

QUESTION—SANITARY SITE, MT. LAWLEY.

Mr. J. MacCALLUM SMITH asked the Minister for Health: 1, How much longer will the residents of Mt. Lawley have to put up with the sanitary site nuisance? 2, Will he urge the city council to expedite the removal to the new site?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: 1, The transfer of operations to the new site will be completed within two months. 2, The council have already constructed a road, 1½ miles in length, to the new site, and two-thirds of the initial work at the site have been completed. The progress being made is considered reasonable.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Seventh Day.

MR. PIESSE (Katanning) [4.34]: Before addressing myself to the motion, I wish to offer you, Sir, my most sincere and hearty congratulations upon your elevation to the important position you occupy. I look upon it not only as a compliment and recognition of your valued services, but also as a compliment to the district which you have represented so long and ably in this House. I wish also to offer my congratulations to the Government upon their accession to office, and to say I am glad to know that wise counsels have prevailed in the uniting of the two parties which previously sat in opposition to the late Government. The composite Government, representative of both parties, has been successfully formed and I can only hope this augurs well for the welfare and prosperity of the State. I desire also to say how pleasing it is to know that an extension of His Excellency the Governor's appointment has been arranged, for the present Governor, Sir William Campion, has succeeded in endearing himself to the people of the State. I also wish to place on record my appreciation, and the appreciation of many of my friends, of the able services rendered to the State by the late Government. Putting party politics aside altogether, I think the House and the country can congratulate themselves upon the fact that we have in the House quite a number of ex-Ministers of long service, indeed veterans in politics, to help us to run the affairs of the State. I hope the work of the session will be pleasant and that the Opposition,

realising as they must do that the Government are faced with a serious economic position and with great difficulties—the Leader of the Opposition himself remarked the other night that the Government had many serious difficulties to face—will not allow party differences to interfere with the work of successfully carrying on the administration of the affairs of this country. The Governor's Speech, although disappointing, discloses the necessity that exists for a close scrutiny of the State's economic situation, especially in point of trade and finance. It reveals the need for economy in every Government department. This House will be called upon to face many difficulties, and I think it would be an act of grace on the part of members on both sides of the House if in asking the Government departments and the employees of all Government services to exercise every economy in administration, they themselves gave a lead in making sacrifices to the end that the cost of Parliament might be reduced. Considerable increases have taken place during recent years, and I think it would be furnishing evidence of our sincerity in the desire that the State employees should make sacrifices in view of the altered conditions of finance if we ourselves were to lead the way by making substantial reductions in our own Parliamentary allowances. I understand it is the intention of the Government to make that question part of their policy, and I think that what the country is expecting is that Ministers and members alike will be prepared to make some sacrifice themselves. Although Ministers may be called upon to work harder and give closer attention than has been previously given by any Government to the administration of affairs under the altered conditions, I feel sure they will be loyal to the State and not be afraid to make reasonable sacrifices themselves. This, possibly, may not meet with the approval of all members, for it may be that in some instances a reduction in the Parliamentary allowance would inflict hardship upon individual members. Still, we should be earnest in this matter and not be afraid to face our responsibilities. Suggestions have been offered that a 10 per cent. or even 15 per cent. reduction in our Parliamentary allowances should be made. Personally I would go further and say that we in this House should agree to reduce our allowances by £100 per annum, and ask another place to respond. In my view, members of another place should be prepared to

make an even greater sacrifice and reduce their allowances by £200 per annum. Never in the history of the State or of the Commonwealth has the country been faced with so serious a financial position. There has been a substantial shrinkage in the value of our primary products and our export trade. During the past year, unfortunately, our staple products of wheat and wool suffered a shrinkage of at least 30 per cent. in the value of wheat and 65 per cent. in the value of wool. I do not wish unduly to take up the time of the House, but I seize this early opportunity to ask members to consider what effect the comparative fall in prices has had upon the farming industry. Perhaps I cannot cite a better case than my own. I am proud of the fact that my son and I hold a farm that has been under development for the past 25 years. I will not say it is the best farm in the district, but certainly it is looked upon as being well up to the average of the successful farms down there. In 1928 the net proceeds from our wool was £1,302. We produced in that year 47 bales giving a weight of 15,386 lbs., and the average price per bale was £27 1s. 1d.

Hon. P. Collier: How much per lb. is that?

