

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 28th January, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Mines: Regulations under "The Rights in Water and Irrigation Act, 1914" governing issue of licenses for construction of artesian wells.

By the Minister for Railways: 1, Returns of receipts and expenditure of the Government Tramways for quarter ended 31st December, 1914. 2, Returns in accordance with Sections 54 and 83 of "The Government Railways Act, 1904," for quarter ended 31st December, 1914.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, State Children Act Amendment (Introduced by Hon. R. H. Underwood, Honorary Minister).

2, Land Act Amendment (Introduced by the Minister for Lands).

3, Police Act Amendment (Received from the Council).

BILL—LOAN ACTS AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council.

QUESTION—ASIATIC LABOUR.

Mr. NAIRN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Have the Government recently imported cement manufactured by Asiatic labour? 2, Is such cement known in the trade as Green Island cement? 3, What quantity (if any) was imported and what price paid? 4, What is the country of its origin? 5, Was cement of Australian or English manufacture available? 6, If so, why was it not purchased?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The Government recently purchased cement from a British firm. 2, Yes, 3, 5,000 casks at 16s. f.o.r. Fremantle, subject to passing Government test.

4, Hong Kong. 5, No. 6, Answered by No. 5. For the information of hon. members I desire to state that owing to the scarcity of cement—none being procurable in the Commonwealth at the time—and as it was impossible to obtain any of that which was on order from England, namely, 7,500 casks, until February, such order having been placed by the Agent General in time for the continuation of the different works, a conference was held in October of the various officers in charge of public works in the State where cement was required for the continuation of such works. At the inquiry it was ascertained that approximately only 400 casks were available for purchase in the State, and this cement was quoted at a high rate, namely, 22s. 6d. per cask. In addition there were 3,600 casks in stock, and with the purchase of the 400 casks mentioned it would enable the works to be kept in progress until about the middle of December, otherwise over 1,000 men would have been thrown out of employment, these men being engaged at the Wooroloo sanatorium, on water and sewerage, railway construction, etcetera, works. The offer of 5,000 casks was placed before the Government and the cement was to be delivered in December. It was in the interests of the State to keep the men employed, no matter where the cement came from, and as it was to be to the Government standard the purchase was immediately made. The cement was delivered in December and was found to be to standard.

BILL—DIVIDEND DUTIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES—1914-15.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 26th January, on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Holman in the Chair.

Vote—His Excellency the Governor, £1,750:

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [4.45]: At this late time of the year I do not intend to discuss the proposals

of the Government or their acts at any length, and certainly not in detail. Seven months of the year have gone by and seven months of expenditure have been incurred by the Government. In my opinion we could well have had the Estimates brought down two months earlier than they have been this year. I do not wish to be misunderstood. I wish to say that there is urgent need for economy, and for the good management of the affairs of the country. I shall endeavour to show that there has been quite the reverse of good management. The member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) said, in the course of his remarks, that he had listened to two speeches, namely that of the Premier, and that of the leader of the Opposition, and he commended both. I venture to say that it is rather remarkable that the member for Irwin should have found himself in the position of being able to commend both these speeches. The speech of the Premier was carefully prepared, but was quite unlike the Premier's usual utterances, and very much weaker than usual. The leader of the Opposition, in the course of his criticism, made a very excellent speech which, if it had been noted by the Premier, would doubtless work very much good. But any remarks made from this side of the House can only meet with one reception from the occupants of the Treasury benches. Beyond that it cannot be said that they are likely to do very much good. In addition to the two speakers I have mentioned, we have heard a speech by the member for Irwin, to which I will refer later. There is one thing about the Premier's speech that I admire. He admitted, as he could not help doing in the face of the figures he presented to the House, his failure to control the affairs of the country. I admire the pluck of the Premier, notwithstanding all that has happened and the position that we find ourselves in at the present time. The Premier, it will be noticed, has promised no reform. With the Premier there is no eleventh hour conversion. The Budget presents an opportunity, not only for

dealing with past transactions and the administrative acts of the Government, but for dealing also with the future transactions and future expenditure of the country, and provides as well as an opportunity for the Government to tell this House and the people of the State what they intend to do in regard to future expenditure. In addition, it is usual for the Premier, in addressing himself to this question, to make some reference, at any rate, to the possibilities that lie ahead and the opportunities which are likely to be given to the people of the State. There was never a time when it was more necessary for the Premier to do this than now. But the Premier refrained from giving this information, and not a word of hope escaped his lips. The Premier had nothing whatever to show that would relieve the situation.

Mr. Foley: Did you want him to promise rain or good seasons?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not want him to promise rain. I would like to point out that there is no man in the country who is in the same position as the Premier, and no man in the country has more information at his disposal than the Premier, or is more in a position to give the country the benefit of it. The Premier on this occasion decided to say nothing in regard to the future. The member for Irwin in his eloquent speech—and I am bound to admit that the speech was delivered with a great deal of eloquence—was so anxious to apologise to the Government and pass the responsibilities on to us, all of whom he classed, I think, as directors of the affairs of the State, that one might be excused if one thought that he too should share some of the responsibility.

Mr. Munsie: It was only a fair-minded speech. It was an exhibition of fair-mindedness which we have not not had in the past from the benches opposite.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I say that after listening to the hon. member one might be excused if one considered that he had to share to some extent in the responsibilities of the past. I venture to say that there are few Government sup-

porters who would have gone so far in commendation of the actions of the Government as did that hon. gentleman. Mr. Gardiner is willing to condone the offences of the Government, and every stupidity of the Government, but I doubt whether those sitting behind the leader of the Country Party are of that opinion. The leader of the Country party supported his excuse and apologies for the Government not by argument, but by the old stock method of making an attack upon the civil service, and the Civil Service Act. Whenever the country is in trouble and there is a time of financial stress, the civil servants are said to be to blame for it. The civil servants of the State, under the Commissioner, draw altogether, including the amount paid for temporary clerks, the sum of £386,000. This amount is out of an expenditure of £5,300,000, and yet we have the member for Irwin excusing the Government because £386,000 out of this enormous sum is paid to those hard-working, and for the most part capable, officials, men who do not deserve the censure of anybody. No doubt there are some men who ought to be got rid of in the service, but they are, for the most part, willing and anxious to help the Government as far as they possibly can. For the most part, too, they are men who do not accomplish the amount of work they should because of the system under which they are working. I do not blame the Government for the system. It is a system which has grown up during the years past. But we never can get down to the simplicity of the system obtaining in ordinary business concerns, because the position is totally different. If the Premier had not his files complete how would he like it when he came to the House? He has to account for every detail of every transaction, and because he has to do that, the system in vogue has to be both cumbersome and expensive. Do not let us attack the men who are in the service and working under this system, or attack the service generally, because of the mismanagement of our administrators. I was surprised to

find how ready the Premier was to grasp at this excuse. He interjected time and again "Give me power; let me act and I will soon straighten the position out." The Civil Service Act is designed to protect the rights of the State, and of the civil servants. It was thought by the framers of the Act that it would protect the civil servants and give them a fair deal. When an officer is appointed to the civil service he may be the best man available on the word of the Minister, but he is supposed not to be there only at the pleasure of the Minister appointing him, but to have certain established rights.

The Minister for Mines: Like many more pious hopes, this was not realised.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Act gives ample power. It is said by the Government that it goes too far, that they cannot get rid of officials they want to get rid of, or dispense with the services of men who may no longer be useful. But did the Act protect good men like Capt. Hare, or like Mr. A. S. Roe or Mr. James Cowan, or like that young man who is so much wanted in the State, Mr. Despeissis, or Mr. Dunstan, or many others? Did the Act prevent Ministers from dismissing them?

The Minister for Mines: Mr. Dunstan did not come under the Act.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Did the Act prevent Ministers from dismissing them? Did the Minister for Lands hesitate for a moment to discharge Mr. Despeissis? Not he. It was easy when the Minister wanted to do so to get rid of his officials. If the Act failed in these cases to protect the men who had an undoubted right to protection, how can it be said to protect those who are unsuitable? If there is a man in any of the departments who is not doing his work he can be put out. What can he say if he is told to go? A Minister will say he must go, and he has to go. Did the Minister dismiss Mr. Dunstan, or did he not?

The Minister for Mines: No! Does the hon. member know the position?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I know it quite well. I have had to get rid of a good many men myself. What can a man do when he is shunted from his office?

He can do nothing if he is unsuitable. What claim has he? Appointments of civil servants are supposed to be safeguarded, and are supposed to be made under the Act, and those already in the employment of the service are supposed to have a prior claim. Did Ministers respect that Act? Not they. When they wanted a man for the State hotel, they got Mr. O'Connor. How did they get him?

The Attorney General: He is not under the Act.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Public Service Commissioner made the selection.

The Minister for Mines: He did not.

The Attorney General: It was referred to him, but not as a right.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The services of our Public Service Commissioner were made available in connection with this appointment. I am not saying anything against Mr. O'Connor. I believe he runs the place very well.

Mr. Foley: Then, why this criticism?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: When Ministers wanted to give this gentleman the appointment they managed it very well.

The Attorney General: That is outside the Act altogether.

The Minister for Mines: The appointment was not under the Act.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It was a very irregular appointment.

The Minister for Mines: It was quite a proper one.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The advice of the Public Service Commissioner was sought in connection with that appointment.

The Minister for Mines: Simply in order to reduce the number.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Not to one, but to 14. The Minister knew beforehand what he wanted to do.

The Attorney General: Even suppose he did, it was no crime.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am not reflecting upon Mr. O'Connor, but upon the Government. The Government say, "Please excuse us; we are in trouble because of the Public Service." Ministers have always trampled the laws of the State underfoot. The

Attorney General trampled the Electoral Act underfoot. When he wanted to make up the rolls did he have any respect for it? No! He said "Take the names from the Federal roll," and so there were stuck on the roll 1,000 names of persons who ought not to have been there.

The Attorney General: Did you suffer any wrong?

The Minister for Mines: Was it a bad roll?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Attorney General admits that he was in the wrong.

The Attorney General: I do not.

Hon. Frank Wilson: How can it be a good roll when 1,000 names of persons who were not in existence were put on it?

The Attorney General: It is better to have 1,000 names too many than 100 names too little.

Mr. George: It would be all right if they were earmarked.

The Attorney General: That is a nice remark to make.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am not going to discuss this question. I hope we will have a Royal Commission to inquire into the whole matter next session.

Mr. Munsie: I thought you were preaching economy.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Well then, let there be a select committee. Ministers have trampled the laws of the country underfoot. I have already referred to the Electoral Act in this regard. They disregard the Land Act when they frame regulations which are *ultra vires* and which are merely instructions after all, in regard to the conditional purchase leases. To-day they are leasing Crown lands, which under the Act, they are not properly enabled to do, and thus are costing the State thousands of pounds a year in cash, money which the country can ill spare. Then there is the Arbitration Act. They flouted this without a blush, particularly when the award was given in favour of temporary clerks. They have never shown any regard either for the Agricultural Bank Act. They asked for authority to advance

£200,000 to the bank, and when they got the authority they refused to make the advance. Then there is the State Trading Accounts Act, for which they have had no regard whatsoever. They do not, as I say, observe the laws of the land. And yet they say they cannot deal with the civil service because the law is against them. I am not going to criticise as much as I might.

Mr. Thomas : I wonder at your moderation.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : The Premier needs to be shown the greatest consideration possible. The difficulty in which he finds himself was not caused by the war or drought. If the House will allow me I will endeavour to account for some of the Treasurer's troubles. If I cannot go so far in this direction as the hon. member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner), that is my misfortune. I heard the defence of the Premier put up by the member for Irwin and I listened to him with admiration as he unfolded excuse after excuse. I envied this new-found admirer of the Premier, and thought of Sir John Forrest's Fremantle candidate, who said, that he supported Sir John Forrest when he was wrong, and would return him again. Mr. Gardiner's support was the more effective because of his extreme modesty. He made it clear that he was able more effectively to control the finances of Western Australia than either Mr. Scaddan or Mr. Wilson because of greater experience, and proceeded to give some good advice which would be valuable if only the Premier were willing and the constitution permitted. Unfortunately both stand in the way, as I shall endeavour to show. It cannot of course be expected that any federated State can escape financial difficulty. It must occur to members who think back over the past 14 years. We still have to carry out the usual functions of Government as applying in a well-developed State. We have to settle and develop a vast area of waste land, and to set up industries by encouraging and helping people. To his own sorrow, and to the taxpayers' loss, the Treasurer has added to the cost of administration by costly

and risky State enterprises. In my opinion we federated together too soon, without knowing what would happen financially. We have had to meet the needs of a greedy Federal Parliament ever reaching out for more revenue, whilst that revenue was urgently needed for State development. I want to compare some figures in connection with the finances with those obtaining before federation, and I think hon. members will be startled when they are told what has happened. In 1900, the year before we federated, the last year of home rule, we collected in customs and excise £933,716, in 1903 the amount was £1,255,731, in 1908-9, under Mr. Wilson, we collected £616,824, which was the worst year, and was £640,000 less than in 1903. Last year the amount collected was £640,963, an enormous drop. The total revenues were as follows :—For the year ended 30th June, 1901, £3,079,000 ; for 1903, £3,630,238, or £550,000 more in the three years ; in 1908-9, £3,267,014, whilst in 1914 it amounted to £5,205,343. This last year we had £2,000,000 more revenue than in the worst year. In 1902 we had a population of 205,000, equal to £17 ls. 7d. per head. In 1908-9 Mr. Wilson reduced this per capita to £12 11s., which is the lowest recorded. That was surely a magnificent feat. To-day, owing to the mismanagement of the administrators, although we have a population of 325,000 the revenue extracted per head amounts to £16 5s. 2d. Turning to the expenditure in the financial year 1902-3, this amounted to £3,521,763, and there was a surplus in that year of £108,475. In 1909, Mr. Wilson's worst year, the expenditure reached £3,368,000, and the deficit for the year was £101,437. Last year, 1914, the expenditure climbed up to £5,340,745, and the deficit for the year to £1,354,110. For the purpose of comparison it is necessary to keep in mind the interest bill. In 1903 this amounted to £692,692, as against 1910-11 when it had risen to £1,046,236, and in 1913-14 to £1,384,096, an increase of £380,000 in three years. Ministers should take a pull ; people cannot stand further increases of direct taxation. Of

course there have been increases of revenue, but those have been due to the agricultural policy of the Liberal administration. Land revenue has increased by £233,000, railway earnings by £894,000, and harbours by £140,000. Against these increases, however, our interests Bill is £782,000. Ministers should keep before their minds always the necessity of keeping the revenue received from direct taxation apart from the revenue derived from the Federal authorities. Income derived from Federal sources dropped last year to £400,000. The worst results of the war and the drought have yet to come, and it is my duty to warn Ministers of this and remind them of their duty to the country. Unlike the leader of the Country Party I cannot feel that they will take me into their confidence, or even listen to my advice unless given in this public fashion. Ministers have borrowed ten millions during the last three years, and the public debt now stands at 30 millions, one-third of which has been set up by our friends opposite in the last three years.

Mr. Taylor: You cannot find fault with their borrowing.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, not if they were to spend the money wisely.

Mr. Foley: How much have they spent in State trading concerns?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I daresay the Treasurer could give the hon. member the information. The purchase of the Perth trams, the power house—an unnecessary expenditure at this juncture—the sawmills, the butcher shops, the steamers, the brickworks, and the rest of these undertakings probably account for not less than a million and a-half.

Mr. Foley: That is only assumption.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I only know what the Minister has been pleased to tell us from time to time. Our deficit has grown to £898,000 and to this must be added a considerable amount to cover the £136,000 which has been charged to advances, and not to either loan or revenue. Why have Ministers faked this balance? Why have not these amounts been charged to their proper items? If they were so charged probably

the deficit would amount to a million pounds. Ministers have a strange way of doing business, and this balance is not a true balance at all, as the Auditor-General points out. All hon. members have read the Auditor-General's report on page 27, showing that this has not been charged up to either revenue or loan. It is wrong for Ministers to bring down a statement which they know to be incorrect. Why cannot Ministers give us correct information? I have endeavoured to set out the position as it is, and to show the difficulties which have faced the Government in consequence of the reduced amount collected from the Commonwealth. I want to know if that position does not demand from Ministers more than they suggest. No economy is thought of; the Estimates show this. There is no intention to develop our natural resources. The one way out of the difficulty is in development. There is no chance of saving anything appreciable by cutting off a few pounds from some poor unfortunate civil servant's salary, or by dismissing a civil servant here and another there. Of course if they are not wanted they must be dismissed, but we understand that a number of them are to be dismissed, merely in order to save a very small sum of money. If our great South-West were developed properly—

The Minister for Mines: You have talked about the South-West for many years. What have you done for it?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I did a great deal for the South-West. The only way out of the difficulty is to make use of our natural resources. The country provides all the elements necessary to success. The Minister asked what did we do for the South-West. We appointed Mr. Connor, we appointed Mr. Moody, we appointed Mr. Scott, the irrigationist. We have 300 or 400 irrigation plots going now. What has the Minister done, beyond attempting to appoint a check inspector on the goldfields? We put in tree-pullers in the South-West. We dammed the rivers and drained the lands, which was the only thing to be done in the South-West. Until this was done the South-West was hardly ready to take lime.

