

they are on a low plane as compared with land values in the Eastern States. That is the reason why Western Australia will recover a great deal sooner. But what we have to consider is that the world, after all, is a very small place, and that we have to drop the narrow nationalism which has spread so much since the war. In conclusion I will quote a statement made by Signor Mussolini. No one has indulged more in that narrow nationalism than Signor Mussolini, who began by declaring that Italy had to grow all its own wheat—in which Italy has not succeeded. The statement I wish to quote is—

A solution leading to a resumption of economic and financial activity must be found. Such a solution can only emerge from a very broad conception which recognises the interdependence of States, though their economic systems may be different.

On motion by Mr. Wansbrough, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.43 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 6th September, 1932.

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

QUESTION—COLLIE COAL.

Supplies, Prices, and Delayed Award.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Which mines at Collie are supplying coal (a) to the railways, (b) to the power house? 2, What was the quantity supplied by each mine per week, or fortnight, and the price per ton paid to each mine by the railways and by the power house? 3, On what date was Mr. Howe appointed to arbitrate upon the disagreement

between the Commissioner of Railways and the coal mining companies as to prices? 4, Has Mr. Howe yet given his decision? 5, What is the reason for such a prolonged delay?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1 (a) and (b), Co-operative, Proprietary, Cardiff, Stockton, and Griffin. 2, For week ended 27th August, 1932—Railways: Co-operative, 991 tons; Proprietary, 1,732 tons; Cardiff, 559 tons; Stockton, 951 tons; Griffin, 402 tons. Tramways: Co-operative, Proprietary, Cardiff, Stockton, 1,829 tons; Griffin, 204 tons. The prices paid, which are tentative only, all being subject to adjustment by arbitrator. were—Railways: Co-operative, 16s. 6d. per ton; Proprietary, 15s. 10d. per ton; Cardiff, 14s. 11d. per ton; Stockton, 15s. 4d. per ton; Griffin, 13s. 6d. per ton. Tramways: Co-operative, Proprietary, Cardiff, Stockton, 10s. per ton; Griffin, 9s. 9d. per ton. 3, 10th November, 1931. 4, No, but an interim decision was given on 12th November, 1931. 5, The hearing of evidence is not yet completed, and evidence of a more comprehensive nature than was expected is now being given.

QUESTION—CROWN RESIDENTIAL LOTS.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Chief Secretary: 1, How many Crown residential lots were found to be illegally occupied by residents of Meekatharra, Wiluna, Gwalia, and Leonora, respectively, for the 12 months ended 30th June, 1932? 2, Since action has been taken by the Lands Department to lease these lots and collect annual rents, how many leases have been applied for in each respective district?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Fourteen at Meekatharra; 56 at Leonora (Gwalia). The Lands Department has no information in respect of Wiluna. 2, Nine at Meekatharra; 19 at Leonora (Gwalia).

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fifth Day.

Debate resumed from the 18th August.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [4.40]: I take this opportunity sincerely to congratulate you, Mr. President, upon having been re-elected to the important

