

be in a better position than it is to-day. These views I submit for the consideration of the Premier. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 1st August, 1923.

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

QUESTION—PREMIERS' CONFERENCE.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Premier: Is it his intention to place on the Table of the House a copy of the minutes of the last Premiers' conference?

The PREMIER replied: Yes.

QUESTION—PENSIONERS' RATES EXEMPTION.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Minister for Works: Is it his intention to introduce this session an amending Bill to the Pensioners' Rates Exemption Act, 1922, prohibiting the charging of 5 per cent. interest on the arrears of rates, etc., under the Act to invalid and old age pensioners as now charged by the Water and Sewerage Department?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: It is not necessary to introduce an amending Act. Interest will not be collected on rates exempted under the Pensioners' Rates Exemption Act, 1922.

QUESTION—MIDLAND RAILWAY, PURCHASE.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Premier: 1, Have the negotiations in regard to the purchase of the Midland Railway Company's land and railway been completed? 2, If so, will he make a statement in regard to the matter? 3, If not, when will he be in a position to make such statement?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, Valuations have been received and are now being considered.

QUESTION—ROAD-MAKING, FEDERAL GRANT.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Works: 1, What is the amount expected to be received by this State from the Commonwealth Government for road-making purposes? 2, What are the conditions in connection with the payment of this amount? 3, What method of allocation amongst road boards and municipalities is proposed in regard to the distribution?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The matter is at present the subject of correspondence, and in due course the papers will be laid on the Table of the House.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLIES, ERADU AND GERALDTON.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Since supplies have been regularly utilised what is the average amount of water taken by the Railway Department weekly from the Wicherina reservoir at Eradu? 2, What is the price per 1,000 gallons? 3, What was the average amount of water distilled by the distilling plant at Geraldton per week during the twelve months preceding 30th June, 1923? 4, What was the average cost per 1,000 gallons over that period?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, 16,000 gallons per week for period 26th March to 30th June, 1923. 2, 5s. 3, 140,860 gallons. 4, Operating costs 9s. per 1,000, capital charges 1s. 8½d. per 1,000; total 10s. 8½d. per 1,000.

QUESTION—WATER METERS.

Mr. LUTEY asked the Minister for Works: 1, What is the cost per annum of repairing and replacing water meters in the Kalgoorlie area? 2, What amount of rent is received per annum for water meters in the Kalgoorlie area? 3, What is the cost per annum of repairing and replacing water meters in the metropolitan area? 4, What amount of rent is received for water meters in the metropolitan area per annum?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The question involves the preparation of a

return for which instructions have been given, and it will be laid on the Table of the House in due course.

QUESTION—SANDALWOOD PERMITS.

Mr. MARSHALL (for Mr. Cunningham) asked the Minister for Forests: 1, Is it a fact that the Forests Department refuse to issue permits for sandalwood pulling to men engaged in and those desirous of engaging in that industry? 2, If so, what reasons actuated the department in initiating such policy, and for what period is it to continue?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS replied: 1, The issue of licenses for the pulling of sandalwood from Crown lands south of the 26th parallel of latitude has been suspended pending a decision by the Government, which, subject to a determination of the dollar exchange values intends to accept the most favourable tender, to operate as from the 1st of September next, after which date all British born or naturalised British subjects, who were holders of licenses as at the 30th June last, will be registered and employed as at present. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—TRAMWAY EXTENSIONS.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What is the estimated cost of the construction and equipment of the tramway extension to Claremont? 2, The cost of the Inglewood-Maylands extension? 3, The estimated cost of the proposed Lord Street-Maylands section? 4, The actual cost of the tramway connection to Como?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, £42,005, including £4,750 for additional equipment at Cook-street Substation. This includes the extension from Claremont Railway Station along Victoria Avenue to Watkin Road. 2, £7,000. 3, No extension in this direction having been decided upon, the estimated cost cannot be quoted. 4, £54,389 11s. 2d., including £14,634 2s. 11d. for substation building and equipment.

QUESTION—RAILWAY, WAROONA-LAKE CLIFTON.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Minister for Railways: 1, When was the Waroona-Lake Clifton railway taken over by the Working Railways Department? 2, What was the total capital cost of the line? 3, What is the total interest debit to date? 4, What have been the working expenses since the line was opened for traffic? 5, What were the total receipts during the same period?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, The Waroona-Lake Clifton line was brought under "The Government Railways Act, 1904," on 21st August, 1922. 2, The capital cost as at 30th June, 1923, was £62,056. 3, The interest debited by the Government Railways to 30th June, 1923, was

£2,936. 4, Section information as to costs is not kept, but on the basis of the average expenditure per train mile for the whole system during last year, the cost of working this section to 30th June, 1923, was £517. 5, The earnings of the line to 30th June, 1923, amounted to £110.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES.

Mr. J. H. SMITH asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to establish more agricultural colleges in Western Australia in the near future? 2, If so, has he considered the establishing of one in the South-West? 3, Will he consider the advisability of establishing a college at either Bridgetown, Balingup, or Manjimup?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, The question of the establishment of an agricultural college centrally situated is at present receiving consideration. 2 and 3, When other colleges can be erected the claims of all districts will be given every consideration.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.40]: The Speech delivered by the Governor and prepared by his advisers was not altogether unlike many others we have heard during recent years. A most casual perusal of it, however, serves to convince one that the Minister for Agriculture was a cute prophet when he declared some few months ago that the retirement of Mr. Colebatch from the Ministry meant that in future the literary touch and grace of expression, which had characterised previous Governor's Speeches, would be missing.

The Premier: Who told you that?

Mr. Lutey: The Speech.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is the conclusion I have drawn from the reading of it. Ministers have had a very long recess, covering a period of seven months, but it remains to be seen whether they have applied themselves to the solution of many of those problems which confronted them, and to which they pledged themselves to give consideration when the House was last sitting. As is not unusual, there have been happenings during the recent recess, happenings of a most important character. One may say that in some directions they were alarming happenings. A few months ago we had quite unexpectedly a political crisis. It is satisfactory to observe that the Government have met the House with apparently the same unanimity which characterised this trinity of parties during the past year or two.

Mr. McCallum: Satisfactory to whom?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The conduct of the left wing of the party opposite is remark-

able. Perhaps, in view of the backing which our friends on the cross benches possess outside this Chamber, I should describe them as the right wing of the Government party.

Mr. Richardson: It may be the wrong wing.

Mr. Pickering: No, we are the right wing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Those hon. members can always be depended upon to do something extraordinary during the recess. We find that, shortly after the House adjourned last session, members met—I believe I am correct in saying they met under the chairmanship of the Minister for Agriculture—and quite innocently, it would appear, and with the best intentions, they decided upon a series of resolutions. The Minister for Agriculture, who is the leader of the party outside the House and Deputy Leader of the Government inside the House, occupies, it seems to me, a most extraordinary dual position. He was deputed to convey the decision of the party to his Leader, the Premier. This decision was conveyed by letter. We learn that throughout this serious crisis the negotiations—for greater security to both parties, I suppose—were carried out in writing. No verbal negotiations took place at all, so it would appear. The hon. members discovered, after the Premier, and the other section of that side of the House which sits immediately behind him, had time to investigate the matter, that they had brought about a sudden and serious crisis. What do we find happened then? The Premier, as Leader of the Government, delivered his ultimatum to the Deputy Leader of the Government, in his capacity as head of the Country Party. In plain language the Premier told the deputy Premier that the resolutions had to be withdrawn, otherwise he was not prepared to carry on. Another meeting was held and it was decided that they did not intend to convey the meaning in the resolutions which the Premier appeared to read into them.

Mr. Pickering: They meant what they said.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have read very diligently all the correspondence published in connection with that incident, and I am unable to say now where the members of the Country Party stand on that particular point.

Mr. Underwood: It was only their triennial stampede.

The Minister for Agriculture: The member for Pilbara will put you right.

Mr. Underwood: The Country Party members tried to bluff us.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At the meeting of the Country Party which was called to consider the ultimatum delivered by the Premier through the deputy Premier, we find the usual thing occurred. I will draw the attention of the House to the fact that at the original meeting when the resolutions that caused the crisis were passed, the Minister for Railways was not present. I remember another of these crisis-making meetings from which the Minister for Railways was also absent. When he attended a subsequent meeting he set things right, according to his view—and

he usually gets his own way. We are told in regard to the incident I have been referring to, that the Minister for Railways attended the subsequent meeting and we learn:

In a forceful speech—

The Minister for Railway is always forceful at caucus meetings.

Mr. Latham: You always found him forceful at your meetings.

Hon. P. COLLIER: One may not always agree that the Minister's attitude is logical or accurate, but we must realise that the Minister for Railways can be forceful at such meetings, particularly when there is a portfolio dangling in the balance. The newspaper report stated—

In a forceful speech Mr. Scaddan pictured the absurd position in which the passage of the resolutions had placed the Country Party.

When the resolutions were originally passed, they were, according to the announcement in the Press, carried unanimously and therefore had the approval of the deputy Premier. Afterwards, however, when we see that his colleague, the Minister for Railways, attended a subsequent meeting and declared that the resolutions endorsed by his colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, and carried by members of the Country Party were absurd and placed the Country Party in a really absurd position, it is indicative of the fact that these two Ministers do not see eye to eye.

Hon. M. F. Troy: It shows that the whole business is a sham.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I was going to say something about that as well. The party decided that another letter should be drafted in reply to the Premier and again the deputy Premier was deputed to deliver the letter to his chief. This was done in a somewhat unusual, not to say dramatic fashion. If that be not so, the reporter chronicling the event evidently had a dramatic instinct. In the report the pressman said—

About 4.30 p.m. Mr. Maley called on the Premier, who was in bed in his room at the Palace Hotel suffering from influenza. Sir James Mitchell was placidly reading a book about lion hunting when Mr. Maley opened the door.

Hon. M. F. Troy: In came the lamb.

Hon. P. COLLIER: One can imagine how timidly the Minister for Agriculture opened the door and cautiously approached the bed on which the Premier was lying, reading a book on lion hunting at 4.30 in the afternoon! The Premier was evidently arming himself with information to deal effectively with this crisis. He might have saved himself the trouble, however, because had he read something about mice hunting, it would have been more suitable to the occasion. So the Minister for Agriculture, and his party through him, intimidated in the letter he was deputed to convey that they did not intend to challenge the Government at the elections. In the Premier's letter to the Country Party, he had recourse to the usual weapon wielded by Premiers. He said: "Unless you are

prepared to accept my view of the situation, I shall have to ask for a dissolution." The Premier knew the weakness of the position.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Premier knew the dissolution could not be granted by the Governor.

The Premier: Couldn't it?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was absurd, but the fact remains that that threat is invariably used by Premiers.

The Minister for Works: Why give the game away?

