

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Did you inquire how much time they had lost during the week?

Mr. LATHAM: I was living not far away and I know what was happening. We have received a certain amount of value from the discussion in that we have an understanding from the Government that they do not intend to extend the 44-hour concession in view of the state of the finances.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

#### Committee of Ways and Means.

The House having resolved into Committee of ways and means, Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

On motion by the Premier, resolved—

*That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1925, a sum not exceeding £805,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, £745,000 from the General Loan Fund, £10,500 from the Government Property Sales Fund, £3,000 from the Land Improvement Loan Fund, and £300,000 from the Public Account for the purpose of temporary advances to be made by the Colonial Treasurer.*

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

*Bill introduced, etc.*

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions, Bill introduced, passed through all stages, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

*House adjourned at 8.58 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Wednesday, 30th July, 1924.*

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

#### QUESTION—TRAMWAY EXTENSIONS.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to extend the tramway service from Wellington Street across the Horseshoe bridge? 2, If so, has consideration been

given to the dangerous state of the bridge for the present traffic? 3, Seeing that the Roe Street end of the bridge is the most dangerous crossing in the city, what provision will be made to make the approaches safe enough to carry the extra traffic?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes. 2, Due consideration has been given to the state of the bridge, which is considered safe to carry all tram and vehicular traffic. 3, All provision considered necessary by the department will be made.

#### MOTION—COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

*Eligibility of certain members to sit.*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.37]: I move—

*That Sessional Committees be appointed as follow:*

*Standing Orders—The President, Hon. J. W. Kirwan, Hon. A. Lovekin, Hon. J. Nicholson, and the Colonial Secretary.*

*Library Committee—The President, Hon. A. J. H. Saw, and Hon. H. Stewart.*

*Printing Committee—The President, Hon. A. Lovekin, and Hon. T. Moore.*

*House Committee—The President, Hon. J. Cornell, Hon. E. H. Gray, Hon. J. W. Kirwan, and Hon. G. Potter.*

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [4.38]: I take no exception to the motion as it stands, but there is a phase that has arisen recently in connection with these Committees that requires to be cleared up. It affected me on the last House Committee, I understand it affected Mr. Lovekin on the Standing Orders Committee, and probably it also affected other members. Last session I was a member of the House Committee. In the course of events I went up for re-election. I was successful, and declared a member of this House, and the writ was returned before the time had expired when I would have ceased to be a member had I been beaten. I received a notice to attend a meeting of the House Committee. I attended, but the ex-Speaker, who was Chairman of that Committee, gave me to understand that if I attended the meeting the question would be raised as to my eligibility to sit. That may be a perfectly correct process of reasoning, but it is a phase that, if my recollection serves me, has not previously been encountered. This House should definitely lay down that this is to be the position, or it is not to be. I admit that exceptional circumstances surrounded the situation, inasmuch as for the first time in the history of responsible government in Western Australia the dissolution of the Assembly occurred about the same time as the biennial election for this Chamber. In the ordinary course of events this would not occur again for six years. The situation that confronted me, as well as Mr. Lovekin, can, however, crop

up in two years' time, if any member of this Council, who happens to be standing for re-election, is also a member of one of the Sessional Committees. The Constitution provides that this shall be a continuous House, and that a third of its members shall retire every two years. It also provides that a member shall hold his seat in this House for a fixed term, namely, from the 22nd May in one year until the 21st May six years later. If at the expiration of six years he goes up for re-election the position I have outlined must occur. The Constitution also provides that the writs in the case of the ordinary biennial election of the Council must be returned on or before the 21st May, and there is no provision for an extension. This does not apply in the case of the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: On what date did the meeting you refer to take place?

Hon. J. CORNELL: It was after the 21st May.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Between the 21st May and the meeting of the House?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. The Constitution provides that a member of this House shall remain a member until the 21st May, whether he has been declared defeated or not. Mr. Lovekin was elected unopposed, and his election was declared on the day on which the nominations closed. To emphasise the position I would draw attention to the position of a member like Mr. Ardagh who was defeated. Mr. Brown was declared elected in his place on the 16th May, but Mr. Ardagh drew his salary until the 21st May and Mr. Brown did not actually become a member until the following day.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: If I had been in your position, I would have attended the meeting.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I desire to have the position cleared up. If any member of any one of the sessional committees is defeated at the poll two years hence, can he function, if he so desires, until he ceases to be a member of the House according to the Constitution? If that be so, it should be made perfectly clear.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [4.47]: I did not have the experience that Mr. Cornell has indicated because I was not summoned to any meeting. I can see some difficulty arising in instances such as Mr. Cornell has pointed out and especially in connection with the House Committee. During a dissolution, that Committee might go for months without being called together at all and that would be undesirable. I am aware that Mr. Kirwan is about to give notice of motion suggesting that we shall amend the Standing Orders and there is no doubt that that course is necessary in view of the amendments contained in the Constitution Act Amendment Act. At present the Standing Orders do not synchronise with the amended Constitution Act. I have been through the Standing Orders and made a number of notes regarding alterations that are necessary. The

point raised by Mr. Cornell is one that I had noted to bring before the Standing Orders Committee if it be decided to review the Standing Orders.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.49]: The point raised by Mr. Cornell is interesting and important.

Hon. J. Cornell: Four members will be affected similarly in two years' time.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: In the past, common sense has played an important part in connection with these committees. I remember what occurred in 1920 when I was a member of the Joint House Committee. There must be a quorum of four to enable that Committee to function. It is necessary for the House Committee to meet to pass the accounts for payment each month. Up to the time referred to by Mr. Cornell no difficulty had arisen regarding the Joint House Committee so long as four members were present. When a member is returned after an election and he happens to be a member of the Joint House Committee, he can, as I did, attend meetings of the Committee. Notwithstanding what the ex-Speaker may have done regarding Mr. Cornell and the meeting of the House Committee, I maintain that common sense must prevail. I have yet to learn that any hon. member has been in the wrong in the past, and I am glad that this matter has been brought forward so that it may be dealt with by the Standing Orders Committee.

Question put and passed.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £1,863,500.

*All Stages.*

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

*Standing Orders Suspension.*

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

*That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a Supply Bill to be received from the Legislative Assembly, and to pass through all its stages at one sitting.*

This is the course usually adopted in the early days of a session. The passing of the Supply Bill is a matter of urgency because we have reached the end of the month, and it is the desire of the Government that Supply be granted in order to pay salaries and meet other expenditure in a constitutional manner.

Question put and passed.

*Second Reading.*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.52] in moving the second reading said: It is unnecessary for me to give details as to the objects of the Bill. It will authorise the Government to apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund

£305,000; from the General Loan Fund, £745,000; from the Government Property Sales Fund, £10,500; from the Land Improvement Loan Fund, and from the Treasurer's Advance Account, £300,000, for ordinary Government purposes. The amount covered represents two-twelfths of last year's expenditure and is based on last year's estimated expenditure.

