Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 20th August, 1935.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.35]: With the permission of the House I desire to make a statement. When the Supply Bill was under discussion members requested certain information which I was not then in a position to give. Also, questions were raised during the debate on the Address-in-reply to which I did not speak. I have submitted members' statements and suggestions to the departments concerned, and I now desire to make the information available to the House. Mr. Baxter quoted figures relating to loan expenditure and deficits for the period 1933-34 and 1935-36, which were substantially correct, but his total of £9,519,000 was £179,000 out. The total of the figures quoted by him was £9,340,000. The increase during the three years of the Collier administration was £144,228, roundly stated as £140,000 in the circular referred to by Mr. Baxter. In a further analysis of the position, Mr. Baxter used figures to show that the average total loan and revenue expenditure during the two periods 1930-33 and 1933-35 were:—

	£
Collier Administration	12,263,000
Mitchell Administration ..	11,418,000
Average annual increase during Collier Administration ..	845,000

It should be recognised that with public utilities particularly, increased earnings must mean an increase in expenditure. It is the net result that matters. For instance, in 1930-31 the expenditure on State batteries amounted to £37,605, and the revenue earnings were £30,573; thus there was a working loss of £7,032. In the year 1934-35 the expenditure had increased to £103,739—that is, nearly three times as much as in 1930-31—but the earnings were £116,062, which provided a working profit of £12,323. In total, the average results of utilities during the three years of the Mitchell Administration and the two completed years of the Collier Government, were—

	Mitchell Govt. £	Collier Govt. £
Average earnings ..	4,486,495	4,675,946
Average expenditure	3,009,953	3,065,074
Surplus on working ..	£1,476,542	£1,610,872

It will be seen that although the average expenditure increased by £55,000—and that was after charging £85,000 a year for belated repairs on railways—the earnings improved by £189,000, leaving a net improvement of £134,000. A correct view of the position on revenue account can only be obtained in the same manner. It is unsound to use the expenditure side of the revenue side independently.

Referring to grants, Mr. Baxter said that the Commonwealth made available £125,000 for country water supplies, £100,000 for forestry, and £60,000 for the mining industry. The two first-named were on the basis of pound for pound, and the State's share of the sums so far received were included in loan expenditure for the year 1934-35. The mining grant was placed in trust, and the expenditure from the amount is controlled by a committee. It is pertinent to remark that a Commonwealth grant of £145,000 was received by the Mitchell Government, in addition to which two other grants of £32,500 each were applied to relief work, etc.

Referring to Government borrowing, Mr. Baxter said:—

> When Governments borrow in such large amounts, it means that there is so much less money in the hands of investors to exploit industry . . . . . The Governments are piling up the public debt and taking money from those who would get better service from it.

The summary of Australian statistics for the March quarter, 1935, issued by the Commonwealth Statistician, shows that interest-bearing deposits in the cheque paying banks at the 30th June, 1930, totalled £206,000,000. At the 30th June, 1934, the amount was £229,000,000, but it has since fallen to £226,000,000. It is considered that the correct inference to be drawn from the figures is that people with money for investment became shy of ordinary securities, and that the only safe outlets for accumulations were

fixed deposits and Government loans. It was just that timidity and accumulation of amounts on fixed deposit that intensified the effects of the depression, and it is now generally recognised that a more confident outlook has been inspired by the use of some of this otherwise dormant money in Government works.

Assistance to wheat growers has been treated more as a national concern than one for independent action by each State. Through the introduction of transport legislation, railway freights have been reduced, mainly on items which concerned primary industry. The estimated reduction in railway revenue through the concessions granted was £150,000 per annum. The timber industry has been assisted by a reduction in the royalty charge of 5s. per load on sawn timber milled for export. This represents a concession of approximately £1,000 per month.

Mr. Baxter stated that about half of our revenue was required to pay interest, sinking fund, and exchange. Actually for 1934-35 the interest payment represented just a little over 34 per cent. of our revenue, but in 1932-33, the last year of the previous Government, it represented 39 per cent. of the revenue. The sinking fund contribution is made for the purpose of repaying the debt, and we are making substantial provision for its redemption. The exchange payment on overseas interest represents the Government's contribution towards the cost of providing a higher return to our exporters, most of whom are primary producers.

Mr. Baxter referred to the repatriation of British migrants. I submitted his statements to the department concerned and have been informed that, when assisted migration was in progress, definite arrangements existed for the repatriation of migrants handicapped by disabilities not recognised at the time of examination in the United Kingdom. Migrants so affected were eligible for repatriation at Commonwealth expense if the disabilities became apparent within two years of arrival. In cases where the disabilities were discovered later, the question of repatriation became a responsibility of the State. No good purpose would be served by retaining here people who had been constantly pressing for return and who had produced definite evidence of physical disability. Those people were satisfied that, with the promised assistance of relatives and friends in regard to help on arrival and in the securing of suitable employment, they would have greater prospects of success in the United Kingdom than here. Only a small percentage of the applicants for repatriation have been granted passages. The need for population is fully recognised by the Government, but in such recognition we do not overlook the fact that ill and physically unfit migrants who are constantly claiming repatriation are entitled to have their requests considered.

When the Government are of the opinion that no other course will benefit the migrant, repatriation is undertaken. The repatriation of those migrants who have been returned has been sanctioned by the Imperial and Commonwealth Governments.

Mr. Cornell asked whether any member of the Secession Delegation had received remuneration for preparing the case for secession, and, further, whether the expenses of the delegation, as indicated to the House, had all been incurred subsequent to the departure of the delegation from this State. In reply, I wish to state that no amount, either for expenses or as an honorarium, was paid to Mr. Watson for his services on the committee which prepared the case for secession. The whole of the expenditure shown on the return submitted to the House was incurred subsequent to the delegation leaving Western Australia.