Hon. P. COLLIER: After the Country Party had considered the letter, the members agreed that they did not intend such an impression to be gained by the Premier from their letter. They said in effect to the Premier that if they were unable to convince him that they were quite innocent, no matter if he did not accept their assurance then, they had not the slightest intention of disintegrating the Ministry. They intimated that they were willing to retire from the Government and stand behind him. They were prepared to go down on their knees if the Premier liked, and assured him that he could form a Government from his own little party on the floor of the House and that they would give him their whole-hearted support. This shows what was really actuating the attitude of members sitting on the cross benches. The Minister for Agriculture said in his letter—

If your party do not accept this basis, it is not my party's desire to stand in the way of the good government of the country. For the remainder of the life of the present Parliament, on that policy of development up to the point with which we have had association, I pledge you my party's general support on the floor of the House for the remaining session, for a Cabinet comprised of your own followers. Under these circumstances, therefore, you will not be entitled to ask for a dissolution, as by my specific undertaking you will have been placed in a position to carry on the good government of the country.

Members will see what was the impelling motive; the Premier "need not ask for a dissolution." The whole thing strikes me in that way. Eventually the Premier accepted the assurance of the members of the Country Party and matters continued as they were formerly. The whole situation is one that would bring delight to the hearts of Gilbert and Sullivan were they living at the present time.

Mr. Underwood: I think, too, it should bring delight to Collier!

Hon. P. COLLIER: I enjoyed it very much, for the situation was comic in the extreme.

Mr. Underwood: Exactly! That is the position.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The deputy Leader of the Government conveyed the party's decision to the Premier in writing. Shortly after that the Minister for Agriculture left to attend a conference in the Eastern States and, accord-

ing to a newspaper report, he was asked prior to his departure if he had anything to say in regard to the political situation. The Minister replied, "No, I have not yet had a reply from the Premier." One would imagine that the Premier and his Minister for Agriculture were not on speaking terms, that they were living at some distance apart and not associated in the government of the country. This from a Minister in daily communication with his Premier!

Hon. M. F. Troy: Their relations were strained.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister stated, however, that immediately he received a reply, another meeting would be called to deal with the matter. Thus we have this farce going on; the Minister for Agriculture writing to the Premier and the Premier replying in writing too. This is what is called responsible Government! We may expect another crisis next week. While the members sitting on the cross benches may be relied upon to provide the farce during the recess, the historic annual conference of the Primary Producers' Association, which will be opened next week, can always be relied upon to create the political farce during the sitting of Parliament.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Prompted by those controlling the farmers from the city.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As the result of the activities of the executive of that organisation, the Primary Producers' conference, prompted no doubt by the executive, may be expected to precipitate another crisis during the week after next.

Capt. Carter: The wish is father to the thought.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not concerned about the matter and my wishes do not influence my views. The member for Leederville (Capt. Carter) knows we can depend on these annual crises precipitated by the Country Party and by the Primary Producers' Association. Another little incident, somewhat personal, occurred during the recess between Ministers, and in this incident the Minister for Works has been involved.

The Minister for Works: It is my turn now. Fire away!

Hon. P. COLLIER: During the early portion of the year the people of the metropolitan area particularly were favoured with a meeting at North Perth in connection with the water supply. The member for Leederville said that it was the proudest moment of his life.

The Premier: Why not have a meeting at North Perth?

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is no reason whatever why such a meeting should not be held. I am referring to the circumstances in which the meeting was held. I think I am right in saying that the Minister for Works had been cajoled or induced or kidnapped into the country to lay the foundation stone of a hall at some rural hamlet in one of the remote fastnesses of the bush. While he was away he was placed in the position of the man

who, while in the water swimming, had his clothes stolen. While the Minister was absent in the country, the member for Leederville induced the Premier to go to North Perth and make an important pronouncement in a matter entirely concerning the department over which the Minister for Works presides.

The Premier: You are altogether wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe the Minister for Works would not be occupying his seat were it not for the fact that he has come to be recognised as having an hereditary right to the portfolio of Minister for Works.

The Minister for Works: Not at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: For my own part—everyone has his own feelings to consider in these matters—if my chief had taken an opportunity during my absence from the city to make an important pronouncement concerning a matter in my department, there would have been a vacancy in the Government.

The Minister for Works: You are wrong altogether.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Apart from the manner in which it was done, we have in the whole business evidence of the constitutional manner in which the affairs of State are being administered.

The Premier: You are quite wrong there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Hon. members will remember that the Premier announced at that meeting that a scheme of water conservation and supply for the metropolitan area had been decided upon by the Government, the capital expenditure in connection with which would be more than three million pounds before the scheme was completed. That is the position. A month or two prior to the announcement being made by the Premier, this House had under discussion the question of water supply, and we find that the Government, which stands for constitutional methods, and some members of which were most vigorous in their denunciation of the Labour Party's policy in embarking upon the expenditure of public funds without Parliamentary authority, in quite a casual way now have no hesitation in committing the country and Parliament to a scheme of water supply for the metropolitan area involving an expenditure of more than £3,000,000 without ever consulting Parliament.

The Minister for Works: That is not correct.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is correct. The Minister can look up the Loan Estimates and the discussion which took place upon those Estimates and tell me whether any intimation was given to this House last year that it was the intention of the Government to commit the country to the expenditure of such a large sum of money. It is not sufficient to say that everybody agrees that there is urgent need for an improved water supply for the metropolitan district. That is entirely beside the question. Is the matter of such little importance that this scheme, involving the expenditure of such a huge sum of money can be decided in the course of a

week or two? Is it because there was considerable agitation in the areas affected—not so much because of the quantity of water but because of the quality—that the Government considered themselves justified in departing from the well-recognised practice of coming to Parliament for authority to carry out a scheme of such magnitude. I recall the time when night after night the Minister for Works himself walked up and down the front of the bench from which I am speaking and denounced his present colleague, the Minister for Railways, who was then Premier of the State, and also those associated with him at the time, for embarking upon the construction of works of comparatively minor importance without first having secured the authority of Parliament.

The Minister for Works: He has since seen the error of his ways.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This House might just as well close up if it is to be ignored in such a fashion. Ministers ask for Parliamentary approval for the expenditure of trifling sums of money, sometimes as low as £5; yet they can commit the country to an expenditure of more than three millions sterling without giving the House the slightest indication that it is their intention to embark on any project necessitating the expenditure of that sum of money. That is the kind of constitutional Government we have developed.

The Minister for Works: It is all right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Anything is all right apparently. The Minister for Works cannot show that I am wrong in my contention. We all know that a scheme for a hills water supply has been under consideration for many years. It was under consideration when I was in office. But that is an entirely different matter from launching out without Parliamentary approval. There is not one pound on the Estimates of the Department of the Minister for Works which was passed by Parliament last year authorising him to make a commencement with this work.

The Minister for Works: You do not think that I am starting a work that I am not authorised to do?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I noticed a day or two ago that the Minister called for tenders for the supply of pipes and other materials for this work, involving an expenditure of £100,000, again, without the authority of Parliament.

The Minister for Works: You can invite tenders for anything.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course, and that is what the Minister would call business methods—preparing plans and calling tenders, and getting approval afterwards.

The Minister for Works: I think it is all right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I want the ratepayers of this city to know how they are likely to be involved by what is being done.

Capt. Carter: It is all very clear in North Perth.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Whilst their present rate is 1s. in the £ it is estimated that in the course of years, after the new work has been

completed, the rate will amount to 2s. 9d. in the £.

Capt. Carter: The Premier made that very clear.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not saying he did not. I am complaining that he acted without anybody's authority. The people to whom he made it clear did not have the opportunity to say aye or no to it; they were not asked to approve. It was not for the public meeting addressed by the Premier to approve or disapprove of the project. It is for the members of this House, who represent the people concerned, to say whether we are justified in embarking upon such an expenditure at this juncture, apart altogether from the question of finding the money and involving the ratepayers in the payment ultimately of a rate like 2s. 9d. in the pound as distinct from 1s., which they are paying at the present time.

The Minister for Works: They are getting it too cheaply now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Apart entirely from the question whether a hills water supply should be provided or not, I protest against the House being treated in this cavalier fashion. It was the duty and responsibility of Ministers to give the information to the House a month or two prior to the meeting which was held at North Perth. The information could have been furnished when the whole question of water supply was under discussion. What do we find? Immediately the session closed, or a few weeks afterwards, and behind the back of Parliament, the country is committed to this big scheme, and the expenditure of a considerable sum of money. It is not a policy that should be endorsed by Parliament, quite apart from whether members approve of the scheme or not. It is not the way the business of the country should be carried out, and Ministers are culpable in having done it in the manner about which I am complaining. Next we have a number of tramway extensions. It is true that the Minister for Railways made no secret of the fact, during the discussion on the Loan Estimates last year, that it was his belief that tramway extensions should be made in various directions in and around the city. Here again the House was not told definitely which extensions would be made or which routes would be surveyed. We find that the Inglewood extension has been carried out, and that the extension from Nedlands to Claremont is in course of construction. The majority of the members of the Royal Commission which inquired into tramway extensions last year recommended the other route, via Dalkeith. I wish also to remind hon. members that in giving evidence before that Commission the representatives of the Railway Department, Mr. Lord and others, declared against the route that is now being followed, and stated that if it were adopted the result would be a loss of revenue to the Railway Department.

Mr. Richardson: The manager of the tramways did not say that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I did not mention the manager of the tramways; I quoted the officers of the Railway Department. The manager of the tramways is concerned only about the running of his own Department. It is proposed also to extend the Lord street tramway to Ferguson street, and the Minister, in replying to a deputation, expressed himself as being entirely favourable to that project.

The Minister for Mines: I say that now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Again here the Railway officials declared that the construction of this extension would mean a loss of revenue to the Railway Department.

The Minister for Mines: They do not object to the line going to Second-avenue.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is considerable settlement there and most of the people living in those parts avail themselves of the Mt. Lawley railway service. If the tram extension is carried out, the railway traffic is bound to be affected.

The Minister for Mines: More than half the people in that locality walk at the present time because the train service is so infrequent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that is a fact, but what I want to draw attention to is this—and I do this for the benefit of hon. members sitting on the cross-benches—

Mr. Harrison: It is very kind of you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, because those hon. members are apt to have lapses of memory. I recall the fact that when last year the extension to Como was being discussed, our friend called special meetings of the party and threatened to destroy the whole Cabinet, not so much because of the breach of promise on the part of the Government, but because of the expenditure of public funds in the metropolitan area. As a matter of fact, the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) gave notice of a motion declaring that no expenditure of public funds of any description should be incurred in the metropolitan area, and that all available money should be utilised in the direction of constructing roads and railways for the development of country districts. Now apparently, members of the Country Party are supporting the action of the Government, who have committed themselves to an expenditure of more than three million pounds, and these same members kicked up a noise a year or so ago about the expenditure of a few score thousands of pounds, and, in fact, threatened to wreck the Government in consequence of that!

Mr. Pickering: The promise was made to Parliament.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was not. If the hon. member likes I will read the motion that he submitted. It had nothing at all to do with the question of a promise; it was a question of spending public funds in the metropolitan area. That was the motive behind the actions of members on the cross-benches. At the present moment they are silent, though the Government are embarking upon an expenditure of over three million pounds for water supply and several hundreds of thousands of pounds on tramway extensions. I

think one might be permitted to say something with regard to the attitude of the Press towards these matters. Newspaper men are privileged to frequently and freely express their opinions regarding the actions of members of the House and of public men. Therefore I am sure they will not object to my saying a word or two to say concerning the Press and this matter.

