient coal could be used in and around the vicinity of the place where it is mined.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): While it is perfectly green it is all right.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Cardiff coal has a very pronounced faculty for deteriorating just as all soft Collie coals have. The railway men have done their best under very adverse circumstances so far as Collie coal is concerned. They are practically carrying the industry on their back. We have highly responsible and skilled engine-drivers being brought below the level of a navy so far as their work is concerned through the use of these bad coals. The member for Forrest has dealt with the question of altering the designs of engines. Although I do not hold any brief for the railway department in connection with their non-compliance with the suggested alteration in design, there are other factors which have to be taken into consideration. Since Collie coal has been used on the railways there have been many improvements made in the engines. Perforated ash pan dampers are now used, and also spark arresters. These were not neces-

sary before the advent of Collie coal on the railway system. Again, brick arches have been put in, and several alterations have been made in the design of the exhaust pipe, so that the heavy draught will not be on the fire and thus bring out sparks. As regards wide fire boxes, which seem to be the bone of contention between the Railway Department and the mine owners, these boxes would not be of much use with soft coal. They are useful only with hard coal. The advocates of the non-adoption of the wide fire box urge that the water difficulty in this State is acute. Undoubtedly the water used here is of bad quality. We know that Western Australia is a very dry State, and that water cannot be obtained everywhere as in the other States. Owing to that fact the department are unable to use steel fire boxes and steel tubes, as in countries where wide fire boxes are adopted. There is evidence that the water used on our railways corrodes the main stays of the fire box, which are the most important portion of that particular box. Not long ago one fire box collapsed altogether, and the fireman and driver were simply blown out of the cab. The reason given was corrosion of stays on account of the bad water used. The stays had corroded so much that the fire box gave way. That danger would be considerably greater with the use of a wider fire box. The objection of the Chief Mechanical Engineer to the introduction of that fire box is that under existing circumstances the narrow fire box throws sufficient strain on the stays, and that if the fire boxes were considerably widened the strain on the stays would be so much increased as to constitute a danger to the men working on the engines. There are many recommendations in the report of the Royal Commission, but the only one to which I take exception is that mentioned in my amendment. I take exception to it on behalf of the men working in the industry. As regards the fine of £50 proposed by the Royal Commission as a penalty for any company supplying dirty coal, if that proposal were carried out it would have a satisfactory result. But, if the coal mine owners were absolutely sincere in trying to get the best of the coal for their best customers, there would be no necessity for fining them at all.

Mr. O'Loughlin: They say they are absolutely sincere.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But experience proves that they are not. Owing to the method by which the companies work their mines, as regards low grade or dirty stuff, they mix this with the clean stuff, blending the two qualities to such an extent that the result is unsatisfactory although not a breach of the calorific quality required by the Railway Department. This subject is too important from a national point of view to allow the parochial interests of one portion of Collie to be considered in preference to the interests of the men working in the industry, the interests of the Railway Department, and the interests of the State generally. The present Minister for Mines holds also the portfolio of railways, and naturally he would try to serve the interests of both departments. In my opinion it is fortunate that the decision lies with a man responsible for the proper administration and develop-

ment of both the railway industry and the mining industry.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is there any seconder to the amendment?

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [10.46]: I formally second the amendment.

On motion by Mr. Piesse debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [10.47]: I move—

“That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday next.”

I have no doubt this motion will meet with some protest from the hon. gentlemen opposite; but I would like to point out that when I moved, two months ago, that the House should adjourn until the 23rd January, I gave as one of my chief reasons for fixing that date the circumstance that the Treasurer would be obliged to attend the conference of Treasurers in Melbourne. From the information I then had, I believed that the conference would be completed before the 23rd January, and that the Treasurer would have returned by that date. The Treasurer will be here on Friday next, and hon. members know that some little time must elapse before he can submit his Budget to the House. The business which the Government will ask the House to deal with is principally of a financial character and in connection with the Estimates. I now ask the House to adjourn until Tuesday next, not with the object of delaying business, but in order to meet the convenience of hon. members. It seems to me undesirable to ask hon. members to meet here unless there is sufficient business to occupy the House fully. Hon. members are aware that there is not much business on the Notice Paper now, and that until the Treasurer returns the Government will not be in a position to place their financial proposals before the House.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [10.50]: I must enter my protest against the proposal of the Premier. It is a fair thing to remind the House what the position of affairs has been since the elections took place. Four months have elapsed since the Government were returned with a majority to this House. Following the elections, the House was not called together for seven weeks, and then, after having sat for five days, the House was adjourned for eight weeks to enable members to take part in the Referendum campaign. Then we met again on the 23rd of the present month, and having sat for four days, or a total of nine days since the general elections, we are asked to adjourn until next Tuesday. When do the Government expect to get through the business of the session if we continue to proceed along these lines? It is true that circumstances have arisen which have demanded the presence of the Treasurer in Melbourne, and we know that he cannot be back for a few days more, but surely the policy of the Government is not wrapped up in the Treasurer. Are we to understand that the only business remaining to be submitted to the House is the Estimates.