It is the custom to repeat the parrot cry of the Minister, that we did nothing for that part of the State. We did more for the South-West than all the Governments that went before us.

Mr. Munsie: They give you credit for ringbarking hundreds of acres of splendid karri forests.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I did not do it, nor did I authorise it. I have explained this before, yet the hon. member brings up the old statement.

The Minister for Mines: It merely happened.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, not in my time. If we had remained in office we would have had dairy farms going there now. Many gentlemen, active, prosperous, and successful, say it cannot be done. I say it can be done. There is no insurmountable difficulty. All that could be done of a preparatory character was done by us years ago. When present Ministers came into office they stopped the drainage works.

The Minister for Mines: Where?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Down the South-West. You carried out one or two drainage schemes, but the great national work of utilising the rivers and brooks has been abandoned. When hon. members talk about the South-West they should remember that the present Government are doing very much less than was done in our time. Thus, with £306,000 more revenue to spend we find that mining has received £7,000 less from revenue this year than it received last year, while the timber industry has received £176,000 less, the lands £12,000 less, and agriculture £15,000 less. On these three items, which mean so much, the only departments which can get this State out of trouble, the Government are attempting to save money.

The Attorney General: You complain that we are spending too much, and you complain that we are not spending enough.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I say you are spending less on the only departments that count. With a land development policy actively pursued this country would be out of trouble in no time;

but these Estimates show what the Government think of mining, of land, and of agriculture. Yet they indulge in expenditure on a lavish scale in other directions. They spend on a steamer sufficient money to develop 100 mines. We admit that the Government are sitting in the shadow of a great trial, but the position is they do not know the way out, and are not endeavouring to find it.

The Minister for Mines: Be a patriot and show us.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am endeavouring to show you that the only way is through active development, through the employment of 50 or 60 surveyors, through the encouragement of gold-mining, of the timber industry, and of agriculture. Nine years ago, when we came into power the position of the country was not as bad as it is to-day, because the Labour Government had not been in power for three years; but they had been in power for one year, and consequently the position was very bad indeed. We did not say to the civil servants, "You must take your walking ticket." We said, "Let us have a few more surveyors, a few more railway builders, more men on the goldfields and on the lands," with the result that three years ago this country enjoyed a prosperity previously undreamt of.

Mr. Foley: How many men did you put on the goldfields?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. member knows that we did more for mining in those six years than was ever done before or attempted since.

The Minister for Mines: The goldfields gave their answer to that at the last general elections.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The goldfields gave an answer to suit the Minister, and I daresay they always will, because they are determined Labour supporters who make no very great inquiry. It is hard to believe that thousands of electors on the goldfields would all think alike if they did inquire. It is the custom there to vote for Ministers and Ministerial supporters, and of course, they voted unanimously for them at the last election.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They would put the acid on them if they did not.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It will be rather interesting to see how they will act when the next elections come round, when possibly the Esperance railway will not even have started. I could point to many irregularities mentioned in the Auditor General's reports.

The Minister for Mines: Not more than he mentioned when you were in office.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There are. If the Minister likes I will mention a few that will take an hour or two. I could not get through the objections raised by the Auditor General in one day.

The Minister for Mines: He raised a few in your day.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Very few indeed.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There are one or two matters that have been neglected by Ministers. It is a statutory requirement that Ministers should contribute to the fund to wipe out loan expenditure in connection with land from year to year at a fixed rate. The Auditor General points out that Ministers have not made this contribution, though they have collected the land rents. Ministers have made a great song about outstanding land rents. The Auditor General points out that they have £31,000 on land rents which were deferred last year. There is a sum of £100,000 owing up to the 30th June and a sum of £31,000 held over for the 12 months only. Ministers have no excuse. Why have they not made this contribution? Money is taken from loan to improve lands in various ways, and this money has by Statute to be returned in half-yearly payments. But Ministers have paid short of their proper payments by thousands of pounds and they have failed to place this shortage to the credit of loan fund.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They had to keep their deficit down.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: And of course their deficit is shown as being so much less. We do not want to labour the question.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that not what you would call faking accounts?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes; I would call it faking accounts. Parliament has no control over this; it is a statutory requirement. Ministers have no regard for the Statutes or the law of the land. They flout the law of the land whenever it suits them to do so. In 1910-11 we expended on the Fremantle Harbour Works £19,000 odd. This amount was paid off by the then Treasurer from the profits earned that year. During the past three years £90,000 has been expended and £140,000 has been received. The Government have only paid £50,000 of the amount that they have expended from revenue, making £40,000 which was covered by revenue standing to-day. In other words they have relieved their deficit by £40,000.

Hon. Frank Wilson: On one item alone.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes. In many other ways they have not scrupled at all to make use of every possible opportunity of faking the position. There never was anything like it in the history of the State. It is a most serious matter.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Yes, and it ought to be inquired into.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: These figures constitute a very small proportion of the record of maladministration by this Government. Under the leader of the Opposition, when he was Premier, economy was carefully studied.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Yes, every time.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But this Government have been absolutely reckless during their occupancy of office. Take their expenditure on motor cars alone. To-day it is costing over £3,000 a year to keep Ministers' cars going and that is only one item. They never scruple to spend money and under their regime there has been the grossest possible extravagance, just at a time when there was most need for economy. The hon. Frank Wilson, when Premier, lived within his means. The Premier of to-day, however, said at the last elections "Let the deficit grow"; but it

could not grow unless he went on borrowing from someone.

The Minister for Mines: You got down to live within your means for one year only out of six.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Our revenue had fallen to a sum of two millions less than Ministers get to-day, and we naturally had a deficit. We kept the wheels of progress going, however, and we kept our people in employment and we gave them opportunity to work. We had to have a deficit. As soon as the effect of our work began to be felt we managed to square the finances and that work had its effect during the last year or two of our administration, with the result that just prior to our leaving office, there was a credit balance of £13,000. If Ministers had only financed as honestly—

The Attorney General: Do you accuse us of dishonesty?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No. If Ministers had made the deficit they ought to have made—

Mr. Foley: You cannot accuse a man of political dishonesty and say that he is personally honest. That was what the *Kalgoorlie Miner* said of three of your colleagues.

Hon. Frank Wilson: And it had to pay for it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I have pointed out cases where transfers should have been made to the debit of revenue. If these transfers had been honestly made, the deficit would not have been £900,000 or so, but a great deal over a million pounds to-day. There is need for economy. I pointed out that owing to our financial troubles, brought about largely by the needs of the Federal Government, and by their taking so much more year by year out of our revenue, we must have economy. This was realised by the leader of the Opposition when he was occupying the position of Treasurer of the State and he effected a cure without damaging the country. The country was developing rapidly.

The Minister for Mines: What an ungrateful country it was to turn him out after all these great services.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That was not a test at all. At that time the country was in a prosperous condition. It was not prosperous on borrowed money. We borrowed on an average £1,100,000 against £3,300,000 borrowed by our friends opposite. There was economy in the strictest sense of the word, not brought about by cutting down salaries or by dismissing officers from the service, but by wise expenditure. There was activity on every hand.

The Minister for Mines: In fact, general prosperity.

Hon. Frank Wilson: General confidence.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: To-day, however, there is stagnation.

The Minister for Mines: I believe you, but some people would not.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Everyone knows that there was prosperity then, just as much as they know that there is stagnation and no employment now. Perth is looked upon as a concentration camp where men can be fed because they cannot find any employment. Three years ago the people in the country had some faith in the future; to-day they only have doubt.

The Attorney General: They believed in you then; now they despair of you.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Our farming industry is good, our agricultural industry, our pastoral, mining, and timber industries are good; why then do the people doubt? They doubt because both public and private credit has been undermined and undermined by the actions of the Government, the deliberate undertakings of the Government. I do not suppose the Government had any knowledge of what would happen. They have spent so recklessly and borrowed so extravagantly that this, which has happened, was bound to happen. In my opinion no section of the people has benefited; in fact I believe every section of the people is worse off now than it was before. I am perfectly willing to admit that there are some cases where men have secured more money and a great deal less work than before, this being due to bad management. When the Premier came into office he might have followed one

of two courses. He might have adopted a progressive policy, or he might have become reactionary. The platform of the Labour Party demands the latter course and the Government followed it. A great many members of that party thought that progress made special opportunity to some people, whereas it meant opportunity to all the people. Rather than risk benefiting the few, they ran the rule over the whole lot with the result that we have this position. I do not say that some classes of the community have not benefited. So long as this Government are in power we shall have a gradual decrease in the weekly earnings. The Government now have men on for 44 hours a week and in some cases only five days a week.

Mr. Foley: The poor casual worker is not growling, but the civil servants are, many of them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Is it not patent to everyone that this position is due to the extravagant expenditure of the Government in the past? Of course it is. If the Government persist in the course they have followed there is only one ending to it all. The only way to progress is to have our people employed and to encourage private enterprise. We must develop our industries. Four million pounds worth of stuff was imported last year from the Eastern States although a great deal of this could have been manufactured here. If it is not going to be manufactured by the Government let it be manufactured by private people. When they are encouraging the State by factories, let the people who take them on be safe in their investments. The result of this may be that in the future, instead of having 300,000 people contented, happy and prosperous in the State, there will be millions of people who will be happy, contented, prosperous. I hope that hon. members, particularly new members, will look into this question for themselves and read the public reports and that they will come to a just conclusion as to what the Government have done and will gauge to its full value their failure. The work of the Government during the last three years has not justified their

return to office. If it had not been for the goldfields they would not have been returned. They are, fortunately for them, now returned for the next three years and are going to govern the country. I do not know what will be the result of their administration. I warn the workers of the State, at any rate, that all that has happened to them that has been favourable in the past has happened to them because of the actions of their nominees and that further trouble to them will come because of the mismanagement and maladministration of Ministers. I would just like to point out that there is an opportunity, if the Government would only grasp the situation, in connection with the introduction of food. Owing to the war it is estimated by a writer in the *Standard of Empire* that there will be a shortage of 42 million bushels of wheat and rye in France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia. That is to say that there will be less cropping done to this amount. The writer pointed out that these countries have a total wheat area of 108 million acres and a rye area of 102 million acres, and that there would ordinarily be an area of cultivation of 210 million acres of land. It is suggested that Canada should increase her crop 50 per cent., that Australia should increase by 20 per cent., and India by 10 per cent. I do not know if this can be done, but if it can it means not less than 1,500,000 acres. We have not only the opportunity here, but it is our duty, and the Government should encourage our producers to sow the largest area of wheat they can. I am suggesting a way of getting over some of the unemployed difficulty and our financial troubles, and it is to encourage the growing of crops which can be so readily sold. I feel, with the hon. member for Irwin, that we should endeavour to live within our means, but the Government have never endeavoured to do that. They said before the last election that they were not afraid of a deficit, in fact, they were proud of it; it was a sign of ability. Then the member for Irwin said that we should all take the responsibility.

With the enormous revenue we have the Government have a responsibility to all the people. The people are entitled to have good roads. I know to-day where roads have been destroyed and where a bridge has been broken down and the authorities will not repair it because the Government will not help them.

The Minister for Works: Where is that?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The bridge I am referring to is at Collie.

The Minister for Works: We are making provision for a bridge there.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The people have a right to ask the Government to undertake their responsibilities, seeing the amounts which the Government collect from the people. The member for Irwin claims that every member should take the responsibility. Every member is responsible to this extent; he can express his views of approval or disapproval of the Government and point out the way in which work can be done, but it is due to the House, constituted as this one is, that members should be fairly treated. Only the other day the leader of the Opposition was speaking and criticising the State steamers, and the Premier replied, "You may wake up to find two more steamers bought." Take the powellising agreement: was that not kept a secret for 16 months, and that agreement provided for an expenditure of £37,500 a year for ten years? Were members responsible for that? We did not know of its existence for 16 months. It would be interesting for the Government to tell us how much they paid for timber treated, and how much of the £37,500 due for last year was paid for services rendered. I understand that £500 or £600 would pay the royalty, and the rest was given away. There was a contract for a million sleepers with the Powellising Company. Where is this contract? Can we see it, and what was it? This contract was hidden for 16 months and we are denied a look at it even now.

The Minister for Works: I say there is no contract.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Your predecessors say there was.

The Minister for Works: What was and what is are very different things.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Now we have it. The Minister says there was a contract, and that it has been got rid of. I am showing how members have been treated in the past. There was the purchase of the steamers. That was a secret purchase, and a very bad purchase indeed. Then there are the Government sawmills, brickworks, butchers' shops, all these were started without the knowledge or consent of Parliament. We were in no way responsible for these things. We had not an opportunity for 16 months of criticising the powellising agreement. We did not know of it, but I know a great deal more than Ministers have told me.

Mr. Heitmann: What about the Beverley estate?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That is an unfortunate interjection on the part of the member for Geraldton. The Avondale estate was bought by us and cut up by us, and would have been sold if the present Government had not reserved the land from sale. I can give the names of gentlemen who applied for land on the Avondale estate. There were several applicants.

Mr. Thomas: Only one, Sir John Forrest.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: There were several, and the applicants were refused, as the estate was reserved by the Government, and I believe it was reserved for a State Farm. All the land would have been taken up if it had not been reserved by the present Government.

Mr. Heitmann: Had the present Government purchased an estate from one of their supporters, what would you have said?

The Minister for Mines: Recommended by a colleague, purchased by a colleague and from a colleague.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: In connection with the timber mills, why have the Government refused to issue permits? The Premier has said that 500,000 sleepers would cut out the forests of W.A. There are 100,000,000 sleepers

on the land held by the Crown to-day, yet the Premier would not allow the Federal Government to get their 500,000 sleepers. I suppose that when this timber business is looked into it will be found that some of the loss on the timber mills will have been made good by the sleeper cutters. We were told the other day that single men were to be refused licenses, and I think the member for Forrest had some letters in the paper referring to this matter. Do we know why these permits were refused; why the timber industry has been interfered with?

The Minister for Mines: The licenses have been issued as usual.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You backed down.

The Minister for Mines: There were never any other instructions issued. The only point is that the Government have ceased to advance to single men.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It would be interesting for the Minister to make a statement setting out the true position. There has been a good deal of monkeying over this timber business that Ministers ought to be ashamed of. In reference to the Wongan-Mullewa line: why does that remain unopened? I am told that the Minister for Works is charging six times as much as is charged on Government railways. Let the line be opened and let us get as much revenue as we can from it. Are the Government going to keep the line closed to traffic?

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member does not assert that we will not take the railway over as soon as it is available.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It has been available for months. If the Government can run the line through the Works Department, which is an inexperienced Department, surely the Government can run it through the Railway Department, which is an experienced department. What is the reason this line is not opened?

The Minister for Works: Do not forget we are running at one-third the cost that your Government were.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: These high rates have been continued for a year

after the line has been connected up with the system. Again, I would point out to the Government that they can get revenue by opening that line and carrying the stock traffic.

The Minister for Works: The line will not pay axle grease. There is no traffic.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I should be glad if the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) would tell us how we on these benches were responsible for increasing fertilizer freights against the farmer and for reimposing the terminal charge upon the farmer. Were we consulted? I repeat that those burdens were placed on the shoulders of the farmer by the Government, for the reason that the Government failed to obtain approval for additional taxation. Such approval having been refused, the Government, without Parliamentary sanction—at a time, I believe, when Parliament was not in session—set out to obtain, by hook or by crook, £30,000 or £40,000 more revenue from the farmer than before.