Capt. Carter: Before you leave the tramways, will you kindly put in a word for me for one of my extensions?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not leaving the tramways yet. During the crisis of last year over the construction of the Como tramway—for a crisis undoubtedly it was—the "West Australian" had a good deal to say and, apart altogether from the breach of promise on the part of the Minister, the "West Australian" dealt very exhaustively with the general inadvisability of expending public funds in the metropolitan area. In an article on the 13th June, 1922, the "West Australian" commented—

The Government is embarking upon metropolitan schemes which, however much justification could be found for them were the country in a prosperous condition, with a volume of wealth accumulating under the numerous hands of busy workers in our primary industries, offer no prospect in our present situation of being other than additional handicaps to progress.

That was all because the Government had embarked on an expenditure of £50,000 for the Como tramway. On the 19th June the same paper stated—

Since 1920, when Labour members such as Mr. Troy and Mr. Wilcock, and country members, of whom perhaps the most forcible was Mr. Maley, the present Minister for Agriculture, protested against extensions of the tramway system, very few figures have been supplied voluntarily by the department in favour of a policy that seems to obsess official circles. As Mr. Maley pointed out less than two years ago, with an appositeness not less pertinent to-day, "the facilities provided in the city are altogether out of proportion to the simple necessities available in the backblocks to transport the produce essential to the welfare of the State."

Mr. Harrison: Perfectly true.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Those comments were occasioned by the Government having embarked on an expenditure of £50,000. On the 19th June the same paper stated—

But new extensions unless in congested districts—and of these there is none—must entail additions to working and capital costs, with no commensurate compensation on the revenue side.

Twelve months ago there were no congested districts, according to the "West Australian." Apparently, some of our metropolitan districts have developed congestion very rapidly.

Mr. Munsie: According to the electoral rolls, the number of electors has decreased.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The article continues—

And of such are our permanent and reproductive works, and that which they reproduce with inexorable fidelity to the statesmanship that sponsors them and the officialdom that defends them are deficits, deficits, deficits, and weary men, "carting 20 miles, starting away from home at 4 o'clock in the morning and not getting back until the following evening."

Mr. Harrison: Shame!

Hon. P. COLLIER: This huge expenditure of £50,000 on the Como tramway occurred when the Premier, Sir James Mitchell, was out of the State. The "West Australian" remarked—

... Sir James Mitchell. He was absent from the State when Cabinet had a brain wave concerning the manner in which the unemployed might be absorbed—an inspiration which has drawn crowds of men to the city, some of whom have even abandoned jobs in the country to flock to the industrial Eldorado to which Ministers pointed the way.

This little innocent Como tramway attracted flocks of men to the city. It was all due to a brain wave on the part of Ministers when Sir James Mitchell was out of the State. When Sir James Mitchell is present and himself fathers an expenditure in the city amounting to four or five millions of money, not £50,000, this newspaper has not a solitary word to say.

The Premier: Where did you get those figures?

Mr. Pickering: The "West Australian" is consistent, is it not?

The Premier: Where did you get those amounts?

Hon. P. COLLIER: All was wrong when the Premier was out of the State. All was wrong when his unfortunate colleagues acted in that way. But all is well now. Because the Premier is here, the expenditure in the city is now justified. The "West Australian" described the construction of the Como tramway as a scheme of trams for everyone within the metropolitan area. There is a scheme of trams going on for everyone now, too, but I have not read such comments in the "West Australian" during the last few months. The "West Australian" said—

In our present circumstances not a yard of tram track should be laid in or about the city unless the localities to be served should consent to be legally bound to make good any deficiency on their operating expenses and interest and sinking fund charges. . . . To-day a policy in connection with the tram system which, in our parlous financial situation is politically mad, politically wicked, is the joint product of Mr. Colebatch and Mr. Scaddan.

The Premier: What was the date of that?

Hon. P. COLLIER: About the same time, just a year ago. The "West Australian" said it was the joint product of Mr. Colebatch and Mr. Scaddan and was politically mad and wicked. Sir James Mitchell

was out of the State. This joint product, which the "West Australian" so stigmatised, was landing the State into an expenditure of £50,000, and the "West Australian" added—

It is impossible that these gentlemen can have given any consideration to its effect upon the finances.

What effect is the huge expenditure upon which the Government are now embarking in the metropolitan area to have on the finances of the State? We are to have reservoirs at Mt. Eliza costing £60,000; we are to have reservoirs at Mt. Hawthorn costing, I do not know how much; we are to have reservoirs somewhere in the Fremantle district. The Minister for Works hastily and hurriedly called tenders for £100,000 worth of pipes. Tramway extensions are being undertaken in various directions, and other extensions have been promised in the immediate future. The country is being committed to an expenditure of over three millions of pounds in respect to the metropolitan water supply, and what effect will that have on the finances?

Capt. Carter: The people of the metropolitan area will pay for it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The conditions and circumstances have all changed in the last 12 months to justify this alteration of policy! But this is not all. Subiaco is to have its sewerage system. Engineers are getting out surveys and levels so that Subiaco, in the quickest possible time, may be connected with the sewerage system. And, as if that were not enough, the Public Service Commissioner has asked the heads of departments to make recommendations as to those public servants who are entitled or who ought to receive their grade increases. The Government have stood out against grade increases during the last two or three years, but now grade increases are to be granted to civil servants. A sewerage scheme is to be provided for Subiaco. Tramway extensions are being constructed throughout the metropolitan area and reservoirs are being put on the top of every hill in and about the city, and these items, together with a hills water scheme involving an outlay of three million pounds, will commit the State to an expenditure of not less than five million pounds. Yet not a word is heard from this critic who so unmercifully slated the Premier's colleague over his little ewe lamb of £50,000 a year ago. I hope I shall not be considered unkind in saying that all this sudden spasm of activity in expending money in the metropolitan area and carrying out works which were unequivocally condemned by the Minister for Agriculture and the Premier himself last year is not altogether unconnected with the approaching general election. There are 10 or 12 seats in the metropolitan district, and if hon. members think that their purchase at the public expense is worth five million pounds they will be justified in endorsing the policy upon which the Government have embarked. It is nothing more or less than a policy of buying the metropolitan constituencies. During the outcry concerning the quantity and quality of the water supply last summer it was com-

mon talk on the part of members sitting behind the Government that if this condition of affairs existed next summer not one seat would be won by supporters of the Government; and so we see this sudden activity during which the Minister for Works was shipped off to the bush to be out of the way. He could not be trusted to deal with the matter, and the Premier took the unusual course—a course never taken by any other Premier to my knowledge—of hurriedly, and without consulting Parliament, announcing this proposed new water scheme—

Mr. McCallum: Over the head of a Minister.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and agreeing to tramway extensions and authorising preparations for the construction of the Subiaco sewerage works and taking steps to see that the public servants, whose vote influence in the metropolitan area is not to be discounted, get their grade rises. This is nothing short of a policy of loaves and fishes; it is a flagrant and deliberate attempt to influence the electors next year. Now I come to the question of the finances, and I say at once that I, with every citizen, rejoice to see that the financial year which has just closed shows a very large reduction upon the huge deficits to which we have become accustomed. I may express the hope that the reduction is likely to continue. The deficit of £405,000 for the year, whilst very substantial, represents a great reduction upon the deficits of previous years. The Premier has been fortunate in that he has had a very large revenue, I think the largest on record, for the year just closed, £7,207,452.

The Minister for Mines: An enormous amount of money to take from a handful of people.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is a very large amount, and it is 2¼ millions of pounds greater than the revenue received by the present Minister for Mines in his last year as Premier of the State. Direct taxation is very high, £987,300, for the year. I believe that also is the highest figure that we have ever yet attained. The feature of the finances is the improved condition of the railways, which show an increase of revenue amounting to £81,000 and a reduction in expenditure amounting to £126,000. One would like to be assured that this improvement in the Railway Department, particularly as regards the reduction of £126,000 in a year's expenditure, is not due to neglect or failure to carry out necessary maintenance work. I know from my own experience, and the Minister for Railways knows it too, that when the finances of the Railway Department are unfavourable, and especially when the Treasurer of the day is urging the railway officials to produce better results, there is a tendency to put off necessary maintenance work. For instance, when we took office in 1911, we were asked by the then Commissioner of Railways for, and we granted him, £500,000 to carry out what he described as belated repairs. Rolling stock had been allowed to go

as long as ever it would without repairs, and there had been neglect of maintenance of permanent way and in other respects. That was a penny wise and pound foolish policy. The State had to spend about half a million sterling on belated repairs which no doubt, if they had been carried out at the proper time, would have cost considerably less. So, whilst I have no direct information on the point, I incline to the belief that the Railway Department to-day are merely repeating the experience of the years to which I have referred.

The Minister for Mines: The assurances I have from the Commissioner of Railways are to the opposite effect.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But you have expended a lot of loan money.

The Minister for Mines: The expenditure of loan money and revenue money is in accordance with the conditions on which loan and revenue moneys are made available. The cost of relaying, for instance, goes to working expenses.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister knows that it is an easy matter for the railway authorities to delay carrying out necessary repairs, if it is so desired.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think they are doing that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the improvement is genuine, and the service has not been starved in order to obtain it, the present position is very satisfactory indeed as compared with that which existed two or three years ago. Of course we know that the revenue benefits greatly by the expenditure of Loan Funds. It goes without saying that the improved condition of the railway finances is due largely to the expenditure of considerable sums of loan money.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Almost solely due to that, I should think.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When the State is expending large sums of loan money, not only does the revenue benefit directly, in that direct charges are made against Loan Funds, which otherwise would not be the case—

The Premier: You spent a good deal of loan money when you were Minister for Railways.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. The expenditure to which I refer may be responsible for the fact that although our finances always showed better than the hon. gentleman's—

The Premier: No, no!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let me remind the Premier that last year his loan expenditure was greater than that of any previous year in the history of the State.

The Premier: The money was spent on public works.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It matters not how the money is expended; the revenue must inevitably benefit from the expenditure of Loan Funds. There can be no question about that. I sincerely hope that the improvement in the finances will continue, and that the Premier will be able to show a further reduction in next year's deficit. Whilst I have had some-

thing to say about the consistency of the Press on the matter of expenditure of large sums of money in the metropolitan area, it may not be out of place for me to say a word or two on the consistency of the Press regarding the question of the finances. Of course we have "turned the corner." That was announced in flaring headlines a month or two ago.

The Premier: I said that myself.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe it was anticipated for the Premier, though, by the "West Australian."

The Premier: It is certainly true.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If even one month shows a slight improvement upon the long series of deficits, our friend the "West Australian" exercises all its ingenuity in order to demonstrate that the whole financial position of the State has greatly improved.

The Premier: The "Worker" said as much.