position you occupy. It must be to you a source of great satisfaction to know that you have the full confidence of members of the House. I desire briefly to touch upon the passing of so many members of Parliament, or former members, during the past year. I had the privilege of working with some of them in another place. I refer to the Hon. T. Walker, Mr. Lutey, Mr. Teesdale and Mrs. Cowan. I was a member of the Legislative Assembly when Mrs. Cowan was first elected, and I wish to pay my personal tribute to the courage and ability with which she dealt with social matters, particularly as they affected her sex. In this House we lost one of our most brilliant intellects through the death of Mr. Lovekin and I myself occupy the seat rendered vacant by the unfortunate death of my old friend, Mr. Stewart. Mr. Hickey who also passed away had served for many years in this House. It may truthfully be said of these former members who have crossed the Great Divide that they gave of their best to the State. Unfortunately Parliamentarians at the present juncture are blamed for many of our troubles. No doubt Parliaments of the past have been responsible for many of the burdens placed upon industry, but, in my opinion, Parliamentarians as a whole are honestly endeavouring to serve the State and the people generally with a view to improving existing conditions. I have no intention of embarking upon a dissertation on finance, but there are one or two points to which I shall draw attention. When the Government took charge of the Treasury, it was like Mother Hubbard's cupboard, absolutely bare. If we can judge from the many calls made upon the Government, it seems that many sections of the community appear to believe that the Treasurer has an inexhaustible fund from which to draw, something like the widow's cruse of oil. My sympathies are with Ministers who are administering the affairs of State, in view of the difficulties of the position to-day. It is worth while drawing attention to the fact that although we have not been on the loan market for a long time, our indebtedness per head of the population has increased considerably. In 1928 the revenue per head in this State was £25, the expenditure £25, and the total indebtedness £168,948. In 1929 the revenue was £24,519, the expenditure £25,199 and the total indebtedness £166,040. That result was due to the can-

cellation of the sinking fund payments under the terms of the Financial Agreement. Many members of Parliament and others attribute Western Australia's financial difficulties to the existence of that agreement, as the result of which Western Australia is unable to carry on by way of further loans. I should like to ask members who raise that question, what would have been the position of Australia as a whole had there been no Loan Council in existence? The Loan Council has proved of great benefit to Australia. Although Western Australia suffers a disadvantage through its Premier and Treasurer having to travel to the Eastern States so often, Australia has to stand on its own financial basis, and the efforts made by the combined Treasurers constituting the Loan Council have certainly exercised a beneficial effect on the finances of Australia. Although revenue in 1932 decreased to £19,062, expenditure also decreased to £22,758, but our indebtedness increased to £185,564, an increase of approximately £16 10s. per head of population. I am not quoting those figures in any carping spirit, but I wish to direct attention to the serious financial position of the State. I wonder how long we shall be able to continue under those conditions. It is popular at present to decry the banks. As one who in his younger days experienced the dire effect of the bank smash, I feel grateful that the policy laid down by the financial institutions as a result of the experience of the nineties has proved so helpful to the people in this time of stress and has saved many people from additional worry and misery. If Governments and private citizens had prepared for the rainy day as the financial institutions have done, we would be in a much happier position. I cannot understand why the banks were not compelled to submit to the 22½ per cent. reduction which was imposed upon people who had money on mortgage or who held Commonwealth bonds. It is popular to accuse the banks of exploiting the public, but if we consider the decline in the value of bank shares, we find that many people are suffering severely although bank interest was not compulsorily reduced. To give an example, the shares of the Bank of New South Wales some years ago stood at £56; to-day they are as low as £29. This decline represents a substantial loss to shareholders. Those who have been compelled to realise have lost much

of their capital, while dividends have materially declined.

Hon. H. Seddon: Then what would have been the position if the 22½ per cent. reduction had been imposed on the banks?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Probably no dividend at all would have been paid. However, I still think the banks should have been placed on the same footing as other people. If the Government were able to control the banks and create credit by printing notes, we would not be able to overcome our difficulties. We have to increase production and reduce the cost of production, and to do this seems almost impossible under existing conditions. On the one hand we have a high protection policy; on the other hand we have the Federal and State Arbitration Courts. I am rather pleased that the Federal Government are acting on the recommendations of the Tariff Board, and that we are to receive some substantial relief from the duties previously imposed. I could give numerous examples of the tariff burden on the people of Australia, and of requests for high wages standards. A gentleman interested in the cotton industry, when giving evidence to the Tariff Board recently, had the audacity to ask for a duty of 10d. each on handkerchiefs, and a few days later a gentleman representing the Hosiery and Knitgoods Manufacturers' Association of New South Wales calmly held up a pair of stockings and said, "We can produce this at 1s., but we want a duty of 2s. 6d." There we have examples of the impudence displayed by many of the manufacturers who approach the Tariff Board with requests for prohibitive duties. Those instances show how the public and the workers of Australia have been fleeced by the manufacturers of the Eastern States, and one wonders how long the people will submit to it. The Federal Arbitration Court fixes the Perth basic wage at £3 8s. 6d. And the State Arbitration Court fixes the basic wage for the metropolitan area at £3 12s., for the South-West division £3 13s., and for the goldfields £3 18s. While I am strongly opposed to giving the Federal authorities more power, I consider that so long as we are bound to Federation, the Federal Court should fix the basic wage and working hours for all the States to ensure uniformity of conditions. Recently there has been discussion regarding the quantity of goods forwarded to the goldfields under the cheaper