Mr. Foley: What Government was it that first imposed the terminal charge on the farmers?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The terminal charge was originally put on by the Liberal Government, I admit quite frankly; but it was intended to continue only until such time as the lines were paying. Moreover, the timber companies paid the greater portion of the amount received on account of terminal charges. Who reduced the fertiliser freights? The Liberal Government. Who increased the fertiliser freights? The Labour Government. Who reduced the stock rates? The Liberal Government. Who increased the stock rates? The Labour Government. The Labour Government penalised the farmer every time. I am endeavouring to point out that we have been on a financial spree. Twenty four millions of money in three years! And yet the people have nothing to do, and yet there is depression. The test of ability in finance is successful work done. The member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) as Treasurer had no

troubles because he was in receipt of an enormous revenue. The present Treasurer has had no success. The leader of the Opposition, however, was a success as Treasurer, and left his successor a very good example to follow. It ought to have been easy for the present Treasurer to carry on the developmental work which was being done when he took office. But that work was not continued. The Labour Government determined not to persevere with the work that was being done when they took office. The result has been that we have increased our expenditure enormously, while at the same time decreasing individual opportunities. Workers and business men have had, and are having, a bad time. This can be rectified, and ought to be rectified, and will be rectified. Western Australia would be prosperous in the extreme if the best use were made of the 300,000 people we have here. I do ask hon. members to believe that I did not set out on my task to-day with the idea of unduly criticising Ministers, but with the intention of pointing out the right road and the wrong road, and asking Ministers at least to go just a little bit along the right road for a month or two, in order that the difficulties besetting Parliament and our people individually and collectively may be removed. I hope at any rate that Ministers will appreciate my forbearance. I am astounded at my own moderation, because so much that ought to be criticised has been left untouched by me. However, this is a time when we all ought to assist, to the utmost of our ability, to rectify the mistakes of the Government, and to place Western Australia once again on the high road of prosperity.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [6.5]: I have to thank the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) for his courtesy and consideration in allowing me to take an opportunity which was, I understand, arranged for him. However, I desire to say a few words on what is probably the last occasion of my attending the House during this session. I felt disposed to follow on

the track of my friend the member for Northam (Hon. James Mitchell), who has been present during the whole of the debate on the Estimates and who, therefore, has had the opportunity of drawing attention to various matters on which possibly I might otherwise have had something to say. My special object in rising now is to utter a few words with regard to the situation in which the Government find themselves as a result of the present financial stringency. During the last few days the Government have decided to make an alteration in connection with the railway service, namely the substitution of a 44 hours week for the 48 hours week. There has been, and there is still, considerable agitation and perturbation amongst the railway employees in that connection. As an ex-Commissioner, but as one whose interests are still in that great department, I should like to say from my place here to those men that they would be wise, very wise indeed, if, in the present crisis, they met the Government fully as regards the proposal which the Government have placed before them. The men have to consider, as the country has to consider, that with a 44 hours week and earning 9s. per day they will be receiving 49s. 6d. per week. Now, the great bulk of the workers of this State, who have to assist in providing the money to pay that 49s. 6d. per week, are not earning anything like that amount themselves. It is all very well for the officials of great organisations, for committees and others, to try to maintain and uphold a position gained at the cost of a deal of fighting. I do not grumble at that. I do urge, however, that when a great emergency comes, such an emergency as confronts this State and, indeed, the whole of the British Empire, it is futile, it is wrong, for any particular class of the community to attempt to escape its fair share of the burden. The proposition which has been submitted to the railway men simply means that either the number of employees will have to be reduced in order to let those retained have their full time, or else that the full number will be kept on at a reduced rate of pay applying to

the whole of the employees. With the loss of freightage, with the shrinkage in passengers traffic, the returns of the railways have been falling, and are still falling, and will continue to fall. It is impossible, under such conditions, for a Commissioner, or for a Ministry, or for Parliament, to avoid resorting to a curtailment of the running of the railway system. There must be a cutting down of trains, not only of passenger but also of freight trains; and that must necessarily carry with it a reduction in the number of men employed. Now, where there is a large body of men employed—the Railway Department employ something like 7,000—is it not wise for those men to consider if it is not better that all their mates should have employment, even if it is not full employment, than that some should have full employment and others be cast into the ranks of the unemployed of this State? I make these few remarks simply with one object. I believe that without undue conceit I may say that even now with a great many of the railway men a few words from their old Commissioner may carry weight. I speak in the hope that wise counsels may prevail, that the action of the Government will be recognised as being action which in the circumstances any Government would have had to take, and that the Government's proposal will be furthered by the railway men instead of opposed.

Mr. THOMAS (Bunbury) [6.10]: I am not going to follow the lead of some hon. members who have made excuses for addressing the House. I feel that the present is the most important occasion we have ever confronted, at all events since I have been a member of Parliament. Unfortunately, we have had to face serious issues during the past few months; and I incline to the opinion that we have a still more serious time to face in the future.

The Attorney General: Sure.

Mr. THOMAS: I think there is little doubt of that, and I think it behoves every member of Parliament, no matter on what side of the House he may sit, to give his best thoughts to assist the Government and incidentally the country,

over the stile for the time being. When the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) was speaking, he devoted a considerable portion of his time to criticising the leader of the Country party. He said that the leader of the Country party had apologised and apologised and reapologised for the errors of the Labour Government. I was in my place in the House when the member for Irwin spoke, and I listened very attentively, and I did not hear him apologise for anybody. I want to say this honestly, that I desire to compliment the leader of the Country party on having, as far as lay in his power, raised the level and the tone of debate in this House. In the years that are past, the few years that I have known here, there has been too much recrimination. I myself am as much to blame as anybody else is for that. I am not wishing to avoid any blame in that respect. But since the member for Irwin has been here, he has tried to be fair. I daresay there are many matters on which the leader of the Country party has not agreed with the Labour party; but the hon. member has taken into consideration the times that we are facing, and he has tried to be fair in his criticism of the Government; and, above all things, he has tried to be helpful. Now, it has been said that the one occupation to which no man ever serves an apprenticeship is that of critic. It is easy to indulge in destructive criticism; and for years past—I do not say this spitefully at all—we have had from the Opposition benches nothing but destructive criticism, a continual carping, faultfinding criticism; but we have never had from those benches any constructive criticism. And, after all, the creative faculty is the one that is of value to the Government of a country. I do not care where the Government may come from; they will have faults; and if critics are going to see only the faults of the Government and give them no credit for their virtues, it is easy to tell the same old story which we have heard so often and had repeated once again this evening. The leader of the Country party said that this State needed a moral tonic; and in that re-

mark, conveying so much as it does, I entirely agree with him. The hon. member also had the courage to say that, while he was not in the position to administer that tonic, he would stand behind the Premier if that hon. gent was prepared to administer it.

The Premier: Would you make up the tonic?

Mr. THOMAS: It would be a good one if I compounded it. Now, difficult and all as the position may seem today, it would be an easy matter to correct the present financial situation, to bring forward the reforms that are necessary, if, when the thing was decided upon, the whole of Parliament would stand behind Ministers, and give them a fair opportunity to carry their reforms into effect. But what is the position? That immediately anything is done, no matter how good it may be—

The Premier: Or how necessary.

Mr. THOMAS - Or how imperative it may be, we have the fact that members of the Opposition find fault with it, not only in this Chamber but outside it, carrying their faultfinding into the country. And what is the result in the Press? We find that even the best of Bills—and nearly the whole of the members of this Chamber have agreed upon some of the Bills that have come forward during the present session, measures which were not party measures, but measures brought forward for the benefit of Western Australia—are subjected to the cruellest misrepresentation in a Press which is supposed to exist for the benefit and for the protection of the public.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. THOMAS: It seems to me that throughout Australia for many years past the people have been learning to lean too much upon the Government. It appears to have been expected that the Government could do impossibilities, that they should be prepared to find revenue and perform miracles and yet should never be expected to bring in any increased taxation or any increased payments of any description, to enable them to do

that. The time has arrived when all parties and all leaders in public life should make the position plain. The position should be explained that without revenue, or without income, or increased taxation, it is a sheer impossibility for the Government to increase their expenditure and to carry on the things that are needed to be carried on in the country at the present time. With regard to the question of a moral tonic, I might refer one section of the community, and that is the Public Press. It seems to me that while it may be permissible under some circumstances for politicians to be guided almost entirely in their judgments by party interests, although unquestionably that is wrong, it seems a great pity that the Press of Western Australia should not forget that such things as parties exist and remember that there is such a thing as considering the welfare of Western Australia, irrespective of any party or any other consideration. It seems to me a great pity that the moral tone and general influence of the Press are not exerted and directed exclusively in the interests of the people, instead of their judgments being warped and their influence being used in behalf of the particular party whose interests they are advocating. There comes a time in the history of all states and all nations when the people should rise to a higher level. There has never been any occasion in the history of the British nation when people should adopt a disinterested attitude more than is demanded at the present time.

Mr. Heitmann: This alleged freedom of the Press does not exist. They are controlled by advertisers almost entirely.

Mr. THOMAS: I do not think that this is so. They have the idea that they are supported by a certain section of the community. It seems to me at times that all fair judgment is suspended. I do not claim any special consideration for our party. This is a time when judgment seems to have been suspended and when criticism is indulged in with one object only, the benefit of party irrespective of the

benefit of the people of the State as a whole. It is regrettable that in a country like this we cannot produce public men in possession of great power, men who will influence public opinion in the right direction, and it is regrettable also that we cannot produce public organs, to influence public opinion in the same way and men who will rise above such petty and paltry considerations and place the welfare of the State above anything else.

Mr. Taylor: You cannot get members of Parliament even to do that.

Mr. THOMAS: I do not know.

Mr. Willmott: You should say "all" members of Parliament.

Mr. THOMAS: I think there are some who are prepared to take a fair minded view of the situation, and let us hope that things will be better in the future. The hon. member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) devoted some time to the question of increased revenue that we were deriving in Western Australia to-day, and he wondered why it was that with such an increased revenue we were not able to finance the affairs of the country without accumulating a deficit. I know that, throughout the time of the last general election, this bald statement was made very effectively against the Labour Party, namely that we had an enormous revenue, increased in fact to many millions of pounds beyond what the Liberals had had years ago, and consequently that with this vastly increased revenue, we ought to be financial and should have been able to have put aside a thumping surplus as well. With that argument in view, it would be well to consider the exact position and how it is we have such a vastly increased revenue and where this revenue all goes. In looking at the *Statistical Abstract* I find that the total taxation of Western Australia is £386,000 an amount of a trifle under 24s. per head per annum. I have not been able to search all the records of all the countries in the world, but I doubt very much whether there is any other country that you could point to that has a lighter taxation than Western Australia.

Mr. Heitmann: That is for the State.
Mr. THOMAS: We are in the State Parliament. These are the only taxes that we have to deal with. We cannot control the expenditure of any other Parliament.

Mr. Male: Can you tell me any other State that reaches that amount?

Mr. THOMAS: Can you tell me any other State where it is less?

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: We have the lightest land and income tax of any State in Australia.

Mr. THOMAS: Including the land and income tax and all other taxes, it amounts to £386,000. In the last 10 years the taxation has not increased, by probably more than £100,000. In addition to that, the total receipts from the Commonwealth amount to £640,000 and for part of that we render some services, and another part of it is for rent on transferred properties. If we total these two amounts we find in round figures it comes to one million pounds of money. The remainder of the income of the State amounts to 4½ millions, and how do we obtain that? We obtain it by services rendered and by payments made to us. Numbers of people would have us believe, for interested motives, that the people are being taxed to the extent of 5½ millions of money, but such is not the case. If our friends opposite, who are advocates of private enterprise, had their way and all railways and other things now controlled by the State were run by private companies, the whole of that 4½ millions would not be received by the Government at all, whilst the people would be paying the money just the same as they are doing now, but would not derive the same benefit from it. They would have to pay interest on capital for the reason that they would have to pay to the shareholders sufficient money to enable them to pay interest and sinking fund, and provide a fat profit for the shareholders as well.

Member: The services would not cost so much.

Mr. THOMAS: I will prove to the hon. member that the services would cost a great deal more.

Member: And we would have the Government stroke.

The Premier: That is a libel on the Government service.

Mr. THOMAS: The hon. member for Northam says that there is a deficiency, in order to pay our way, of roughly £300,000. If we are running concerns that are bringing in over four millions of money and give services to the people, and if there were £300,000 that they were paying away as a loss, what would be the honest and legitimate course that should be adopted? The honest and legitimate course would be to increase the charges for the services that are being rendered.

The Premier: If that were the position, which it is not, that we are running it at so much loss, what is not taken into account is what is owed to the Government and not taken as services rendered.

Mr. THOMAS: We may go on to prove that the deficit would be considerably reduced if everybody paid up what they owed to the State. If we are not paying our way there is still a deficit. The only correct thing, the only courageous thing, and the only honest thing for the Government to do is to say fairly and squarely to the people, "You are not paying sufficient for the services that we render to you and we think it is only honest to the public generally that we should increase our charges to some extent so as to enable the State to pay its way."

Mr. Male: Why not reduce the expenditure.

Member: This is due to mismanagement.

Mr. THOMAS: We have heard a great deal about improving the management. Other Governments have had a deficit. Hon. members sitting in Opposition were in power for a number of years—

The Premier: During prosperous times.

Mr. THOMAS: And the deficit became a perennial thing. All the time they were in power there was a deficit.

Mr. Male: And they squared the deficit.

The Premier: Victoria is anticipating a bigger deficit in one year, and with a

good season, than we have made in three years with bad seasons.

Mr. THOMAS: The deficit is due largely to the fact that the people have not been told exactly how we stand.

Mr. Taylor: That is a reflection on the Government.

Mr. THOMAS: No, they have done what they considered right.

The Premier: How can you tell the public, except through *Hansard*? The newspapers will not publish it.

Mr. THOMAS: If we could forget our own paltry little differences, if we could forget the habit of continually snatching after party advantages, irrespective of the general good, and if we could decide upon a course to be pursued, and all stand together, Western Australia could be led out of its present financial trouble.

Mr. Taylor: It would be a big caucus meeting.

Mr. THOMAS: The member for North Perth interjected something about the services, that we were not rendering services as good as can be secured from private employers in other parts of the world. Take the Railways, and make a comparison between the State-owned railways of Western Australia and the privately-owned railways of England.

Mr. Male: There is no comparison.

Mr. THOMAS: Still, I am going to give a few facts. Take the journey from Fremantle to Bunbury, second-class return, summer excursion, 127 miles, fare 10s., and the English excursion rates, third-class return for the same distance, 15s. 10d.

Mr. Male: Their third-class is better than our second.

Mr. THOMAS: I have it on the authority of experts that such is not the case.

Mr. Robinson: Where did you get those figures?

Mr. THOMAS: From the English company's time-table.

Mr. Robinson: From Taunton, in the west of England, to London, the fare is 5s., and it is a longer distance.

The Premier: If you are going to take a special case, I will take one. We run excursions from the goldfields for nil.

Mr. THOMAS: Take Fremantle to Albany, 353 miles, second-class return, summer excursion fare £1 10s. In England a similar excursion for the same distance costs £2 4s. 1d.

Mr. Smith: You are quoting an exceptional case.

Mr. THOMAS: Take Fremantle to Kalgoorlie, 387 miles, second-class return, £1 10s. In England the same distance, third-class return is £2 8s. 4d. Take London to Portsmouth, 69 miles, first-class season tickets 12 months, £45. For the same distance in Western Australia under the same conditions the price is £21 6s. 6d., or less than half. And here we are in Western Australia wrestling with a deficit, in a sparsely populated country, and trying to run our railways on fares one-half of what is charged in England. If we have succeeded with a very small deficit on our railways in running fares for half what is charged in England, with many times our population, where does the argument of the Government stroke come in? A fact that must be borne in mind is that on the English railways they have many things much cheaper than we have, their coal to wit.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: No; or not in London.

Mr. THOMAS: In addition to that, I am told by an expert that the wages paid there are practically half what are being paid in Western Australia. They have cheaper facilities in every way. They have an enormous population to work on, and they are charging more than twice as much in some instances as we are charging here. We are trying to give the people of Western Australia at least 25s. for their pound, and if the Premier and his colleagues are prepared to go on charging as in the past they have no one but themselves to blame for the condition of the finances. Take the same trip on a third-class season ticket in England, 69 miles, £33 per annum; in Western Australia, the cost of the same ticket is £14 3s. 6d. How can we do it? If this matter were fairly considered, and a fair thing decided upon, there is no reason why in Western Australia the fares should not be considerably increased, so that the

people would be paying honestly for what they are getting. What is the use of our deceiving the population of Western Australia into believing that we can do what we cannot do?

Mr. Willmott: Let them pay so much an hour and you will get an enormous revenue.

Mr. THOMAS: Take another instance. Perth to Fremantle, 12 miles second-class return, 1s. 2d.; in England the same distance, third-class 2s. Perth to Midland Junction, 10 miles, second-class return, 1s. In England 1s. also. What earthly reason can be brought forward for doing such a thing, and running the country into a deficit? If we have the courage of our opinions we should make the people realise that they must pay more for the services rendered. The member for North Perth (Mr. Smith) says it is possible to make figures prove anything. I do not know whether he means to reflect on the honesty of my statements, but I challenge him to get together the figures for himself and refute the statements I have made. Again, I find that from Perth to Cottesloe, suburban fares, first single, 10d. The distance is eight miles, but from Bunbury to Waterloo—one of the suburbs of Bunbury—the same distance, the fare is 1s. 4d. Can any hon. member tell me why a resident of the metropolitan area should ride eight miles for 10d. while an unfortunate individual who lives in the bush has to pay 1s. 4d. for the same privilege?

The Attorney General: Do you want to reduce the charge at the Bunbury end?

Mr. THOMAS: No; I want to bring your charges up to the level of those at Bunbury. It is a monstrous injustice that a man in Perth should be able to travel first-class for eight miles at 10d. while a man living in the country has to pay 1s. 4d. for the same privilege. It is possible that the Minister for Railways is not aware of it.

Mr. Willmott: Is he aware that it is cheaper to take a ticket from Perth to Bunbury and another from Bunbury to Bridgetown than to book straight through?

Mr. THOMAS: A second single for eight miles, Perth to Cottesloe, costs 6d., and from Bunbury to Waterloo, 10d. What have we done in our district that this treatment should be meted out to us?

The Premier: Your fare is not unfair. The other is too low.

Mr. THOMAS: The anomaly should be adjusted as quickly as possible. Until I went into this matter I did not know that such a condition of affairs existed. Again, 23 miles, Fremantle to Maddington, first-class single costs 2s. 5d., while 23 miles, Northam to Meckering, costs 3s. 10d.—2s. 5d. for the City, 3s. 10d. for the country. This is a matter worthy of the consideration of the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell). What have the Northam constituents done to be treated like that? The hon. member has been lax in his duty to permit such a condition of things to exist.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You have not adjusted the Waterloo fare.