Regarding the reservation at Mt. Monger, I am informed that this will expire on the 30th June, 1936. It is one of a group that was recently floated in London as the Great Boulder Mining and Finance, Limited, with a capital of one and a half millions, and the Mines Department understand that arrangements are in hand for the commencement of active operations on all the new company's holdings. Mr. Cornell also referred to the necessity for water supplies for various mining districts. This vital matter is receiving full consideration. As a matter of fact, the Minister for Water Supplies has been in touch with at least three of the mining companies, namely, the Western Mining Corporation, Limited, the Norseman Gold Mines, No Liability, and Spargo's Reward Gold Mine, No Liability. When those companies first approached the Government, each one of them indicated the quantity of water that would be required when the mines were equipped and active operations commenced. The Government were then advised that the cost of laying a main to meet those estimated require-

ments, plus the quantity of water that would be needed for domestic purposes and a liberal margin for increased mining activities generally, would be £200,000.

The three companies referred to were then asked whether they would be prepared to pay in advance for water to be supplied if the Government could provide the amount required to supply water from the Goldfields Water Scheme main. The position now is that the three companies concerned have undertaken to pay in advance for water the sum total of £43,000. This means that the Government will have received that amount from the companies before water can be made available. The price to be charged is 10s. per thousand gallons for fresh water used for mining purposes at Norseman, and 8s. per thousand gallons for water used by Spargo's Reward Gold Mines, Limited. Now that the companies have entered into this undertaking, the Government have decided to connect the Norseman district with the Goldfields Water Supply main, and the work will be proceeded with expeditiously; but it is not at all likely that the scheme water will be available at Norseman within 18 months from this date. The companies are aware of this fact. It is not considered unreasonable for the Government to require companies to prove their financial stability by paying in advance for an essential commodity, namely, water. It is freely admitted that the mining industry in the Norseman district cannot be developed unless an adequate supply can be provided from the Goldfields Water Scheme. Throughout the years the local supplies have been inadequate even to meet the mining operations which were conducted on a comparatively small scale; but, nevertheless, and despite the fact that extensive mining operations could not be conducted, the sum of approximately £10,000 has been expended in improving the existing local tanks and the catchment areas attached thereto, and new pipe lines have been laid and the pumping station renovated, but, unfortunately, the rainfall has been so deficient that the tanks have not filled. The Yellowdine Mining Co. asked for the connection to be made with the water main at an estimated cost of £7,000; and the company having agreed to pay the sum of £3,000 in advance for water, the Government undertook to make the connection, and this work is well in hand. Certain of the companies operating within the Marvel Loch and Burbidge areas have entered into a satisfactory arrangement with the Government; and, in consequence, the Government have agreed to enlarge the main so that their requirements can be adequately met, at a cost of £48,000.

As to Ora Banda, the existing main is inadequate to meet the full requirements of the district as ascertained from the Ora Banda Mines Ltd. and other companies now operating within that area. The estimated cost of laying a new 8-inch water main is £57,000, and the Ora Banda Mines Ltd. having undertaken to pay the sum of £25,200 in advance for water to be supplied, the Government on their part have agreed to proceed with the work, and tenders are about to be called for the supply of pipes. Mr. Cornell indicated that the Beryl Mining Co. had complained to him that there was a shortage of water for domestic purposes. Mr. Millington reports that no such complaints have been made to him, nor does he know of any request having been received for the provision of a water supply for mining purposes. Apart from what has been done, or what it is contemplated to do, to meet the situation within the areas referred to, attention is directed to the fact that water supplies are being established at Beria, Murrin Murrin, Reedy's, Payne's Find, Wannaway and other localities, and that, at great cost, improvements are being made to the existing water supplies, both domestic and mining, at Meekatharra. Mr. Cornell states that numbers of unemployed have been sent from the metropolitan area to carry out public works within the Eastern Goldfields district. In pursuance of the general policy, whenever works are carried out in any portion of the State every consideration has first been given to the number of men who are unemployed within that particular locality, and it is denied by the department concerned that even the majority of men who are employed in country and goldmining districts are selected from those who are unemployed in the metropolitan area.

I submitted Mr. Cornell's remarks in regard to miners' diseases to the department concerned: and, in reply, it is stated that it is open to any person seeking employment in the mining industry to apply at the Kalgoorlie Laboratory for examination for the necessary mine worker's certificate,

provided the applicant is free from the diseases specified in the regulations under the Mines Regulation Act, 1906, and is in other respects physically fit for work as a mine worker. The department are not aware that the mining companies are refusing to employ men of 45 years of age and over. The compensation payments under the Miner's Phthisis Act are more liberal than under any other similar legislation in Australia, and the beneficiaries are more than compensated for funeral expenses by the generous provision which the Act bestows upon them as compared with beneficiaries under any similar Act. In regard to the increase in blasting accidents, I can assure Mr. Cornell that the department are doing everything possible to ascertain the cause of such accidents and to prevent their occurrence. The Chief Inspector of Explosives, who is at present in Kalgoorlie, presided at a conference held at the Chamber of Mines between representatives of the Chamber and the mining division of the Australian Workers' Union to discuss the question of premature explosions. A new method, known as the cartridge method of firing fuses, was demonstrated, and is to be tried out in the mines. It is hoped that this will prove successful, and that it will do away with many of the accidents due to premature explosions.

When discussing Agricultural Bank matters, Mr. Cornell stated, *inter alia*—

> The present authorities of the Bank are creating a most injurious effect by the sending around of a form of inventory to the clients of the institution.

The Agricultural Bank Royal Commissioners pointed out in their report that the Agricultural Bank was without a valuation of its securities, and that in the case of many of the bank's securities interest and/or principal indebtedness must be written off or conditioned. The Agricultural Bank Act of 1934 by Section 65 provides for writing down over-capitalised securities, and the inventory referred to is for the purpose of obtaining a complete stocktaking of the Bank's securities in order that effect may be given to the legislation passed last session to enable the ultimate review of the securities, with a view to the adjustment of settlers' indebtedness to the Bank. This work, which is of a comprehensive nature, and of vital importance to the settlers, was put in hand immediately the Commissioners were appointed. Mr. Cornell indicated that the Commissioners had broken down the morale of the settlers; but when we consider that the Commissioners were only appointed in March last, and that since that date their actions have been directed to establishing genuine settlers, it is hardly reasonable to suggest that the breakdown of morale can have occurred in the short period of four months. Dealing with the Commissioners, Mr. Cornell said—

> Those gentlemen have got in every shilling of interest the farmers possessed . . . . . Every shilling of interest has been taken into revenue or applied to square the Budget . . . . . When it comes to Commonwealth money and necessitous relief, fictitious claims are being put up to conform with the law and secure relief . . . .