Hon. J. Duffell: And this authorisation will carry the Government on to the 31st August?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes. The Estimates will be brought down as early as possible. I cannot fix the date at present, but the Government departments have been busily preparing their Estimates for some time and before long they will be dealt with by Cabinet, and presented to Parliament as soon as possible. I move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [4.56]: I do not desire to hang up the passage of the Bill, which is the usual one presented at this stage of the session when the Government require the money for the purposes outlined by the Leader of the House. The motion for the second reading of the Bill, however, affords an opportunity for discussing some of the purposes for which Supply is being voted. I intend to confine my remarks to one issue, and that concerns the recent administrative act of the Government when they granted a 44-hour week to some Government workers. The electors of the South Province mainly comprise industrial workers. The action taken by the Government does not appeal to me in some respects. I happened to be in Menzies on the night prior to the general election and I heard one of the present Honorary Ministers, Mr. Munsie, outline the policy of the Government regarding this question when addressing a meeting on behalf of Mr. Panton. I single out Mr. Munsie for two reasons. In the first place he is a member of the Government to-day, and, secondly, at the time he made his statement, he was Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party. I have a shrewd idea that the policy as announced by Mr. Collier was the result, not of the deliberations of Mr. Collier, but of the Parliamentary Labour Party, who sifted out the various matters relating to the party's platform. In speaking on this question Mr. Munsie was one of the men best qualified to express a definite opinion. Here is the definite opinion he expressed when speaking at Menzies—

If this Government is returned to occupy the Treasury Bench, and it undoubtedly will be so returned, I have pledged my party to bring down a Bill to Parliament to make the 44-hour week a legal enactment, and if this should not be agreed to by Parliament, I give this definite and emphatic assurance—

No man on earth can be more emphatic than Mr. Munsie,

if the Bill does not become law the Government will, by administrative act, give every Government worker in this State 44 hours.

On the hustings I was asked if I favoured the 44-hour week. I said "Here is my position. The tribunal that fixes the wages of Jack the miner and Bill the navvy, as well as the hours of labour, will, so far as I am concerned, fix them also for the Government worker." What do we find? We find that that definite pre-election statement has been thrown aside. The electors were given to understand in various parts of the State that the first authority that would be sought would be that which would give the workers 44 hours. There has been a recantation. No one could have objected, not even the most hide-bound Conservative in this House could have lodged any valid objection to a Government introducing a Bill to enact something that that Government had declared on the hustings would be done in the event of its being returned to power. If that course had been followed, the whole situation would have been debated from A to Z and from all angles by both branches of the Legislature. But we get down to the position that what was proposed was carried out by an administrative act. I wish to exonerate the Leader of the House from culpability because he was not then a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party and therefore was in no way responsible for the definite assurance given by the various candidates at the elections. But while exonerating the Leader of the House, I cannot extend the same consideration to the honorary Minister in this House, Mr. Hickey, who was a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party and was one of those responsible for the announcement going forth as it did. Mr. Hickey was au-fait with the whole affair. We find now that the pre-election promise has gone by the board. We find also that Mr. Munsie's other promise, that all Government workers would get the 44 hours by an administrative act if Parliament refused to sanction the enactment in that direction, has not been fulfilled, because only some of the Government workers have had the 44 hours privilege extended to them. I would like the Honorary Minister, in defence of the 44 hours extension, to make out a definite case to this House when explaining why some Government workers were granted the 44 hours, and others were not. It has been a maxim of Labour ever since its inception that it should set a standard as a good employer. I agree with that. It should be a standard that other employers should emulate. But in differentiating as I have shown, the Government

have emphatically destroyed the standard that should have been set up. Who is receiving the benefit of the 44 hours? Take the railway service, and we find that the men on the permanent way are on the 44-hour week, but the chief men of all in that service, the men who are entrusted year in and year out with the safety of thousands of lives, I refer to the locomotive drivers, are not granted the 44-hours privilege. If there is one section in the railway service that should be granted this privilege, it is the locomotive engine-drivers. Their occupation demands that they should be given the greatest consideration, because of the nature of the work they have to perform. I will endeavour to show that the engine-drivers should be granted the 44 hours equally with the men employed on the pipe track digging trenches. Here is the position as I understand it. During the regime of the previous Government the workers employed by the State went to the Arbitration Court. It was then agreed that one award, which happened to be the railway award, should decide the question of hours and in many respects other positions, and from that, wages would be fixed and readjustments arrived at. The court, in its wisdom, gave to only certain sections of the railway service the 44 hours. The Government of the day then met the unions in conference and agreed that the principle of 44 hours should apply to all other Government workers. Time went on and the hours and conditions of labour again went into the melting pot. The Commissioner of Railways endeavoured to have the 44 hours a week taken from certain railway workers, but the court refused the application. Other Government workers went to the court and said that the 44-hour basis was practically the keystone of the argument. The court declared that 48 hours should be restored, and those hours were restored. Now we find that the 44-hour week applies to those awards covering the unions in regard to which the court said "You shall revert to the 48 hours." That decision of the Arbitration Court has been set aside. We know that the locomotive drivers, and many of the running staff of the railways, are working under an arbitration court award which provides for 48 hours' work. If the Government, by an administrative act, can set aside the mandate of the court, then why cannot it also set aside the award relating to the engine drivers and the running staff. There is no great objection to the Government, as an employer, granting 44 hours, because, more or less, they have a mandate from the electors to do so. But there is great objection, and it is an objection that requires a considerable amount of answering, to the differentiation that has taken place. It is argued that the introduction of the 44-

hour week will not prove any greater charge on the revenue and that we shall get the same return as we got from the 48-hour week.

Hon. E. H. Harris: That is only a figure of speech.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is not my daily experience why men for years past have been trying to get a 44-hour week. The plain reason why they want 44 hours is that they shall not have to work so long, and do so much. That is the correct reason. The men are honest in the attitude that they adopt. It is the actual position, view it as you like. Then comes the other side of the picture. Are we to have an Arbitration Court fixing wages and working conditions for one set of workers, while the Government set their own standard of wages and conditions, without reference to the Arbitration Court, for their own workers? There are but few Government workers in the province I represent, but so long as I remain in this Parliament I will not be a party to creating a set of circumstances which will give favourable conditions to a privileged section of the community, with detriment to that section of the community which I represent specially, and that other section which is represented by agricultural members, who, I hope, will have something to say on this subject. Western Australia has many good Government workers; in fact, they are nearly all good workers; I have nothing whatever to say against them. But, view those workers as you like, it is plain that not even 10 per cent. of them can be placed in the secondary industries category. They are an appendix that is necessary to the continuous working and the well-being of the government of the State, of the institutions controlled by the Government; but they produce no wealth—that is, wealth in the sense in which it is generally understood to be produced. Figuratively speaking, Government workers produce no more wealth than, say, a bagman employed by Sandover & Co., or any other firm.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Or the boss.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Or the boss. Government workers are not wealth producers. However, the point I wish to make is this: Take the mining community and the farming and pastoral communities of this State. They all produce primary wealth. The wealth produced by the gold-mining industry is in the form of a commodity carrying a fixed price, a price which cannot be pushed up or pushed down by the machinations of profiteers or any other persons. Gold having a fixed price, the gold miner, whenever he has asked for shorter hours or higher wages, has invariably been told the tale that the industry cannot bear a greater burden. I venture to declare that if the price of the gold-mining industry's commodity could be pushed up in the same way as the prices of commodities produced by other industries, the gold-miner would be in a much better position to-day. The fact