Mr. THOMAS: I have taken steps to get it adjusted.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I think Meckering is the constituency of Mr. Harrison.

Mr. THOMAS: But Northam is the hon. member's constituency. To increase first-class fares 2d. per trip and second-class fares 1d. per trip would not be a terrible impost. It could be adjusted to distances, and if these increases were made they would yield an additional revenue of over £51,000 per annum. This would be exclusive of the workmen's and season tickets.

The Premier: That is if the same number of people travelled.

Mr. THOMAS: Does the Premier think that by adjusting the increases fairly for the different distances any great number of people would be prevented from travelling? If so, why not reduce the fares by a half and encourage so many more people to travel?

The Premier: We could not carry them.

Mr. THOMAS: My suggestion would not place a very heavy impost on the people. If we were to effect an increase of 6d. per ton on the journey—not per mile—on all the goods carried by the

State, the revenue would be increased by £75,000 per annum.

Mr. McDowall: If you go on like that you will wipe out the deficit.

Mr. THOMAS: Why should not we do so? The whole thing appears to be a joke to the hon. member. To me it is a serious matter, and I have a right to the serious attention of members when submitting my proposal to the Committee. It is worthy of consideration and I am prepared to maintain it, not only here, but on any public platform. Just think what a trifling impost 6d. per ton on the goods we handle in Western Australia would be! Would it make a very serious difference to any section of the community?

Mr. A. A. Wilson: It might be 2s. in some cases.

Mr. THOMAS: If it were made 6d. per ton, and the same from Perth to Fremantle as from Perth to Kalgoorlie, we would be doing something approaching an act of justice, but it is a matter for railway experts to decide how the burden should be distributed. The fact remains that by the simple means of imposing a burden scarcely perceptible to the people, we could easily raise £150,000 per annum. I claim that this is justifiable. When the Labour Government came into power the wages of railway men were increased—and I applaud the Government for having increased them—by something like £112,000 per annum, and the Government expected to go on the same as before. If the Government increased the pay of the men and it was necessary that they should be better paid the general public should be asked to contribute their share towards making up that additional outlay. If an equitable charge were made on the railways—

The Minister for Works: Would it be equitable to pay 6d. for 12 miles and the same for 120?

Mr. THOMAS: I think it can be soundly argued that it would be equitable. Why should a man living under all the disabilities attendant on life in the country districts be penalised on top of his other troubles by having to pay 10 times what the man in the city pays? I

am no advocate of privileges to people in the cities. They should bear with the people in the country the cost of running Western Australia. How many Governments in the past have listened too attentively to the wants of those immediately surrounding them? I have one fault to find with the Labour Government, and it is that they do not give sufficient attention to decentralisation. I sincerely hope that these little suggestions will receive consideration. I trust they will be submitted to the officers of the Railway Department, who are experts and who understand these matters. If they are asked to express an opinion, I am prepared to stand by what they say. I am confident that if the experts administering our railways were consulted they would suggest going, not only as far as I advocate, but still further. In this way we could secure justly and equitably revenue which would help Western Australia out of its financial difficulty.

Mr. Taylor: That is not revenue at all. The people pay for services rendered.

Mr. THOMAS: Since the position of Parliament amounts to this that we have no power to increase taxation, and that the taxation proposals introduced by the present Government and carried into effect have been of the most trifling character, and since we cannot introduce the right sort of taxation namely, direct taxation, we have a right to consider other means for raising revenue. People will not pay taxation if they can escape it, and there are continual claims that railway fares should be reduced. The member for Northam made a song about the fact that the Government had raised the rates on the carriage of fertilisers. There would be no harm in carrying fertilisers at reduced rates if we could afford to do so, but if fertilisers are to be carried at a loss it is essential to submit some other form of taxation to make up for it. The most illogical of impossible positions is for a member to advocate a reduction on the one hand, and to ask for increased services on the other.

Hon. J. Mitchell: No, make the rates as they were.

Mr. THOMAS: This is the sort of political dust the hon. member and his party throw in the eyes of the people, and at present they have the public to back them up. This sort of thing is not honest. Those hon. members are only attempting to curry political favour at the expense of the rest of the community.

The Minister for Works: It is just as honest as for a man to pay for 12 miles what is charged for 100 miles.

Mr. THOMAS: I do not think so. If we were permitted to increase taxation to make up for these losses on the railways it would be possible to adjust the proposals fairly to all. This brings me to the matter of 44 hours a week on the railways. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) said that he as the old Commissioner, had advised the men to take up the burden cheerfully. "Take up thy cross." I take no exception to asking the working men to carry their share of the burden, but I do contend that when they have to do it, all other sections of the community should do likewise. What is the position? If we introduce a taxation proposal to distribute the burden on the shoulders best able to bear it, what consideration does it receive? It was contended that this proposal when introduced was not fair—the man with £5,000 a year should pay nothing, according to some hon. members.

Mr. Heitmann: Many of them are still getting it too, although they say they cannot do anything on account of the war.

Mr. THOMAS: It would not matter if they were previously making £20,000 and now were making only £100 per year. They were asked to pay only on what they were making. This was a paltry subterfuge, but these people applaud us when we are forced into the position of asking the humble toiler to carry the burden of the community. The hon. member for Northam might laugh, but this is a great truth. It is disgraceful that we should be asked to do this.

The Premier: It is the working man's own fault. He should have abolished the

second Chamber. He needs a bit more yet, and then he will wake up.

Mr. THOMAS: Had the toilers stood behind the Government when they went to the country practically on this proposal, and said—"Yes, we will bear our small burden, and return you with a majority," we could have compelled another place to pass the measure embodying our proposals. We are now absolutely forced into the position of having to ask the public servants, many of them being amongst those who are least able to bear any additional load, to carry the whole of the burden.

Mr. Taylor: On your reasoning, the people of this State have forced us into this position.

Mr. THOMAS: A large number of them, misled by the Press and by the misrepresentations of interested individuals, turned down the measure which, if they had understood it, would have brought the Labour party back to power with an enormous majority.

Mr. Wisdom: You do not give them credit for much intelligence.

Mr. THOMAS: What opportunities have we to make our position known except when we speak on the public platforms. Our voice is rarely heard outside the confines of this Chamber. If the member for Northam made a speech, no matter how poor and indifferent it might be, he would be placarded in the *West Australian* as having made a fighting speech and a brilliant attack on the Government.

The Premier: They published a speech the other day which he never made in this Chamber.

Mr. THOMAS: It is not what he says, but what he ought to say. No matter what piffle the hon. member might talk—

The Premier: "Observer" probably prepared it for him and forgot that he did not deliver it.

Mr. THOMAS: Consequently we have little opportunity to legitimately influence public opinion, and the best acts and best projects of the present Administration, by virtue of the fact that we cannot reach the people, are lost in

both Houses of Parliament, and still the giddy old games of the Liberals go on.

The Premier: Look how they fix up the speech made by the hon. member to-night, and make a comparison with the *Hansard* report.

Mr. THOMAS: I have noticed some of the brilliant criticism to which we have been subjected by the Press. The *West Australian* a little while ago took the Government to task for having had the temerity to write something off the literary and scientific vote, the vote for King's Park and the vote for the Zoological Gardens. That newspaper said it was a crying shame that the Government should be so pettifogging as to dare to reduce the vote which is used for stuffing dead animals at the museum, and that while living men, women, and children might be starving, it was a rotten shame to reduce the number of exhibits at the museum. They thought that in reducing the vote for the art gallery the Government were doing a great wrong, and seemed to think that a hungry man would be better off if he were engaged in gazing in the art gallery upon some production of one of the grand old masters than in glueing his eye upon a big fat beef steak. Without saying anything about the need that there was to cope with the question of unemployment, this newspaper said it was a shame to reduce the allowance to the zoological gardens by £200. Why should not his majesty the boia-constrictor be put on the same footing as those who are out of work and in need of food, and why should he not be reduced by one meal a day? What is wrong with the alligator doing with a little less sustenance than he has enjoyed in the past?

Mr. Taylor: You could only bring him across the river and send him down to the skating rink.

Mr. THOMAS: Could we not do with a few less snake-houses at the Zoological Gardens, if we could have a little more money to spend on the unemployed? Yet the Government are taken to task, and the leader writer of this journal said it was a shame that the vote for King's Park should be cut down. For all that,

the billing and cooing of "canoodling" couples can go on just the same.

The Premier: They can take it from me that the prospects are that the vote will be cut down still more.

Mr. THOMAS: I have read many comments on the actions of the Government. I am not going to say that all the beautiful statues and the beautiful works of art, and the nice lot of stuffed exhibits at the museum, are not desirable things, but I do say that when this country is in trouble, and when men, women, and children in this State are in want, there is every reason for the decrease of the vote for the museum, the art gallery, the Zoological Gardens, King's Park, and all the rest of it.

The Premier: And the Observatory.

Mr. THOMAS: I would put the Observatory last of all.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What does the vote amount to?

Mr. THOMAS: We are told—and I suppose the figures are correct—that the saving altogether on the items I have mentioned amounts to £36,000.

Mr. James Gardiner: And do not forget the boxes of cigars.

Mr. Male: You lost far more than that on your trading concerns.

The Premier: We lost a bit more, I suppose, by helping the pearling industry.

Mr. THOMAS: This has become an obsession of the hon. member. Passing on to another matter, which I think I may be justified in discussing, I notice at a reception tendered to an ex-politician, who had just returned from a trip to the old country on a pleasure jaunt, in speaking on that occasion this gentleman told his hearers—and he was a Liberal—that he was very glad indeed that the Liberal party was not in power in West Australia to-day, because, he said, there are many difficult problems which have to be adjusted.

The Minister for Mines: These be their gods—thank God I have not to carry their burdens! So says Mr. Moss. A courageous sentence indeed.

Mr. THOMAS: What a lofty attitude to assume, what fine patriotism that a

man thinks so little of his country, which has done so much for him, that he is prepared to be one of the politicians in power whilst the sun is shining, but will, when things go awry and troublous times and difficulties come along, express his pleasure that his party is not in power, so that others will have to face the responsibility of the bad times and that when the good times return again there may be no stigma attached to his party which, in returning to power—if it does—may do so without a stain upon its character. What is public life coming to that a man who has occupied an important public position for many years should say that he is glad he has no responsibilities to carry to-day? I am speaking of the man who was at one time a member of the Legislative Council.

Hon. J. Mitchell interjected.

Mr. THOMAS: Apparently I have mixed up two individuals. At all events I am speaking of one who is the president of the Liberal League to-day, and this fact gives him a more important position, so far as that party is concerned; and further goes to show more convincingly the attitude that he is prepared to adopt. I want to say that there have been many claims that economy should be exercised by Ministers. I have never yet heard anybody say just exactly how that economy in administration was going to be effected. I have lately come to the conviction, as many others have done, that before any Minister, or any Government, or any party, can make reductions and can put their house in order, and at the same time do the fair thing by Western Australia, some alteration to the Public Service Act must be effected. I have in mind one department in particular to which I go pretty often, and that is the Lands Department. I am not going to cast any reflection upon the great majority of the officers of that department. Many of them are able and efficient individuals. They have an inconceivably large number of petty little offices, up-and-down corridors, everywhere you turn. In many cases these act as a protection and provide them with the desired seclusion where they can retreat for the pur-

pose of scanning the columns of the *West Australian* when they arrive at 10 o'clock in the morning, and before they leave again for lunch at one o'clock. Even if a Minister came to the conclusion that some of these could be dispensed with under existing conditions, he would find it a very difficult matter indeed to do.

The Premier: Rather. Don't we know it.

Mr. THOMAS: I know that as a private business man, if I had to hold an inquiry every time I wanted to get rid of an employee, and had to get together a certain number of individuals to say whether or not I was right in the action I was premeditating, then I should have been in the insolvency court long ago.

The Premier: If there was only one individual to inquire it would not be so bad, but there are three.

Mr. THOMAS: There is no better incentive to exertion in this world than where the employer has the power to invest a man with the order of the boot. I do not say that every privilege and right should be taken away, but I do say that the subject is well worthy of consideration, and that something might be done to give the Government more power. I was only thinking that, no matter what the strength of a Minister might be, and no matter what ability he might have, he has about as much chance of reforming these individuals under existing conditions as Gulliver had of getting away from the Lilliputians who had tied him up; for, in these circumstances, the public service rules and regulations are tying Ministers up with red tape and they are just as tightly bound as ever. I have little more to say.

The Premier: You could easily enlarge upon that subject.

Mr. THOMAS: I dare say I could. I am of opinion that the occasion often brings forth the man. I am satisfied that if we take Western Australia to-day as we find it, and if we take the misfortunes and the difficulties that now confront us, and use them as an object lesson, as a guide for our future attitude, and as to

the manner in which we conduct our development of the future, out of the present trials and difficulties that are facing us, there may be much good coming to us. I am satisfied that all sections—or nearly all sections—of the community of Western Australia have firstly expected too much from the Government; secondly, they are too irresponsible. The years of boundless prosperity that Australia has known have created, doubtless, a very fine race indeed, but they take too little thought for the morrow. Possibly our adversities, if properly studied and considered, may teach us many valuable lessons. If we can learn from them the fact that we should live within our means.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That is it. They should live within their means.

Mr. THOMAS: And that we should make some provision for bad times, no matter how brightly the sun be shining, and if we can teach the people all these things, possibly we can say that out of this danger, through which we are passing, we shall be able soon to run into a zone of safety. We can raise our people to a higher standard of reliance. No country can be great that is always looking for something to lean upon, and no people can become entirely prosperous unless it studies thrift and takes precautionary measures to guard against possible bad times to come. We have the example of several classes of the community, of the working man in particular, who may be earning good wages year after year, but who, after being out of employment for a few days, finds himself penniless once more. No matter what gifts may be strewed in our path or what prosperity may come to the country, if we do not learn the value of making provision for those dependant upon us, whilst we are in a state of prosperity, then that state of prosperity is of little value to us. We need strong men to-day more than ever before in our existence. We need high-minded men, and we have them if they will be true to themselves, and, as a consequence, true to Western Australia, and if these will but

take a firm grasp of the position, realising the necessity which exists for progressing on our way, irrespective of what paltry carping criticism may be made of their efforts to carry out necessary reforms, our State will go ahead. We must realise this fact that, whilst we have a shrinkage in revenue to-day and a decrease in the incomes that we enjoy to-day, we are in what may be called a state of comparative prosperity, compared with what we may anticipate in 12 months from to-day. Good fortune, of course, may not come our way. We are led to think by the papers in their headlines that the allies are slaughtering their opponents, but the other side, in the meantime, is telling us a different tale. The greatest authority of all, however, the man on whom we mostly rely, tells us that we have a three years' war ahead of us.

Mr. Heitmann: You cannot rely upon the newspapers even to that extent.

Mr. THOMAS: It is true they are misleading in the extreme. At all events there seems to be the prospect of a three years' war before us. Supposing misfortune overtakes us in the form of another drought, and no further loan funds are available, what would be the position? I am not a pessimist and do not desire to adopt a pessimistic attitude, but it becomes necessary every day to consider what may happen in the future, and to put our house in order. The Premier, as the Minister controlling railways, should see if means cannot be devised to increase the income. If the Premier will but take the stand I feel he should take, and exercise the strength he possesses intellectually, he can carve out for himself a reputation that will live when most of his critics have been forgotten. There was a time when Victoria accumulated a deficit, under Treasurer after Treasurer, until it reached, speaking from memory, over two millions. Then there came along one man who said he was determined to adjust the finances. He put his weight on the lid of the Treasury chest. He was criticised; people clamoured that he was unjust, and unfair, that his taxation was torturing the

people. But he did it; he squared the ledger, and no man throughout the length and breadth of Australia holds a higher financial reputation than Sir George Turner.

Mr. Carpenter: But the people suffered very much.

Mr. THOMAS: He taught the people the lesson that they must live within their means; and it is a crying shame that any Parliament should lead the people to expect impossibilities. If a married man on an income of £3 10s. a week is living at the rate of £4 a week, nothing but disaster is ahead of him. And no matter whether he has to curtail those luxuries he thinks he wants it is a wholesome corrective that he should live within the amount he receives. If the people of Western Australia want us to launch out, let them give us authority for increased taxation. If there was one clear and emphatic verdict given at the last election, it was a direction to this Government to adjust the financial position. If the Premier adopts proper reforms he will be criticised, but there is growing up a sense of fairness in this House and a big majority will stand behind him and say "You are taking the right course out of a difficult position and we will stand side by side with you and accept our share of the blame." There are many forms of patriotism. One is to be prepared to go on to the battlefield and fight for your country. But there are also other forms of patriotism that can be exercised at home. You can be a patriot by denying yourself and sinking your petty advantages, standing shoulder to shoulder with the administrators of the country and helping them to steer the ship of State out of troubled waters into a safe harbour of refuge.

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [8.36]: I desire to echo and re-echo from this side of the House the sentiments expressed by the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas), by whom the people of this country have been told to live within their means. It is a well known fact that prosperity has come to every class of our community, yet many individuals are no better off financially than they

were ten or 15 years ago. As more money has come to them, more expensive desires have come to them, and when the day of distress comes along and money is no longer so free as it was, those people are the first to feel the pinch. I agree with the hon. member that it is a salutary thing for the people of Western Australia to be, as it were, brought up with a round turn, and told they must live within their means.