Hon. P. COLLIER: "The Worker" has been merely stating facts, and giving official figures. I want to remind hon. members that although they and the people of this State were allowed to know what the amount of the accumulated deficit was on the 30th June last, or when the result of last year's finances was published, it is not likely that they will see any mention of that accumulated deficit again until June of next year. Just once a year, the "West Australian" lets the people know the exact amount of the accumulated deficit.

The Premier: The "West Australian" states it monthly.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is evidence of the Premier's recklessness. I challenge the Premier to go through the files of the "West Australian" for months past and point out any reference to the amount of the accumulated deficit.

The Premier: There is too much said about the accumulated deficit, in my opinion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It may be so. It may be that it is not a good thing for the State to be continually broadcasting to the world the amount of its accumulated deficit. But that is not my point. Just now I am dealing with the consistency of some of the critics. Let us contrast the "West Australian's" present attitude of snatching at any crumb in order to show that the finances are in an improved position, with the attitude of the same newspaper during the time that the present Minister for Railways was Premier and Treasurer of this State. The cutting which I now hold in my hand is one I have only picked up at random from the files of the "West Australian." It is dated the 2nd October, 1914, and says—

Mr. Scaddan and his colleagues have given abundant evidence of their incapacity for affairs.

Is the Minister for Railways listening? When he was Labour Premier he gave abundant evidence of his incapacity for affairs. Now that he is a National Minister, he gives abundant evidence of his entire capacity for affairs. The extract continues—

As regularly as the months succeed each other is testimony of the qualification of the State Government published, and the latest evidence appeared yesterday, when we were told that the debit balance on the month's operations was £6,954 . . .

A debit balance on a month's operations of £6,954! There was evidence in that debit balance, and abundant evidence, of the incapacity of the Labour Ministry. This morning there was shown a deficit of £180,000 on a month's operations, but that will not be quoted as evidence of the incapacity of Sir James Mitchell. With regard to that deficit, there will be a silence that could be cut with a knife.

The Minister for Mines: We get criticism nowadays.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the hon. gentleman ever forgets the floggings he used to get on the second of every month, as well as three times a week, he has a much more defective memory than I think he has. To continue the extract from the "West Australian"—

and that the accumulated deficit now amounts to £651,077.

There was no suppression in those days of the amount of the accumulated deficit. There was abundant reference to the fact that the Labour Government had an accumulated deficit of £651,077. To-day we have an accumulated deficit of six millions sterling, and that fact is never published and very rarely referred to.

The Premier: It is published.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What is the use of the Premier making statements which are deliberately incorrect?

The Premier: The fact is published.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I say it is not. What is the use of the Premier making incorrect statements? The "West Australian" does not month by month publish the accumulated deficit. I make that as a deliberate statement of fact, and the Premier cannot refute it.

The Premier: You said that the "West Australian" does not publish it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Where is it published?

The Premier: I think I can find you a paper showing it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is a very poor attempt of the Premier to quibble out. The Premier knows that my whole argument refers to the "West Australian." He knows that the non-publication I mentioned referred to that paper. While the deficit was £651,000 in those days, it was not an act of disloyalty to publish it continually. It was not then considered that such publication would injure the credit of the State, because a Labour Government was in power. Not only was the amount of the accumulated deficit published on the day of the issue of the monthly financial figures, but it was reiterated, day after day, in news columns, leading articles, and special articles. It was always brought before the world. The present Minister for Railways then became famous the world over as "Gone-a-million Jack." He was known

not only throughout the Commonwealth, but his fame as the Premier with the million deficit spread all over the British Empire, if not through Europe. Anywhere in the world to-day one can learn who "Gone-a-million Jack" was. It was by the aid of our Press critics that he became so famous. This article continues:—

The Premier, who is proud of this deficit, will probably bear himself more haughtily than ever.

You can imagine him walking down Hay-street swelling visibly, bearing himself more haughtily than ever, because of the added deficit of £6,000. The writer proceeds:—

But a careful people will see no glory in it.

There is no loss of glory to-day in deficits of hundreds of thousands of pounds. Then we come to this gem:—

Shall we stick to a steed floundering wildly in the treacherous financial currents in which it has plunged us, or shall we cast it adrift and swim for our lives?

It was necessary to strike out for life because of this deficit of £6,000 in a month. There is no question now of swimming for one's life. The article continues:—

Who will relieve the State of the mad carnival of wasteful expenditure which has characterised the administration during the last three years?

Those three years resulted in a deficit of £671,000. That was a "mad carnival of expenditure." The last three years of the present Government's administration has resulted in a deficit three times as great.

The Premier: What was the result of your last three years?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Ask your colleague He knows. Roughly, it might be said that the biggest of our annual deficits was never half the amount of any of those of the present Premier, except that of this last year. For fuller information the Premier can apply next door. The comment of the "West Australian" was:—

The deficit is made good from loan funds every loan is earmarked for certain purposes—and a consistent deficit is the hall mark of an unpurposeful Treasurer.

To what degree of perfection has the present Treasurer attained as an unpurposeful one?

The Premier: There has not been a credit balance since 1911.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not complaining now. I am merely taking opportunity to remind our newspaper friends of the impartial manner in which they hand out criticism of finances and politics generally when dealing with Labour and National Governments respectively. One would conclude there was an earthquake if the "West Australian" were to suggest that the present Treasurer was unpurposeful. The article continues:—

It follows that many of the projects of the Government must be abandoned, because the money voted for them has been used to finance the revenue shortage.

And again—

This helpless improvident Government—With a deficit of £600,000 in three years! I repeat that, except last year, the present Treasurer has consistently exceeded that deficit in each year of his term. I remember that as the result of reading, morning after morning, the "West Australian's" criticism of our financing, I myself was beginning to think that really our Treasurer could not know so much about finance as many of us believed, that there must be some fault in his administration.

The Minister for Mines: I did not suggest to you the advisability of your taking on the Treasurership, did I?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. The article continues:—

This helpless improvident Government—send the reckless Administration about its business.

And now we should be told that if the present thrifty Government were to be sent about their business, the whole country would fall into ruins. Again:—

The effects of the Government's wilful incapacity are so plain.

That was not a singular instance. If anyone were to take the trouble to go through the Press cuttings, he would find that this sort of thing was served up to us about three times a week. Now, however, all is well. I will leave it at that, and express the hope that the Premier will be able to continue the improvement he has effected, will be more purposeful, and that as a result, the finances will benefit. Now I come to the question which, after all, is the one big outstanding subject that interests and concerns every section of the community, namely, the policy of immigration and land settlement. I do not approach this subject in any carping spirit. I am as keenly anxious to see a policy of immigration and land settlement developed on sound lines as is any other member of the community, but I am afraid that not all things are well with the policy of immigration. From what one can gather of those who have visited the Old Country and obtained first-hand information as to the method of selection—

The Premier: I think you ought to name them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I shall call to my aid the member for Claremont (Mr. J. Thomson) before I conclude. Also, from our own observations in this State, it seems that the scheme is not proceeding as smoothly as one could wish. It is quite evident that the views expressed by the member for Claremont in a Press interview on his return from the Old Country, are sound. The hon. member said—

Under Sir James Mitchell's migration scheme the State is receiving a wrong type of immigrant. Instead of securing farmers' sons who would come out with sufficient capital to enable them to work their land,

and also at their own expense, the State is receiving an inferior type of migrant.

The Premier: That is not fair to the people on their way.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, I think the hon. member meant, not inferior, but unsuitable.

Mr. J. Thomson: I meant inferior, mentally and physically.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should not describe any of them as inferior. That is not the best word to employ when we wish to express the view that we are not getting the right kind of migrant. But unquestionably there is something wrong at the other end, because unsuitable men are getting through in greater numbers than is desirable. Of course there will always get through a percentage who will be found to be unsuitable.

The Premier: Not a very big percentage is getting through.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know of my own knowledge, but it is the consensus of opinion among those who come into contact with them, that very many unsuitable persons are getting through. Those who come into daily contact with the migrants express the view that a considerable number of them are not suited for farm life or work in the country. I cannot say of my own knowledge.

The Premier: The hon. member has seen as many of them as has anybody else.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I cannot say from observation that I have any fault to find with them.

Mr. Money: Many Australians going on the land are not at first suitable.

Mr. Marshall: But they are of better type than are the imported men.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am afraid the Government have not a thoroughly well thought out scheme of migration; I mean thoroughly well thought out from the selection of the men in the Old Country right through to the placing of them on the land. We are going along more or less in haphazard fashion.

The Premier: No, it is not at all as it used to be.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But it would appear that if 500 migrants arrive this month the Government say, "Very well, we will take them"; while if the arrivals were 1,000 or even 2,000, we should have the same attitude in the Government—"Very well, we will do all that we can."

The Premier: I do not know.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It seems to me we ought to be able to proceed along definite prepared lines and arrange, say, to take a certain number per month.

The Premier: So we do.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know whether that is so.

The Premier: It is so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier will know that already, when we have only just em-

barked upon the scheme, there is congestion in some directions, an over-supply, or a number of people we are not able to provide for.

The Premier: Not at all; but of course there always will be difficulties.

The Minister for Mines: It is only a question of reducing to the minimum the number of misfits.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It would be foolish to argue from the individual to the general. We must have, under the most carefully devised scheme, a percentage of misfits. It should be our endeavour to keep that percentage as low as possible. If an unduly high percentage is likely to fail, the matter becomes a serious one. I desire the indulgence of the House while I read a report prepared by the State Executive of the Australian Labour Party for presentation to the Overseas Settlement Delegation which arrives here on Sunday morning. I do so in the first instance because I think it is desirable in the interests of the whole policy that any comment or criticism should be made public before being handed to the Commission when they arrive. Such information should be published at the earliest opportunity in order that the Premier, and those associated with him, may have an opportunity of examining it and making any comments upon it to the Commission while here. The public should also have an opportunity of analysing it. The Premier will agree that if the organised labour movement of the State should take up a certain definite attitude towards a policy, it must have a material influence upon the success or otherwise of that policy. This report is signed by the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie) as General President of the A.L.P., and Mr. Millington as secretary. In the main, it embodies my own views on the subject. I hope the Premier will not misunderstand my purpose. After all, those who criticise in a right spirit are often more helpful than those who give approval to everything and anything. The Premier knows it would be almost impossible in any scheme of immigration and land settlement such as that to which the State is now committed to avoid differences of opinion and prevent mistakes occurring. I am not going to find fault because mistakes occur in a scheme of this kind, or because its management does not always proceed along the lines we would most desire. The document to which I refer is as follows:—

REPORT PREPARED BY THE STATE EXECUTIVE OF THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BRANCH OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOUR PARTY FOR SUBMISSION TO THE BRITISH OVERSEAS SETTLEMENT DELEGATION.

From January 1st, 1920, to June 30th, 1923, the number of assisted and nominated immigrants entering Western Australia was 12,299. For the same period the excess of arrivals over departures was only 4,382,

The details for each year are as follows:

	Excess of Arrivals over Departures,	Assisted and Nominated Immigrants.
1920	*1,347	1,364
1921	27	3,381
1922	2,895	4,368
1923 (6 months)	2,807	3,186
	4,382	12,299

*Excess of departures over arrivals.