remains that the money needed to pay all Government workers, to give them the privileges they actually have, and this proposed additional privilege, can come from only one source, that of primary wealth production. I would be unfair to the section I represent in this Chamber if I did not stress that important aspect of the question. I say nothing whatsoever detrimental or derogatory to any Government worker in this State. I have always argued that the best advocate for better working conditions and higher wages is the worker himself. If he does not agitate for better conditions and bigger wages and shorter hours, I do not know who is going to agitate for him. But when it comes to getting those benefits from the source in which the 44-hour week originated, one enters upon an interesting phase. The improved conditions cannot be granted without detriment being caused to a larger section of the community than the section which benefits. And there is another aspect: Do the Government intend to deal with the 44-hour question in the only manner in which it can be logically dealt with, seeing that the pre-election promise has been thrown overboard? Is it proposed that the forthcoming Bill to amend the Arbitration Act shall provide that in any award delivered by the Arbitration Court no greater number of weekly hours shall be fixed than 44?

The Honorary Minister (Hon. J. W. Hickey): You will see that Bill when it comes along.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I want the Government of this State to be as honest as Mr. Theodore's Government has been. Mr. Theodore's Government told the full story at the proper time and in the proper place, and dealt with the question in an entirely logical manner, declaring that the Queensland Arbitration Act should be amended to provide for a working week of 44 hours. An amending Bill is to be introduced in Queensland directing that the Arbitration Court shall not in any industry fix a greater number of hours than 44 per week. Much may be said both for and against that proposal, but it represents a bold declaration of policy, and is therefore an action to be appreciated. Finally, let me ask whether, in the future, workers not favourably situated in Government employment will have to approach the Court as before for the fixing of their wages, hours, and other working conditions? Further, do the Government intend that in future no State employee shall go to the Arbitration Court but that the Government shall fix his wages, hours, and working conditions? Or is it the intention that Government workers shall go to the Arbitration Court for the fixing of all matters other than working hours? Such a position could not possibly be tolerated by any broad-minded and deep-thinking man in this community. With all due consideration for the Government workers, I say that so long as workers in private employ have to approach the Arbitration Court for the set-

tlement of wages, hours, and working conditions, it is only fair that Government workers should be similarly circumstanced.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY—Honorary Minister (Central) [5.24]: I certainly am not going to take advantage of this Supply Bill to enter into a debate on the 44-hour principle, or on the recent action of the Government in restoring the 44-hour privilege to certain workers who had enjoyed that right until quite recently. It is difficult to gather from Mr. Cornell's remarks whether he is for or against the 44-hour week, and whether he is for or against the action of the Government in this respect.

The PRESIDENT: The point is whether the 44-hour week is connected with the proposed expenditure of money with which we are dealing now.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: Quite so. As regards Mr. Munt, that gentleman is capable of taking the full responsibility of his actions. However, the present Premier said in his policy speech at Boulder—and every pledge made in that speech was repeated by myself, so far as that is concerned—that if the Labour Party were returned to power, the 44-hour week would be restored to those Government workers who had enjoyed that privilege previously and had lost it by a decision of the Arbitration Court. Effect was given to that pledge at the very first opportunity, and those Government employees who had been in possession of the 44-hour privilege previously had it restored to them almost immediately upon the Collier Government's accession to office.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Do you repudiate the principle of 44 hours for all workers in Western Australia?

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: Certainly not.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Why don't you put it into operation, then?

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: We put into operation what we promised, and we put it into operation at the earliest possible opportunity. The present Government are hardly three months old, but they have already carried out their promise regarding 44 hours.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Did you promise to go behind the action of the Arbitration Court?

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: The Collier Government promised exactly what they have done. If it comes to another arbitration, I venture to suggest that the question of hours will not be discussed by the Arbitration Court, and that the court will have a definite instruction to fix only wages and working conditions.

Hon. G. W. Miles: This Parliament will have a say in that.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: I refuse to be drawn into a debate on the 44-hours principle. I rose merely to reply to Mr.

Cornell's charge that certain pledges given by the Labour Party had not been fulfilled. This particular pledge was given plainly and deliberately, and it was honoured at the earliest possible moment.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is how you obtained your votes.

Hon. J. Duffell: What would happen if the Arbitration Court refused to ratify your Government's action?

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: The Arbitration Court would be given definite instructions. However, no such step has been taken up to date, and no such step is likely to be taken.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [5.28]: I should not have risen to speak to the Supply Bill had it not been that the Honorary Minister has addressed the House and taken up a remarkable position—the position that the Government have the right to interfere with the Arbitration Court. We all know that during the general election the present Premier, when outlining the policy of the Labour Party at Boulder, distinctly declared that the party stood for the 44-hour principle; but I have no recollection of Mr. Collier's saying that if returned to power he would immediately interfere with the Arbitration Court by granting a return of the 44-hour week to the men who had had it taken from them by the Court. True, the general principle of 44 hours was enunciated at Boulder by the present Premier. I have no objection whatever, and I believe no member has any objection, to the Labour Government endeavouring to carry out their policy in its entirety; but before an administrative action of that kind was taken, altering the policy of the country by Government interference with a tribunal, namely, the Arbitration Court, a Bill for that purpose should have been brought before Parliament. Mr. Cornell, who initiated this debate, has certainly put up an excellent case and one which the Government themselves to-day realise. The outstanding fact is that by their action in granting 44 hours in lieu of 48 to 3,000 men, at a cost of between £70,000 and £80,000 annually to the country, Ministers have raised a hornet's nest about their ears. They are going to reap as they have sown, and certainly they have sown in a remarkable way. The Premier is a very astute and clever man. He sees now that the economic position in Western Australia, and indeed throughout the world, will not allow of the establishment of the 44-hour week. Every member is anxious to grant to the workers the best conditions we can possibly give them. If they can do as much work in 44 hours as in 48—which is entirely fallacious—and if the country can stand it, by all means let us give the workers that advantage. But the Premier is wondering what is

going to happen. He knows that what Mr. Cornell has said is perfectly true, namely, that the extension of the 44-hour week will be demanded by all in the Government service, in consequence of its being restored to those 3,000 men.

Hon. J. Cornell: Well, are not the others entitled to it?

Hon. J. EWING: In the circumstances, certainly they are. We should not treat one section differently from another. The Arbitration Court said the hours should be 48, but the Government came along and agreed to give the employees 44 hours. They are entitled to make such an agreement with the employers, but they must then get the consent of the Arbitration Court to violate the court's award. I should be surprised to know that that has been done in this instance. I do not think the Government have informed the court of what has been done. If I am right in this surmise, it constitutes a breach of the Arbitration Act. What is going to be the outcome? I am not opposed to short hours for the worker, provided the State can stand it; but the State cannot stand this. Mr. Cornell spoke of Mr. Theodore. What is reported in the newspapers we cannot take for gospel, except the fact that the Premier of Queensland has decided to bring in a 44-hour Bill, which is to take effect in the middle of 1925. Mr. Theodore sees the position and has stated it on many occasions. When the extremists try to get him to do what is wrong, he resists them. Even on this occasion he resisted them, but he had to give way. Following on the action of the Government of this State, all workers in the Government service must now get the 44-hour week. Then what is going to happen to the State? People with money invested in Western Australia and who desire to develop industries in the State will be faced with the position that the Arbitration Court is practically told by the Government that the policy of the Government is a 44-hour week. What will be the position of the President of the Arbitration Court when outside employees demand a 44-hour week? We were told by Mr. Holmes last night that the State's finances are very bad. I hope to explain to the House that the State, during the past four and a half years—

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member must confine himself to the Bill.