Mr. PIESSE: It works out at 1s. 8d. In 1929 the average price per bale was £22 6s. 1d., for 35 bales, a total of £780 14s. 7d. which worked out at 1s. 5d. per lb. In 1930 the net proceeds from the sale of 46 bales of wool was £472 5s. 11d. The average price per bale was £10 5s. 4d., which worked out at 8d. per lb. I have given these figures to show that the average price of wool per bale fell in two years from £27 14s. 1d. to £10 5s. 4d. This was a class of wool that has always been regarded as most profitable. The figures will give the House an idea of what the farming community is suffering. I refer particularly to those who are growing wool and wheat and those who are growing wool alone. This shows what an unfortunate position they are in this year owing to the sudden drop in prices. This drop has brought about a good deal of the serious drift in finances. It is said that Australia is suffering a shrinkage in the value of wool of somewhere in the neighbourhood of £30,000,000. In Dalgety's last monthly report a full record appears of the comparisons between different years. If members will refer to it, they will be able

to verify the figures I have already given to the House. This State is depending almost entirely upon primary production. It, therefore, behoves the House to sink party differences and meet the situation fairly and squarely. What would any financial institution do in similar circumstances? In this time of financial crisis everyone is suffering. Not only are the workers affected, but unfortunately many people who have been regarded as wealthy and most successful are also suffering from the fall in the price of primary products. This is common, of course, to the whole of Australia. Our future welfare is so interwoven with the Commonwealth that we are justified in closely investigating our past relationship with the Federal authorities. We want to see how far we ourselves are responsible for the present unsatisfactory state of affairs, and how far Federal action has interfered with our finance and our state of prosperity. Our national wealth is bound up in the success of our primary products. Only so long as we can make them pay can the country prosper. It behoves the House, and the Government in particular, to pay the closest attention to the fostering of these industries. I am glad to say the Government have indicated that they are fully seized of their responsibilities. I wish to pay a tribute to the previous Government. There are many people in this State, and in the district I have the honour to represent, who are grateful to them for their past efforts to develop agriculture and our primary industries. In our part of the State we are disappointed that various previous Governments and Parliament have not paid that attention to the lower end of the Great Southern that its importance demands. Had wiser counsels prevailed, and previous Governments been more practical in some of their developmental schemes, particularly with regard to group settlement, we should not be feeling the general depression in trade and consequent unemployment to the same extent. It is no use blaming past Governments. It has often been said that the Government which does not make a mistake does nothing. We have, however, the right to criticise and comment on unnecessary waste. The waste and losses that occurred in the group settlement scheme could largely have been avoided had

it not been for our system of party Government. I am not blaming one Administration more than another, but I wonder how any Government could have lost such a large sum of money on this undertaking. It was enough to gamble a few thousand pounds upon it without gambling in millions. When we come to think of our present difficulties, and of how hard it is to obtain the necessary capital to carry out even the most pressing work, it makes one wonder how it was that so much money was so unwisely spent on the group settlements. It is the duty of every Government to see that greater care is exercised in this respect, and that loan moneys are more wisely spent. Of necessity we must carry out some public works, and as soon as the money market rights itself we may be justified in taking some risk in the expenditure of our loan moneys, but surely we should profit by past experience, and in the handling of our local expenditure see that only necessary and profitable reproductive works are carried on. Something may be said with regard to an early consideration of our State trading concerns. On the face of it they present a very unsatisfactory position. Some of these concerns are carried on to help other industries. I take it the House is prepared, and the taxpayers are prepared, to take a risk in some respects. I do not want to be critical, but it is unreasonable to think that we should go on losing hundreds of thousands of pounds on some of our State trading concerns. As business propositions, at a time of depression like this they are the first to feel the effects.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Would you close down the Wyndham Meat Works?

Mr. PIESSE: There is something radically wrong with them that they should show a loss of £182,000.

Hon. P. Collier: All of that represented interest.

Mr. Coverley: There is nothing wrong with the meat works; it is the Government's system of bookkeeping that is wrong.

Hon. P. Collier: That represented interest on the plant, and was not a loss on working.

The Minister for Railways: There was no loss on the operations.

Mr. PIESSE: Perhaps the Government are paying too much for the cattle.

Hon. P. Collier: If you close them down you will have the interest charges to meet all the same.

Mr. PIESSE: The time has arrived when all Government concerns should stand on their own bottoms.

Mr. Angelo: Ships float on their own bottoms.

Mr. Coverley: And others stand on them.

Mr. PIESSE: No trading bank would carry on any of these concerns on their present balance sheets.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You should investigate the balance sheets before you say that.

Mr. PIESSE: That is my view according to the published reports.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You cannot accept them. We have already seen how one paper has apologised for its mistakes.

Mr. PIESSE: I am ready to be convinced. One of the faults about these State trading concerns is that no provision seems to have been made, as is done with most successful undertakings, to establish a reserve.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That goes into the Treasury.

Mr. PIESSE: It should not go into Consolidated Revenue. These businesses should stand on their own. I hope I am not misrepresenting the position. I have not gone fully into all the accounts.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The hon. member should investigate them closely.

Mr. PIESSE: When I have done so, I hope my deductions will be found to be wrong. I know the position as it is based on the Press reports.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You know the Press is unreliable. The Press has misrepresented you time and again.