The Premier: We are telling that to all classes of the community; you are referring only to one.

Mr. ROBINSON: I said all classes. I have no time for the man who does not live within his means. The example to the people of spending more than they earn should not be given by the Government, but an example of living within the means at their disposal which is the highest example any Government can set. When the Government took over the affairs of the State three years ago, they found the finances in apple-pie order, with money in the Treasury and a prosperous country to rule over; but at the end of three years they have an over-spending, or deficit, of practically a million of money. I say the Government want to learn the lesson which the member for Bunbury would teach to the people. I have come here in order that I may, to the best of my ability, assist the Government—

The Premier: To spend more money.

Mr. ROBINSON: To administer the affairs of the country in such a way that at the end of their present tenure of office there will be no deficit.

The Premier: How can you square that with your argument for money for roads.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Treasurer would have a place in the history of Western Australia if it can be said of him that during his first three years, while learning his business, he spent a million of money more than he received, and during the last three years of his office his intellectual attainments of which we have heard and his physical capacity stood him in such good stead that, with the

assistance of the whole of the Chamber, he wiped that deficit out and handed over the affairs of the country to his successor as he relieved them. No prouder position could be occupied, and while he takes means to that end every member of the House, on this side as well as on his own, will assist him.

The Premier: How do you square your argument with the demand for a road somewhere down in the country for a motor?

Mr. ROBINSON: Figures may be made to talk in any way. Each matter and circumstance must be judged on its own merits. If the Premier wishes me to discuss roads in the country, I am prepared to sit here till after midnight discussing roads, and how they should be managed. But I am here to discuss matters pertaining to the Estimates. Before I leave the member for Bunbury, whilst I applaud his general sentiment, I want to refer to his lack of economic knowledge. He has the temerity to come into a House of 50 members and compare the railways of England with the railways of Western Australia. He told us that on the railway between London and Portsmouth, 69 miles, you can get a first-class ticket for 12 months for £45, whilst for a similar distance here it costs £31. But he forgot to tell us of the difference in the volume of trade, which of course makes a great deal of difference in the charges. The journey between London and Portsmouth is made in one hour 15 minutes: from Perth to York, a similar distance, occupies four hours. Again, the second-class accommodation on the English railways is as good as, if not better than, the first-class accommodation in Western Australia.

The Premier: There is very little of it.

Mr. ROBINSON: What there is is better. There is no comparison whatever between an English first-class and a Western Australian first-class carriage. And yet there is a comparison—it is the difference between riding in a well-appointed carriage and in a spring cart.

The Premier: That is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. ROBINSON: But I am going to suggest a comparison nearer at hand, New South Wales and Western Australia.

The Minister for Lands: You never finish your arguments.

Mr. ROBINSON: In New South Wales the first-class fare from Sydney to Newcastle, 104 miles, is 9s. 8d.; in Western Australia, for a distance of 102 miles, it is 16s. 2d.; 103 miles 16s. 4d.; 115 miles to Bunbury, 18s. 4d. So that practically our charges in Western Australia are double the charges in New South Wales; and yet the member for Bunbury would say to the Minister controlling railways that he should raise the rates.

Mr. Munzie: There are no return fares in New South Wales.

Mr. ROBINSON: I am dealing with things which are comparable. It is a much fairer comparison than to compare West Australian railways with English. I listened to the Budget speech with a great deal of interest, because I had criticised the Premier outside the House and I wanted to have an opportunity of hearing him first hand. In listening to that address, whilst admiring the ability of the man who delivered it, I was yet, in the circumstances of this country, astonished to find the lack of a tone of economy in that Budget. I doubt if he used the word. And when I come to look through the figures of the Budget what do I find? The greatest attack and practice of economy is in the cutting down of subsidies to road boards and municipal authorities by one-half and by cutting down the grants to public institutions which have taken so many years to grow to the condition they are in to-day. I am not prepared to quarrel with the statement of the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas). If the people of the country are in such a condition that they are starving, and without food, and without money, then I say, of course, we must shut up our museum and our art gallery and everything of that character we possess. Have we arrived at that stage? When I hear the Premier as

Treasurer in that same speech tell the House that he had established a new industry, a fishing industry, and that he hoped directly to put on another trawler—

The Premier: Who said it?

Mr. ROBINSON: You did.

The Premier: I said nothing of the kind.

Mr. ROBINSON: He intended to purchase a new trawler.

Hon. Frank Wilson: And two more steamers.

Mr. ROBINSON: When I hear the Premier indulging in statements of that description I see that the condition mentioned by the member for Bunbury have not arrived. In the meantime I fail to see why institutions that have cost us so much in time, in ability, and in administration spread over a number of years, should be set back for a period of five years by a process of starvation. Take the King's Park Board. The deprivation of that body of £500—and, bear in mind, that Park is not for the Premier or any other magnate to use exclusively, but is for the people, and everybody has as much right and interest in it as another—when we take £500 from that Park—

The Minister for Works: What about the other parks?

Mr. ROBINSON: Let us deal with one thing at a time. If we take £500 from that park it means the cutting away of four men employed there, because, of course, the park board, practically a Government institution, can only pay out that which it has. It employs to-day 10 or 11 men, and I believe four of them are to go if this money be lost. This means that the roads through the park will not be maintained as they are to-day, and I venture to say the loss of that £500, coupled with the failure to supply the water—which I have pointed out time after time to the Minister for Works—will mean the loss of £5,000 to that park. In other words it will take 5,000 sovereigns of the people's money to put that park back again to what it has been. Then, take the cutting down of these

municipal subsidies. I see around me everywhere roads starved for want of water, for lack of funds, for lack of repairs. Our roads in the neighbourhood of Perth to-day show that the country is in a deplorable condition, if they are any index of the state of affairs which exist at the Treasury.

The Premier: Our roads compare favourably with the roads of Australia.

Mr. ROBINSON: That is an irresponsible statement made without knowledge. I will give place to no one in the House for a knowledge of the roads about Australia, and I venture to say the roads around Perth have no parallel in Australia. The Causeway itself, which has to be maintained at the Government expense, was not only allowed to get into a shocking state of repair, but it reached such a condition that it was a positive danger to the people, and it has been repaired in such a halfhearted manner by the Minister for Works that many more pounds will have to be spent upon it.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: These roads are not at all nice for automobiles.

Mr. ROBINSON: They are not at all nice for the people I represent, the people of Canning, who have to drive across that Causeway—which is the bumpiest thing in the British Empire—in their spring carts.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. ROBINSON: Who rides in motor cars? How dare members opposite talk to me of motor cars! Who rides in motor cars more than the Premier, the Minister for Works and the Minister for Lands?—and at the public expense. You jibe me about motor cars; you carry your wives and families in State motor cars at public expense, while I pay for my own car.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair.

Mr. ROBINSON: I was momentarily annoyed; I am sorry.

The Minister for Lands: You will be more sorry before we have finished with you.

Mr. ROBINSON: I object to threats administered in that way.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister must not threaten an hon. member.

Mr. ROBINSON: I do not propose to speak at length on the question of the deficit. On the Address-in-reply I referred at some length to that subject, and what I said then is as true now as when I uttered it. In effect it amounts to this: that while the revenue of the country month after month during last year was mounting up higher than any revenue the country ever had before, so that the Government could readily live within their means, the deficit equally, month after month, was mounting up. I therefore join hands with the member for Bunbury in his scathing comments on the administration of the Treasurer. It is of no use telling me that it is the war or the drought. We will find those things out this year. In the last six months of last year it was not the war nor the drought. It was the administration. It was, in fact, during the months of October and November that the Treasurer was standing, as it were a square peg in a round hole, whilst sovereigns to the extent of 3,000 a day were slipping down each side of him, and he was powerless to stop the run. I say that is the fault of his administration. You ask me how we are to cure these things. I am sent here to assist the Premier and the House. He asks me to assist him, and when I deliver criticism in a fair and proper fashion, he tells me I am a marvel. If I am a marvel, what is he? If am not going to descend to the talk that goes on in this Assembly, but I propose with your leave to make one or two suggestions which, if carried out, I feel sure will help everyone of us to understand the finances of the country better. It has been said by some members on the Government side, and I repeat it, that we do not receive as members of the community sufficient information. There are the trading concerns, the departmental concerns going on month after month and year after year; the Premier himself cannot explain them, and he gives no information at all to the public. I say we should not have to wait for months and months till some

balance sheets are placed on the Table. They should be delivered with that same clockwork regularity with which we receive the balance sheets of business houses. If they were placed in our hands I am sure there are some brains in the House which could make suggestions to the Premier. But when we do get that information we are powerless. I have suggested that the Premier should continue that fine institution initiated by Sir Newton Moore, namely, the submission of a balance sheet practically of each department, a long schedule containing the profit or loss of each one. A member is then able to run his eye over it and say "that department is not paying," and proceed to look into the cause, whereas now we have volumes of figures thrust into our hands and we cannot arrive at their inner meaning without weeks of investigation. The Treasurer himself cannot understand the figures, such is the jumbled state they have got into. Publish them to us plainly, simply statements of assets and liabilities, the profit and loss account of each department, and then we can deal with them. Take the meat trading concern, which shows a profit of £16. In that account I find that the carcasses supplied to each of these shops came from Yandanooka station, and instead of those carcasses being taken in at market value, they were taken in at a price fixed by the manager, the man who manages both Yandanooka and the markets. Of course, it is much better if both Yandanooka pays and the meat stall pays. No less a person than the Auditor General has drawn attention to this.

The Premier: What does he know about meat at all?

The Minister for Works: He pokes his nose into things that do not concern him.

Mr. Wisdom: He knows a bit about you people, anyhow.

The Premier: He knows nothing about the price of a bullock, anyhow.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Auditor General does not wish to fix the price of anything, though I know he could fix the value of some people. If the Minister

who continually interjects will permit me, I wish to say—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. ROBINSON: The Auditor General has stated that the price should be the market value, and not a price assessed by the manager. It would be an unheard of thing if in taking stock in one of the large business concerns of Perth the local manager were able to say, "I will fix the cost at which the goods came into the warehouse at so much." He must take his stock at the c.i.f. price with certain charges for landing. So, too, with the Government's meat business. If stock has come down from Geraldton, it must be taken in either at cost or at market rates, but certainly not at a rate fixed by any person in an arbitrary fashion. The man who is the manager—I do not even know his name—fixed the price of the stock. That, I say, is not a proper business proceeding. The price should be either the cost or the market value.

The Premier: Suppose he fixed that, what difference would it make?

Mr. ROBINSON: It will make this difference, possibly, that instead of a profit of £16 there will be a loss of perhaps £2,000. I venture to say, further, that there probably was such a loss.

Mr. James Gardiner: Suppose the manager fixed the stock at an average value?

Mr. ROBINSON: He has simply fixed the price. Would the hon. member tell me that the manager of a softgoods business in Perth is going to fix at an average the price of goods to come from Melbourne? The value is to be based on the price at the place whence the goods come. I am not going to be led into any discussion of side issues. I do not propose to take advice here from either the opposite side or the member for Irwin.

Mr. James Gardiner: You had better get off beef.

Mr. ROBINSON: I have a perfect right to come into this Chamber to discuss accounts. I have yet to learn that all knowledge of accounts centres in either the person of the Treasurer or that of the member for Irwin. I am only emphasising now a criticism by the Auditor

General of this country—a man respected by everyone who knows anything of accounts.

The Minister for Works: What degrees does he hold? Has he ever passed an examination?

Mr. Wisdom: Have you?

The Minister for Works: Yes; I have.

Mr. Wisdom: Never.

Mr. ROBINSON: Now we come to the payment of the civil servants. The Treasurer laughs at the civil servants.

The Premier: No. I was only laughing at you.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Premier laughed at my remark.

Mr. James Gardiner: He is laughing with you.

Mr. ROBINSON: In the civil service there is a number of officers who complain that they have been underpaid for many years. A board of appeal was provided by the Government of the day for the hearing of such matters. The board dealt with those matters, and awarded to certain officers certain increments. Those increments constitute a debt of honour due by the Government of the country; and yet, I understand, it is a question of hesitation whether those amounts shall be paid. For my part, I say that while there is a shot in the locker our debts should be paid; and the only way in which the Premier can induce me to agree with his view that the increments should not be paid, is for him to confess to the House that he has no money. Then we will give him time to pay. But so long as those payments are due and the Treasurer has money, I say unhesitatingly that those amounts should be paid.

Minister for Works: It is a very poor class of civil servant who would press the Government, through the courts, for an increase of salary at this time.

Mr. ROBINSON: I again agree with the member for Bunbury, several parts of whose speech were admirable, in that the fate of this country for the next three years very largely depends on whether the Government in power manage and administer the country's affairs in a sound and businesslike manner.

Mr. James Gardiner: Have not we got some responsibility also?

Mr. ROBINSON: In my opinion, if there is any assistance that can be rendered by any member of this Chamber, it is that member's duty to give it.

The Premier: Why do you not give assistance to me? This is your opportunity.

Mr. ROBINSON: When I address criticisms to the Premier in a friendly way, I am twitted as to motor cars or some other thing. The Premier, I venture to say, can ill afford to scoff at the meanest member of this House who offers him the smallest piece of advice.

The Premier: But there are two ways of offering advice.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Premier knows full well that every member of this House will be only too glad to see next month, and the following month, and the month thereafter, this deficit being gradually wiped out.

The Premier: I do not believe it; I wish I could believe it.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The Premier has not got a hope.

Mr. ROBINSON: What am I going to do with a Treasurer who declines to believe the honourable word of a man standing in his place in this House?

The Premier: I have had more experience of members opposite than you possess. You are only a young Liberal.

Mr. ROBINSON: I am speaking mainly of myself. I have not yet committed any political crime.

Mr. James Gardiner: You are lucky.

Mr. ROBINSON: I do not hold myself responsible for any of the faults or shortcomings or good qualities of the last Administration or of any preceding Administration. I came in here—perhaps the Premier may say, young, but that can be cured; inexperienced in Parliamentary affairs, but I hope that will be cured, too, thanks to my electors. As time goes along, I hope the Premier will learn that when I offer suggestions they are bona fide and not in any way designed for the purpose of tripping him. It is impossible for us on this side, or at all events for me, to make any suggestions of practical value unless absolutely enabled to dive into

those trading accounts, and to see balance sheets and have profit and loss accounts submitted in the way that these things should be done. If that information is given to us, the Premier's role will be a much happier one, for he will receive advice and assistance from all parts of the House. The Committee has listened patiently to me. I do not pose as an expert in finance. I merely address to the House some stray criticisms in connection with the Budget on various matters that have occurred to me; and I hope the Premier will receive those criticisms in the spirit in which they are offered.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore) [9.8] : The discussion on the Premier's Budget and on the Estimates generally has, ever since the introduction of responsible Government in this State, been an occasion for a considerable amount of speaking and widely extended criticism. I do not propose to delay the House to-night with a widely extended criticism or a lengthy speech. We are, however, approaching the financial question in circumstances which are unparalleled not only in the history of Western Australia, but in the history of Australasia, and I may go further and say, unparalleled in the history of the world. Not only have we war without, but we have drought within, which has devastated our flocks and herds and has placed the farmers of this State in the tightest position they have ever occupied. When Sir Rider Haggard was in Australia two years ago with the Empire Trade Commission, speaking in Sydney he told the New South Wales people that somebody who had the ability could produce a wonderful work on the capabilities of Australia. He said, speaking as a practical farmer—and I speak here to-night as a practical farmer also—that little was known of the wonderful resources of Australia. He said that Australians should take hold of their wealth and utilise it. The land, he said, was at the bottom of everything in every nation, and he urged us to people our land, and to keep the people on our land. That advice applies exactly to Western Australia at the present time. "Bring people to your land," said Sir Rider Haggard, "and so

grow greater, and help the Empire of which you are one of the brightest stars." Those words were used by a man whose name is known to everybody. It is those words I propose to take as the text for anything I may have to say to-night. I sympathise with the Government. I am not sent here to embarrass the Government of the day. I sympathise with the Government as regards the position in which they now find themselves. They are in the tightest position that any Western Australian Government have ever been placed in.