Hon. J. EWING: I am doing so. The Bill provides for the payment of the men employed only 44 hours per week. During the last four and a half years the State's progress has been so great that we are now in a fair financial position. But if we are going to extend the 44-hour week to all workers in the Government service, and going to do other things promised to the railway workers during the elections, we shall be sacrificing the improved financial position of the State, and Mr. Collier will find himself embarrassed at the end of the financial year, will find that instead of wiping out the deficit, he has piled it up again. The Premier has shown that he realises this,

and that he wants to find a way out of the difficulty. It is well known that while the railways have carried interest charges, they have not been asked to pay any sinking fund. So, although the railways show a profit of £95,000 this year, we are told by the Premier that there is actually a loss of £34,000, for the reason that the railways have not provided sinking fund.

Hon. A. Lovekin: What is going to pay for the Lake Clifton railway if we have not a sinking fund?

Hon. J. EWING: Never mind that. Ever since Lord Forrest was Premier of the State the practice has been not to ask the railways to pay sinking fund. The Premier told a deputation the other day, and repeated it last night in another place, that sinking fund should be applied to the railways. That is because he sees what is coming, and he wishes to show that the railways are not in their supposed excellent position. By that line of argument he will be able to combat the serious proposition about to be placed before him by the railway workers. He says that if the sinking fund were applied to the railways, they would show a loss of £34,000.

Hon. A. Lovekin: And that is the true position.

Hon. J. EWING: So far as I can recollect, the railways have never been debited with sinking fund. However, the Premier does not wish to extend the 44-hour week throughout the railway service, and so he is contending that the railways should be asked to pay sinking fund.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Why make his position the more difficult?

Hon. J. EWING: I am not. But, clearly, he is looking for a way out.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Should not we help him out?

Hon. J. EWING: Yes, I am trying to help him out by showing that the country cannot stand the proposed concession. The Premier, I think, sees that himself. I am here to support the Leader of the House. Only on questions of vital importance to me, or on questions of principle, will he find me opposing him. I am sure the House will give him the generous support it gave me last session. I am glad this question of a 44-hour week has been raised by Mr. Cornell, because it will let the country see that those willing to help the Government are also willing to point out the pitfalls. This 44-hour week is a pitfall so serious to the State that I am sure the Government will regret having initiated it without first asking Parliament's consent.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.40]: During the consideration of the Bill a most important matter has been raised, and one of the actions of the Government challenged. I do not propose just now to say whether I think they have done right or done wrong. The fact remains that during the elections they made certain promises which to-day they are endeavouring to fulfil. Queensland has been mentioned as a

State where the 44-hour week is to be conceded. Queensland and Western Australia are similarly situated in point of area, and of natural resources, and also of industrial conditions. When we consider the unavoidable economic effect of shortening the hours of labour, we arrive at a point where a word of caution will be in season. I remember when white labour replaced indentured black labour in Queensland for sugar production. Sugar was previously sold at a reasonable price. But when the white worker went on to the plantations, and the grower had to pay increased wages, the price of sugar was raised to the companies treating the cane, and refining the sugar. The enhanced price was passed on to the consumer. This did not retard the progress of the sugar growers, but in Western Australia there are indications that facilities have been granted that were not reproductive and the enhanced cost could not be passed on. There are instances where the increased wages charges have been passed on, notably by the railways, the fares and freights of which were increased. The Government were called upon to pay something like £200,000 including retrospective pay, and freights and fares were raised in order to cover the heavier working costs. As a result we now have competition from outside. Motor buses have been introduced and have materially affected the suburban train and tramway revenue. How far is this going to increase the burden on the general public of finding money to pay for the privileges that the Government in fulfilment of their promises are going to grant? It is all a question of the value of the labour and the return obtained for it. If we are going to establish secondary industries we can do so only if we are able to compete with outside manufacturers, and to do that we must be able to produce at a lower cost, allowing, of course, for freight and duty. Before the Government make any rash promises that will seriously alter the prevailing economic conditions, they should consider the probable effect. Suppose the Arbitration Court refused to agree with the action of the Government, what would be the result? Probably chaos would follow, accompanied by a clash between the Arbitration Court and the Government. I hope these matters will be fully considered when the Government are framing amendments to the Arbitration Act. The outlook for the Government at present is not bright, but I hope that, with the assistance of all parties, they will succeed in bringing about a better state of affairs. So far as I am able I shall do my best to advise and assist them to secure the desired results.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [5.30]: I wish to refer to a matter that has an important bearing upon the question of finance. I would not have spoken about it had it not been referred to by Mr. Ewing. He spoke of the payment of sinking fund on our railways, and seemed to dispute the

Premier's statement that one cannot speak of profit on the railways until the sinking fund has been met. Mr. Ewing argued that if sinking fund were not paid there would be a very large profit, instead of the position represented by the Premier. I cannot follow the reasoning of Mr. Ewing and others who contend that no sinking fund should be charged on the railways. It is quite true that on the railways in England, Canada and other parts of the world no sinking fund is allowed, because those railways are privately owned. They were built out of capital that was provided when the companies were formed, but our railways were built from borrowed money, and it is absolutely essential that a sinking fund should be provided in order to meet the loan when it falls due. A number of the critics of the Premier's statement have made the mistake of comparing the railways of Western Australia with those built by subscribed capital of private companies in other parts of the world, where, instead of sinking fund, depreciation is provided for. I am in sympathy with the Premier's desire to maintain a system of sound finance. It was a system instituted by Sir John Forrest; an unquestionably sound system, and I am sorry that the hon. member, perhaps unwittingly, has created the impression that the railways at present are making a big profit, whereas that is not actually the case. To create such an impression would only tend to make the Treasurer's difficulties much greater. Goodness knows, they are great enough as it is! I think it is the desire of every member of this House, irrespective of party, to assist the Premier in every way possible and not to embarrass him. Let us support the sound contention he has presented, that the railways at present are not making a large profit in the sense in which a profit is generally understood.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [5.53]: If we are to have sound finance in this State there must be either a sinking fund or a depreciation fund in connection with railways constructed from borrowed money. One of the Auditor General's reports mentioned that 277 engines, which had been purchased out of loan moneys, were worn out and were to be replaced from borrowed money. Railway revenue has had the benefit of the earnings of those engines, and if there is no depreciation fund, there is no money available to pay for the engines. Take the Lake Clifton railway, which was purchased by the previous Government. The rails are to be taken up and put somewhere else. What is to provide for the loss incurred unless we have a sinking fund or a depreciation fund? Until such provision has been made, we cannot say that the railways have made a profit. Mr. Duffell referred to the marginal note of Clause 2 of the Bill. The marginal note of course is no part of the Bill, but nevertheless the

clause is in accord with the marginal note. It says, "Sums available for purposes voted by the Legislative Assembly."