It will be seen that no fewer than 7,917 of the immigrants—nearly two-thirds—either left the State, or replaced Western Australians who emigrated.

Effect on Population.

The relation of immigration to population may be judged by the following table: Population at December 31, 1919 . . 380,810
Add Excess of Births over Deaths—

Three and a half year, 1920-21-22 to 30/6/23	16,647
Add Immigrants for same period	12,299
	28,946
What the population should have been on June 30, 1923	359,756
What the population was on June 30, 1923	348,357

People lost to the State in 3½ years 11,399

Emigration, therefore, and not immigration, is the term to use when describing the chief aspect of Western migration. No absolute data exists enabling a conclusion being arrived at as to whether those leaving the State are married or single, whether immigrants or persons of long residence. Examination of the "Statistical Abstracts," however, yields the following information:

Excess of Births over Deaths.			
1913	6,234	1919	3,347
1914	6,161	1920	4,761
1915	6,025	1921	4,327
1916	5,478	1922	4,964
Total	28,894	Total	17,399

In 1913 the mean population was 313,272; in 1919 it was 319,526; and in 1922, 339,424. The annual birth rate per 1,000 of the mean population was 29.4 in 1913 and 24.0 in 1922. The figures suggest that married persons are a considerable proportion of the numbers leaving the State. Supporters of the present system of immigration ascribe the leakage in population to the decline in mining.

The Minister for Mines: It ought not to be forgotten that the Federal authorities make a reduction every year for unrecorded departures.

The Premier: The people who walk out of the State!

The Minister for Mines: You cannot get out of this State in the way you can out of any other.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The report continues—They contend that miners are “habituated to the industry, and content with no other” mode of life, and accordingly seek to justify the failure of the Government to organise new avenues of employment for the families of those whom the mining industry no longer needs. That the reasoning is fallacious is made evident by the Commonwealth Statistician’s returns, which show a decline in the number of persons engaged in mining in all States. The figures are:

Persons Engaged in Mining.

	1918.	1921.
New South Wales ..	33,663	29,701
Victoria ..	5,378	5,211
Queensland ..	8,641	5,847
South Australia ..	2,750	2,020
West Australia ..	9,265	7,084
Tasmania ..	4,200	3,170
Northern Territory ..	512	131
Commonwealth ..	64,409	53,164

It is, in the opinion of this organisation, absurd to say that the miners would not be content with any other form of useful and decently-paid employment. Their fitness as potential settlers on the land is immeasurably ahead of those who are being brought from the cities of Great Britain to undergo agricultural experience, in circumstances which will be dealt with later in this report.

Cheap Labour Aspects.

From the foregoing it will be clear that immigration *per se* is not the source of any serious economic disability in Western Australia. The extent to which it has become a source of irritation arises from the general economic shrinkage, which has increased the struggle for employment among workers generally. By enabling employers to secure additional labour, however inexperienced, at rates much less than those customarily paid to West Australians, immigration has accentuated the problem of living for the latter.

For this development the immigrants are in nowise treated opprobriously; on the contrary, recognising the nature of the industrial situation in Great Britain, and realising that in any event this country has many attractions for those suffering privation and hardship in the old land, the Western Australian Branch of the Australian Labour Party has proposed that a Labour Immigration Depot should be established in each State of the Commonwealth, for the reception and information of immigrant workers.

To Combat Misrepresentation.

The principal duties of such Labour Immigration Depots should be

1. To issue regularly to overseas Labour organisations statistical information *re* employment and unemployment in Australia.
2. To get into touch with immigrant workers on their arrival and inform them of the conditions obtaining in the various trades affected.
3. To provide a clearing house where all immigrant workers who have been deceived by the immigration authorities, or underpaid and badly treated by the employers, can collect, organise, and have their cases brought to the light of publicity, and to the notice of their respective organisations overseas.
4. To provide a centre where Australian trade unions whose occupation is being flooded with immigrant workers can apply for the purpose of taking effective steps to counteract the flow of immigrants into their particular trade.

Basis of the Criticism.

Reference to the declarations of policy which this party has made from time to time will make clear that our criticism of immigration does not spring from any selfish desire to shut out from Australia the men and women of other countries. If Western Australia cannot retain those already here, if employment conditions are of such a character as to make other States a lure for our young men and women, then, obviously, the preliminary requisite to a scheme of immigration is the correction of those economic evils which force people already here to go elsewhere. Certain practical questions suggest themselves, viz.—

- (1) How many newcomers can we place in profitable employment?
- (2) To what extent and on what terms can we provide them with lands at prices well within the productive values?
- (3) What effective means can we employ for ensuring that the new settlers will be competent to do the best with the land when they get it, and what policy or organisation is required to secure profitable markets for the swelling bulk of products?

Employment Resources.

The slow growth of our industrial establishments (factories and other industrial establishments employing either four hands or machinery) is a factor that greatly restricts our capacity to provide either newcomers or our own natural increases in population with profitable employment. The

latest figures available yield the following comparison:—

Number of Factories, etc., and Persons employed.

	1911.	1921.
Establishments ..	880	1,099
Persons employed ..	16,754	19,098

Although the population increased in that period by over 40,000 the number engaged in industrial establishments rose by only 2,344.

Agricultural Industry.

The agricultural domain, despite a tremendous expenditure of public money in stimulating the industry, has not advanced at a rate commensurate with the increase in population, or the outlay of the State. Particulars in this respect are—

Acres under Crop.

Year ending February, 1916	2,189,456
Year ending February, 1922	1,901,680
Year ending February, 1923	2,267,511

A more complete statement up to 1922 (the latest available) shows—

Agriculture: Cropping, Clearing, etc.

Particulars.	1916. Acres.	1922. Acres.
Under crop ..	2,189,456	1,901,680
Under sown grasses	9,119	18,411
Newly cleared prepared for next crops	293,625	298,699
In fallow ..	686,421	894,739
Previously cropped, now used for grazing	1,058,171	1,923,021
Ringbarked or partially cleared	3,819,582	2,667,612

Total land cleared, cropped, etc. .. 8,056,374 7,704,242

The figures show that the agricultural domain of Western Australia was less by 352,132 acres in 1922 than was the case in 1916.

The Distribution of Land Control.

The land of Western Australia embraces a territory of 624,588,800 acres. At December 31, 1922, it was held as follows:—

	Acres.
(1) Absolutely alienated ..	9,834,437
(2) In process of alienation	16,554,191
(3) Held on lease or license	286,311,212
Total as above ..	312,749,840
(4) Held by Crown ..	311,838,960
Total area ..	624,588,800

Numbers 1 and 2 include the areas that are most fertile, and which are served by railways and other public utilities. That the area of fertile land within the ambit of profitable productive utilisation is limited, is proved by the need for State resumption in order to find holdings for re-

turned soldiers, as well as the admissions of the principal Government newspaper (the "West Australian," 23/7/23) that there exists "... a keen demand for land which the authorities are unable to satisfy"; the paper also declared: "... there is not much land (economically) available for immediate further settlement." Further evidence that the area of available fertile land does not admit of any great number of additional blocks being made immediately available, is found in the conflict between the Forests and Lands Departments regarding the determination of the Forests Department to withhold certain areas from selection in order to maintain a minimum of forest lands for the future needs of the State.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will continue reading the report—

The greater part of the land included in classification Number 3 is held under pastoral leases for extended periods, and may also be said to be beyond State control. It will thus be seen that although approximately fifty per cent. of the land of Western Australia is still held by the Crown, its productive character is so doubtful, or its remoteness from settlement, means of transport and market facilities, so great, as to put it beyond the region of economic utilisation for many years.

De-population in the Rural Areas.

The areas served by railways, and which have been the venue of more or less cultivation, do not progress to a satisfactory degree. Important rural areas such as York, Toodyay, Beverley, Wagin, and Northam—to quote a few examples—remained practically stationary during the census decade 1911-21. The York Roads Board and municipal areas (inclusive) contained 2,876 persons in 1911; ten years later the number was 2,843—an actual loss of the total natural increase, as well as its proportion of immigration. In 1911, Wagin road board and municipal areas) had a population of 2,006; in 1921 the population was only 2,316—the growth was infinitesimal. Of Northam the same thing can be said. In 1911, when the census was taken, the population of Northam (municipality) was shown to be 3,361; in 1921 the population was 3,583. The figures for the road board for the same period are 1,785—2,141. Thus in 10 years one of the finest agricultural regions of this State, with railways radiating north, south, east, and west, has added only 500 people to the number resident within its boundaries. Even its natural increase has not been retained.

A Reform Policy.

For this stagnation the Labour Party declares there is a remedy. Land close to railways should be used to its full productive

capacity. Its possessors should not be permitted to hold in idleness fertile areas, served by public utilities, while settlement is forced out on the margin of the economic region, and the State compelled to spend huge capital sums in providing facilities for production, while the services it has already provided are only partly employed. But there is more in the problem than this. At present small farmers, fruit growers, and traders in the inland areas, are obliged to depend entirely on the avenues of marketing which are under the control of the agents of European or Eastern States monopolies. The products of the soil, instead of pursuing their natural course to the markets of the world in a rational way, are all diverted to the formation of a vertical glut at the capital. Perth is the road along which the whole of Western Australian trade must travel. Neither Geraldton nor Albany, nor Bunbury—the chief outer ports—nor Northam, Narrogin, and Collie—the chief inland towns—have direct access to the economic world; instead of developing and prospering and providing an outlet for the hinterland around them, they are mere tributaries feeding the exploiting machinery in the metropolis.

The Problem of Assimilation.

Thus both the agricultural and manufacturing industries, as disclosed by the foregoing facts, do not at present justify any expectation that this State can find profitable employment for any large influx of people. The rural areas continually supply the city with a reinforcement of young men, driven out of the towns by the lack of industrial opportunity; the city, in turn, is unable, for the same reason, to avoid the departure of citizens and other workers, who seek in the factories and workshops of Victoria and New South Wales the employment that our industries do not offer. Private manufacturing enterprise in this State is largely in the hands of men whose business connection with the Eastern States (or overseas) firms prejudices local manufacturing development. To ameliorate the evil the Labour Party laid the foundation of a policy of State enterprises. The State Implement Works have not only found employment for Western Australian born artisans, but have enabled farmers to secure essential equipment at reasonable prices. Labour expanded the railway workshops, and as a result locomotives are now being constructed in Western Australia equal to any in the world, and which cost the State less than if they were imported. Labour organised timber mills, brickworks, and other avenues of employment, which have enabled the State to produce tradesmen, train apprentices, and become more economically self-contained than would otherwise have been the case.

It is true that objection is taken to the establishment of these State industrial establishments, but it will be found that the objectors, in the main, are those who not

only oppose State secondary industries here, but who are also opposed to private industrial enterprises being started as competitive factors against firms located elsewhere.

Menacing the Industrial Standard.