railway freights being offered over the Trans line. I was interested to read in an interview with Mr. Locke, the furniture manufacturer, the reason why the goldfields were using South Australian furniture. It was claimed to be cheaper and of better quality. Mr. Locke said his firm had been in business for 40 years, and were quite willing to allow their goods manufactured in Western Australia to stand in competition with those made in the Eastern States. Then he added, "We are forced to sell furniture at a huge disadvantage in Kalgoorlie when it is considered that the South Australian manufacturer employs his men under a 48-hour week against the Western Australian award of 44 hours, and under a much lower basic wage than that ruling in Western Australia." That shows clearly the need for having uniform hours and wages throughout the Commonwealth. The wage base fixed in South Australia is approximately £3 per week, and it is no wonder that our workmen are idle while South Australian workers are supplying the requirements of the goldfields. I agree with Mr. Holmes that we could advantageously cut out the two lay representatives who sit in the State Arbitration Court. They represent additional cost and present no advantage to the State. I deeply regret the unfortunate position that has arisen in connection with the State Arbitration Court. The President is accusing the Government of interfering with the work of the court. Under the Act lawyers were debarred from appearing in the Arbitration Court because it was hoped thereby to prevent legal technicalities being raised to cloud the issue. It is regrettable that the Financial Emergency Act has provided a peg for so much dissatisfaction. When the measure was introduced, equality of sacrifice was the keynote, and surely it was not contemplated that only Government employees should suffer a reduction and that outside employees should not be affected unless each individual employer approached the court! I hope the Government will accept the challenge and will clearly indicate what Parliament's intention was. If it was reasonable for all Government employees to suffer under a common rule, and for owners of house property and lenders of money on mortgage, etc., to accept a reduction of 22½ per cent., it seems rather a straining of terms on the part of the president of the court to adopt the attitude he has taken towards the Financial Emergency Act. Regarding arbitration, there is

one thing that the people of Australia must realise, and the sooner they do so the better it will be. This is illustrated by a statement made by Sir Hugh Bell, an acknowledged authority on economics, who said—

Parliament can easily impose on the employer, whether a private individual or the State, the payment of a certain wage if a man is employed, but one thing it cannot do, and that is to compel the employment of a man at a wage which the price of article he produces will not suffice to pay. The man will remain unemployed.

There is a good deal of common sense in that statement. It illustrates one of the difficulties that industry generally throughout Australia is suffering. Parliament has imposed so many conditions and restrictions upon employers than the cost of production has been increased and many men have been thrown out of employment. There is one problem that is worrying parents of to-day and that is, what to do with their boys. I know of instances where parents have made great sacrifices for their children, only to find that when the youths are ready to adopt some calling, no avenue of employment is available. I am aware also that in touching upon this question one is liable to be misunderstood or misquoted, and perhaps to be accused of advocating cheap labour. In my opinion, however, the restrictions that have been imposed by the Arbitration Act have proved detrimental to the children of the workers, and possibly more so to them than to the children of any other section of the community. I know of an instance where the parents sacrificed much to keep their lad at a high school in the hope of his becoming a school teacher. The lad was particularly clever and passed all his examinations with a great deal of credit to himself and to his school. Unfortunately, because of the depression, the Education Department was not able to employ any more pupil teachers, as it had been doing, and the lad suffered. The father approached his employer and said, "I wish you would give my lad a chance: I do not mind what kind of work he is given." The employer expressed his willingness to assist, and when he interviewed the boy the first question he asked was, "How old are you?" The lad replied that he was 17, and then was told "I am sorry I cannot put you on." That is the position with which we are faced to-day, and it is due to the Arbitration Court. If one advocates the removal of the restrictions imposed by the court.