Mr. PIESSE: I hardly think the Press would purposely misrepresent the position.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: No, but it makes mistakes, like other people.

Mr. PIESSE: I can only hope a mistake has been made, and that upon investigation it will not be shown that the losses which have been reported have actually occurred.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You have read the apology the Chief Secretary got.

Mr. PIESSE: Yes. I was surprised that a more careful report had not been made in the first place. We should see that these industries are conducted upon an independ-

ent and business basis, free from political control and party considerations.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And free from newspaper propaganda.

Mr. PIESSE: If they can be made profitable, I would be quite ready to give the Government which brought them into existence full credit for them. At present, however, they do not seem to be in a very satisfactory position, as that term is applied to private business concerns. The farmers have been asked not only by our State Government, but by the Federal Government, to grow more wheat with a view to lifting Australia out of its unsatisfactory position. The unfortunate difficulty, however, is one of finance. Unless the primary producer can continue to avail himself of the financial accommodation he received in previous years, it is not to be expected that he will be able to respond to the call made upon him. He cannot do so without the necessary capital. And that is Australia's great difficulty today: we know there is a shortage or tightness of cash everywhere. The Governor's Speech indicates that the best experience the House can produce should be brought to bear so as to carry the country through the trying period it is facing. To forecast what the wheat market will be is extremely difficult. We hope that it will be favourable. The farmer has to be a man of hope. The wheat market has been dropping for the past few months, and we wonder where the fall will stop. There would be hope if the primary producer were given an opportunity to do what is asked of him; that is, if the necessary capital were forthcoming. Naturally we are anxious to know what the Premier's Budget will disclose. I hope that one of the first things to be stated by the Premier will be that no more taxation shall be imposed on the primary producer, who is already overburdened with Federal taxation.

Mr. Angelo: Two people cannot milk the same cow, and two have been on the stool for a long time.

Mr. Raphael: You do not seem to think of that, though, where the worker is concerned.

Mr. PIESSE: Until some practical move is made to reduce the cost of production, how can the Federal Parliament expect the farmer of Western Australia to grow more wheat and make a success of his enterprise?

The burden of the Federal tariff is felt throughout this State. During the past 15 or 20 years our agricultural machinery has more than doubled in cost. Is the present generation of primary producers to be strangled by a high protective tariff in order that secondary industries may be built up in Australia? Moreover, most of the secondary industries which we are called upon to protect by the high tariff are located in the Eastern States. Day by day we have evidence of the enormous volume of Western Australia's imports from those States. The only satisfactory feature of the situation is that we buy those things from our own Australian people. Nevertheless, we pay a heavy penalty in many directions. Not only is there the adverse trade balance, but there is the continually expanding octopus of the Federal tariff. We are proud of the Australian harvester, but how can we be proud of supporting industries which are based on higher wages and higher salaries than our primary producers are able to earn?

Mr. Raphael: Is the object of the tariff only to protect industries, or is it also to prevent money from going out of Australia?

Mr. PIESSE: While in favour of a reasonable degree of protection, I object to protection which raises farming machinery to more than double its price of 15 or 20 years ago. How can Western Australia evolve from its present position while the producing costs of our primary industries are increased almost daily? Take ordinary ploughshares. A few years ago they cost 28s. per dozen. To-day a dozen of them cannot be bought under about 50s.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Would you suggest that that is due to the tariff only?

Mr. PIESSE: Australia has made a mistake in trying to build up highly protected secondary industries before building up its primary industries. That is why Australia is lagging behind. What has it cost Western Australia to build up industries? During the last eight or nine years our public debt has increased by 30 millions sterling, whilst in the same period our population has increased by 80,000. Thus the cost of the increase of population is about £400 per capita. We should put our primary producers in a position to operate here successfully and to develop the unused lands within the safe rainfall, lands capable of carrying

hundreds of thousands of people. That cannot be done while all the things the farmer has to buy remain at such high prices. We are still importing huge quantities of dairy and farm products.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: To-day we are producing more butter than we can consume.

Mr. PIESSE: I congratulate the State upon that fact.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: We are now cold-storing butter, and our merchants are importing Eastern States butter.

Mr. PIESSE: Our production of butter could be greatly increased if costs were reduced. The butter bounty is one of the very few Federal bounties in which Western Australia can participate. Besides butter, there are eggs, cheese, honey, cream, and condensed milk imported by this State from the East.

Mr. Angelo: Fish too.