This requires explanation. The Commissioners inform me that the statutory lien over the proceeds of wheat crops to cover interest charges, provided by the Agricultural Bank Amendment Act of 1930, have been applied by the Commissioners to date without alteration. The revenue collected from farmers has, unfortunately, fallen far short of affording relief to the Budget. On the contrary, the State Revenue Account was drawn upon last year, for the last time, to meet the deficiency in the interest due by the Agricultural Bank on its indebtedness to the Treasury, and the amount received by the Bank from its clients. The statement regarding fictitious claims to obtain Commonwealth funds may possibly result in Commonwealth Government inquiries. The Commissioners have administered these Commonwealth funds in strict compliance with the requirements of the Auditor General; and if settlers submit fictitious claims, they are liable to penalties laid down in the Act.

I submitted Mr. R. G. Moore's statement in regard to the provision of a State battery at Leonora to the Mines Department, and have been advised that Inspector of Mines Gibbons visited Leonora in June, 1933, for the purpose of making an inspection to ascertain if the erection of a State battery at that centre was warranted. Mr. Gibbons spent exactly a month in the district and examined and sampled mines within a radius of about 30 miles from Leonora, and then furnished a full and comprehensive report. The ore actually broken at the time of his visit, from the whole of the districts likely to be served by a State mill, amounted to a total of 534 tons. After consideration of this report, the State Mining Engineer and the Superintendent of State Batteries both

reported that the erection of a State mill was not justified at that juncture.

The fact that a company now intends to erect three batteries in the district does not necessarily prove that the recommendation submitted to the Minister was wrong. The officer referred to was a highly qualified man, who has since left the department, and now occupies a high position in the mining world in one of the Eastern States.

Mr. R. G. Moore also indicated certain provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act which he considers should be broadened and amended so as to give a miner affected with early silicosis some inducement to leave the industry. I submitted the suggestions to the Government Actuary, who advises that the solution would appear to be the granting of a lump-sum payment to compensate the man for the loss of employment and to tide him over the period until he can find suitable work for himself. Whether the proposal is practicable or not is another matter. The burden of costs on the mining industry is already a heavy one; and the proposal, if given effect to, will make it heavier still. The State Insurance Office would be obliged to reconsider the premiums now payable, as in the ordinary course of events the men whom it is proposed to induce to leave the industry by offering them compensation, may not be claimants for years to come. It does not appear that the State, under present financial conditions, would be able to bear the burden. Then with regard to the important factor of health, will withdrawal from underground work prolong the miner's life? Unfortunately, at the present time Australian statistics are not available to enable an answer to be given to this question. The evidence from South Africa shows on the whole that even in the primary stage the downward progress of the disease is in many cases not arrested on leaving the industry, although continuation in underground employment will accelerate the progress of the disease. And there is another point of view to be considered. Is a miner who has worked underground all his industrial life capable of learning a new occupation? Probably not: and, in the circumstances, he must look for ordinary labouring work or other unskilled work of a light character, which at the present time is most difficult to find. In view of the matters mentioned, the present is hardly an opportune time to take action along the lines suggested. Mr. Moore stated—

> If the laboratory notifies that he has developed silicosis, he is advised to get out of the mining industry . . . . . If he goes out there is no compensation for him.

I am advised that the conditions are not quite so harsh as Mr. Moore has suggested. In the first place the man is given two years in which to get out of the industry. This should afford him a reasonable opportunity to look for more suitable employment. The Mine Workers' Relief Act provides that any mine worker who is notified that he is suffering from silicosis in the early stages and who has already ceased underground work, or ceases within two years, may apply to have his name registered as having ceased such work. If at any time thereafter he should develop silicosis advanced, or tuberculosis, he shall be entitled to £750 compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act, or the Mine Workers' Relief Act, as the case may be. After exhausting the sum of £750, he then becomes entitled to the ordinary benefits prescribed under the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, ranging from 25s. a week for a single man up to a maximum of £2 5s. a week for a married man according to the number of dependent children.

Hon. R. G. Moore: The man gets compensation only for advanced silicosis. He gets no compensation in the early stages of the disease.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am merely making a statement as supplied to me. Mr. R. G. Moore also referred to the matter of the erection of workers' homes on the goldfields. The hon. member suggested that a loan of £500 could be repaid over a period of eight years, but the secretary of the board advises me that this would necessitate a monthly payment of £6 9s., to which would have to be added rates and taxes. It is not considered that clients could make such a large monthly payment, and that longer terms would undoubtedly be necessary. The board consider the position to be too speculative, and are not prepared to approve of applications. Mr. Nicholson dealt at some length with the position of apprentices in the building trades and indicated that they were not being properly disciplined. I can assure the hon. member that the Government recognises that conditions in the building trades are at present unsatisfactory, and an officer of the Public