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: That has appeared in similar Bills over and over again.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The marginal note would seem to postulate that the Legislative Council had nothing whatever to do with it, but I find that, from the inception of responsible government in 1889 till the year 1914, a similar marginal note and a similar clause have appeared in Supply Bills. In 1915 another four lines were added to the clause, and from that year onwards the wording has been the same as that of Clause 2 of this Bill. The section in the 1900 Act reads—

The said sums shall be available to satisfy the warrants under the hand of the Governor, under the provisions of the law now in force in respect of any services voted by the Legislative Assembly during the financial year ending 30th June, 1901.

In 1915 the following words were added:—

Or issued for such purposes; and all expenditure for the purposes of temporary advances as aforesaid shall be recouped by charging the specific appropriations of Parliament applicable thereto, or by the recovery thereof from the Governments or persons on whose account the advances may have been made.

Under that clause we rather improved the position that existed in 1900, because the amounts have to be allocated to votes in the main Appropriation Bill, which must have the assent of the Council as well as of the Assembly. This Bill provides that the total grant—not the details, which have to be allocated and adjusted—has to be approved by Parliament and in the preamble the following provision appears:

And be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly, etc.

The point raised by Mr. Duffell rather staggered me at first, but investigation shows that there is nothing in it.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (South-West) [5.59]: The question whether depreciation should be allowed before profits are estimated on our railways is one that might well be argued. Some members hold that a private company would have to allow for depreciation. What private company would undertake to run a railway miles into the country unless there was some promise of profit in the immediate future?

Hon. H. Stewart: The Lake Clifton railway, for instance.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes; it must be shown that there will be some ultimate profit. We have this extraordinary position. We are endeavouring to settle this great



country by giving railway communication to the people far back.

Hon. A. Lovekin: In Canada railways are built by private companies.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes; but the private companies own either vast tracts of country, or mines of coal or huge forests of timber. They have something at the back to support them. I have always contended that when a railway runs into new territory that has any chance of paying its way, a special grant should be set aside for some years to make good the loss upon the line.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Does that not amount to providing depreciation and sinking fund?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: In a different way. All kinds of bricks are thrown at the management of our railways because they do not pay. Year after year we go on building hundreds of miles of line that we know cannot pay in the immediate future. The people who have to run these railways should have a say in their construction. Our railways are built by the Public Works Department, and then handed over to the Commissioner of Railways, who is told to make a profit on them. I have always contended that such a system is absolutely wrong and unjust to the management of our railways.

Hon. H. Stewart: The Commissioner alters them before he runs them.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: He does. The money that could be set aside for depreciation is often swallowed up in making the railway fit and safe for the public to travel over. I have voiced this opinion in another place. From to-day onwards we should make a point of allowing the people who have to run our railways to build them. The Lake Clifton line has been referred to. Twelve months ago I asked why that concession was not being worked, and, if it was not being worked, what steps the Government were prepared to take to let someone else work it. Since then I have received no reply. The huge deposit of lime there is lying idle. Lime is urgently needed by the agricultural community, and must be given to it, especially in the wet districts of the South-West, if the land is to be farmed as it should be. In the meantime this huge deposit is tied up.

Hon. H. Stewart: Were you not in the Cabinet that authorised the concession?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes, but I was not there after the concessionaires ceased work, which somewhat altered the position.

Hon. J. Duffell: That is quite a different matter.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: If the lime at Lake Clifton were made available, plenty of capital would be forthcoming to work it. In the far South-West we cannot afford to nav high prices for lime, but we could pay the prices set out in the Act covering the concession.

Hon. A. Burvill: It is 10s. a ton.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I trust the Leader of the House will take a note of what I am saying. I hope we shall soon

find that the concession has been taken away from the concessionaires, and made available to others so that we may get the benefit of this huge lime deposit.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Did they not go away because they got cheaper lime elsewhere?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I understand they gave up working the deposit because they found that the lime they are now getting from Gingin is more suitable for the making of cement. I am, however, talking about agricultural lime.

Hon. H. Stewart: They were under an obligation to provide lime.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes. I am not concerned in the manufacture of cement, though I hope the company will be successful in competing against the imported article. I am, however, concerned about agricultural lime being made available to the agricultural community.

Hon. H. Stewart: It is for that reason they got the concession.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes. A tremendous trade could be built up in agricultural lime. At Lake Clifton there are practically inexhaustible quantities of it.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is there not too much salt in it? They could not make cement with it.

Hon. A. Burvill: It is the finest lime that can be found.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: At the time the concession was asked for the lime was analysed by every analyst in the State, and a good many outside.

Hon. H. Stewart: It was approved by Brunner Mond.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: It was frequently stated that it did not contain one per cent. of salt.

Hon. J. Cornell: How was the sampling done, and where were the samples taken?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I had several samples taken when I was Honorary Minister.

Hon. J. Cornell: Did you take a sample?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Yes, I took it myself at Lake Clifton.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: There is a lot of sampling done besides sampling for salt.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I got 14 tons of the lime, and used in on my orchard with excellent results. It certainly did not kill the trees or the pastures.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Perhaps you rooted up the trees.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: It was not necessary to root them up. Apparently it is now discovered that this lime is impregnated with salt, and that it kills trees and pasture. It is extraordinary that this should be found out now.

Hon. J. Cornell: After the line is built.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I have used the lime, and found it excellent. I do not intend to combat the statement of Mr. Duffell concerning arbitration. Arbitration is the law of the land. If there was ever a subject to make men weep it is arbitration. In theory it is excellent, but in practice it has proved futile and unworkable. It is all

right for one side. If wages are raised by the court, it is commended; if wages are reduced, or there is a refusal to raise them, the court is anathema, and on many occasions work has ceased. I have repeatedly voiced my opinions upon arbitration. The sooner we drop it and adopt the wages board system, or some other method of settling our industrial troubles, and the sooner this expensive Arbitration Court system ceases, the better will it be for Western Australia and Australia as a whole. I wish to utter a word of warning. I presume that a portion of the money comprised in this Bill will be used on pipes for the metropolitan water scheme. I had the privilege of inspecting and passing about 35,000 pipes that were used many years ago for constructing the Coolgardie water scheme. They were excellent pipes. At the works they were handled as if they were eggs. One was never allowed to brush against another, and everything that could be done to make them last long and retain their usefulness was done. They left the manufacturer in perfect condition. When they arrived at their destination along the goldfields line, however, they were bundled off the trucks as if they were jarrah or karri logs. They were bumped into one another and splintered in all directions, with the result that the bitumen covering, that formed an important part of every pipe, was so damaged that the pipes have not lasted a tenth or a hundredth part as long as they should have done. A man was sent round with a brush and tar to cover up the spots where the bitumen had been knocked off. In many cases this was done so long after the damage that a coating of rust was showing on the steel. The tar was then applied over the top of the rust, and in many instances pipes have had to be renewed that should have lasted 50 years with the proper bitumen covering left on. I warn the Government that every care must be exercised in the unloading and handling of the pipes before they are put into the ground. In the old days pipes were laid so that the jagged edges of rocks formed their bed, and with the movement of the pipes it did not take long to work through the bitumen covering on to the steel. There is only a quarter of an inch of steel upon which the rust can work. If care were exercised, these pipes would last as long as cast iron pipes, but care must be taken to see that the bitumen coating inside and outside is left in the same condition as it was when they left the works.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Would not concrete pipes be better?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: I think not. They are too heavy and cumbersome. A steel pipe is comparatively light, and when properly covered is absolutely efficient.