The Premier: Any Government in Australasia.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I think it is the duty of hon. members not to embarrass the Government on this occasion. I feel confident, also, that it is the opinion of the people of this State, no matter to what political creed they adhere, that the Government of the day should not be unnecessarily embarrassed at the present juncture. For that reason I do not desire to criticise the actions of the Government more adversely than I can possibly help this evening. It was the pastoralist who laid the foundation of Australia. The Premier and his friends are endeavouring to strengthen the foundation at the present time; and all power to them; I wish them every luck. Although in this House I frequently hear harsh things said in regard to pastoralists, I am quite certain that hon. members do recognise, in their hearts, that the pastoralist laid the foundation of Australia and held this continent for the Empire. The miner came along. I know it myself, and I have seen it. For years I was working with the miners of this State. I have been down nearly every mine in Western Australia. I was let down by the alluvial miners into their shows from the windlass in a bucket, and was treated as tenderly as they might treat a woman. For that reason, amongst many, my sympathies must go out to the miner. The miner built up the arch of this edifice of Australia, but it remains for the agriculturist to fix in the keystone of that arch which must maintain the prosperity of Australia for all time. For that reason, and as a representative of a purely

agricultural district, and as having represented an agricultural district of this State off and on for the last 20 years, I am pleased to think at the present moment that the Government have at all events risen to the occasion and are endeavouring to do all in their power to assist the man on the land out of his difficulties. I do not think the people in the cities realise the stress under which the people on the land are labouring. These men are bearing greater difficulties, I may even say, than the men at the front. There are no cheers for them in their difficulties, there is no hand to cheer them on in the battle they have to fight. There are no iron crosses as rewards for their bravery—

Mr. A. A. Wilson: And not as many bullets.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: But at the same time, they are suffering in the interests of the State, and it is our duty to assist them as far as we possibly can. I am not one who believes we shall have a continuance of this trouble. I am a farmer, and have been brought up on hope. The farmer is not only a man with hope, but a man with faith in the future. I believe Nature has her compensations in store for those who survive these difficulties. If they battle through this season, we shall see next year a very different state of affairs from what exists at present. The State is going to assist the man on the land, and I hope it will be done as quickly as possible. These men, like their horses, are now champing at the bit, anxious to get to work, and when they can get to work they will, perhaps, forget a good many of their troubles. Work is a grand cure for all ills, and the sooner the Government can help them to get to work the better it will be. I hope that the assistance to be rendered to the farmers will be hurried on as quickly as possible so that they may know their exact position. Many farmers are complaining that they do not know what their position will be.

The Premier: They cannot know until we know what the legislation will be.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: It is a pity that legislation for their relief was not introduced earlier. It should have been

passed two months ago. These men want to get to work now. Time slips by rapidly; we are now at the end of January, and it will not be long before they will want to get their seed in. They need the means to keep their cattle strong and fit to work. Many of their horses are in such a condition as to be unfit for work, and their owners are unable to provide the necessary fodder for them. Feeling that the Government realise that the future of the country depends on the producer, I trust they will recognise the urgency and see that the administration of this movement is pushed on as quickly as possible.

The Premier: Tell us how we have failed up to date?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: Nothing has been done. Men have been helped with food, but in many instances they have been seeking assistance for weeks and weeks—

The Premier: In what direction?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: In the direction of food for their horses. A great many of them require fodder—

The Premier: I was not aware of it.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: If they are to put in their crops their horses must be kept in condition.

The Premier: We did not waste 24 hours in acquiring all the wheat in the country in order to protect the farmers.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I recognise that.

The Premier: We would have got in earlier but for your friends in another place.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: It will be some time before they require the wheat, but they need assistance now to keep their horses fit so that they will be able to prepare the land for their crops. Although I am in accord with members who urge economy in these days—and no one recognises the need for it more than the Government—I regret that economy is being exercised largely in a direction which is detrimental to the man on the land. The annual grants to our roads boards have been reduced by 38 per cent. Last year grants to roads boards totalled £45,500; this year they have been reduced

to £27,000. It has always been customary to give special grants in addition to a subsidy on rates. The only special grants last year totalled £16,000, and no special grants appear on the Estimates this year, save an amount of £300 for a road to the caves. I do not know whether we are all to turn cave men, or why there should be a special grant for a road there and nowhere else. Recognising the need for assisting the development of this State, one of the great baits which should be thrown out to induce men to go on the land is roads. It is of no use building railways unless there are roads by which to travel to them. Another argument often used, and I think it has been used by the Premier, is that every one, as far as possible, should be kept employed. As a result of the cutting off of subsidies to roads boards, many people have been deprived of work.

The Premier: That happens when any expenditure is cut out.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: Of course.

The Premier: Then where do you propose to economise?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I regret that the Premier has not found some other direction in which to exercise economy instead of in the direction which must ultimately prove detrimental to the interests of the man on the land whom he is trying to help.

The Premier: Every man has to suffer somewhat.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: In the district I represent which is largely made up of the Midland Railway area, the Government are not building railways for us, and we are taxed as the other people in this State are, and we feel perhaps more than others the loss of the subsidies and grants which have assisted us in the past.

The Premier: You supported a Government who cut them down in good times and you raised no complaint.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I was supporting no Government at the time the hon. member refers to.

Hon. Frank Wilson: We gave them all the roads they wanted.

The Minister for Mines: And cut down the subsidy in prosperous times.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: It is most unfortunate at a time when we want to offer every inducement possible to get people on the land that these subsidies should be the first line to be attacked by the Premier in pursuance of his policy of economy. If the Government were to jettison all their State enterprises—

The Premier: What about the men who would be thrown out of employment then?

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: If they were to sell Yandanooka estate—because I am certain no land in Western Australia at the price paid for Yandanooka can be profitably held for carrying stock—

The Premier: We will put in a greater area of crops there than if we had sold it.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY. I advise the Government to leave farming alone.

The Minister for Mines: You recommend that enterprise.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: If the Government jettisoned all their State enterprises and allowed them to be carried on by the individual where the individual is able to do so—

Mr. O'Loughlen: They could not make a greater failure of farming than many settlers have done.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: If the Government would abandon their State enterprises, it would be of great benefit to the State. I have not been able to delve into the intricacies of these accounts, but I am certain that if the Government adopted my suggestion it would be better for themselves and better for the State.

The Premier: Just at present all the farmers are being carried on as a State enterprise.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I can understand that the Government, after having started these enterprises, do not like to close them down, but even a large number of their supporters are convinced that it would have been better for the country and for themselves if these enterprises had not been entered upon.

The Minister for Mines: The State newspaper is the only one left and we are going to start that.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: One of the first lines on the Estimates attacked by the Treasurer is the subsidy for the destruction of wild dogs. Ever since I have been in the House, a period of 20 years, someone in opposition has annually attacked this vote. It has generally been regarded as a joke—I do not know why—but I doubt if there is any subsidy on the Estimates of greater benefit than this. It might be argued that if wild dogs are destructive to the holdings of settlers, it is their duty to destroy the dogs, but I point out that there is an enormous area of waste land in this State, and unless a reward is offered, the average individual will not make any attempt to destroy wild dogs.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Patriotism!

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: It is a fact and the hon. member knows it. It is a pity that this subsidy should have been reduced, because even now in many parts of the State, wild dogs cause a great deal of trouble.

The Premier: Settlers can easily get over that difficulty. They can form themselves into a board, tax themselves and pay a subsidy for the destruction of the dogs. They are getting the benefit, and the people complaining are well able to pay.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: It is not the pastoralist but the small farmer in the back blocks who is complaining. The pastoralist has the means to destroy wild dogs; he keeps trappers—

The Premier: Let the settlers appoint a board.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: In the back blocks I have often asked farmers opening up the country—"Why do not you keep sheep in conjunction with your farming?" and the invariable reply has been, "I cannot keep any sheep because the dogs are too bad. I cannot kill the dogs because there is so much waste country round about me." I think it is a pity that the Government should have knocked this off. They have left something, but I think it has been cut down by half.

The Premier: The other half will come off then. I am glad the hon. member has drawn my attention to it.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I think it is the duty of the Government to keep the dogs down upon their own country, the Crown lands.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They are breeding them on their own country.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The Government should not knock off a subsidy like this, which will mean that dogs will devastate the flocks and herds of the settlers, to say nothing of robbing the hen roosts.

The Premier: Let the owners of the flocks and herds look after them.

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member argues that economy is necessary but it is an economy which should always be exercised on the other fellow.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I do think that economy is necessary, but not in the wrong direction.

The Premier: Always.

Mr. Willmott: When the settlers agree to come forward and tax themselves, as they have agreed, the Government should help them.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I think the settlers are quite prepared to help themselves in every possible way. It is not a large amount, but it would do a great deal of good and would encourage people who had not even land of their own to destroy these animals whenever they have a chance. It is not for me to tell the Government how they are to manage the affairs of State. The Government are placed in power, and it is for them to formulate the best schemes they can for the administration, in the most satisfactory way, of the affairs of the country. At the same time we are able to look on from outside this House, but while the Government is in power it is not my desire to embarrass them.

The Premier: That is not correct.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: And it is not my desire to criticise the Government unfairly for any of their actions. At the same time I think, and a large number of the people in the country are of the same opinion, that it is a pity for the

Government at this stage to feel it necessary to cut down the subsidy for the making of roads, which is one of the most useful works that can be carried on in the country.

The Minister for Mines: There are some people who think we are wrong in attacking the Museum and the Zoological Gardens. It is all a question of the point of view from which you regard the matter.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: The Museum has been very little attacked I notice.

The Minister for Mines: Some people say it has been too much attacked.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: When the Government go out to attack they generally go away from the centres of population into some parts of the State where the voices of the attacked may not perhaps so easily be heard. I do not suppose that any remarks I may make will alter the views of the Government in regard to this matter, but these are my opinions and I think they are shared by a large number of people in Western Australia. I do not intend to delay the House tonight. I am quite sure that all of us are anxious to close this session as soon as we can. I sympathise with the Government in the embarrassing position in which they are placed at the present time.

Hon. Frank Wilson: And have got themselves into.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I think if they were to alter their methods it would not only be a great deal better for themselves but for the country also. My sole object in addressing myself to these matters is, at any rate, to show the Government how much concerned the people whom I represent are, as well as the community in general. It is no good blaming the Government unless we are prepared to say what we are blaming them for. If the Government had the moral courage to throw over the State enterprises, which are not paying at the present time it would be very much better for us all.

Mr. CARPENTER (Fremantle): [9.35]: My remarks will be very brief. I have listened with interest to the speeches we have heard this evening. It

has been remarkable that, with all the protestations that have come from nearly every speaker, that they appear in a spirit of co-operation and of help to the Treasurer and the Government, any practical suggestion as to how that help might be given has been entirely lacking. Reference has been made during the debate to the happy time when the revenue was buoyant and when we were able to build public works out of the annual surplus. We know at one time the happy position in which the Treasurer of the State found himself. We know also that to provide that surplus year after year, the taxpayers at that time were paying in customs taxation, I think, between £8 and £10 per head per annum. Under these circumstances, when the people were so heavily taxed, there was scarcely any possibility of the Treasurer getting behind. The Treasurer of that day could not have spent the whole of the revenue in the ordinary channels of Government expenditure.

Mr. Bolton: He could now.

Mr. CARPENTER: The troubles of the Treasurers began when we lost control of this customs revenue, and when the Federal Government was established and took over the control of our customs revenue, cutting it down by one-half so far as this State was concerned. I believe I am correct in stating that the amount per head at the time the Federal Government came into being, was about £7 odd and the uniform tariff framed by the first Federal Parliament amounted to £3 10s. or £3 15s. a head. We not only lost control of the customs revenue but it was cut down to that extent, and whilst the people of Western Australia, particularly, kept that extra amount in their pockets and were not called upon to pay that much away in customs taxation, the Treasurer, and each succeeding Treasurer has been running a neck to neck race with the finances.

Mr. Smith: Are you prepared to hand over the Savings Bank to the Federal Government?

Mr. CARPENTER: I am not talking about the Savings Bank.

Mr. Heitmann: The people of West Australia did not reap the advantage.

Mr. CARPENTER: They did reap some advantage. When the first sliding scale came into operation, and the amount of West Australia's proportion was reduced, the traders put much of that into their own pockets. The consumer got the benefit for the first year or two, but after that we heard nothing whatever about the sliding scale. Speaking generally, the amount was left in the pockets, it not of the consumers, at all events of the trading section of the community, and until recently no one seemed to be one penny the worse. We simply shrugged our shoulders and said "We owe the Treasurer so much per head, but we will wipe it off in a few years." Perhaps one of the dangers of the present day is that the deficit has become such a common experience that we have lost sight of the evil of it, and have come to regard it as one of the regular things that we had to look for year by year. But in spite of the deficit of past years, the people have gone on demanding public utilities, which have cost a very much larger sum year by year, and successive Governments have gone on conceding these utilities, until we have this emergency which no one foresaw, and we now find ourselves very seriously up against the question of what we are going to do with our State finances. The remarkable thing about the present situation is this—it is not because the present Government have not received a mandate from the people to at least make an effort towards reducing the deficit. We came to this House over three years ago, with a big majority, pledged definitely to a taxation policy. In fact an overwhelming majority of the people of West Australia said to us, "Go into Parliament, impose direct taxation upon us, the people, in the form of income tax and land tax." The land tax and the income tax was brought in. Did it become law? Was the mandate of the people carried out, and if not, why not? The Treasurer, by interjection to-night, when the hon. member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) was speaking, touched the spot exactly when he referred to the Upper

House, which has blocked and still blocks the people of West Australia from taxing themselves in a way that they think fit, and from raising revenue which would do something, at least, towards reducing the deficit, of which everybody is now complaining.

The Premier: They are doing it now.

Mr. CARPENTER: I want to stress this point because it has been lost sight of, and, for the reasons I will mention, it has led to very much of the present confusion. Not only did the present Government during the last Parliament endeavour to strengthen the finances by carrying out the express wish of the people who were to find the money, or their share of it, but they are now faced with the present emergency. A few months ago they brought in, what was to my mind, a somewhat heroic proposal for an emergency tax. This House passed it. The other House, however, again refused to allow it to become law. An election took place and that taxation measure was the issue of the election. No attempt was made to hide it or hush it up. On every platform Liberal candidates condemned and our people advocated this taxation; and the people by a large majority of the electors sent a majority to this House to pass that taxation. If the people half a dozen times over send us back again with an express mandate to put on a tax, and the hon. gentlemen in another place do not approve it, the deficit will still stand. We may talk till we are black in the face, and offer suggestions and criticism, but you will still have the deficit, so long as we have an obstacle to keeping the people from getting what they want. In this House we have the responsibility of raising revenue, and squaring the finances; but another place, which has no responsibility, has the power of blocking our proposals. Contrast that position with what obtains in the Federal arena. There the people elect both Houses, and when the people of Australia speak, their voice is heard and their mandate obeyed; and the Government of the day, representing the people, have no trouble whatever in carrying their financial proposals. The re-

sult to-day is that with a truly democratic form of Government the Federal Treasurer is not in any financial difficulty. He simply asks the people for the money he wants, and he gets it. I will not stress the point that the people of Australia are more and more inclined towards unification. They say, "Give us a Parliament in what you call our own sovereign State, which will respond to our wishes, and we will stand by the State; but so long as you insist upon having a Chamber which thwarts our will we must turn to the only place where that will is obeyed." That feeling is driving the people of Western Australia and of other parts of Australia into unification almost in spite of themselves. The Federal power grows day by day, and it must continue to grow so long as the present position exists. I would say to my hon. friend of the Country party that if they want to see prosperity and to see the finances of the State put on as healthy a basis as in the Federal arena, they must help us to remove the obstacle I have spoken of. I want to say that, as our efforts to square the finances in the way in which the people of Western Australia have given us a mandate to do have been blocked, we are resorting to all sorts of expedients, offering suggestions, and seeking the line of least resistance, instead of attacking the great obstacle with the object of removing it. We have had an example of this to-night in the suggestion by the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas), who thinks he has discovered a gold mine in one of our State trading concerns, the railways. I have to express a strong objection to making any of the State utilities a means of indirect taxation. I am an advocate of State control of industries and services for the reason that I believe we get better and cheaper service from a State-controlled industry than from one controlled by private enterprise, and that is why the trend of public thought to-day is towards an extension of the functions of Government in that direction.

Mr. Nairn: Not in this State.

Mr. Bolton: All over the world,

Mr. CARPENTER: I am sorry that the Premier appeared to be listening sympathetically to the siren voice of the member for Bunbury while he was telling him how much revenue he could raise by putting an extra twopence on his railway tickets. It would be fatal to the policy of State control if any Government, and especially a Labour Government, were to listen to promptings of that sort.

The Premier: It is not a question of Labour or Liberal Government.

Mr. CARPENTER: There should be a difference in their policy. Are we going to do something which would destroy our own policy? We should be undoing something we have been endeavouring to do in the past.

Mr. Bolton: Do you believe in making the railways pay?

Mr. CARPENTER: I believe in the railways paying, and having a margin for an emergency; but I do not believe in extorting thousands of pounds more than necessary from the people.

The Premier: The railways are not paying at present.

Mr. CARPENTER: I have here the report of the Commissioner of Railways for the year ended 30th June, 1914, in which the following financial statement appears — 1914: working expenses, £1,572,008; interest on loan capital, £524,449; interest on carriages, £17,192; interest on railway stores fund, £14,202; Total, £2,128,851, less credit balance £128,160. Alongside of that you have to put the fact that we have a number of new railways which could not be expected to pay yet.

The Premier: They should return us some revenue, but they are returning us none.

Mr. CARPENTER: If there had been anything like normal conditions this year we should not have had to face the big deficit which is our worry to-night.

Mr. Willmott: It would not have made any difference in that statement.

Mr. CARPENTER: The net profit during the last five years—

The Premier: There have been no profits,

Mr. CARPENTER: The net credit balances, as the Commissioner calls them.

The Premier: Sinking fund has to be added on the amount which we expended on the railways.

Mr. CARPENTER: The net credit balance, accordance to the Commissioner's report, amounted to £623,424.