Works Department has been instructed to survey the position for the purpose of seeing what action can be taken to improve matters. Mr. Nicholson stated that he understood that under many of the Arbitration awards only a limited number of boys may be employed. This has been a feature of apprenticeship ever since trades were organised into unions and, in fact, long prior to that when the trades were controlled by the guild of each trade. The limitation of the number of trainees is in the interest of the apprentice. The employer is not the teacher; the apprentice depends on the journeyman for his tuition, and the journeymen are employed, primarily, to turn out as much work for their employer as they can, and no employer would consent to the time of a journeyman being unduly spent in teaching an apprentice. Consequently, the number of apprentices must be limited to such a number as the journeymen can properly teach without interfering with their output of work. Mr. Nicholson implied that he did not approve of an apprentice having to attend a technical school class as part of his training. The Chairman of the Building Trades Apprenticeship Board does not agree with this contention. He states that technical teaching which can not be given on the job and can only be given in a technical school, is becoming more and more an essential feature of each trade.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What I said was that teaching should take place at night and not during the day.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am also advised that, in regard to the discipline of apprentices, the number of cases that have come before the Arbitration Court and the Building Trades' Apprenticeship Board, in which failure to obey orders and to conform to discipline is alleged, is infinitesimal compared with the large number of lads who have passed through their apprenticeship period very greatly to the benefit of the employer. He advises me that the Building Trades' Apprenticeship Board conferred an enormous benefit upon contractors when the building trades were hit so severely by the slump. At that period the contractors found it impossible to fulfil their contracts in regard to apprentices, and, but for the board, would have found themselves saddled with a harvest of litigation for breaches of contract. Mr. Nicholson suggested that, if the apprenticeship regulations were abolished, the number of boys employed would be greatly increased. Experience has proved that this is not so; in fact, only a few employers in a few trades ever employ the full complement of apprentices that the awards allow. The only certain result that would follow the abolition of apprenticeship regulations is that those apprentices at present employed would have less opportunity of being properly trained, and any increase in the number of boys employed would be by making unemployed a number of men. Mr. Mann stated that rabbits were increasing in numbers in the South-West, especially on Crown lands. I referred this matter to the Director of Agriculture and he informs me that Crown lands in the accepted term are not the main breeding grounds of the rabbit. He states that a person can travel for miles on open unalienated country without seeing any sign of the pest until nearing settled areas. Abandoned farms are undoubtedly a menace to the properties adjoining, and, during the last few years, the Government have assisted local vermin boards in dealing with these properties by providing free poison and pollard, and last year further assistance was granted by loaning poison carts and providing unemployed men to operate them. Unfortunately, this assistance had to be limited to those vermin districts which had a very large number of abandoned farms in their areas. At the present time, consideration is being given to providing further assistance to vermin boards to deal with abandoned properties.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT ACT, 1899, AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 14th August.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [5.7]: The importance of this Bill will be acknowledged by all who heard the introductory speech of the Chief Secretary. The purpose of the Bill, as pointed out by that hon. gentleman, is to remove certain disabilities, or risk of disabilities, which might occur to a member who, quite innocently, may be led into committing a breach of the Constitution Act as it exists at present. There were illustra-

tions given, and in the course of the Chief Secretary's speech he recalled the fact that the question of meeting the position had been considered as far back as 1894 by two eminent lawyers of that period, namely Mr. Septimus Burt and Mr. George Leake. Those gentlemen realised the seriousness and difficulty of suggesting amendments which might open the door to abuse of the Act. There is no doubt that every hon. member here is desirous of maintaining the purity of our legislative Constitution. I do not think there is one member who would seek to depart from that, and it is our duty to follow in the footsteps of those who preceded us and maintain, as far as we possibly can, the sanctity of the Constitution. It has been stated that in the years which have elapsed since the Constitution was first framed, changes have taken place in respect particularly of governmental activities, and the creation of those various activities or instrumentalities is really the main cause contributing to the risks undergone by members of Parliament, and the object of the Bill now before us is to safeguard members. I feel just as does the Chief Secretary, that we must approach the consideration of an amending Bill of this kind with great care, and give it mature thought. It is not a Bill that we would be justified in rushing through or treating in any way lightly: indeed, the more consideration that can be given to it, the better because, even though such a great length of time has elapsed since 1894, when consideration was given to the idea of amendments, it was not until 1919 that a definite move was made towards rectifying or amending the Constitution Act. In 1919 the speech of the then Attorney General dealt with an amendment very much on the same lines as that now before us. In addition, in the measure introduced at that time, there were various other important questions and suggestions made for amendment in other directions, but the Bill, although it was very fully discussed, lapsed by reason of its not being passed by the requisite statutory majority. The very fact, therefore, that so recently as 1919 the House did not see its way to give the requisite authority for the passing of the measure should impress us with the necessity for weighing the amendment now before us with equal seriousness. The proposal contained in the Bill is, as I have stated, very much on the lines—so far as the amendment of Section 35 is concerned, and I think the Bill is confined to the amendment of Section 35—of the proposal brought forward in 1919. There are some verbal alterations which have been necessitated by what has occurred since then. We find that the amendment contemplates adding certain words to Section 35 of the 1899 Constitution Act Amendment Act. One thing that did occur to me when reading the Bill was that we might possibly be opening the very door which previous Parliaments had prevented being opened. It is very difficult, reading Clause 2 of the Bill, to say whether a construction could not be placed on it different from that which the Chief Secretary quite candidly thought it was meant to convey. It is one of those difficult matters which need cogitation because, as I have already said, there is no member here who wishes to see the door opened in such a way that would enable us to depart to a great extent from the Constitution Act as we have understood it all these years, and make it possible for persons holding an office of profit really, in certain instrumentalities, or certain agencies of the Crown, being also eligible to hold office as a member of Parliament.

Hon. J. Cornell: Why even knock at the door?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I am not knocking at the door, but I think it is our duty to examine the Bill. We note that there are certain risks to which members of Parliament are exposed. If the position can be safeguarded without those risks being incurred, it might be possible to frame such amendments as would overcome the difficulty.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What are the risks?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: They are these: The Chief Secretary referred to the possibility of contracts being entered into, say with the Commissioner of Railways, various State trading concerns, the Agricultural Bank, or other activities of the Government, whereby a member might be held to have committed a breach of the Act and have his seat declared void. It is one of those moot questions that will only be solved by the determination of the Court after the whole matter has been thrashed out.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: On your own showing that has been the position for 40 years.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes. Efforts are now being made to remove the risks, and

to endeavour also to obviate the risk of possibly opening the door wider than was really intended. Paragraph (b) is an instance of what I am referring to. It states that Section 35 of the principal Act is amended by adding at the end thereof the following words:—"nor to any contract or agreement (not being a contract or agreement for the construction of any public work within the meaning of the Public Works Act 1902-33) made or entered into in the ordinary course of business with (a) the Commissioner for Railways, or (b) any person or body charged in a corporate capacity with the administration of any Act." Let me take the words "contract made with any person or body charged in a corporate capacity with the administration of any Act." It is doubtful whether that particular clause framed in the language in which it is framed would not open the door in the way I have suggested.