Hon. H. Seddon: What about internal corrosion?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: There is none in the case of steel pipes that have bitumen covering. The pipe is first heated,

and is then put in a bath of bitumen, that is also heated to 400 degrees; the pipe is then lifted from the bath and while it is kept revolving sand is poured upon it. It is kept revolving until it is cold. When the operation is completed the bitumen coating becomes as hard as bell metal both inside and out. The pipe, too, becomes three times its original thickness, and is impervious to anything that is detrimental to the steel so long as the bitumen covering remains intact. Many people condemned the Coolgardie scheme pipes, but this was due to the fact that they were so carelessly handled between the trucks and the ground where they were laid. I hope these few remarks will appeal to the Leader of the House, for I know what I am talking about. Much money could be saved to the State if a little more care were used in matters of this kind.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. H. SEDDON (North-East) [7.30]: It is desirable that every member of the Chamber should express his opinion regarding the points raised during the discussion on the Supply Bill, if only for the reason that that measure directly affects the finances, which must be admitted by everyone to represent the most pressing problem confronting the State. We must recognise that our position at the present time, as Mr. Holmes pointed out, is a most serious one. He quoted certain figures in support of his contentions, but there is another aspect that may make the position even more clear to hon. members, and to the general public as well. The discussion this evening, apart from the fact that it marks our protest, is more or less futile as regards the Bill, because we can only accept or reject it, but cannot amend it. The discussion, therefore, is on the effect that may be produced in the affairs of the State. The Governor's Speech contained a paragraph referring to the interest and sinking fund charges, the payment of which make a heavy drain on the revenue of the State. The fact that the charges represent a steadily increasing drain on the revenue has to be taken into consideration. If we analyse the figures we shall have some idea of what is happening. If we take the records of past years we find that in 1920, 7s. in the pound of the revenue received represented capital charges for interest and sinking fund; in 1921 that charge represented 6s. 8d. in the pound; in 1922 it represented 7s. in the pound; in 1923 it represented 7s. 7½d. and in 1924, 7s. 2d. in the pound. That means that just over one-third of the revenue received for the financing of Western Australia had to go to meet capital charges. If we take the ratio of the capital charges to production we find that in 1920 it represented 1s. 9d. in the pound. That means that of every pounds worth of production, 1s. 9d. was required to pay capital charges. In 1921 the amount represented 2s.

2d., and in 1922, the latest year for which we have the figures. it represented 2s. 2½d. in the pound. Then exports, by means of which we have to pay our foreign loans, are also affected and we find that in 1920, 2s. 6d. in the pound of our exports had to be taken to meet capital charges; in 1921, 3s. 7d. in the pound; in 1922, 3s. 6d. in the pound, and in 1923, 4s. 7d. in the pound. The question arises, therefore, as to how far we can go in incurring such charges, which are increasing year by year because we continue to spend loan moneys. When we analyse the ratio between the capital charges and loan expenditure, we find that in 1920, 15s. out of every pound of loan money expended was required to meet capital charges. In 1921, the amount was 17s. 2d.; in 1922, it was 19s. 9d., and in 1923, 15s. in the pound. Members will note the disparity that arises there. The explanation is that the greater the production the less is the amount we incur in the ratio between capital charges and annual revenue. I have quoted these figures because there is a part of the Supply Bill that directly affects the position and that is the portion referring to the expenditure of loan moneys. When we realise that 77 per cent. of our production is directly or indirectly affected, by drought, we must at once recognise the precarious position the State would be in if we suffered from a failure of the harvest. About 30 per cent. of the railway revenue is due to the carriage of the primary products: 34 per cent. of the income tax is effected by the taxation of primary producers, whereas the companies directly or indirectly concerned with primary production contribute 61 per cent. of the tax from this source. In each instance, those returns would be affected if Western Australia had the misfortune to experience a bad harvest. Our position would be precarious indeed. Whatever happens we must meet our capital charges. If we failed to do so, then it would be goodbye to all idea of raising further loan moneys. For this reason the position is most serious. The question has been raised as to whether the policy of the Government will tend to increase capital charges unnecessarily because of the decision to grant a 44-hour week. No one would oppose a 44-hour week unless it were shown to adversely affect the very persons to whom it was granted. When we examine the result of the 44-hour week, we find that it does affect the persons to whom that privilege is extended, and all their fellow workers. Men engaged in Government services are employed in one or two lines of activity. One section is concerned with maintenance or routine work in connection with various Government services and the other with construction work, and that is a regular charge on the finances of the State. But if by introducing a reduction of hours we get a reduction of output, the outcome will be that the whole community will receive less and will have to pay more

for the services rendered. In the second instance, the effect of a diminution of output will mean an increased capital expenditure and will impose a burden upon the State for the whole term of the loan by reason of an unnecessary charge upon the finances of the State. As to the effect on workers, a few figures relating to the production of the State and also to the expenditure for 1922 will be of interest. The whole production of Western Australia is raised by people classed in the Commonwealth Year Book as "breadwinners." In 1922, according to those statistics, there were, in round figures, 150,000 bread winners in Western Australia. The total production of this State in that year worked out at 9s. 8d. per head per day. That is to say, if the whole production of this State were divided amongst all the breadwinners, it would work out at 9s. 8d. each per day. The loan expenditure during that year, on the same basis, was 1s. 1d. per day; thus, grouping these two figures together, we get an amount of 10s. 9d. per day. The capital charges represented 1s. 6d. per day during that year, yet the minimum wage for that period was 13s. 4d. per day. When we review these relative figures, we must ask ourselves where we are tending to. There is a discrepancy that must be accounted for and the only way that it can be accounted for is in the constant rising of the prices of commodities. I would refer hon. members to a book published by Mr. Murphy, the secretary of the Labour Department in Victoria. He presents an interesting comparison showing that while the average increase in wages the worker received from 1900 to 1916 represented something like 11 per cent., the average increase in the cost of living was 16 per cent. These figures support the argument I have just presented.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: What were those figures based upon, a 44-hour week or a 48-hour week?