Member: Where has it gone?

The Premier: To pay sinking fund on capital expended.

Mr. CARPENTER: Whether the revenue for any one year covers the liability for that year or not does not affect my point. I am replying to the proposition of the member for Bunbury that we should levy additional charges through the railways, and thus indirectly tax the people to bring in revenue. If the railways are not paying—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must address the Chair.

Mr. CARPENTER: We have to take into consideration the fact that with our railway construction policy it is impossible to expect new lines are going to be immediately profitable. The question is are the present old-established railways paying. I think they are. I am dealing with the question whether the revenue from railways is sufficient to pay all charges, or whether we should have a policy such as suggested by the member for Bunbury of further taxation.

Mr. Smith interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I will not have these conversations. I do not mind an interjection, but I will not allow any member to carry on a lengthy conversation as the member for North Perth is doing.

Mr. Smith: I apologise, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARPENTER: I wish merely to make my protest against the proposition, to which I think the Treasurer listened too sympathetically, that we should attempt to square the ledger by increased indirect taxation in the form of increased railway fares, while allowing the real obstacle that stands in our way to remain.

Mr. Heitmann: You might suggest how the obstacle can be removed.

Mr. CARPENTER: It can, and will be done some day. The member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas), speaking on the railway question, advanced an argument which I noticed was accepted with some avidity by my friends on the Opposition cross-benches. The argument was that because we were paying a higher fare on the country railways than was being paid in the metropolitan area therefore the fares in the metropolitan area should be raised to the level of those on the country lines.

Mr. James Gardiner: There was no acceptance of that policy on these benches.

Mr. CARPENTER: There were some approving nods.

Mr. James Gardiner: I hope we are not to be held responsible for nods. Are you satisfied that the suburban fares are bearing a legitimate portion of the increased wages?

Mr. CARPENTER: I am not sufficiently acquainted with the details of railway expenditure to have an opinion on the point.

Mr. Bolton: I am convinced they are.

Mr. CARPENTER: If they are not, let the Railway Commissioner tell us so. The cost and the earnings per train mile are set out each year in the Commissioner's report, and it ought to be a very simple operation for the Railways' accountant to say "We are running so many train miles in the metropolitan area in the course of the year. It has cost so much, and we have carried so many passengers, which has produced so much, and there was a deficit on the cost."

Mr. Heitmann: A good stiff deficit, too.

Mr. CARPENTER: If it is so, as one living in the metropolitan area, I say, make the railways pay. I do not believe the people in the metropolitan area want to sponge on the rest of the State and get railway fares at less than the actual cost.

Mr. Heitmann: Nor do I see why a man earning 8s. a day in Bunbury should pay more than the man earning 8s. in Perth.

Mr. CARPENTER: If it costs a penny more per mile to run the trains in the Bunbury district we are not inflicting any injury on that man by making him pay what it costs. I am not talking altruism to-night, I am talking business.

Mr. Heitmann: It is a most extraordinary policy.

Mr. James Gardiner: Increased freights on superphosphates represent £22,000 out of the £112,000 increased wages.

Mr. CARPENTER: And they tell me that even now the carriage of fertiliser is unprofitable.

The Premier: And will be more than ever so this year, because there will be no back loading.

Mr. CARPENTER: If there is any branch of the business which is not paying, the Commissioner ought to point out to the House in his annual report where the leakage is. We could then say to the Treasurer "You have a leakage there; stop it," and he could do that by simple regulation.

Mr. Willmott: Are you aware that timber is carried for 3s. a ton as against the 12s. 4d. charged for the farmers' produce, backloading?

Mr. CARPENTER: No, I am not, but I am sure that the farmer, when he gets a fair deal, is prepared to give it, and prepared to pay to the State the value of any service he receives. That is all I want. I do not want to see the farmer penalised by having to pay more in fares and freights than they are worth to him merely for the sake of wiping out the present debt. Let me say a word in reference to the adoption of the same policy in other directions. For many years the people in the Fremantle district have been getting their water supply at a fairly cheap rate. Recently the Government have connected our Fremantle water supply by a pipe with a much more costly system in and around Perth and, as a result, we have not got a good water supply yet. There are times when one cannot get a bucketful in half an hour, notwithstanding which the Government have raised our rates by 100 per cent. Since the 1st January the people of

Fremantle have been paying 1s., where previously they paid 6d. It is not a question as to whether we are too heavily taxed, but whether we are getting what we pay for. We took a deputation to the Minister, and he pointed out that we were getting some saving in other directions, that the completion of the sewerage meant that we were getting a slight reduction in the cost of our sanitary system. I could not see any logic in it, but I have since had a reply saying that for the reasons he gave to the deputation the Minister cannot reduce the rate. I regret that the Government have fallen from their high estate to the extent that they are making a public utility the means of taxing the people of one part of the State in taking from them more than the value of the services rendered.

Mr. Heitmann: In Geraldton the people pay 1s. and get no water at all.

Mr. CARPENTER: It means that whereas a man in a business house in the main street of Fremantle has been paying £5 a year and using £2 worth of water, he has now to pay £10 a year and will not get any more water. I regret very much that I have to support a Government which have adopted a policy of that sort. I am not going to let the matter rest, and I hope something will be done either to force the Government to give us the value of what they are taking from us or to reduce the rates. Speaking generally I recognise that the present financial position is not satisfactory, but I see no necessity for scare or panic. Other States of Australia have been in tighter places than we are in to-day. I was one of many hundreds driven out of Victoria 20 years ago as a result of a disastrous boom policy which brought about the inevitable reaction. Because we have here as good resources as they have in Victoria I believe we shall weather the storm.

Mr. Heitmann: Victoria is the richest State in Australia.

Mr. CARPENTER: I think not. I am quite sure the people and the resources of this State will be equal to overcoming the present difficulty, and before the next two years are over I hope there will be

such an increase in our national wealth and income that the troubles of to-day will have disappeared.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [10.11]: While I do not intend to deal comprehensively with the elaborate figures submitted in the Budget, I wish to touch upon one or two items. But, before getting on with them I desire to say a word in reply to some of the criticism offered. Boiled down, the criticism from the Opposition has been directed mainly against our State enterprises, and has been restricted to the pounds, shillings, and pence aspect. Members opposite have not taken into consideration the indirect benefit those enterprises may have conferred on the community generally.

Mr. Smith: Of what benefit is the State brickworks?

Mr. MUNSIE: There is no greater consumer of bricks in Western Australia than the State itself. The mere starting of the State brickworks had the effect of reducing the price of bricks to the consumer by 5s. per thousand. I know that of my own knowledge. The principal bugbears of our friends opposite are undoubtedly the State steamers and the State butchers' shops. I believe the State butchers' shops and even the State steamers, with all the loss attributed to them, have been an actual saving to the people of Western Australia. I reiterate that statement here to-night.

Mr. Male: You are quite wrong.

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not, of course, see eye to eye with the hon. member interjecting. We have had many complaints as regards the small butchers; their claims have been brought before us times out of number; when the State butcheries were started, we were told it meant the ruin of the small butchers. However, I can prove conclusively by documentary evidence that since the establishment of the State meat shops of Western Australia I have had meat delivered at my door for 1d. a pound less than I paid prior to the establishment of those State shops. I should mention that I have never bought even one pound of meat from the State butcheries. Generally, as to the results of the State butcheries and the

State steamers, it has to be borne in mind that no State of the Commonwealth has had such bad seasons in its pastoral area as Western Australia has had recently, and that nevertheless there is no State in the Commonwealth in which meat has remained so nearly at the same price as has been the case in Western Australia.

Mr. James Gardiner: But there has been a great sacrifice. The farmers have been selling lamb wholesale at 4d. per lb., and your wife has to pay 9d. per lb. for the same meat.

Mr. MUNSIE: I am prepared to admit that unfortunately the farmer has been compelled to place his sheep on the market because he had not the means of feeding them. I admit that, but I wish to inform the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) that many months prior to that unfortunate necessity arising meat in that particular district had been reduced in price. I only regret that State butchers' shops have not been extended to Kalgoorlie and Boulder in order to confer on the 30,000 or 40,000 people of this State residing on those goldfields the same benefit as the people of the metropolitan area have derived. I am prepared to say, even, that the Government would have done good business if they had extended the system of State butcheries to every reasonably large centre of population. Next, I wish to say a few words on the criticisms of other members. The leader of the Country party made one or two statements with which I am in entire agreement. First, that in the hon. member's opinion the Treasurer should make a public announcement that the Treasury was closed for all demands other than demands for bare necessities. The leader of the Country party pointed out that these are strenuous times we are passing through. While entirely agreeing with that statement also, I wish to know who is to be the judge as to what is a bare necessity and what is not. If the Premier is to be guided on this point by the speeches of hon. members who rise in this Chamber to address themselves to any and every item reduced on the Estimates, then I

undertake to say that before the Estimates are passed the Premier will have learned that every item cut down represents a bare necessity which ought on no account to be reduced. Every member whose constituents are affected by a reduction will, in all good faith, maintain that his case is a perfectly just one, and that it is the other fellow who should be reduced. Unquestionably, it is a calamity if votes are reduced; but, wishing to be fair, I am bound to admit that under existing conditions the Treasurer must cut somewhere.

The Premier: Wait till you get the Loan Estimates. You have heard nothing as yet.

Mr. MUNSIE: It is probable that I myself will have some just reason for complaint, because I have to look after the interests, not only of my own constituents, but also those of the Premier's constituents. I may mention that the district represented by the Premier and two other goldfields members besides myself has not been allocated a penny piece on these Estimates. I wish to tell the Premier here that, by reason of the fact of his holding the Premiership, his constituents write to me stating that they know their own member is a very busy man and therefore they are sending their requests along to me. Another statement made by the leader of the Country party was that the people must be taught to rely more on their own resources; and he went further, and said that as a matter of fact certain sections of the community were practically being spooned by the Government. With the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas), I am perfectly convinced that the people of Western Australia, in order to tide over present difficulties, must rely more on their own resources and lean less on the Government than they have been accustomed to do. Otherwise, the people of Western Australia are going to put their Government in the bankruptcy court.

Member: It is there now.

Mr. MUNSIE: No. While the national debt of Western Australia is 30 millions,

the credit of Western Australia is good for 60 millions. I have still sufficient faith in Western Australia to believe that this State could borrow as much money again as it now owes, and yet be a long way from the insolvency court. However, as to the necessity for relying more on oneself and leaning less on the Government, I wonder whether the leader of the Country party would apply that statement to the people whom he more especially represents in this House, namely the farmers of this State. I do not put that question in any disparaging manner as regards the farmer; but I wish to say that no Government, either in the history of Western Australia or, I believe, in the history of the British dominions, have ever done more for the farming community than has been done by the Sead-
dan Government.

Mr. James Gardiner: Since I have been here, that is absolutely correct.

Mr. MUNSIE: I doubt whether such assistance as has been rendered by the present Government to the farmers can be paralleled in the history of the British dominions.

Mr. James Gardiner: They tell me I ought not to assist the present Government, because of that.

Mr. MUNSIE: And yet the farmers and settlers are not satisfied. At all events, so far as the current session is concerned, I am to a certain extent pleased that I do not possess a bushy beard; because, if I had, it would have been filled with hay seeds long ago. I have been pleasantly surprised, sometimes, to find the doorways of Parliament House still open. To judge from the amount of talk there has been in this Chamber on wheat and hay and fodder, one might have expected to find the doors blocked with agricultural products any day. However, the farmers and settlers still remain unsatisfied, in spite of the assistance the present Government have rendered them. I desire to emphasise the point that I am prepared to go as far as the legitimate necessities of the farming community render necessary, or possibly even a little further, because I recognise and realise the

difficulties of the farmer, and because I perceive that if the Government do not give adequate assistance to the farmers at this juncture—although I have no agriculturists, or only very few, in my constituency—we are going to have the farmers competing for employment with the men engaged in other industries of Western Australia. However, what I desire to draw special attention to is the resolution passed by the executive of the Farmers and Settlers' Association quite recently and reported in the *West Australian*. I wish to give the leader of the Country party and the members of that party generally, and also this Committee, to understand that I at all events am not prepared to go so far as that resolution suggests. The resolution reads as follows:—

The executive went into the matter of advances to distressed farmers, and were of opinion that owing to the high price of wheat and horse feed the load of putting in this year's crop was more than the farmer could bear, and that the community as a whole should bear part of the burden.

While the Government of the day have, in my opinion, done all that was possible to enable the farmer to obtain as cheap seed as it was possible for him to get—

Mr. Smith: No.

Mr. MUNSIE: I contend that if the Bill the Government introduced for assisting the farmer who has nothing to-day, had been passed into law in the form in which it was introduced, that measure would have done more to assist the man on the land than the Bill is capable of doing now. Irrespective of that, I say the Government have done everything possible for any Government to do by way of assisting the farmer. If, with the assistance the present Government are prepared to render the agricultural industry, the farmers cannot make a success, then the sooner the Government get the people out of the agricultural industry the better it will be for the State. I am prepared to maintain that the genuine farmer does not want or expect the general taxpayer to do what that resolution suggests should be done, and that is the reason why I men-

tioned the resolution in this House. I am perfectly satisfied that if the Government or the Treasurer were to be guided or influenced by that resolution, we should within a week find the same organisation carrying another resolution to the effect that the farmer should be supplied with his seed wheat free at the cost of the general taxpayer. It struck me, being the representative of a goldfields electorate, as peculiar that the very first item which the leader of the Country party criticised on the Estimates, when he was giving the Treasurer advice as to where to economise, was the supposed £8,000 loss on our State battery system.

Mr. James Gardiner: That was simply because they stood in that order in the Estimates.

Mr. MUNSIE: I realise that, but it is a strange coincidence that this item should have been the first mentioned. There is not a member who, after studying the records of our State battery system, will say that this enterprise has not more than justified itself even at a loss of £8,000. The introduction and erection of State batteries was practically responsible for the discovery of two of the first fields in Western Australia, namely, Meekatharra and Sandstone. On top of that the system has produced gold to the value of over £5,000,000, and though it may not have been a direct benefit to the State, it has been of enormous advantage indirectly.

The Premier: To the State, but not to the Treasury.

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes.

Mr. James Gardiner: I was not criticising any indirect advantage to the State.

Mr. MUNSIE: I am aware of that fact. I regret to have to criticise the remarks of an hon. member who cannot possibly be present to-night. However, I cannot address myself to these Estimates without commenting on some remarks by the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Gilchrist). The hon. member was fairly logical in his advocacy of putting to greater use the lands adjoining existing railways before going mad on building new lines. I am in accord with him; something should be done to compel holders of land in close proximity to railways to put it to its best use. I

take exception to the hon. member's remarks in reference to the Electoral Department and the work of various political organisations. As regards the goldfields district of the Labour organisation, the secretary of the central executive could produce a letter from the department complimenting that body on the splendid assistance rendered in enrolling electors. While it is probable that those associated with all political organisations go a little too far and do things which they ought not to do, it was ill-advised of the hon. member to criticise such organisations generally when such splendid voluntary work has been done by some of them to assist the department. Another remark by the hon. member leads me to believe that he makes speeches to suit occasions.

The Premier: He is a true Liberal.

Mr. MUNSIE: The member for Gascoyne waxed fairly eloquent on the wonderful possibilities of the North-West and urged on the Government the necessity for encouraging settlement in every direction. He described the waste lands of the North-West as being a menace to the Commonwealth and the Empire. He pictured hordes of Asiatics in close proximity to our northern shores, and referred to the yellow peril. He went on to say it was all very well to applaud our allies of different nationalities at the present time, but our allies of to-day might be our enemies of to-morrow. Then he proceeded to warn the Government to be careful and to do their utmost to people the great North-West and thus protect it against the Asiatic evil. He was emphatic that the Government should do everything possible to prevent Asiatics from gaining a footing in the State. Yet only a little time ago in this very Chamber, while discussing the pearling industry, the hon. member stated—

I have no patience with the humbug and hypocrisy that indignantly object to building up an Australian industry and establishing settlement in the North-West upon a firm basis by the employment of Asiatics.

The Premier: You cannot say it so dramatically as he did.

The Minister for Mines: It is a very sudden twist.