The Premier: That is the principal business.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have no doubt it is the principal business, but there are other proposals, if we may take the policy speech delivered by the Premier at Moora as any criterion, for did he not in that speech foreshadow the introduction of several taxation measures?

The Premier: They are for the Treasurer to deal with.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But surely in the absence of the Treasurer another Minister could take charge of the Bills. If the Bills were not ready I could understand the delay of awaiting the Treasurer's return so as to discuss with him these measures to deal with financial matters. But unless Ministers have been afflicted with the disease which the Honorary Minister says the Brunswick orchard was suffering from, namely, die-back, those Bills ought to have been prepared before now.

The Premier: They depend largely on the Treasurer's visit to Melbourne.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Treasurer's visit to Melbourne has to do solely with loan money. Are we to assume that the Government have not yet drafted their taxation proposals? That is the only inference to be drawn from the fact that we have been asked to adjourn the sittings until the Treasurer returns. Is this a one-man Government? So far we have been asked to deal with only Bills in the form of leaflets.

The Minister for Works: You know better than that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is that the national policy of the Government? It is time the Government disclosed their policy; they have had four months in which to do so. I am protesting now against wasting the whole of to-morrow.

The Premier: We can get through a good deal of work on Tuesday.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No doubt, but what I am protesting against is that four months have elapsed since the elections, and though the Government have had ample time in which to prepare a programme, nothing appears to have been done. If they have a programme there is no need to await the return of the Treasurer from Melbourne before submitting it to the House. Are there not income tax proposals? That was the policy of the Government, and it is not necessary for the Treasurer to be here to submit a new income tax Bill.

The Minister for Works: It is better that he should be here.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Why? Could not the Premier, the Attorney General, or even the Minister for Works, take charge of such a Bill pro tem? The Government are proclaiming to the country that they are unable to get on with their business until such time as the Treasurer returns. I hope the country will take note of the fact that the national policy consists of the helpless drift we have been witnessing during the past week. After having been in recess for two months, the House meets and after four days of work the possibility of further useful work is exhausted until

the Treasurer returns. I submit that that is the most deplorable confession of ineptitude and incapacity I have heard for many years. I want to see Ministers and the House occupied every day, because it is possible that if we have to-morrow, or any other day off, one or other of the many Honorary Ministers might possibly go on running amok around the country, uprooting or damaging some other Government property. If they are here we can keep our eyes on them, and while they are busy in the Chamber they are not destroying State property.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): You will have to retract if you talk like that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I ask again, where is the national policy? And I ask members sitting behind the Government whether they are going to submit to this lackadaisical manner of doing business. We are approaching the end of the financial year and absolutely no business has been brought down for consideration. During my 12 years of parliamentary experience I have never known such a late period to be reached with so little done and that, too, notwithstanding the fact that the Government were returned with an overwhelming majority and with instructions to go ahead with any measures they thought desirable to submit. I would not be offering this protest against waste of time if the Government had not had ample opportunities for preparing their policy and submitting it for the consideration of members.

The Premier: It has been submitted.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well, where is it?

The Premier: The hon. member knows I have undertaken not to introduce measures of a controversial nature.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then how is the Premier going to handle the financial position of the State?

The Premier: Except for taxation purposes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well, they are of a controversial nature. Where are they? Of course they are waiting until the Treasurer returns. We must assume that the measures have been drafted and prepared for submission to the House. To admit otherwise would be to admit that Ministers have been doing nothing during the past four months. If the measures are ready, what is to prevent their introduction now? The attitude of Ministers is "The Bills are ready, but none of us is ready to introduce them till the Treasurer returns."

The Minister for Works: What is wrong with it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the hon. member is satisfied that he is carrying out the National policy by adopting an attitude of this kind, it will be for the people to judge as to what the National policy really is. After eight weeks of recess it is ridiculous to bring the House together for four days and then ask for an adjournment until next week. Members on this side refrained from speaking on the Address-in-reply, and as a result we find that there is to-day no business whatever to go on with. If Ministers had a proper sense of responsibility their proposals would have been ready, without having to await the return of

the Treasurer. Apparently if the Great Western Railway were to break down the whole business of the State would be hung up indefinitely until such time as the Treasurer could make his way back. This may appeal to the natural pride of the Treasurer, but it does not reflect credit on the other Ministers. Will anybody say that the Minister for Works could not fill the Treasurer's shoes in regard to the taxation Bills? Could not the Minister for Works even take up the Budget itself, and after an hour or two of consideration, satisfactorily submit it to the House?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must confine himself to the motion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Apart from the taxation measures, there is private members' business with which the House could be occupied to-morrow. I protest strongly against the waste of time involved in bringing members here to consider half a dozen insignificant Bills, and then adjourning after four days' work.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [11.6]: What is to become of the business we have already on the Notice Paper? We have here two or three Bills which might well be considered to-morrow.