Hon. H. SEDDON: They were based on a full working year of 300 working days; hours were not taken into consideration. These figures, however, point to the fact that ill-considered increases of wages, or reduction of output, will ultimately operate against the man it is proposed to benefit. It is for that reason that we should consider where we are going to and the effect this policy will have upon the workers and upon the State. Reference has been made to the fact that the men who benefit by the 44-hour week concession are those engaged in secondary occupations, and not to those engaged in primary production. If we examine the position as it may affect industries, we see that the pressure may be beyond the capacity of those industries to bear them. As Mr. Cornell pointed out, the minimum rate of wages for miners is much less than that received by men in other avenues of employment, and if the wages are increased beyond a certain standard the effect will be the closing down of the mining industry. This shows that ultimately the

whole position boils down to that of the primary workers. Once we increase the charges on industries to the point where it is impossible for them to continue, the result will be the collapse of the economic pyramid, which is standing on its apex instead of on a broad base. The question affects the position of the majority in this State. We must recognise that whether a man works with his brains or with his hands, he is a worker—the proportion of non-workers in Western Australia is very small indeed—and this demonstrates that the whole community is affected by ill-considered actions that may be taken. When we embark on a line of action regarding the basis of concessions to workers, we must see to it that there is an equal amount of efficiency available; the alternative is the increase of the burden to a point that will bring down the whole social fabric in ruin. If it were not by the blessing of Divine Providence that we have had good seasons, the position of Western Australia would be bad indeed, and would demonstrate the truth of my contention. There would be tremendous suffering throughout the State. There is one other small matter to which I will refer before concluding my remarks. Mr. Willmott made reference to the condition of the water supply pipes. It was my privilege to be employed in the Railway Department and I saw the construction of the greater part of the goldfields pipe line. His references to the condition of the pipes were quite correct. There was a considerable exposure of the pipes to the action of the atmosphere. On the other hand, however, we must realise that a great deal of the corrosion has been internal as well, and when the engineers made an investigation of the pipes, they found that, whereas the protective covering in the first place had been sound, the friction caused by the motion of the water had removed the covering and the fact that the pipes had been allowed to be emptied and then filled again, had adversely affected them. The effect of these alternating actions of filling and emptying the pipes was to set up corrosion on the inside that was even worse than the corrosion on the outside. Very early indeed in the history of the scheme did they find external corrosion. Miles of piping have since been carefully removed from the action of the earth. The pipes have been mounted on holsters and protected by wood to prevent external corrosion.

Hon. A. Bursvill: Was that corrosion not caused by the presence of mineral in the water?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Not altogether; it was the effect of the oxygen and compressed air in the water on the internal part of the pipe that caused the most serious damage. The engineers embarked on a policy of construction of summit tanks which provided that the adoption of the pipes should be kept full of water, and the lime treatment process at the weir counteracted the

action of the oxygen and the salts in solution. It is necessary to make that explanation; otherwise members may have a false impression of what happened. To say that the removal of the bitumen on the pipes was responsible for the whole of the corrosion is scarcely right. In conclusion, I think the question that is involved most, and that has been lost sight of, is that Cabinet has acted without consulting Parliament in the granting of the revised hours of labour. Therefore from the standpoint of protecting the interests of the people we as their representatives should enter our protest against any action of Cabinet that will tend to increase the burden on the community.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [7.48]: Were it not for the frequent repudiation of promises made by the Premier at Boulder, and the side-stepping in this Chamber by the Honorary Minister on the question raised by Mr. Cornell, I would not have spoken on the Supply Bill. The Honorary Minister would have us believe that we do not know what the Premier said. I will tell members, who do not know, what the Premier said at Boulder.

The PRESIDENT: I remind the hon. member that any remarks he makes must be connected with the expenditure proposed in the Bill.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am endeavouring to show that some of the money provided for in the Bill will be devoted towards paying those men who have been granted the 44-hour week, and that some of them will collect that money if the policy of the Government is carried out. I have a copy of the speech made by the Premier at Boulder, as it was reported in the Goldfields and Metropolitan Press. This is what the Premier said—

The Labour Party stood solidly for a 44-hour week, and they would, by legislation, seek to establish the 44-hour week. That was said on the 17th January, and yet the Honorary Minister here to-night told hon. members that the Government promised they would restore to those Government servants what had been taken from them by the court. That is not so. Whatever the Labour Party may be, I will give them credit for being princes of anglers. They set out with a well organised scheme six months before the election to rope into their ranks all industrialists, by making promises such as the one I have quoted. The ambassadors of the party did not fare too well, but fortunately for them, at that time, the Court of Arbitration prescribed a rate of wage on the Goldfields of 13s. 6d. a day. The adjournment of Parliament was moved and the matter was discussed, and the Labour Party used that as a lever which acted effectively. Their patience was rewarded, and they passed a hook into the gullet of the industrialist, pulled him on to a bank where he is now high and dry, and at the present time they declare, "We promised to restore the 44-hour week to

some of the Government workers." I want to give an emphatic denial to the remark that the Premier made any such statement. I take the present opportunity of reminding members of what he did say, and that was a repudiation of the promise he made to the industrialists that they would be granted a 44-hour week.

Hon. A. BURVILL (South-East) [7.53]: I did not intend to speak on the Supply Bill, but it appears to me that the method by which it is proposed to spend this money will have the effect of dwindling it down considerably. If we are going to raise wages and to give a 44-hour week, the funds we have at our disposal will not be sufficient to meet all requirements. I appreciate the point made by Mr. Ewing that the Arbitration Court has had nothing to do with this, that it has been done merely by a Government regulation. I am not going to say anything against Government regulations, because the previous Government were employing men in the district I represent for 44-hour periods. That period was in vogue there, and there should be no difficulty in putting it into vogue in connection with other departments. It is not a fair thing, if you employ men, to work some 48 hours and others 44 hours. To a certain extent the present Government have rectified that anomaly. But the point is that the primary producers are in the same fix. The proposal will hit them up in the long run because they must sell their products in the world's markets, and the increased cost of the 44-hour week will be passed on to the producers. There will be a rise in the price of commodities. Therefore we shall be in a worse state than we were in before. For some time past the small farmers in the slack period worked for the Government five days a week and 44 hours, and then one day a week on their farms. If a man works 44 hours he has done enough work in the week. How are we going to get over the difficulty? How is it possible to compete against a man who works for 44 hours, then puts in a day and a half on his farm? The position will now be accentuated.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Is there not a Government regulation that prevents Government employees doing other work?

Hon. A. BURVILL: There may be. So far as casual employees are concerned, I do not think the regulation applies.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Perhaps it is not enforced.