We suggest to the Commissioners that they ascertain from the Government the precise number of immigrants who have taken up land since the post-war migration commenced. Nearly 4,000 males have come to this State under the Ex-Service scheme. Where are they? If the scheme was a bona fide project to provide farms for British Ex-Service men, and not a mere augmentation of the supply of rural labour for existing land-holders, the bulk of these men would now be upon their holdings. Our experience, however, is that too large a proportion of the migrants find the conditions on the land too arduous, and the standard of living which their capability admits of, too penurious, to be borne. The result is they drift back to the city, or to the class of labour they were accustomed to in England; they thus become industrial competitors with their fellows, and their necessities expose them to serious exploitation and injustice. In addition, they become a general reserve force in the labour market, depressing the standard for all workers. The menace which this situation involves for unionism in an era of widespread unemployment may be readily appreciated. That it should coincide with a series of "wage-cuts" and extensions of working hours, either ordered by various tribunals, or arbitrarily imposed by employers, accentuates the suspicion with which the whole migration scheme is viewed by those whom it adversely affects.

Some Definite Suggestions.

To place the scheme on a sound and reasonable basis, this branch of the Australian Labour Party makes the following proposals:—(1) That the selection of immigrants be made by a board composed of (a) For rural labour: One representative of the Primary Producers' Association, one representative of the Trades Unions, and a Government nominee. (b) For other Labour: One representative of the Employers' Federation, one representative of the Trade Unions, and a Government nominee. Provided that no consideration be given any application until approved by a medical officer to the satisfaction of the board. A confirmatory report to be furnished by the Government medical officer at the port of embarkation. (2) That on arrival at Fremantle or Albany the immigrants shall be accommodated at the Immigrants' Home; their allotment to employment to be made by a State board constituted in the same way as the selective board. (3) Full particulars of all industrial awards and other matters in respect to conditions of employment, wages, hours of labour, etc., to be made available to every immigrant

before embarkation, and also on arrival. (4) The immigrants shall not be regarded as casual labour to be employed in the busy seasons, but as trainees qualifying by 12 months' continuous experience of farm life to operate their own holdings. Employers therefore engaging immigrants under the scheme should do so on a contract of 12 months' employment. When seeding or harvesting operations have ceased the trainee should be engaged at clearing, fencing, dam-sinking or other labour serviceable in the improvement and development of a farm.

(5) In the event of this condition being fractured for any reason the trainee shall be entitled to re-enter the Immigrants' Home and be regarded as a newly-arrived immigrant, or alternatively be transferred to another farmer as provided in clause 4. (6) To augment the facilities for adequate agricultural training a series of State farms should be inaugurated where immigrants un-allotted to employers may be accommodated. (7) Due provision should be made to ensure that a sufficient number of holdings will be made ready each year to permit of the immigrants who have qualified for holdings being given possession of same. As it would be unjust to limit occupation to migrants, and as Australians should have equal adequate facilities to enable them take up land, the number of farms should be in due proportion to the number of migrants approved for embarkation in any year. (Signed) S. W. Munsie, President; H. Millington, General Secretary, July, 1923.

I think that is a reasonable statement of the case as we know it to-day. I have already said that there is no evidence of the fact that the Government have a consecutive, thought-out, organised scheme, from the time the migrant leaves the Old Country until he finds occupation on the land here.

The Premier: That could be said, no matter what one did.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The fact that the Government have to rely upon the efforts of an outside voluntary organisation to find employment for the new arrivals in the first instance, and that the possibility of finding employment for new arrivals is due largely to the energy and activity displayed by this organisation, is in itself proof that there is not an organised, consecutive scheme in existence. The Government should be able to say from the commencement that they are able to take a certain number of migrants each year. The Government should have knowledge of the opportunities of employment offering in the agricultural areas from farmers and others. After the migrants have served a sufficient time here to qualify them to take up land of their own, there should be a sufficient area of land available to enable all those who desire it to become possessed of holdings. We on this side are not alone in the statement that no details of the scheme from beginning to end have ever been published. I may call the attention of my friends

on the cross benches to the fact that their executive, a very important body of a very important organisation, in a report prepared recently for presentation to the conference which is to be held next week, declared that they were still unable to say whether they approved or disapproved of the immigration scheme, because they were still in the dark as to the details of the scheme. Last year, in July I think it was, the Minister for Agriculture, at the invitation of that executive, attended to explain the scheme. Mr. Maley addressed a meeting of the executive. The report informs us that the president tendered the thanks of the executive to Mr. Maley and expressed the hope that when the Premier returned from the Old Country that hon. gentleman would be able to furnish fuller particulars. A report recently drawn up by the executive contains the following paragraph:—

It is understood that the Country Party Ministers, by virtue of their position in the Government, have definitely associated themselves with the Premier's policy. Here we have the Country Party Ministers associated with the Government, and, although they have been included in the Ministry for the past three years, the executive can issue such a statement! The report proceeds—

We have, however, yet to learn that the Country Party as a whole has received such information concerning the scheme as to enable it as a party to signify its approval of the policy. So far as the executive is concerned, however, it stands exactly where it did when the Minister addressed it on 13th July last year, and has not had sufficient information placed before it to enable it to come to any definite conclusion respecting the details of the Premier's policy. . . . The position, so far as the Premier's policy is concerned, is simply that the executive has not been told sufficient about it to officially issue any announcement regarding same.

That is rather a remarkable statement in view of the fact that during the past 12 months, members of the Country Party in this Chamber have met members of their executive in conference! It is to be presumed that Country Party members know precisely the policy of the Government and know what they are supporting. Notwithstanding their intimate association with the executive, they have been unable to convey to the executive the principles of the scheme in all its details. A very disquieting feature of the whole situation is associated with the figures I read regarding the excess of arrivals over departures and regarding assisted and nominated immigration. During the past three and a half years the excess of arrivals over departures represented 4,382 only, notwithstanding that during that period assisted and nominated immigrants numbering 12,297 were brought to the State. In other words, two-thirds of those coming here, or else two-thirds of our own citizens, have gone beyond the borders of the State.

The Premier: If they did so, they must have walked out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But I am quoting official figures, and I have no other guide beyond these official statistics.

The Premier: As a former Minister, you know how those figures are made up.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know. If these official figures be not correct or reliable, it is only fair that some member of the Government should, at the earliest possible moment, give information to the public which will be reliable. It is useless questioning these figures. If they be correct, there is a leakage of two-thirds. While people are brought in at one end, so to speak, they go out at the other end. The figures I have quoted show that either 8,000 newcomers or else 8,000 citizens of Western Australia have taken their departure from the State, leaving us with a net surplus of only 4,382.

The Premier: If that is so, the newcomers are not competing with our own workmen.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier I know realises the seriousness of the position.

The Premier: You know that those figures are not correct.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I shall be glad if the Premier will show us where they are incorrect.

The Premier: I have tried to do so already but you will not be convinced.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier merely made an assertion and that is not convincing.

The Premier: I told you of the unrecorded departures.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know anything about that.

The Premier: I have already told the House about them.

Mr. Munsie: If we cannot accept the Government Statistician's figures, why do we pay him for his work?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is all the more serious when we realise the enormous expenditure the State is committed to regarding this policy of immigration and land settlement. Any such policy embracing big schemes must necessarily occasion enormous expenditure.

The Premier: You cannot expect to do pioneering unless the Government help in the work.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am admitting that. The loan expenditure for 1919-20 was £2,664,000; for 1920-21, £2,586,000; for 1921-22, £2,454,000, and for the financial year just closed, £3,644,000. I think I am correct in saying that the expenditure of loan money for the last financial year was the largest for any single year in the history of the State.

The Premier: Sixty-nine per cent. was spent on agricultural development.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The fact remains that last year the expenditure of loan money was £1,200,000 in excess of that of the preceding year. These figures show that during the past four years there was a total expenditure of loan money amounting to £11,348,000. Any State embarking upon expenditure of such large sums of loan money will be in a safe position so long as there is a proportionate

increase in the population and a consequent increase in the production of wealth. If we are to add greatly to our loan indebtedness and burden ourselves with an ever increasing amount of annual payments in the shape of interest on borrowed money, and at the same time we do not increase our population and production in a sufficient ratio to enable us to bear that burden, then the State is in for a bad time. That is a self-evident fact.

The Premier: It all depends upon how the money is spent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course if the money is spent as an aid to production—that was the policy which actuated the "West Australian" last year in insisting that money should be spent in the country because it is from the primary industries of a State, especially in Western Australia, that practically all wealth comes—it is a wise and essential policy.

The Premier: That is where the money has gone.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It may be too early yet to show results, but the Premier will admit that the State has not advanced in production during recent years.

The Premier: Yes it has.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has not advanced in respect to acreage under production or livestock. As regards cattle, sheep and pigs, we went back last year.

The Premier: The war knocked production out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course it did, and it may be that we have not thoroughly recovered yet. The figures show that the acreage under cultivation has only slightly increased. It is now 2,223,000 acres as against 1,910,000 acres a few years ago. Our flocks and herds are fewer to-day than they were a few years ago.

Mrs. Cowan: There was a drought last year.

Mr. Mann: The seasons in the North have been very bad during the last two years.

Mr. McCallum: That is in one little spot.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That does not apply to the agricultural areas where we have been fortunate in having good seasons for years past. While we are not altogether remaining stationary, the increase in population and production should keep something like pace with the increase in our indebtedness. We have a heavy indebtedness per head of the population and otherwise. While we have within the State the people to bear that burden, it is all right, but the figures I have quoted indicate that we are losing a very considerable proportion of our people. I do not believe we are losing those who come from overseas, but, unfortunately, those who have been resident within the State for a number of years. There has been a considerable drift to the Eastern States of people who have been resident here for the past 20 or 25 years. That is due in a measure to the fact that there are no openings in secondary industries here for children when they grow up. The result is that parents who are financially able to do so, go to the Eastern States, where there are more opportunities for their chil-

dren to learn a trade. This position is disquieting. The Premier remarked on a former occasion that even if this were the position, it would be so much worse if we were not bringing in migrants. The Premier was quite right in that statement; if we did not bring people here, we would be going backwards. It is essential in the interests of the State that an endeavour should be made to see that while we spend money to increase our population and our production, we should keep our people within our own borders so as to bear the added burden.

Mr. Richardson: Can you suggest anything to keep them here?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have suggested it on more than one occasion. While we get new arrivals from overseas without any knowledge of farming conditions in this State, yet who are willing to go into the outer areas and undertake the difficulties of pioneering the forest in the South-West, those resident in the State for years are not willing to go out to the confines of civilisation. They have left the State rather than do that. But they would be willing to become farmers if land were made available to them alongside existing railways and within measurable distance of the market. There is something wrong in our land settlement policy when we expend millions of pounds on the opening up of new areas while in old established districts such as Toodyay, Northam, York, Pingelly, and Beverley the population is remaining stationary, in some instances even going back.

The Premier: If we keep them all out, we shall still find the population going back.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not a good policy to expend large sums of money on the construction of railways and water supplies for land settlement in new areas while we have the greatest mileage of railway per capita in the world, while we have railways not paying, and old-established districts standing still. By correcting these things we shall improve the situation. Perhaps we shall be able to get some definite information next week when the Primary Producers' Association meet to deal with the matter.