Mr. MUNSIE: It is a sudden twist when we bear in mind his eloquence in his latest speech in support of peopling the North-West. I do not believe the Asiatic evil is the menace suggested by the hon. member. If an army of a million men were landed in the North-West they could not possibly be brought to Perth. Having thus dealt with the remarks of other hon. members, I wish to say a few words on the mining vote. I would draw attention to the abnormal assistance which has been given to the agricultural industry, and to the surprising fact that the mining vote this year has been cut down by £7,099. I hope the fact of my having drawn attention to this matter will result in the Minister taking care that the vote is maintained in future. During my 17 years' experience in this State there has been no time when the Government should do more to assist the industry than at this stage. At no time during that period have we had such splendid rains right through the whole of our goldfields as have fallen this year. It was almost useless for the last two or three years, so far as the Eastern Goldfields were concerned, and those beyond them, to grant assistance to men to go out prospecting, inasmuch as there was practically no water for them to get anywhere. But the splendid rains we have had throughout the goldfields have been the means of providing water everywhere. I am pleased the Minister for Mines has given his assurance that he is not going to turn down any genuine request from prospectors to go out prospecting; that where it has been possible for him to do so he has assisted prospectors during the past two or three months. There was no better opportunity ever offered for any prospecting on the goldfields of Western Australia than at the present juncture. A word or two with regard to the Industries Assistance Bill which was before the House a little time ago and which has been commented on by all the leading newspapers in the metropolitan area. One of the chief objections taken to that Bill is

that it is to assist industries. Those who have drawn comparisons in regard to it say there is nothing to prevent the Government from loaning thousands of pounds, if they so desire, upon mining security which is practically valueless. I believe that the Minister, in introducing the Bill, emphasised the point that the inclusion of mining in the Bill was more to validate what the Government had already done in making advances on tin, lead and copper, than it was to grant assistance in the future. I believe it is the intention of the Government, if assistance is required for the mining industry, to grant assistance from the Mines Development Vote. Another matter to which I desire to draw attention, and one which has been referred to by the leader of the Country party (Mr. James Gardiner) is that affecting civil servants. A good deal has been said so far as civil servants are concerned. I interjected on that occasion that I was one of those who would assist the Premier to amend, or alter, the Civil Service Act. I repeat that here, and desire also to point out that under the existing circumstances it is almost impossible for an Administration, no matter who may comprise it, to carry its enterprises to a successful issue under our present Civil Service Act. So far as the civil servants are affected, I believe that drastic alterations are required, and that where the Ministry or the Government are endeavouring to put into operation their policy, a part of that policy is to advocate and encourage as far as possible the day labour system. I believe, however, we have an absolutely hopeless task in front of us unless we can secure an amendment of that Act. I am perfectly satisfied that in many instances the Government are not getting fair value for what they are paying. That means that the State is not getting the fair value. I say that advisedly and candidly, and I think that a considerable alteration can be brought about if we amend that Act in the desired direction. I know of an instance—if I had to prove this before a court of law I could not do so, although I am just as confident that this state of affairs exists as I am of being

present in this Chamber to-night—of a civil servant in the State who had charge of men who were working on the day labour system, prior to the election, and who delighted in bringing people down and pointing out to them, or rather attempting to show them, what it cost the State to get this work done by day labour, although he was the very man who was supervising it. I do not blame the men, but I blame this man who should have seen that the employees did a fair thing, and who, if they did not, should have got rid of them. A man who allows a thing like that to go on, the Government should have the right to get rid of, and if this had been hanging over him he would have seen that a fair thing was done by the State. One hon. member to-night in the course of his speech said it was ridiculous for the Premier to state that he could not get rid of a man under the Civil Service Act, and went on to refer to several men who had been removed but who did not come under that Act. The hon. member did not, however, tell the House that the State had to pay pensions in these instances. We could get rid of every civil servant to-morrow if the country was in a position to pay pensions, and we could thus put other people in their places.

Mr. Taylor: Not unless they were over the age.

Mr. MUNSIE: The State could get rid of them and pay pensions to them. Of course, so far as getting rid of civil servants under the Civil Service Act, is concerned, it is a difficult job. The Government are making an effort to do something so far as the finances of the State are concerned, and have issued a mandate that where possible all Government employees shall be brought under a 44 hours week. I am not going to say, while I deplore the fact that it has been found necessary to bring that about, that I do not believe the Government had any other alternative, or if they had it would have been more disastrous in my opinion. The Government were faced with the position of having to do something. I think the hon. member for Bunbury outlined the case very well,

when he said that prior to the election the Government foresaw that it had to get revenue from somewhere. They suggested a method of getting it by introducing a proposal that meant direct taxation. It meant, in my opinion at all events, a fair, just, and equitable taxation, but the measure was lost and the Government could not get taxation by that means. As outlined by Mr. Carpenter, on every occasion since the Scaddan Government came into power, they have sent up a taxation proposal in accordance with the policy of the Government, but it has been turned down by another place, whilst we are blamed for the enormous deficit. Whilst I give the civil servants all credit for the volunteer scheme they introduced during the time the emergency war tax was brought in, and whilst I give credit to those who are still paying up their proportions, I say that under existing conditions the Government are compelled to bring in this 44 hours week, but although the men on the bottom rung have been reduced to 44 hours a week the civil servant is to be left where he is. That is the anomaly of the thing, and our reason why the Civil Service Act should be amended. The civil servant will meet you with the argument, "Why reduce the civil service when you are not touching the man working for a private employer, who gets practically as much as the civil servant?" And I admit he has logical ground for his complaint. But if it is a good thing to introduce the 44 hour week so far as the wages staff is concerned, surely it is an equally good thing to introduce it in respect of the salaried staff. So far as private employment goes, there has been reduction of hours in a considerable number of cases.

Member: Private employees do not hold permanent positions.

Mr. MUNSIE: Unfortunately within three weeks of the outbreak of war, several large firms in Perth, who in my opinion were in a position to do better, immediately resorted to putting as many as possible of their employees on half time, and I am sorry to say that in many instances they picked out girls getting

15s. per week. The Government is faced with the position of having to adopt one of three courses. They have a certain amount of money with which to run the State; they have a certain number of employees, and they have either to reduce the hours and keep all on, to reduce the number of hands and pay the same rate of wages, or keep on all hands and reduce wages generally. Of those three alternatives, the one the Government have adopted, I consider the wisest.

Member: What was that?

Mr. MUNSIE: To keep the rate of wages as they are at present and reduce the hours of working—with, I admit, a corresponding reduction in wages. I believe that the general run of employees of the Government are prepared to accept the reduction to 44 hours per week—

Mr. James Gardiner: Provided it is general in its application.

Mr. MUNSIE: Quite so. But the Government cannot possibly make the application general outside the service. I believe the mandate has been issued that wherever it is possible it is intended to make the application general throughout the civil service.

The Premier: You cannot interfere with anyone under the Public Service Act.

Member: Would you alter that?

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes; I would quickly, if only to bring about a general 44 hours week. It is a reasonable proposition, but here again the Government are up against difficulties. They have to seek information from heads of departments—and I hope I am not doing the heads of departments an injustice when I say that in several instances departmental heads have put up excuses or endeavoured to show that it is impossible to bring down the hours to 44 a week working five days. I hope the Government will take a firm stand and that overseers, foremen, and everybody else whom it is possible to place on the same level, will be placed on the same level as the workmen. There is one other matter to which I wish to refer. There has been no time in the history of Western Australia or

in the history of the Arbitration Court in this State when workers should be more thankful than they should be at the present time that we have an Arbitration Act on our statute-book. I wish to emphasise this matter, because I have heard it commented on freely, and have heard hot criticism from our own party, not in this House but from the rank and file outside. Immediately the war broke out, and it was known that there was going to be a bad season, and that merchants were likely to lose money, an agitation was started that the arbitration awards be set aside, and the employees left to the tender mercy of employers. I am pleased indeed that that was not done. With regard to the question of subsidies, I do not intend criticising the Government for reducing the subsidies by 50 per cent. I realise that something has to be done. If, as I believe, it is the intention of the Government to pay subsidy at the rate of 50 per cent. in equal proportion to municipalities and roads boards, in my opinion it would be fairer and better for the State, and better for the individual localities, if the Government instituted a preferential system, giving in greater proportion to roads boards than to municipalities.

The Premier: The subsidy in the pound is greater in the case of roads boards.

Mr. MUNSIE: I realise that. But the cut from the municipalities should be greater than the cut from the roads boards.

Member: Why so?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MUNSIE: The reason why I urge road boards should get a greater percentage than municipalities is because municipalities in nine cases out of ten are in a position to borrow money which roads boards are not.

Member: There is no money to borrow.

Mr. MUNSIE: The member for Can-ning (Mr. Robinson) drew attention to-night to the fact that the subsidy to the King's Park board has been reduced by £500. I want here to again protest—I have protested, I believe, on every estimates produced since I have been in the House, and I am going to protest

emphatically again—that although the King's Park vote has been reduced by £500, the amounts on the Estimates for parks and reserves are not fairly divided. The amount, which includes the King's Park vote, is something like £3,000, of which sum the King's Park board and the metropolitan parks take £2,475, leaving the rest of Western Australia only £525 between them.

Mr. James Gardiner: What have they done for your parks?

Mr. MUNSIE: Practically given us nothing. Only £525 for all the rest of the parks in W.A.! If money has to be provided for parks and reserves, a more generous share should be allotted to our far country districts, for in the metropolitan area there are very many resorts, including the river frontages, whereas on the goldfields we have only the little Railway Park in Boulder, Victoria Park at Kalgoorlie, and the two racecourses. While I have no desire to see King's Park altogether deprived—I am gratified that succeeding authorities should have saved so splendid a national park from all encroachment—I do not want to see £2,475 out of £3,000 allocated to the metropolitan area while the rest of the country gets practically nothing. The Fire Brigades Act requires amendment. In the first place no board should have control, as the Fire Brigades Board has, of from £30,000 to £60,000 of public money per annum, unless provision is made for appeal against the decisions of such a board. It may be said that the money controlled and expended by the Fire Brigades Board is not wholly public funds, that the local authorities pay three-eighths of the amount, the insurance companies three-eighths, and the Government the balance. But no one will deny that, reduced to the last analysis, it means that the people pay the lot. Recently the board decided to abolish two volunteer fire brigades, one in South Kalgoorlie and the other in East Kalgoorlie. I am not going into the question of whether the board was justified in the abolition of those two brigades, but I will put before the Committee certain facts in support of my contention that

provision for an appeal from the board's decisions is urgently required. The residents of one of the two localities referred to, believing that the abolition of the volunteer brigade would adversely affect their insurance risks, undertook to subscribe sufficient money to maintain a hose and reel in the locality and to provide shed accommodation for the purpose, in order that the volunteer system might continue in the district. However, the board has declined the proposal, and so it cannot be put into effect without liability to a fine. It has been stated that the abolition of those two brigades has not interfered with the insurance risks in the respective localities, but I give that an emphatic denial. There are at least twelve people resident within a quarter of a mile of the South Kalgoorlie fire station who within a fortnight of the resolution being carried by the board, had their fire policies returned to them, each with an accompanying note stating that if the property-owner called at the insurance office the balance of his premium would be returned to him. I spoke of this to an insurance man, and his reply was, "That is only one company; there are others that will insure." Since then, however, every insurance company operating in Kalgoorlie has been approached, and not one of them will accept the risk. Notwithstanding this, those persons still have to pay their quotas towards the maintenance of the board, both through the Government and through the local governing body. Nor is that the worst phase of the position. We have there twelve houses that have been insured for years past, but which cannot be insured to-day, although no reasons for this are given. If any of these properties should be destroyed by fire, the owner is liable, under Section 77, Subsection 3 of the Act to recoup the board for expenses in connection, with extinguishing the fire, to the extent of one-eighth of what the property could have been insured for. If that is not a ridiculous state of affairs I do not know what is.

Hon. J. Mitchell: If, as you say, the properties cannot be insured for any

sum whatever, the one-eighth recoup to the board would amount to precisely nothing.

Mr. MUNSIE: If the owner had £25 in the Savings Bank the Fire Brigade could garnishee it, notwithstanding that the owner could not possibly get his house insured. It is no use to talk about his not being able to pay the money. The Fire Brigades Board are empowered to garnishee the money.

Hon. J. Mitchell: If he cannot insure, there would be nothing to garnishee.

Mr. MUNSIE: The hon. member does not understand the position. I am trying to point out the injustice of such a method of subsidising the Fire Brigades Board—subsidising the board under a section of its Act from which there is no appeal. In any area whatsoever, irrespective of whether insurance is obtainable or not, if a fire occurs, the board can charge the owner up to one-eighth of the value at which he might have insured, providing the House is worth over £50. I have nothing further to say on the Estimates; but I do trust that hon. members criticising the Government either within this Chamber or outside it will endeavour to make their criticism fair as far as possible. Finally, I wish to compliment the leader of the Country party upon his speech on these Estimates—a speech which, while pretty severe on the Government in some directions, yet afforded Ministers, at all events in my opinion, some sound and helpful advice.

Progress reported.

BILL—BLACKBOY AND ZAMIA PALM LICENSE.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [11.14] in moving the second reading said: This Bill, which has been distributed to hon. members, merely provides that the Minister for Lands may enter into an agreement with Henry Rowley in the terms of the draft agreement set out in the Schedule, for the purpose of enabling Mr. Rowley to exploit waste lands of the Crown by

the removal from such lands of blackboy and zamia palm and by the extraction of certain commercial products from these plants. The draft agreement provides that Mr. Rowley, although granted this right, shall have no exclusive right, but that the Government may issue similar licenses to other persons or companies to operate on the same areas for the same purposes. Further, the agreement stipulates that any land in respect of which the proposed license shall be granted may, notwithstanding the license to Mr. Rowley, to be set apart as a reserve or may be leased as a pastoral area or granted as a timber leasehold or a saw-mill permit area or utilised under any other of the conditions of the land Acts.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Under conditional purchase also?

The PREMIER: Yes; absolutely, under all the conditions provided by the Land Acts. The agreement stipulates that Mr. Rowley shall within twelve months from the date of completion of the agreement expend a sum of not less than £1,000 in providing plant and machinery and so forth, and that in the next twelve months he shall similarly expend a further sum of £5,000. He is also called upon to pay the State a royalty of 6d. per ton on all blackboy and zamia palm removed from Crown lands, subject however to a refund to him, in respect of water contained in green blackboys, of such percentage of the royalty as the Minister for Lands may determine.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What is the reason for the refund?

The PREMIER: A great deal of blackboy might be removed that would not yield oil, and the Government do not desire Mr. Rowley to pay for what is of no use to him. If he puts the blackboy to commercial use, then of course he will have to pay for it.

Mr. Smith: And anyone else can obtain the same concession?

The PREMIER: Yes. The proper safeguards are provided to ensure that statements, verified by statutory declarations, shall be made from time to time by the licensee, as to the quantities of

blackboy and zamia palm removed under the license; and if the royalty is in arrear, or if any breach of the agreement is committed, the license may be cancelled. The agreement also provides that any dispute which may arise under it shall be submitted to arbitration in accordance with the provisions of the Arbitration Act, 1895. These are the principal points of the Bill. Hon. members will no doubt recognise that the agreement is thoroughly fair to the State, and certainly not in any way injurious. On the contrary, it is decidedly of advantage to the State if Mr. Rowley or his company expend capital in developing a new industry. Mr. Rowley has certain patent rights for the extraction of commercial products from blackboy and zamia palm. At all events, some good will result to the community from the starting of the proposed work, even if the Government do not receive royalty.

Mr. Smith: It is hardly fair that if Mr. Rowley enters upon operations in a district, other people should come in.

The PREMIER: His patents protect him, and he is not nervous about competition. Under the conditions I have stated, the House will, I trust, agree to the second reading of this measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [11.18]: I congratulate the Government on having secured this agreement with Mr. Rowley. At the same time, it seems to me that the Government might have taken power under this measure to grant similar licenses to other people. Had they done so, they would have avoided the necessity for coming down to the House for authority in the event of another license being required. They might have taken power similar to that which they have under the Land Acts as regards timber leases and so forth. Indeed, the Government might amend the Bill in that direction. It will be a very good thing if the zamia palm is utilised, and the same remark applies to the blackboy, which at present is of no utility to the country.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [11.20]: In supporting the second reading I wish to express the hope that the Premier will not take notice of the remarks of the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) that he should provide power to grant other licenses without obtaining the permission of the House. If the Premier took this step the hon. member would be the first to criticise it. If any rights are to be given over this or any other plant in Western Australia, it is the duty of Parliament, representing the people, to say whether leases shall be granted and under what conditions they shall be granted. The people who intend to operate on the blackboy and zamia are prepared to put a lot of money into the venture, and the Premier is to be congratulated upon having given them this opportunity. It provides additional evidence that when private enterprise seriously attempt anything, the present Government are willing to stand behind them.

Mr. WILLMOTT (Nelson) [11.21]: I have pleasure in supporting the Bill. Those hon. members who have visited Mr. Rowley's laboratory and seen his work in this connection will have been delighted that such a pest as the zamia palm is at last to be turned to good account. Every sort of product imaginable from the whisky, in which the member for Subiaco takes such an interest to cattle feed can be obtained from these plants. Considering the great variety of products which it has been discovered can be manufactured from the palm and the blackboy, it is remarkable that these plants have for so many years been regarded as merely useless excrescences to be chopped down and burnt. In view of Mr. Rowley's experiments, I have every reason to believe that these plants will prove to be a great source of wealth to the State.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS (Subiaco) [11.22]: I desire briefly to support the second reading. I have had the pleasure of visiting Mr. Rowley's laboratory and have viewed with very great interest more than the whisky which he can produce from the zamia palm. The product which I think will be of the greatest benefit

by far to the State is the tar. Mr. Rowley claims that he will be able to produce tar from this plant far more cheaply than it can be procured to-day. This is an important matter for those who take an interest in local governing affairs, because the requirements of tar impose a big drain on the finances of local authorities. If it is possible to supply this commodity at a reduced price, an enormous benefit will be conferred upon the State.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned 11.25 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 2nd February, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Workers' Homes Board, report for the year ended 30th June, 1914. 2, Inspector