Hon. A. BURVILL: Perhaps not. Some time ago there was an increase in the wages of the railway men. At that time the primary producers expected a reduction in freights. Instead of that there was an increase in freights, and an increase in fares as well. The time is ripe when we should have a reduction in

freights. How is it possible to expect that now in the face of what has happened? It seems to me that the man who is to foot the bill, will be the primary producer. I would like to say something about arbitration before I sit down. Before I became a farmer I was a working man and I was a unionist. I would be a unionist again to-morrow if necessary. There was always a difficulty arising out of the man who did not want to be associated with strikes. So long as I can remember, before the Arbitration Court came into existence, one set of workers would find a particular industry in which the men were paid a low rate of wage. The men would either strike or have a difference with the boss which would result in an increase being given. When the Arbitration Court came into existence we thought these difficulties would be overcome. That was not so. Going before the Arbitration Court the bricklayers' labourers would get an increase, and perhaps nothing more was done regarding other crafts. The result was that the proper balance of wages in all trades was upset. The same thing will occur at the present time by the introduction of the 44-hour week, and retaining the 48 hours in some instances. The Arbitration Court should be so constituted that on the delivery of an award increasing the wages, that increase could bring about an adjustment in other trades. But what happens? The court deals with only one department. I do not think there would be any grumbling if the 44-hour week were made general. We require uniform conditions everywhere. If the conditions generally were made uniform there would be far less work for the Arbitration Court to do, and the country would be saved a great deal, while friction and trouble would be lessened, and what is more, the primary producer who has to foot the bill would know where he stood.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [8.1]: I did not intend to speak on this measure until I had heard various members address the House, more particularly on the subject which seems to be regarded as the most important in relation to the Bill, the introduction of the 44-hour week by administrative act on the part of the present Government. To judge from the remarks of hon. members, it seems to be the wish of this Chamber to extend to the present Government fair and just consideration in regard to the measures they bring forward, subject to those measures being fair and equitable to all sections of the community. If the Government regard the interests of every section of the people, they may rely upon fair and equitable support from members of this Chamber. If, on the other hand, measures are introduced, and acts, administrative or

otherwise, are done, which work injustice, then undoubtedly the Government must be prepared for protest and opposition from members of this House. What is wanted is sane and equitable government, especially at this period of Western Australia's history, when our finances are in a serious, or even perilous, condition. We are now asked to vote Supply to the Government, the usual temporary Supply which comes before Parliament at this stage of a session. One would not readily refuse to support such a measure at this time, but I think that we as a House are justified in regarding ourselves as very much in the position of directors of a public company, and in the same way we may regard the members of another place as co-directors with us. By way of extending that analogy, we may look upon Ministers as our managing directors, from whom we expect an exhibition of that skill and care which any director of a company is entitled to look for from the controllers of the company's affairs. So soon as the directors of a company see that their managing directors are not carrying on the business with proper care and skill, then, naturally, there must be objection raised. I regard as thoroughly justified the protest now raised against the act complained of, namely, the granting of the 44-hour week to a certain section of Government employees. Such an act should not be repeated, and we are bound to emphasise to Ministers our strenuous objection to it. Various members have referred to the injustice which has been perpetrated upon other sections of workers by the granting of this concession to one section. It is a gross inequality, and that which is unequal not only creates injustice, but necessarily causes serious discontent among the sections of workers not benefited. When discontent is engendered in the ranks of any section of the community, it is bad for the community as a whole. I trust that the Leader of this House will seriously take to heart, and convey to his colleagues, the views expressed here regarding the act perpetrated by the Government. The occurrence is most regrettable. I, for one, was looking forward to seeing the Government carry out wisely the responsibilities with which the country has entrusted them; and I am indeed sorry that one of the first steps to be taken by the Government should be such as to cause a certain loss of confidence on the part of the community as a whole. The community as a whole was expecting good and wise government from those who have just recently assumed office. I would not at this stage oppose the granting of Supply, but in the event of a recurrence of an act of the nature complained of, I should feel it my duty, as a representative here of the people, to express my opinion in a much firmer way than I have done to-night, and even to record my vote against granting that measure of support which is necessary to the passing of a Bill of this kind.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [8.8]: I have listened with close attention to the discussion on this Supply Bill. I was greatly surprised at the attitude adopted by Mr. Ewing. I wonder is that hon. member aware that his Government were responsible for the introduction of the 44-hour week after the Arbitration award?

Hon. J. Ewing: Not in the same way.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The same course was adopted by the present Government. The previous Government set the pace, and therefore are the cause of the whole trouble. Without reference to the Arbitration Court the Mitchell Administration reduced the weekly hours of certain employees to 44, thus causing discontent amongst the employees generally.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is hardly a fair way of putting it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is the exact position. There was another case before the Arbitration Court, but a case totally different from that of the Public Works Department employees. The men whose hours were reduced by the Mitchell Government were engaged in a laborious occupation, and undoubtedly the Mitchell Government, having regard to the nature of the employment of these men, acted justly in reducing their hours.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Did the Mitchell Government interfere with an award of the Arbitration Court?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In this particular case they reduced the hours to 44. So I am advised. I may have been misinformed, but I do not think so.

Hon. J. Ewing: You have been misinformed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is not my opinion. Great discontent arose in connection with the matter. True, the Arbitration Court did increase the weekly hours from 44 to 48.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And the Mitchell Government did not carry out that award.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The matter was the subject of discussion during the general election. The 44-hour week is a plank in the Labour platform, the first plank in the Labour Party's general platform.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Will they lay that plank down to the public now?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The fact that such a plank existed in the Labour platform was announced in hundreds of election speeches, and the grievance of these men was brought into prominence. That was so even in my district. I know it from my experience, first, during the elections for another place, and, secondly, during the elections to this House. While the Labour Party stated they would do all they could to establish the 44-hour week, they also declared that they would give particular attention to the case of the Public Works Department employees. Those employees are to be found in the various elec-

toral districts and provinces. While the elections were in progress, these men came forward and said, "The Mitchell Government gave us a 44-hour week. What will the Labour Government do when they come into power? The Arbitration Court has taken away the 44-hour week which the Mitchell Government gave us. The Labour Government can by administrative act restore the 44-hour week." Candidates for election pledged themselves to restore the 44-hour week accordingly, to use their influence to secure the restoration by administrative act. In this connection the Labour Government have simply carried out promises and pledges given during the elections. The country knew exactly what would occur if a Labour Government came into power. There has been no deception: the matter was spoken plainly, so that everybody could understand.

Hon. J. Ewing: Why not bring in a Bill for 44 hours all round so as to carry out your policy?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is no objection to that; possibly it may occur.

The PRESIDENT: I do not think questions should be asked now.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In restoring the 44-hour week, the Government increased the wages by only 1s. 2d. per week in excess of what the Mitchell Government had paid; that is to say, in the vast majority of cases the increase was not greater, though in a few cases it was larger. The 1s. 2d. increase was necessary in order to make the pay harmonise with certain awards of the Arbitration Court.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

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

Read a third time, and passed.

*House adjourned at 8.18 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Wednesday, 30th July, 1924.*

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

### SWEARING IN OF MEMBERS.

Mr. A. Thomson (Katanning) and Mr. G. Taylor (Mount Margaret) took and subscribed the oath, and signed the roll.

### QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE SITE.

Mr. LATHAM asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Have the Government decided on a site for an agricultural college? 2, If so, where is the selected site? 3, If no such site has been selected, will consideration be given to the report of the committee which was appointed to inquire into a suitable site, giving preference to Sermon's property at Burges' Siding?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, No; but the question is receiving earnest consideration, and the decision will be announced shortly. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, The committee's report has received attention and the property mentioned has been considered.

### QUESTION—HERDSMAN'S LAKE DRAINAGE, COST.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Works: 1, What was the original estimate of the cost of draining Herdsman's Lake? 2, What is the total amount of money spent on this work to date? 3, Is there to be any further money spent on this work? 4, If so, how much, approximately?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM, for the Minister for Works, replied: 1, A preliminary estimate of £25,000 was made, but the work was authorised on an estimate of £40,000. 2, Expenditure to date, £92,000. 3, Yes. 4, Approximately £5,000.