Mr. McCallum: Can we not get the information in Parliament?

Hon. P. COLLIER: This country, with a population of less than 350,000, cannot lightly adopt the expenditure of £3,600,000 of loan moneys per annum. The interest bill will become so crushing that the people will not be able to bear it. That is the position as I see it. Fortunately, we have possibilities of land settlement which might relieve the situation in an entirely new direction. I notice that the Minister for Agriculture has recently discovered a new province.

Mr. Marshall: He is a great explorer.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It may be that the discovery of this new province will relieve the congestion that exists in the agricultural areas and perhaps save the situation. I congratulate the Minister upon his visit to Esperance, and compliment him on the expressions to which he gave utterance on that occasion. The Minister spoke of the discovery, south-east

of Norseman, of a new agricultural province, the biggest in the Commonwealth. Members have all read what the Minister said as the result of his visit to that district. I and others have known that district, and inspected it, for the past ten or twelve years, and have expressed similar confidence in it. The Minister declared that the Esperance lands had been proved beyond question. His imagination was fired. I wish we all had imaginations to be occasionally fired. Unfortunately, while a visit to the Esperance district served to fire the imagination of the Deputy Premier, a visit by the Premier himself 12 years ago served to fire that gentleman to hostility.

The Premier: It was all engineered for political purposes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am astonished at the Premier making such a statement; the words of his own colleague entirely refute the charge.

The Minister for Agriculture: We all know the difficulties which attended that visit. In those days we were doubtful whether wheat could be grown east of Northam.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is too thin. Perhaps the Minister might not have been so exuberant in the expression of his opinion had he been acquainted with the history of the Esperance lands and of the construction of the railway.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am perfectly confident in my opinion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let me inform the Minister that 12 years ago the Esperance country was inspected over and over again by expert departmental officers, all of whom reported favourably upon it. No other agricultural lands in Western Australia were subjected to such thorough and exhaustive examination as were those particular areas.

Hon. T. Walker: Yes, 18 years ago.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And it was as the result of those inspections and the reports submitted by those responsible officers that the Government of the day brought in a Bill for the construction of the Esperance Railway. Can it be said that that Government, acting on the reports of departmental officers, were actuated by political motives? The assertion will not hold water. The Esperance country, consisting mostly of mallee, can be cleared more cheaply than can any other class of agricultural land. The Premier is entirely responsible for the fact that this land has been held idle for the past ten years. There can be no question about that. Five times did the Labour Government bring down a Bill for the construction of the Esperance Railway. In 1911, 1912, 1913, 1914, and 1915 we brought down that Bill, and on every occasion the present Premier was the stoutest and most obstinate opponent of the measure.

The Premier: You carried the Bill every time.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, we had the numbers here, but the hon. member and those associated with him in this Chamber apparently had influence in another place. The present Premier asserted that the land was

limited in area and second-class in quality. He quoted the yield as being five bushels to the acre, and declared that never would the railway be constructed if he could prevent it. Owing to their tenacity of purpose, the Labour Government eventually induced Parliament to agree to the construction of the railway. Having won through after five years of effort, the Labour Government, unfortunately for the Esperance district, went out of office. The railway was then under construction. I repeat this as showing how determined were the present Premier and those associated with him that the Esperance district should not be opened up, that the railway should not be constructed. The railway was under construction when we left office. Ten mile of earthworks had been completed. When the Wilson Government, of which the present Premier was an influential member, came into office in July, 1916, their first official act was to stop the construction of the Esperance railway. That is seven years ago, and the line is not completed yet.

Mr. Mann: Was it not a wise policy to first settle our more accessible lands?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Wise rubbish!

Mr. McCallum: Do you expect any wisdom from that side?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Was it a wise policy to spend £25 per acre in subduing the forests of the South-West for settlement when we had in the Esperance district millions of acres capable of being cleared at 10s. per acre? I should be in a much better financial position to-day if I were contracting to clear that land at 10s. per acre than it is possible for me to attain standing here addressing the House—I should have more money.

The Premier: I will arrange for you to be put on at clearing down there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am prepared to consider an offer. However, there it is. I believe it is true, as stated in the Press recently, that the fact that we are not holding our population is due largely to the decline in the mining industry; that consequent upon the decline in mining, people from the goldfields have gone to the Eastern States. Had the Esperance lands been opened up and a prosperous farming community settled there, the people from the goldfields, instead of going to the East, would have gone to the Esperance district.

The Premier: Why did you not open up the district?

Mr. Munsie: Because you prevented us from doing so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier might well ask! The Minister for Agriculture says—

They are high grade areas and will satisfy land selectors for an indefinite number of years ahead.

The Premier said—

He had travelled over the country, and a stretch of 30 miles is the only land that has agricultural possibilities at all.

The Minister for Agriculture says—

I say without hesitation that agriculture will spread successfully over a vast tract of territory.

When the Labour Government wanted to settle the Esperance lands, the present Premier said—

Not a man would have gone down there after my visit but for the action of the present Labour Ministry.

Not a man would have gone there if the present Premier had had his way.

The Premier: You accused me of sending them there.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Agriculture says—

In this corner the State will prove to have the biggest uniform and continuous belt of good wheat land in Australia.

The Premier said—

The building of this line from Esperance to Norseman is an absurdity I would say of this line that no greater job was ever suggested than this political job we are asked to agree to now.

The present Premier characterised it as a political job then. The Minister for Agriculture, the Deputy Premier, says the railway must be continued to Norseman and must have spur lines running out east and west to serve this large new province. Then he adds—

From a developmental view point it is impossible to leave the settlers isolated; the Esperance-Norseman railway must be completed and additional spur lines provided both from Norseman and Grass Patch.

I commend the Minister for Agriculture upon his faith in this district. I have quoted the two experts upon land and agriculture. The Premier is an expert. When the Bill was introduced in 1911, he opposed it. He expected it would be brought forward again in 1912, and in order to fortify himself and gain first hand knowledge of the district, he journeyed there during the recess of 1912.

The Premier: No, I went there in 1910.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then the Premier's opposition to the line in 1911 was inexcusable. However, in 1910 he went to see the land. He is a judge of land and, from an inspection of it, can tell what it is capable of producing. The same applies to the Minister for Agriculture; he is accepted as an authority. I have given the House the opinion of the Premier and the opinion of the Minister for Agriculture, and "you takes your choice." There is only one fault I have to find with the Minister for Agriculture—it may have been a slip—and in view of his optimistic utterance, I am inclined to forgive him. At a social tendered him at Norseman, replying to a toast, he commented upon the district he had inspected and the need for extending the railway from Grass Patch to Norseman. Then he said—

It has been left to the Mitchell Government to redeem the promises made many years ago regarding the development of agricultural land in the Esperance district, which he believed would become a highly important agricultural country.

Mr. Lambert: That was colossal.

The Premier: It was true.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This, be it remembered, in face of the statement of the case I have presented to-night. Seven years ago the Government stopped the railway and have not completed it yet.

The Premier: We put up a better record than you, because in five years you built only 10 miles.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And for five consecutive years the Minister, then sitting in opposition, brought to bear all the energy and ability he possessed to prevent the Government of the day from getting passed a Bill for the construction of the railway. So the present Premier was entirely responsible for having held this large province out of occupation all this time.

Mr. McCallum: For 12 years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Associated with the question of the Esperance railway is that of the mining industry. There is no need for me to stress the fact that this important industry has been declining for many years. The discovery of gold has been responsible for more than doubling the population of the State and this, too, in a very few years. Now the industry has fallen upon evil days and having regard to all it has done for Western Australia, and to the fact that it has been responsible for bringing Western Australia from a state of infancy to that of manhood, it seems to me we are in the position of a boy who, having been reared by his parents, finds them fallen on evil days and realises his responsibility to support them. The task is a very difficult one. If it could be pointed out to the Minister that assistance might be rendered in certain ways, I believe he would be prepared to grant it. As to assisting prospecting parties, there is no cause for complaint, but I do complain of neglect in one direction. I believe that mining would obtain the greatest relief if the Government reduced railway rates and water charges. It is rather unfortunate that our auriferous areas are situated so far from the seat of government, thus necessitating the haulage of commodities and mining requisites over distances ranging from 400 to 600 miles. Therefore the cost of requisites must be much higher than they are in such places as Bendigo and Ballarat, where the fields are situated within 100 miles of a seaport. The question of the price of water to the Kalgoorlie and Boulder districts has been discussed in this House on many occasions.

The Minister for Mines: You are aware I do not control that part of the business.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; my remarks are directed more particularly to the Minister for Works.

Mr. Lutey: He has been considering it for two years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On more than one occasion last session, members on this side of the House raised the question of reducing the price of water, and more particularly did we base the justice of our claim upon the fact

that the State had been relieved of the payment, as sinking fund, of £75,000 a year in respect to the scheme. We felt that when the Treasury had been relieved of the payment of that amount, those who drew water from the goldfields scheme were entitled to some measure of relief. Having regard to all that mining has meant to this State, that was not asking too much. It should also be borne in mind that this Parliament, ever since I have been a member, has never cavilled at the expenditure of money for the development of other industries. If we look at the amounts shown in the Loan Estimates year by year, whether the £3,600,000 voted last year or the lesser sums in previous years, it will be found that the major portion of the expenditure went to assist the agricultural industry. We know that in a hundred and one ways—through the Agricultural Bank and the I.A.B., for the construction of railways, water supplies, etc.—money has been poured out freely and even lavishly.

The Minister for Mines: You could not put the mining industry on the same level.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course not, but there is a proportion. When we view the immense sums of money devoted to agriculture—and rightly so—we at least should not overlook what is due from us to assist an industry that is now experiencing bad times.

The Minister for Mines: I think I can assure you that we have just about reached the point when we can do something.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Last session I raised the question on the vote for the Goldfields Water Supply. I am sorry the Minister for Works is not in his place.

The Minister for Mines: Do you suggest a reduction for the whole of the consumers or for the mines only?

Hon. P. COLLIER: In a way a reduction would benefit the industry generally. However, I do not intend to lay down a detailed scheme. It is not for me to say precisely how or to what extent relief should be given.

The Minister for Mines: It might help if I tell you that free water would mean 2s. per ton difference in the cost of treatment.

Hon. P. COLLIER: According to "Hansard" of the 7th December, 1922, the Minister for Works stated—

A question agitating Kalgoorlie members is whether, since the sinking fund payments have been set aside for the time being, a reduction in the price of water will not be possible. That question is being carefully considered, but the inquiries are not yet complete.

The Minister proceeded to say that he would make inquiries into the matter. In reply, I said I was disappointed with the statement made by the Minister, that I considered nothing would be done after Parliament went into recess, and that we should find ourselves in the same position in the following year. The Minister, in answer to that, said—

Goldfields members have made a legitimate inquiry as to whether or not the transactions concerning the sinking fund made

by the Premier in London will or will not bring about a reduction in the price of water on the goldfields. I should be sorry if I thought they had the idea that the Government were trying to lay aside this question. The Minister for Mines and I have not had an opportunity to go into it. While Parliament is sitting Ministers have every nerve strained to carry on current matters. When we get into recess the matter will have my serious attention and that of the Minister for Mines. When we have investigated it we shall have to see what view the Treasurer takes of it.