there follows an accusation of endeavouring to introduce cheap labour. This is really a problem that has worried me for a considerable time, and it also worried Mr. Drew when he occupied the position of Chief Secretary. What is to become of the boys who are leaving school each year? We find that the Arbitration Court protects the worker and limits the number of apprentices. No junior workers are permitted to be employed.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Do away with the Arbitration Court.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is easier said than done. One is justified in asking that some relief should be extended to the youth of the community. Unfortunately the lads of to-day are paying a heavy penalty for the extravagances of their fathers in the years just past. What is the position with regard to apprentices to-day? Is there any encouragement under existing conditions for an employer to take on apprentices? No relief at all can be given. I might quote one case, although I know that one swallow does not make a summer. A firm went insolvent. That firm, employing a number of apprentices, asked to be relieved from the duty of having to carry out their contract in respect of the apprentices. The president of the court made the following statement:—

It was estimated that the assets would yield 10s. in the pound. The creditors would get something and the apprentices nothing. Once the agreements were cancelled, there was nothing for the apprentices to sue upon. He would discuss the position with his colleagues, but at the moment it seemed to him that the trustee could give the lads notice of cancellation of their apprentice agreements, and they could sue him for breach of contract and recover a certain amount of damages.

I am not saying that if a contract has been entered into by a man or a firm in a position to carry on, that contract should not be honoured, but it seems to me it will not be possible under existing conditions to get any employers to take on apprentices unless those employers are thoroughly established in business. I can give a personal illustration. The firm in which I am interested were paying a considerable sum of money each week to apprentices when there was no work at all. A sworn statement to that effect was sent to the court. Lawyers are debarred from appearing before that court because the desire was to keep away from legal technicalities. The president of the court, however,

threw out the sworn statement because it was not a sworn affidavit. No one was able to approach the court because of the number of cases listed, and consequently it was not possible to take advantage of the financial emergency legislation. The State has a duty to perform to the rising generation, and I hope the Government will find ways and means of providing what is known as vocational training. Surely an agreement could be entered into whereby it should be possible to give the boys desirous of learning a trade of some kind the opportunity to do so, or to learn sufficient so that when times became brighter they would not be driven entirely into blind alleys. We could follow the example set by the Federal Government in the way of vocational training when the men returned from the front. I hope the Government will do something in that direction. I should next like to touch upon the Industries Assistance Board, the Agricultural Bank, and group settlement. All these institutions are under the control of the trustees of the Agricultural Bank. I am pleased to see that a move has been made to decentralise the bank on the lines suggested by the Royal Commission on dairying. Many of us have been advocating a system of decentralisation which was long overdue. When the Minister is replying, I hope he will be able to give us full information with regard to the policy it is intended to adopt. We know that in the past everything has had to go through a bottle-neck into Perth, and that considerable delays have taken place. We find that the bank, while it has performed excellent service, has also been responsible for many delays. The time is opportune, in view of the bank taking over the groups, and also because of the unfortunate position of many engaged in farming, for a considerable writing-down in values to take place. I trust that the Government will see fit to appoint an independent committee of financial experts to make recommendations on this subject. The total liabilities of the Agricultural Bank, including group settlement, is £13,482,194.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Does that include the Peel Estate?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I think so. The liabilities of the Industries Assistance Board total £2,577,000, making a grand total of over £16,000,000. According to the bank's statement, the profit last year was £77,363, and the loss on the Industries Assistance

Board was £77,149. Thus the actual book profit shown was £223. I would draw the attention of the Minister to the administrative costs. On page 13 of the report we find that the bank charged up for administration, salaries, incidentals, workers' compensation, etc., £51,580. They deducted £14,346 for group settlement administration, which left £37,233 for Agricultural Bank administration. Therefore, to administer £11,312,617, it cost £37,233, and to administer the groups total of £2,169,517, it cost £14,364. Next, when we come to the Industries Assistance Board we are faced with a most amazing position. We find that the capital involved in the Industries Assistance Board is £2,577,894, and the administrative costs charged up to that board amount to £42,728. So we have it on the one hand that to administer 1¼ millions cost £37,000, to administer 2½ millions cost £42,000.