Hon. A. Thomson: It rather seems that a member could enter into a contract.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: He could enter into a contract, but I would point out that the paragraph contains the words "ordinary course of business." What do those words mean here? They may be construed by the Court as meaning the ordinary course of business of the Commissioner of Railways, the person with whom the contract is made, or the ordinary course of business of some other person. No doubt they really mean the ordinary course of business of the person with whom the contract is entered into.

Hon. A. Thomson: If I were a contractor, I could take a contract to erect a building.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The hon. member could take the contract so long as the work did not fall within the Public Works Act, which is expressly excepted.

Hon. J. Cornell: What if he takes a contract within the meaning of the Railways Act?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: All those works are carried out under the provisions of the Public Works Act.

Hon. J. Cornell: They have now been transferred to the Railways.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I was always under the impression that the Railways carried out their contracts under the provisions of the Public Works Act. If what the hon. member says is correct, it may be that another door will be opened. This limits the exceptions to works carried out under the Public Works Act. If works were carried out apart from that Act, because the Crown happened to be interested through one of its activities, all these questions would arise. Surely it is necessary to give this matter deep and careful consideration.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Under paragraph (b) can an hon. member take a seat on the Lotteries Commission?

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: That seems to upset you.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is questionable whether a member can occupy a position in a corporate capacity and not have his seat declared void. In matters dealing with State trading concerns we have a multitude of these things. They have all been referred to by the Chief Secretary. Then we have the other instance contained in paragraph (d), of a person charged with the management and control of State farms, smelters or batteries. Suggestions have been made of the possibility of all kinds of contracts through these different channels. The more one ponders over the matter, the more one is impressed with the necessity for sending this Bill to a select committee. Having regard to the care and caution that have been exercised in the past, we should be making a mistake if we rushed this measure through. Apparently it is not intended to rush it through.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Your suggestion is a sound one.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In view of the fact that the matter contained in the Bill affects also members of another place, it would be only courteous and proper that a select committee of both Houses should be appointed, so that a matter which deserves so much consideration may be inquired into by representatives of both Chambers.

Hon. J. Cornell: What evidence would you call?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That would be a matter for the select committee.

Hon. J. Cornell: Would you call King's Counsel?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It would be unseemly for me to suggest what witnesses should be called.

Hon. J. Cornell: Their advice was not up to much on the secession question.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The hon. member himself might give evidence if he so desired.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Do you not see the complication that would arise through the Bill having been introduced here? You could not ask another place to appoint a select committee to deal with a Bill it has not seen.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think the Standing Orders might be wide enough to overcome that difficulty by means of a message. Another place could, upon receipt of a message from this House, appoint a select committee.

Hon. J. Cornell: There is nothing to which another place could take exception, even if it were not invited to appoint a select committee.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: We are not the only persons affected; the Bill affects members of both Houses.

Hon. J. Cornell: It boils itself down to phraseology after all.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Some reference has been made to Sections 32 and 33 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899. At first one may be inclined to regard the former section as applying to sitting members. On a closer scrutiny of the section I think it will be found that it applies to a person who seeks to be elected, and who may have been elected for the first time.

Hon. J. Cornell: No, it does not.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I will endeavour to show the hon. member in what way I have come to that view. Section 32 provides—

> Any person who shall directly or indirectly himself, or by any person whomsoever in trust for him, or for his use or benefit, or on his account, undertake, execute, hold or enjoy in the whole or in part any contract, agreement, or commission made or entered into with, under, or from any person whomsoever, for or on account of the Government of the Colony:
>
> Or shall knowingly furnish or provide in pursuance of any such contract, agreement, or commission any money to be remitted abroad, or any goods whatsoever to be used or employed in the service of the public;
>
> And any member of any company and any person holding any office or position in any company formed for the construction of any railway or other public work, the payment for which, or the interest on the cost of which has been promised or guaranteed by the Government of the Colony,
>
> shall be disqualified from being a member of the Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly during the time he shall execute, hold, or enjoy any such contract, agreement, or commission, or office or position, or any part or share thereof, or any benefit or emolument arising from the same.

I call particular attention to those last few words.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Electoral Royal Commission dealt with that matter.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The section I have quoted shows that the individual is disqualified from being or, in other words, from becoming a member of Parliament.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Section 34 deals with the man's position from the standpoint of being a member.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is quite correct.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Crown Law authorities say that the position to-day is that a disqualified person can be elected, but cannot take his seat in the House.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: When members are considering the Bill, it is well that these matters should be thrashed out so that we may know where we stand. The Act distinctly sets out that such an individual shall be disqualified from becoming a member of Parliament during the time he shall execute, hold, or enjoy any such contract. As a matter of fact, it merely refers to a person who has been returned but is disqualified from sitting, and clearly shows that that individual cannot sit in this Chamber during the time he holds such a contract.

Hon. J. Cornell: The same argument would apply to a member, for he would be disqualified, too.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Section 34 is that which deals with a member who has been returned and has taken an active part in the work of the House.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You claim that the purchase of one pound of nails is a contract.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The hon. member should not put words into my mouth; I did not say anything of the sort. I would leave it to the courts to interpret what is a contract. I would not express any opinion at this stage. It would all depend upon the circumstances in which the transaction was carried out. All these things bear on the question of the contract. There is the risk that members may be proceeded against by a citizen, although that member may have acted quite innocently. It is to deal with that phase that the amendment has been introduced and it is hoped by that

means to obviate that possible risk. Section 34 provides exceptions, the proviso reading—

Provided that nothing in this or the last preceding section shall extend to persons contributing towards any loan for public purposes heretofore or hereafter raised by the Colony, or to the holders of any bonds issued for the purposes of any such loan.