That is the old explanation. It is rather early in the day for Ministers to commence at this stage of the session to explain that because of the work entailed upon them in attending to their Parliamentary duties they are unable to devote the necessary time to serious problems. I shall expect in the course of a few weeks that this same old gag will be put forward.

The Minister for Mines: No!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Ministers will in their indignation say, "We are kept here until all hours of the night and there is not time for us to do this or that. Immediately the House goes into recess all things will be delivered unto you."

The Minister for Mines: You are looking for surprises.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Works told us that he and his colleagues were straining every nerve. That was in December last. Seven months have elapsed, and so far as I know nothing has been done.

The Minister for Mines: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It cannot be said that Ministers have been straining every nerve. They have not done so in the application of time to their duties during the last seven months. I cannot help complaining of the attitude of the Government in dilly-dallying with this matter. A definite promise was made by the Minister for Works that upon going into recess he would consult with the Minister for Mines and go thoroughly into the matter. The position to-day is precisely where it was seven months ago.

The Minister for Mines: No, it is not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I say it is. Had it been a matter of assistance to the agricultural industry, a matter of life or death to some branch of the industry, or a request from members opposite backed by the executive, I venture to say that Ministers would not have remained unconcerned about it for a period of seven months. I commend the executive for their activities. After a diligent weekly perusal of the "Primary Producer" I must commend them for their success in bringing pressure to bear upon Ministers to have their pressing wants, no doubt justifiable wants, attended to at once.

Capt. Carter: Do you buy the "Primary Producer"?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am one of the best friends that paper has. I am pleased to say I am placed on the free list, but were I compelled to buy it, I should be prepared to pay

a higher price for it than for any other newspaper in the State.

The Minister for Mines: You find it helpful?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. I get much valuable help from it. I am justified in complaining that the Government have done nothing. Had they given the matter the attention the importance of the industry deserves, and then come to the conclusion that they could give no relief, such as would be of material advantage to the industry, I should have been satisfied and then been able to deal with the matter. This absolute indifference, this total neglect and failure to do anything, are the cause of my complaint. The people on the goldfields are also justified in complaining. The Minister for Mines, after returning from the Eastern States a few weeks ago, made a hurried visit to the goldfields and conferred with someone there. A deputation of those interested in Kalgoorlie also waited on the Premier upon his return from the Premiers' conference. Deputations, however, are of no use, and visits of the Minister at the eleventh hour, just prior to the opening of Parliament, are not sufficient. The matter was of sufficient importance to warrant the Government in taking action within a reasonable time after the close of last session. Much relief could have been given to the industry. I regret to say that mining generally and goldfields interests do not command anything like the concern that the Government evince in respect to other industries. The Premier is well intentioned and well meaning towards the goldfields, but the matter is outside his province. Although it is a question which should be dealt with by the Minister for Works, seeing that the Minister for Mines is in charge of the department connected with the industry, and that he is interested in its well-being, he might have done something to spur on his colleague to some activity in the matter.

The Minister for Mines: [I have done all I am entitled to do.]

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps that is so.

The Premier: It is a financial question.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but why is it not dealt with? It will remain a financial question until Doomsday, until it is seized upon and dealt with.

The Premier: Will you give us a hand with it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: If I can be of any use.

The Premier: Will you help us to pass legislation?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should be only too pleased to do what I can. On second thoughts, instead of endeavouring to galvanise Ministers into life, I had better allow the matter to stand over for a few months and attend to it myself. Within a short time after the present Government took office the price of water for the agricultural areas, water drawn from the goldfields scheme, was reduced. The executive got to work and asked for a reduction in the price.

The Premier: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was granted almost immediately, although these services were not paying and had not been paying.

Mr. Harrison: I remember a deputation approaching you on the same subject.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. The hon. member introduced it. Had he handled the matter effectively, he would have attained some results.

Mr. Harrison: It was too good for you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was the manner in which the hon. member presented his case that was the trouble.

Mr. Harrison: You would not grant any relief when you were Minister.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We put the water there for you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If there is one question upon which members can lay no charge against the Labour Government, it is that of the provision of adequate water supplies.

Hon. M. F. Troy: And many of the farmers did not pay for it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was one of the first works we undertook when we assumed office in 1911. We spent tens of thousands of pounds in the provision of water supplies. Water was given to the farmers and special water trains were run into their districts. I believe that much of this water has not yet been paid for, although no doubt the chits are still to be found in the Departments. It was the duty and responsibility of the Government in the circumstances to carry out this work.

The Minister for Agriculture: An ordinary function of government.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It was assistance that amounted to a duty on the part of the Government to give to any important industry when the circumstances demanded.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Then we are told we did not do this.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are certainly not given any credit for it. The mining industry is in a similar position to-day. That assistance which the Minister for Agriculture has mentioned as being an ordinary function of government should have been extended long ago to the gold-mining industry. That is the basis of my complaint. I have now given up hope of inducing the Minister for Works to do anything. He has practically broken a definite promise made last session, that he would go into the matter and submit a proposal to the Treasurer. The question, however, remains as it was in December last year. I now come to the policy of the Government with regard to the sandalwood business. It is rather difficult to deal with it, because one does not know precisely how the matter stands. Soon after the House went into recess the Government decided to call tenders for marketing sandalwood. Certain tenders were received. No one apparently knows what the tenders were, or what has been done, or what it is proposed to do. It is clear that the intention of calling tenders was to give a monopoly of the sandalwood industry, and to ensure that only one person or firm should be entitled to deal in that business. It may be

that in the circumstances that exist at present the Government can make out a case in that direction. If so, it is not yet known to the general community interested in the industry. It was not a wise thing for the Government to take action in this direction when the House was in recess, and immediately Parliament rose. I have no doubt that, had it not been for the very powerful deputation which waited on the Premier, the matter would have been finalised before now, probably before Parliament had met, and we had been given an opportunity of discussing the position. I protest against the granting of a monopoly unless Ministers are in a position to present a very formidable case in support of it. Possibly it can be shown that the cutters would get a better price and the Government receive a larger return each year by the granting of a monopoly. Nevertheless, it is not a sound policy to pursue. If the Government consider that in the past the State has not been receiving sufficient revenue from the industry, that the pullers have not been getting a sufficient reward for their labours, there is no reason why the authorities could not fix a rate of royalty which they consider they are entitled to get, and fix the conditions permitting anyone to engage in the business so as to ensure to the pullers a certain price. Whatever the price might be, the Government would say to the traders in sandalwood, "Before you are permitted to engage in the business, the getters shall be entitled to receive a certain price, and, further, it shall be incumbent upon you to pay to the State a certain royalty for the privilege of engaging in this business." With those reservations, why cannot anyone who desires to do so engage in the business? The Government would not lose revenue by such a policy, and the sandalwood getters would be protected quite as well as, and I believe much better than, by the granting of a monopoly.

The Minister for Mines: I wish I could agree with you, and then I would have done those things long ago.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know why they cannot be done.

The Minister for Mines: I do.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister will acknowledge that as a general principle it is undesirable that any one person should be given a monopoly over an industry in which many people have business interests.

The Minister for Mines: It depends on what you term a monopoly.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The sole right.

The Minister for Mines: To sell the commodity?

Hon. P. COLLIER: To trade in the commodity.

The Minister for Mines: That is not the point.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The sole right to get and to sell.

The Minister for Mines: We do that every day. The output from our Wyndham Meat Works is handed over to a selling agent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is quite a different thing.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Yes. The State does the buying.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am given to understand that in this connection the Government have a case to present which is not known to members of this House. Therefore one is necessarily discussing the subject in the dark. Other members who may deal with it on the Address-in-reply will be in the same position as I find myself in now. Therefore I hope some member of the Government will make a statement to the House at an early stage, and not at the end of the Address-in-reply debate. It will save a good deal of time and discussion if early in this debate the Minister for Mines will make a statement as to the position and as to the intentions of the Government. So far as I have been permitted to know the situation, I am opposed to the Government's proposals in this connection. I noticed in the Governor's Speech that we are to have a very short programme of legislation. There are only two or three small Bills mentioned, measures of very little importance so far as one can judge. I notice that the Hospitals Bill, which last session was considered to be of vital importance to the finances of the State, appears to have been dropped, no mention being made of it in this session's Speech. I do not know whether that circumstance has any connection with the approaching election, and whether it is thought that it might be better strategy to defer the re-introduction of the Bill until after the general election.

Mrs. Cowan: That measure weighs a lot in the Upper House elections.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Hardly anybody takes notice of an Upper House election. Very few Upper House electors know when an election is taking place. A few years ago only 16 per cent. of those enrolled for the Upper House took the trouble to go to the poll. The unfortunate candidates in the province concerned, the Metropolitan-Suburban constituency, after engaging town halls all round night after night and paying the expense of advertising, were unable to get one meeting throughout the whole of their candidature. It is not altogether a bad state of affairs for members, because in such circumstances of apathy the sitting member usually manages to get back. It is only when there is considerable activity that a new man contrives to get in. So far as we can judge, it is not the Government's intention to reintroduce the Closer Settlement Bill this session. I am sorry that at the close of this Parliament we find that, notwithstanding the fact of very many members who occupy seats here to-day having pledged themselves on the hustings to support a more effective form of land taxation, the position in that respect remains to-day as it has done throughout. I have many times expressed in this House the opinion that the time has long since arrived when Parliament should review the present principles of land taxation. Again, I would remind the House that our present Land Act was passed so far back as 1906, and that no amendment whatever has been made in its taxation provisions

during the past 16 years, notwithstanding the great events which have transpired since then, and notwithstanding the fact that every form of taxation has meantime been reviewed. The same land taxes exist to-day as were imposed in 1906.

Mr. Pickering: But they have been increased.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In my opinion those taxes are altogether inadequate. During the past 15 or 16 years land values in the City of Perth have increased enormously. Land has been changing hands year by year at greatly enhanced prices. As a result of those enhanced values we find that rents have gone up enormously as well. In a great many instances rents in the City of Perth have been doubled. Men are drawing enormous tribute in the form of rent. We should have a land tax which would compel these people to pay a large proportion of the unearned increment to the public funds of the State. I know very well that this proposal will not be immediately agreed to by members on the cross-benches, who have an idea that a land tax is a tax on broad acres. If, however, they will study the matter a little, they will find that the real impost falls upon values largely situated in the city; and so I hope their hostility to the proposal will disappear. I trust we shall be able to get through the session in a fairly amicable spirit, and I would ask the Premier to have the all-absorbing question of the red and blue lines, as indicated on the maps, showing the altered boundaries of the electoral districts, brought down by way of a Bill at an early date. I am not going to touch upon the question of redistribution of seats now. There will be opportunities for that later on. But certainly it is essential that the question should be decided by Parliament at an early date, in order that members may know where they are and in order that the work of preparation of the rolls may go forward.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £1,790,600.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 8.54 p.m.