Hon. H. Seddon: Don't they say how they arrive at those figures?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, salaries £37,512, £3,351, incidentals £5,107, rent £3 10s., workers' compensation £105—. If the hon. member will turn to page 6 of the report he will see for himself. I wish members to realise that I am not criticising the institutions in any way; I am only drawing attention to the method adopted, and contending that a committee of financial experts should be appointed to collaborate with the trustees and officers of the bank in the hope of putting the institution on a better basis than it is on at the present time. When we find that administrative costs are charged up in this way, it gives one cause to worry and wonder whether the general administration is on similar lines. If members will turn to the second report on page 7 they will find that if we deduct what was paid in Federal income tax for seed wheat, wire netting, civil service settlers, Tammin settlement, State Implement Works and road board rates, successive Governments have been in the position of picking up departmental reimbursements to the amount of £1,570,560. In view of the large amount of money involved in the Agricultural Bank, the Industries Assistance Board, and group settlement, it is certainly time that something was done to straighten up the system. I would like to draw attention also to another phase of the Agricultural Bank's activities. On

page 4, under the heading Group Settlement, we find the following—

Advances made under the above heading during the year totalled £52,502 15s. 7d., and repayments £456 1s. 3d., leaving a balance of principal money outstanding of £62,711 9s. 8d.

The total of £52,503 advanced by the bank is made up as follows:—Purchase of stock £16,085, purchase of machinery £55, effecting improvements £2,078, seed and super £11,634, fees for registration of securities £19,917, sundries £2,734. So with a principal amount of £32,586, the settlers are charged £19,917 for registration fees. It certainly seems that some inquiry must be made there, for the charge is out of all proportion to the main amount. I hope the Minister, when replying, will intimate that he is prepared to agree to such an inquiry. On the one hand we are urging a reduction in the cost of production, and on the other hand we are charging the settlers enormous sums in administrative costs. I think those figures will convince members that an inquiry should be held.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Your interpretation of those figures must be wrong.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I can only refer the hon. member to page 4, where he will find the figures clearly set out.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: If it is correct, it is a scandal.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have quoted the figures given to the House. I am not in any way criticising either the trustees or the officers of the bank, for on every occasion on which I have had to approach them in the interests of my constituents I have always received from them the utmost courtesy. I compliment the Royal Commissioners on their report on group settlement, which I commend to the serious attention of the House. One could indulge in caustic criticism of the general administration of group settlement as a whole, but each section has to carry its share of responsibility. In effect, we are all in a bog and we have to put our shoulders to the wheel to get out of it. I am perfectly satisfied that it is going to be a long hard road, especially for the settlers themselves. The first recommendation of the Royal Commissioners is a general reduction of interest to 5 per cent. where rates in excess are now being paid. They recommend also that the valuations should be reviewed

and, when necessary, written down. They recommend that all outstanding interest owing to the Agricultural Bank be capitalised, that accommodation interest be written off, and that all settlers be assisted with further loans to enable values to be maintained. I should like to quote the following from paragraph 7 of the Commissioners' report:—

The position of group settlement to-day may be compared with a campaign which has been commenced without due thought or preparation, and with an untrained army. Many changes of policy and tactics, together with alternate strict and slack discipline, have resulted in pampered and spoiled troops. After huge expenditure some temporary successes were gained, but now serious reverses have been sustained; ground temporarily won is being lost, and the men have lost faith and morale. Some are bordering on mutiny, and their leaders are in a quandary to know what to do. No campaign can be won with an army in such a condition. The first thing to be done is to restore morale by a solid plan that will give settlers a hopeful outlook.