In addition, in Section 35, which is to be amended, exemption is given in respect of incorporated companies consisting of more than 20 persons and where contracts, agreements, or commissions are entered into in respect of any lease, license or agreement dealing with the sale or occupation of Crown lands. I will not weary members by drawing attention to the difference between our Act and corresponding provisions in the Constitution Acts of other States. In respect of the disqualification of members, in other State legislatures, there is quite an interesting resume in the Commonwealth Year Book, No. 13, on pages 932 to 933 and 942 to 943. Those references have not been published, so far as I have been able to ascertain, in later Year Books, and they deal with disqualifications relating to Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly members. Since that publication was issued, the various Constitution Acts in most, if not all, of the several States have been amended. I think it well, however, to refer to the latest Acts passed in Victoria and South Australia. Perhaps I should say that our Constitution Act is much along the same lines as the South Australian Act because I believe our Act was taken largely from that measure. The South Australian sections are arranged somewhat differently, but the effect of the sections is much the same as those of our Act, with the difference that the South Australian Act contains increased penalties in several instances. For example, Section 52 of the South Australian Constitution Act of 1934 reads—

(1) In every such contract, agreement, or commission made, entered into, or accepted as aforesaid, there shall be inserted an express condition that no member of the Parliament be admitted to any share or part of such contract, agreement, or commission, or to any benefit to arise therefrom.

(2) If any person who has entered into or accepted any such contract, agreement or commission admits any member of Parliament to any part or share thereof, or to receive any benefit thereby, he shall forfeit and pay the sum of £500, to be recovered, with full costs of suit, by any person who sues for it in the Supreme Court, or in any other court of competent jurisdiction.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: It is lucky for me that I was not a member in South Australia.

Hon. W. J. Mann: There may not be a Hughes there.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is fortunate for Mr. Clydesdale that our Act was not similarly amended to conform to the provision of the South Australian Act, otherwise a much heavier penalty would have been included. Section 53 of the South Australian Act reads—

If any person disabled or declared by Section 49 or 50 incapable of being elected, sits or votes as a member of either House of the Parliament, he shall forfeit the sum of £500, to be recovered, with full costs of suit, by any person who sues for it in the Supreme Court or any other court of competent jurisdiction.

Hon. J. Cornell: A similar provision is included in our Electoral Act.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Perusing the provisions of the measures enacted in other countries outside of Australia, we may look in vain for any reference to matters of a similar description to those contained in the Bill before us, because they have not State trading concerns such as we have. In England, for instance, they have no Governmentally controlled Water Supply Department or State trading concerns, such as we in Australia have indulged in. We must, therefore, look in other directions. I do not know what the position may be in Canada, Africa or elsewhere, but all those matters could be inquired into if the Bill were referred to a select committee. Take for example the position in Victoria. Parliament there safeguarded the position in a very full and thorough manner. The relative provisions are contained in their Constitution Act Amendment Act of 1928 and appear in Sections 24 to 29. Section 24 deals with the position of contractors and says—

No person who is either directly or indirectly concerned or interested in any bargain or contract entered into by or on behalf of His Majesty, or who participates or claims or is entitled to participate either directly or indirectly in the profit thereof or in any benefit or emolument arising from the same, shall sit or vote in the Council or the Assembly; and the election of any such person to be a member of either of the said Houses shall be absolutely null and void.

Members will see that the provisions of the Victorian Act are much more string-

ent than those embodied in our Act. Section 25 reads—

If any member of the Council or the Assembly, either directly or indirectly becomes concerned or interested in any bargain or contract entered into by or on behalf of His Majesty, or participates or claims or is entitled to participate either directly or indirectly in the profit thereof, or in any benefit or emolument arising from the same, or becomes bankrupt or insolvent or applies to take the benefit of any Act for the relief of bankrupt or insolvent debtors, or compounds with his creditors or (unless in the cases excepted by Subsection 2 of Section 27 or by some other enactment) accepts any office or place of profit under the Crown, or in any character or capacity for or in expectation of any fee, gain, or reward performs any duty or transacts any business whatsoever for or on behalf of the Crown, his seat shall thereupon become vacant.

Then it goes on to make an exemption in regard to a company or partnership, much on the same lines as our own Act. They also make a special exemption that the section shall not extend to any person accepting the office of President or Chairman of Committees of the Council, Speaker or Chairman of Committees of the Assembly, responsible Ministers of the Crown, judges of the Supreme Court, the Agent General, etc. Then there is the exemption, which is in our own Act, dealing with certain naval or military officers. One penalty is provided in Section 27 as follows:—

Except where express provision is made to the contrary by any enactment other than this section, and except in the cases mentioned in Subsection 2 of this section, if any person while he is a member of the Council or the Assembly, or within six months after ceasing to be such member, accepts any office or place of profit under the Crown he shall forfeit the sum of £50 for every week that he holds such office or place of profit, to be recovered with full costs of suit.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: It is getting worse as it goes on.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes, this is in Victoria. I advise the hon. member to keep away from there.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: I have had enough here, without going over there.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There are two penalties provided, for in Section 29 we get a further penalty as follows:—

Any person who wilfully offends against the provisions of this division or of Section 24 of the Constitution Act shall forfeit and pay for every such offence the sum of £200, to be recovered with full costs of suit.

Hon. J. Cornell: What happens in the single-House of Parliament in Queensland?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I have not endeavoured to trace every one of them. What I have pointed out will serve to illustrate the need for consideration. I am not going to attempt to weary members by pursuing the matter further. I think what I have done in the way of examination of these States will be sufficient to illustrate my point.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Which is that we should tighten up the Act, not loosen it.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The point is that we should ponder over the matter. If a select committee should consider that we should follow in the steps of those States that have very stringent provisions, they would have opportunity for recommending such amendments as commended themselves to that committee, and which probably would commend themselves also to the acceptance of the Council. At this stage I will support the second reading.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East) [5.50]: When the Chief Secretary introduced this amending Bill he said it was to protect those members of Parliament who might possibly deal with or have dealt with the State trading concerns. It is time the Act was given very careful consideration. But, like other members who have spoken, I think it requires very careful consideration before any amendment is made in the Act. We have all listened with care and thought to the excellently prepared speech of Mr. Nicholson, and also we have had the advice of the other legal member of the Chamber, and I have come to the conclusion that a select committee would present the correct method of dealing with this important Bill. Mr. Nicholson has quoted various Acts in force in the other States, which of course could be thoroughly studied by a select committee. Also we have constitutional lawyers in Perth who could be asked to attend and give their advice to the select committee. Mr. Baxter stressed the point that this proposed legislation should be retrospective.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That was done in Tasmania.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Yes, so I understand. I am firmly of opinion that we should have all the available evidence before making any alteration in the Act.