The Premier: We can deal with them on Tuesday.

Hon. T. WALKER: On Tuesday we shall not be able to get through all that is on the Notice Paper. It is a sheer waste of time, and a declaration of ineptitude, together with an utter disregard of responsibility, for Ministers to play with the Assembly in this manner.

The Premier: It is done out of regard for the convenience of members.

Hon. T. WALKER: What about having regard for the people of the State and for the responsibility of Ministers? The convenience of the Government is to be perpetually in recess, to do nothing, to have nothing in the shape of a policy, to shelter under the flag of nationalism, and think it is a sufficient guarantee of eternal virtue. It is playing with the House to have no business whatever for us. It is a confession of absolute weakness. At the beginning of the session we had a plain invitation to the Opposition to talk for a fortnight or three weeks. Never in the history of Parliament was such a clear invitation thrown out to prolong the Address-in-reply debate. And because the Opposition have remained silent we now find the Government upon their backs, unable to move, waiting for their nurse to come from the East. We have had from the Premier to-night a confession that until the Treasurer had been to Melbourne and there consulted with the Federal authorities the Government did not know what they were going to do. They had to send to Melbourne to find out what they were to do, and until the Treasurer comes back they have nothing whatever definitely decided one way or the other.

Mr. Piesse: The Labour Government exhausted the Treasury.

Hon. T. WALKER: We have played too long this little tune of National finance. The public are sick of it, and want something accomplished. This is playing one tune on a broken old fiddle too long; no one can dance

to that tune. I submit that the leader of the Opposition has been amply justified in entering a protest against the conduct of the Government. It is playing with every member of this House. We are here to do our work and duty, and there is no work for us to do. That is not respectful to us or this institution. I trust that the public will realise that when the Government are given a free hand they have to give up their business, sit still, and go into recess once more. They have not enough work to keep us for even 24 hours at our duty. It is to be hoped that the public will realise this position.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:

Ayes	..	..	..	..	25
Noes	..	..	..	..	7

Majority for 18

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Broun	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Brown	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Draper	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Durack	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Stewart
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Money	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Collier	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Luley	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Munsie	(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

House adjourned at 11.15 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 5th February, 1918.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY — PRESENTATION.

The PRESIDENT: I have presented the Address of hon. members of this Chamber to His Excellency the Governor, and he has been pleased to send the following reply:—

Mr. President and hon. members of the Legislative Council,—In the name and on

behalf of His Most Gracious Majesty the King, I thank you for your Address. (Sgd.) William-Ellison Macartney, Governor.

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. J. DUFFELL, leave of absence until the end of the session granted to the Hon. A. J. H. Saw (Metropolitan-Suburban) on the ground of absence from the State on military service.

MOTION — PASTORAL LEASEHOLDS AND LAND ACT AMENDMENT ACT, 1917.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [4.40]: I move—

"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the Government should extend the time of application for coming under the Land Act Amendment Act, 1917, to pastoral leaseholders who hold more than 1,000,000 acres in any one division, until twelve months after peace is declared, so that the owners, many of whom are in England working in connection with the war, may have an opportunity of visiting this State and personally superintending the division or disposal of their surplus properties, on the terms that double rent be paid for the extended period."

A very few words from me will suffice to explain to hon. members the meaning of this motion. I have been induced to bring it forward by reason of the fact that at the close of the 1916-17 session a Land Act Amendment Act was passed, which made it necessary for all pastoral lessees desiring to bring their properties under the extending conditions of the measure to apply for that purpose before the 31st March next. To make the matter clear I will read the paragraph of the amendment Act dealing with this matter—

Any lessee holding a pastoral lease granted under the provisions of Part X. of the principal Act may at any time within one year from the commencement of this Act apply for leave to surrender such lease and for a new lease under this section.

Twelve months from the coming into force of the amendment Act would date from the time at which that measure was assented to; and assent was given to it on the 28th March, 1917. So that unless a pastoral lessee makes application to bring his lease under the extension provisions of the amendment Act before the 31st March next, he will forfeit the opportunity of doing so. In average circumstances there would be no difficulty about the matter at all. The average leaseholder, so far as we know, lives in the Commonwealth, if not in this State, and if he does not apply to bring his area under the Act before the time mentioned it is his own fault and he deserves to suffer for his neglect. But there is a number of cases—and this provision is limited to pastoral lessees holding over one million acres—of leaseholders who are in England at the present time and who under the highly