I agree that we have to give the settlers a hopeful outlook. But we have also to remember that there are large numbers of men in the wheat areas and the wool areas in exactly the same position. They, too, require to have their morale restored and to be given some hopeful outlook. It is essential that we should have some uniformity, and I am satisfied that some measure of writing down of the farmers' debts will have to be faced, and a term of years granted to them to enable them to re-establish their position with justice to themselves and to their creditors. It is gratifying to find that the Premiers of the Eastern States have felt that the Act introduced here was very effective, in consequence of which they asked that Mr. White, who is administering the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, should be permitted to pay a visit to the Eastern States. I am hopeful that, as a result of the conference of Mr. White with the Eastern States Premiers, there will be evolved some uniform legislation which will enable a form of tenure to be given to the farmers, and so encourage them to carry on. I think it would be quite practicable to establish local boards in various centres, boards on lines similar to that appointed in the Esperance district, which is performing a very useful function. That board is located in your province, Sir, and so you should know that it has achieved very excellent results. In view of that experience in the

Esperance district, the Government might well consider the establishment of similar boards in other centres. I am sure it would materially help to solve the present unsatisfactory position. If, happily for the State, the prices of wheat and wool increase, of course many of our troubles will vanish, but in the meantime I should like to see the establishment of the boards I have suggested. Also I hope the Government will give consideration to the plight of those settlers in the Denmark district, where so many of the cattle have suffered and even died from what is known as the wasting disease. The Agricultural Department has spent a considerable amount of money down there and sent its officers to stamp out the disease, but so far they have not met with the degree of success they would like. The settlers in that district claim that Mr. McGough has cured a number of the affected cattle, and they suggest that his formula should be purchased by the department. I have here a letter from the chairman of the committee down there, from which I should like to quote this extract:—

As near as I can put it briefly:—We will give our formula to the department to be kept secret. If necessary we will treat stock ourselves, so that our preparation is kept quiet. If this proves successful—as it will—we want the whole of the dead stock account wiped out; accumulated interest on this account wiped out; old worn-out cows replaced, and no interest for three years, to give us a chance to rear a few heifers and be on the level of others.

Those seem to me to be very reasonable requests. It was through no fault of their own that the settlers were placed down there, nor, if it comes to that, was it through any fault of the Government. I understand that Mr. McGough's formula is available, and I hope the Government will give it consideration and in justice to the settlers will adopt the suggestions contained in the letter I have read. Now we come to a subject which has created a good deal of discussion. It is suggested—I understand the suggestion originated in the "Birthplace"—that the members of Parliament should be reduced in number. There is no reason why we could not carry on the Assembly with 30 members and the Council with 20 members, provided we get an equitable quota and representation on lines similar to those existing before we had the present unbalanced quota. I would not agree to any reduction in the membership of this House if there were not a proportional reduction in another place.

If our members were reduced to 20, I do not see why they should not be appointed for six years, as is the case to-day, and why at each general election half the number should not retire. That would mean a saving of expense both to the Government and the candidates themselves. This principle is followed in South Australia, and could apply equally well here. The boundaries of the various electorates and provinces should be co-ordinated. This would enable the Legislative Assembly rolls to be used in both cases.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: How could the Assembly rolls be used for the Legislative Council?

Hon. A. THOMSON: The hon. member must be patient.

Hon. E. H. Harris: We need a good deal of patience.

Hon. A. THOMSON: As the rolls are, we find a voter living in Pingelly and another in Albany and so forth. It costs a good deal to prepare the rolls, and they have not been satisfactory in the past. If we had the Assembly rolls there would be nothing to prevent the authorities from putting in the margin a cross or asterisk opposite the name of the elector. That would indicate that the person was entitled to vote for the Council.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You intend to eliminate the absentee property owner? If he does not live in the Province, he will not get a vote.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am not proposing to eliminate anyone. The name of the absentee owner can also be put on the same roll. Although he would not be permitted to vote for the Assembly, he could vote for the Council.