Hon. J. Cornell: It was done in Tasmania, but only following a Supreme Court decision.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: At the same time, the select committee could call evidence that would enable them to judge whether the amendments should be made retrospective. I will vote for the second reading, but I hope the Bill will be sent to a select committee.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.54] *in moving* the second reading said: In the early days of industrial arbitration in this State considerable time and money were spent in arguments which arose over the registration of various trade union organisations; so much so that in 1925 an endeavour was made by the Government of the day so to amend the Act that the technicalities which had been such a prolific source of argument in the Arbitration Court should be done away with. At that time we thought the Bill as amended and passed, while it might not be perfect, at any rate got us away from many of those fine points which had been so frequently raised at the cost of trouble and expense to industrial organisations as well as to employers. But in view of our more recent experience it appears there are still one or two points which at that time were overlooked. These points also have to deal with the question of registration. In the latter part of last session, when an Arbitration Act Amendment Bill was brought before the House, I pointed out that one of the amendments contained in that measure was of the utmost importance to a large number of workers, especially on the goldfields. The trouble had arisen through a decision of the Arbitration Court in which a number of organisations were condemned as not having been properly registered.

Hon. J. Cornell: Will the Minister enumerate those organisations later?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Very well. When the Bill was before us last session I suggested that unless something were done, in all probability we should have a great deal of trouble arising from this very fact. It was not the fault of the organisations, for in almost every instance they had consulted with the officials of the Arbitration Court. They had carried out the Act in its entirety, they had received the certificate of the Registrar of the Arbitration Court and, so far as could be seen, from the legal point of view everything was in order. Nevertheless, arising from an action taken in the Arbitration Court by one organisation against another, the President of the Court looked into the registration of the organisation concerned and said he doubted whether, in view of the facts that had come out during the inquiry, that organisation was in fact registered in accordance with the Act. I remember that I quoted to the House the statement of the President of the Court. Some members took exception to that, and even went so far as to ask "Are we to be dictated to by the President of the Court; shall he tell us what to do?" I pointed out there was no intention on the part of the court to take any such action, but that the position had been clearly stated from the court's point of view and that it was necessary, if we were to have peace in industry, particularly on the goldfields, that we should take the action suggested, namely, amend the Act. I am sorry to say the House at that time would not listen.

Hon. J. Cornell: You mixed up two questions together.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That did not matter. I pointed out that there was no necessity for the House to agree with the whole of the amendments contained in the Bill. This House, I must say, must accept some of the responsibility for some of the developments that have taken place since that time. However, this House refused to pass the Bill, and since then we have had another case before the Arbitration Court in which the same organisation was involved. Although the point raised in the original case mentioned by me had to do with the particular people who might be members of an organisation, a further point has been raised in the second case. That point deals with the locality in which the organisation exists. On this occasion I desire to keep as far away from technicalities as possible, and explain to the House as briefly as possible the situation that has arisen and what is necessary for us to do to put the matter right. The amending Bill deals with two sections of the Act—Sections

6 and 21. Section 6 relates to the registration of trade unions—organisations of employers or employees. Generally speaking, although the word is not used, it can be claimed that the section deals with the so-called constitution of the union. Section 7 relates to the rules of trade unions, and there are certain provisions laid down of which almost every organisation has taken advantage.

Hon. J. Cornell: Do you mean trade unions or industrial unions?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I think the hon. member understands that I am referring to industrial organisations.

Hon. J. Cornell: The trade union has a different object.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, trade unions are registered under the Trade Unions Act as well as under the Industrial Arbitration Act, but members understand that I am referring to trade unions registered under the Industrial Arbitration Act, 1912-25. Section 7 has application to the rules of the organisation. There is a certain procedure laid down whereby organisations may amend their rules. Almost every organisation registered under the Act has at some time or other amended its rules. In the case to which I have already referred as having been dealt with by the Arbitration Court, the particular organisation, in the first place, included, at the request of certain tradesmen on the goldfields, a number of plumbers. I am referring to the Amalgamated Engineering Union. Exception was taken by another organisation to the union's attempting to include those men in its ranks. On this occasion, although there was no necessity for the Registrar to do so, he sent out notices to organisations whom he thought might possibly be affected. As I have already informed the House, in that case the President pointed out that this was virtually an alteration of the constitution of the union, and he ruled that it was not possible for the constitution of the union to be altered by means of an amendment of the rules. Consequently the registration of the organisaton was not allowed. Briefly, that is the early history of the particular point covered by that amendment in the Bill. The second case to which I have referred deals with the same organisation, which made application to the court early this year for an extension of its award to certain districts, which the President of the Court ruled were not included within the scope of the constitution of the union. He stated that though the members desired to include those particular districts in their award, they could not do so until such time as they had made application in accordance with Section 6 of the Arbitration Act, in which event the court would have to decide whether the application could be agreed to or not. As the president said, to extend the locality or localities in which the union was operating would be virtually to agree to a new union. The organisation has been in existence for something like 26 years.

Hon. J. Cornell: Thirty-two years.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Well, say for over 30 years, its registration had never previously been challenged, and it had been working under awards of the court during the whole of that period, and now we find that because of a slight technicality, it is ruled out of court and, at the particular time, could not obtain the award desired, simply because of some omission of which the officials had no knowledge. I should mention that the employers, at the time and on those grounds objected in the court to the court's giving an award. I have a report of the remarks made by the members of the court, but I do not propose to read it, because I think I have fairly well covered the ground. The court pointed out clearly that until such time as the Act was amended, the registration, not only of this union but of almost every union registered in the Industrial Arbitration Court would be in danger.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Which is the one union to which you refer?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Amalgamated Engineering Union, and what applies to that union applies to many others.