Hon. H. J. Velland: How would you get on where the boundaries are not co-terminous.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I suggest that they be made co-terminous. If they are not co-ordinated, there will have to be a redistribution of seats to overcome the difficulty. That is long overdue in the case of the Council. The proposal would affect a considerable saving in cost and would be beneficial to the candidates. It is too much to expect one representative of the Government in this House to do justice to all the Bills that pass before us. The Chief Secretary has undoubtedly suffered in health as a result of his experience. I hope the Government will lose

no time in appointing a second Minister in this Chamber.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: The Leader of the House says he does not like assistance.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Six Ministers in another place are there to handle the various measures that are brought forward, and it is too much to expect one man here to do justice to the work of six. I am in favour of reducing the salaries of members to the amount at which it stood when I entered Parliament. The basic wage is down nearly to £3 a week, and our salaries could well be reduced to £300 a year with corresponding reductions to Ministers. I have a great deal of sympathy for the unemployed, to whom £300 a year must seem a lot of money. The affairs of State would be carried out just as well at the £300 a year salary as they are at present. I should like to strike a note of warning concerning the policy of the Workers' Homes Board. Wooden houses are being erected in country districts, and many have been removed from group settlements. I have been approached by several men in my town, many of whom have spent between £600 and £800 in the erection of brick houses. Altogether between £60,000 and £70,000 have been spent in this kind of structure. One may be accused of denying the working man the right to live in a cheap house. The dwellers in the wooden houses are paying only about 5s. a week for them. The homes are fairly decent to look at, but they only cost from about £220 to £250. They certainly depreciate the value of the board's security. I wrote to them about it, and in reply was informed that I had no right to prevent a man from getting a cheap house.

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: A question of sacrificing the primary for the secondary industry.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I do not understand the hon. member. The board's securities are undoubtedly being depreciated. Before continuing the policy of erecting wooden homes in country towns, the Government would do well to see whether empty houses are not available, or if homes at reasonable rentals could not be obtained. I wish to draw attention to the unfair competition between the State and the timber merchants. When the Government call for tenders they

should allow the contractors to purchase their own materials where they like, provided those materials come up to the specifications. The position to-day is that on the contract form it is set down that sawn timber will be supplied free on rails, and the dressed timber, joinery, etc., will also be supplied. The successful contractor must order these materials from the State trading concerns, that is, the State Sawmills, Brickworks, etc. In the contracts that are now advertised, fully 50 per cent. of the price constitutes a gift to the State trading concerns involved. The State Sawmills in particular are living upon Government timber orders, supplied for Government departments at rates above those at which they are supplied to the general public. This is a statement that was made to me.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Who made it?

Hon. A. THOMSON: It is authentic. As showing that the State Sawmills keep going as a result of Government orders, I would point out that they are now employing 50 per cent. of the men engaged in the sawmilling industry, whereas in 1929, when all the timber mills and timber merchants were working under normal conditions, the State secured only 25 per cent. of the business. The competition is very unfair. The Government should strike these provisions out of their specifications and do away with this class of competition. If everyone became a Government employee, I do not know where the revenue would come from. Very few of our State trading concerns, or our private concerns, are showing a profit to-day. I wish to protest strongly against the action of the Government in giving preference to their own particular section of industry. I now wish to deal with the Fremantle Harbour Trust and to protest against the proposals of the Harbour Trust Commissioners. The following statement appears in the last report of the Trust:—

If the falling off in import tonnage to the advantage of export tonnage, as disclosed by the above comparison is to continue, the consequent lessening of revenue, notwithstanding possibly increased tonnage handled, will no doubt call for a revision of the present policy of requiring the import tonnage to find the revenue to enable our primary products to receive the benefit of harbour facilities without direct contribution to the provision and maintenance of such.

From reading that, one would naturally infer that our primary products were not to pay anything towards maintenance and up-

keep of the Fremantle Harbour Trust. I shall show that the commissioners are not at all alive to the importance of Western Australia's primary industries. I have here a return which was produced at the recent annual conference of the Primary Producers' Association in Perth. It is an interesting document, showing costs incurred by various ships using the Fremantle harbour. Gantry hire was £215, £270, £189, and £290. The charge for riggers was up to £18, and that for electric fittings up to £6. Mooring and shifting of boats averaged between £4 and £5. Slings cost from £29 to £44. Overtime averaged £3 10s. per ship, and pilotage £25, towage £18, running of lines 15s. Berthage charges totalled £588, £530, £350, and £191. Stevedoring averaged £698; this charge, of course, gave work to men. The grand total of charges amounted to £1,611 in the case of one ship and £1,545 in the case of another. The average cost of loading wheat per ton for five ships, as quoted by Mr. Holmes, works out at 3s. 7.8d. per ton. At Bunbury, which lacks the gantries and improved electric appliances installed at Fremantle, the cost is 3s. 3.7d. per ton. I have it on the authority of a trustee of the Wheat Pool that at Albany, despite long haulage, and also despite the absence of facilities, causing all the loading to be done by manual labour, the men gave great assistance and did everything possible to expedite loading. The cost at Albany, which port, I emphasise, is without any facilities such as those at Fremantle, amounts to 3s. 2.2d. per ton. Thus, without facilities and labour-saving devices, Bunbury shows a saving of approximately 4d., and Albany a saving of approximately 5d., per ton as against Fremantle. The average amount received by the Fremantle Harbour Trust from the ships mentioned in the return I am quoting was £717. The Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners will say that that is all right, seeing that the primary producer does not pay the charges. However, it is because the primary producer's wheat and other commodities have to be consigned oversea that the Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners are able to draw an average of £717 for the nine or ten days a wheat ship under present conditions remains in harbour to load wheat. Therefore it is justifiable to protest against the intention of the Commissioners to place an additional burden on an industry already overloaded with costs. Last year the Fre-

mantle Harbour Trust paid into Consolidated Revenue an amount of £121,225, after having met all interest and sinking fund charges and provided for renewals. Here we have a curious anomaly of Government finance. Despite the fact that the capital value of the harbour increased during the year to the extent of £65,633, the harbour facilities are being used as a taxing machine.

Hon. H. Seddon: That practice is not restricted to the Fremantle harbour.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I know that it is quite common. I dare say that if I were Treasurer, I would be doing the same thing. Apparently the intention of the commissioners is to impose unnecessary charges upon wheat. If that intention can be defeated by my vote in this House, my vote will be so used. I think it desirable to quote the following paragraph from the report of the commissioners:—

The renewals and replacement fund, which stood at £62,297 19s. at the beginning of the year, was increased by a further contribution of £2,000, and interest on investments £2,886 12s. 6d. During the year a sum of £10,000 was withdrawn from this account to meet extraordinary maintenance of the North Wharf, leaving a balance at the end of the year of £57,184 11s. 6d.

I repeat, I trust that the commissioners will not carry out their apparent intention to place an additional impost on the men who produce the real wealth of the State. Another matter to which I desire to make a brief reference, is the Traffic Act. I hope the Government's foreshadowed Bill to amend that measure will provide that a farmer may, if he so desires, carry his produce by motor truck or car in any direction without having first to secure special permission. If I have a motor truck on my farm, I ought not to be debarred from travelling to Perth by means of it unless I pay an extraordinary license fee. It seems wrong that a farmer should not be able to carry from, say, Gnowangerup to Kattanning, over a made road, material which is useful on his farm. I strongly urge amendment of the Act in that sense. I hope the few remarks I have made are not too destructive, and that some of them may even be found constructive; and I thank hon. members for the patience with which they have listened to me.

On motion by Hon. J. M. Drew, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.55 p.m.