Hon. J. Cornell: It applies to the Federated Enginedrivers' Union.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, I could quote quite a list of them, enginedrivers, engineers, boilermakers, moulders, carpenters; in fact almost every union is in a similar position. The Amalgamated Engineering Union desired to extend its award to what are described as the goldfields of Western Australia. Then it was found that the registration as an industrial union was confined in its operations to Coolgardie, North Coolgardie, Yilgarn, Dundas, Phillips River, Broad Arrow and

Mount Margaret, while the districts of East Coolgardie, North-East Coolgardie, East Murchison, Yalgoo, Peak Hill, Gascoyne, Northampton, 24th to 26th parallel of latitude and Murchison were not included.

Hon. J. Cornell: Kalgoorlie and Boulder were actually left out.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. There is a provision in the Act stating that in the rules of the organisation the name of the district in which a majority of the members of the organisation live shall be incorporated in the title of the union. Having complied with the rules to the extent of entitling the organisation, the Kalgoorlie branch of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, one would assume that that, ipso facto, covered the membership of the organisation in that particular district. But the Arbitration Court says that is not so. Therefore we have introduced this Bill to rectify the defect.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Mr. Williams, one of the members for the province including Kalgoorlie, said he would not have this Bill at any price.

The HONORARY MINISTER: He did not say anything of the kind. It is not fair to impute to Mr. Williams something he did not say. It is not for me to take up the cudgels on his behalf, but in fairness to him, I should point out that what he said was that, if what Mr. Holmes assumed was actually contained in the Bill, he would not have it at any price.

Hon. J. Cornell: What he actually said was that if the Bill covered the A.W.U. he would not vote for it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Holmes had suggested that the Bill provided something for the A.W.U., and because of that he argued that it should not receive consideration in this House. That is what it amounted to. To an extent, Mr. Williams agreed with Mr. Holmes.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We shall hear what Mr. Williams said when he returns.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Bill before us simply provides that the court, on application being made to it, shall have power to validate the registration of such organisation, and that the court shall lay down conditions, if it thinks fit, in that connection. I think the amendment is particularly clear and requires no further explanation from me.

Hon. J. Cornell: Would you agree to amend it to apply to all unions registered at the passing of the measure?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know what that might imply.

Hon. J. Cornell: It would apply to all existing registrations, but not to any new registrations. If you apply the amendment in that way, we shall have no difficulty in passing the Bill.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I cannot see why there should be any difficulty in passing the Bill in its present form.

Hon. J. Cornell: There may be some suspicion.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know that we should deal with suspicions when considering a matter of this kind. It is too important and it has proved to be too serious a matter. We have already experienced one dispute which arose primarily from the fact that we did not previously agree to an amendment of the Act.

Hon. J. Cornell: I suggest that a clause be inserted applying to all registered unions at the passing of the measure, not to new ones.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I will give consideration to the hon. member's suggestion. I do not wish to be asked to give a decision at the present moment because it might have implications that I do not understand.

Hon. J. Cornell: There should be no necessity for it to apply to new unions.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The second amendment has a very close association with the first. It simply provides that where application is made for an amendment of the constitution of an industrial union, the same procedure shall take place as is observed when an application is made in the first place for the registration of an organisation. If there is any further information which members feel they ought to have, I shall be only too pleased to supply it if it is within my power to do so. I do wish to impress upon members the seriousness of the existing position, and the necessity for the matter being adjusted without any very great delay in order that a large number of organisations involving thousands of workers in this State might be placed in a position to comply with the Arbitration Act in every particular, and thus be enabled to approach the Arbitra-

tion Court to deal with any business they might have.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Did you say that responsibility for the strike on the goldfields was due to our not passing the Bill last year?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I said this House must take some measure of responsibility for one of the troubles that had occurred on the goldfields quite recently, in that it had not amended the Arbitration Act last session when it had an opportunity to do so.

Hon. J. Cornell: I do not think it made any difference.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. Cornell, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.16 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 20th August, 1935.

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

QUESTION—RAILWAY ENGINES AND HEADLIGHTS.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, How many locomotives are in use on the Government Railways? 2, How many are fitted with electric head lamps? 3, Does he realise that the use of old-fashioned kerosene lamps as head lights constitutes a very serious menace to road users (the beam thrown being almost invisible) and that only by road users focussing their own lights on railway crossings do many of the locomotives become visible?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, 396. 2, 217. 3, No.

QUESTION—BULK HANDLING OF WHEAT.

Royal Commission's Report.

Mr. DONEY (without notice) asked the Premier: Will he give this House an opportunity to discuss the recently submitted report of the Royal Commission on Bulk Handling?

The PREMIER replied: When an hon. member asks a question without notice, it is usual for him to intimate to the Minister concerned his desire to ask such question. I therefore ask the hon. member to give notice of this question.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eighth Day.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [4.35]: I join with hon. members in congratulating the Premier on his restoration to health after the very severe illness with which he was unfortunately afflicted last year. I sincerely hope he will for many years hence enjoy his usual good health. I also express my sympathy with the Minister for Employment who has unfortunately been laid aside as a result of a severe illness. My hope is that he will soon be restored to health, and be able to take up again the work on which he was engaged at the time of his affliction. I congratulate the newly-elected Minister for Agriculture upon his appointment. It must be exceedingly gratifying to him to have been able to reach that position in so short a time. The appointment is a very fitting one, seeing that the Minister has been so prominently connected with agriculture. He probably knows the requirements of the industry as well as any one in the House. I offer him my congratulations. I also congratulate the newly-elected members for Avon and South Fremantle upon their election. Judging from their speeches on the Address-in-reply, I think the debating strength of the House will be greatly added to by their election. It is not my intention to take up much of the time of the House on this motion, which is now in its third week. The first and most important matter that comes under my notice is the recent report of the Royal Commission on Bulk Handling. I would ask the Premier when he replies to the debate if he will kindly enlighten members on this side of the House upon the reason why the report, which was made