Mr. PIESSE: We are importing enormous quantities of dairy and farm products from the Eastern States. One of the first duties upon which our Government should concentrate is to give our primary producers every encouragement and assistance towards supplying the farm and dairy products now imported from the East, so that the money they represent may be circulated here instead of going out of the State. Our adverse trade balance with the Eastern States amounts to nine or ten millions sterling annually. While that condition of things obtains, it is only reasonable to expect that money here will be dearer and less easily obtainable for developing our industries. Should it not be one of the chief aims of both sides of the House to overcome the financial difficulty by producing more in our own State and not sending away so much money to the East? I do not wish to say much regarding Western Australia's relationship to the Federation. I have already pointed out how little the Federal authorities have been able to assist us in the directions where we mainly require help, namely, those directions in which we could reduce the cost of production so as to promote the development of our natural resources. Undoubtedly Western Australia suffers from many disabilities under Federation. I shall not be one to go out and cry for secession as the only cure for our ills. In my opinion it is the paramount duty of both sides of this Chamber to work unanimously and

wholeheartedly for the alleviation of the Federal difficulties under which Western Australia labours. I said on the hustings, and I say here to-day, with all confidence, that it is the first duty of this Parliament to view those disabilities from a non-party standpoint. What would be more agreeable than to see the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier at one on this great subject? It is a vital question affecting our national existence. If we continue to be treated as at present. I am afraid that instead of 50 members here we will have 30 or perhaps 25. Parliament will be reduced to the status of a mere shire council. Already people are up in arms regarding the cost of Parliament.

Mr. Marshall: There are 30 members in the Legislative Council.

Mr. PIESSE: The number there will probably have to be reduced, too.

Mr. Marshall: We could reduce the lot of them.

Mr. PIESSE: The only logical consequence of unification will be that State Parliaments will be done away with. The taxpayers will not be able to submit to the cost of State Parliaments in addition to the Federal Parliament. It is the sacred duty of this Parliament to protect the sovereign rights of the State. Looking back over the years, I cannot recollect any instance of united action being taken by all parties in Parliament for the protection of our sovereign rights. A Royal Commission was appointed by the Federal Government a few years ago, and as a result Western Australia was granted certain concessions. Something like £330,000 was made available annually to this State. I would ask the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition if they think that sum compensates for all the disabilities we suffer under Federation. In my opinion, bearing in mind that nearly half our importations are from the Eastern States, where our trade supports a large section of the people, Western Australia would be entitled to upwards of £1,000,000 a year, and even that would not be quite adequate.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You think secession would alter that position.

Mr. PIESSE: I am not advocating secession. I prefer that we should first exhaust all constitutional methods of putting our house in order by securing fair and proper treatment from the Federal authori-

ties. Under the Federal Constitution the Senate was intended to be the House that would protect the rights of the States. The Senate has failed in that respect, and the members of that House, had they done their duty, would never have allowed powers to be taken away from us as they did in years gone by. We know that there are many instances of overlapping of State and Commonwealth services. Surely the Electoral Department affords one instance in respect of which the State and Federal Governments could reach an agreement and one department only be left to control that work.

Mr. Withers: We tried that here on two occasions, but our proposals were rejected.

Mr. PIESSE: The officers of both Electoral Departments are always courteous and carry out their duties well. Incidentally, I wish to say a word or two in praise of the State Electoral Department in connection with the rolls made available for the last general election. The electoral officers deserve every credit for the preparation of those rolls at such short notice. I think they should receive more consideration regarding the time afforded them within which to prepare the rolls. I know that on the last occasion, owing to the limited time, the names of many electors were struck off, and the time for the service of notice of the action taken was altogether too short. No doubt the Government have this matter in hand, but there are various services that now overlap, which could be carried out by one department. In many small country towns there are officers in charge of the railway station and of the post office respectively. Why could not some arrangement be made whereby one officer could carry out the work involved in the two positions, and thus economise in every possible direction? Surely an agreement of that description could be arrived at between the Commonwealth and State departments and so cut out unnecessary expenditure. The position regarding the savings banks is well known. Why cannot we make some arrangement with the Commonwealth Government and do away with the dual cost of administration there? I believe that in Queensland an understanding was arrived at along those lines, and in all seriousness I suggest that it may not be too late to secure an amalgamation or an arrangement regarding the two savings banks in this State. There are many matters I should like to touch upon at this juncture, and being a new

member, I understand one so placed is granted a little latitude. There is nothing more important that should be dealt with by Parliament at the earliest opportunity than the Workers' Compensation Act. In view of its unfair incidence, I cannot understand why there has already been so much delay in providing necessary amendments so that some of the inequitable provisions might be abolished.

Mr. Raphael: What else do you intend to take from the workers?

Mr. PIESSE: The unfair incidence of the Workers' Compensation Act is well known.

Mr. Raphael: Another election promise to be broken!

Mr. PIESSE: I have some information that I wish to read to the House and if the present Government are not in possession of these facts, it is desirable that they should be. I know of no Act that is more unfair, or presses more grievously upon industry, than the Workers' Compensation Act.

Mr. Marshall: You look at the overdrafts they are working on, and see how that presses on them. You have not said anything about profits or interest yet.

Mr. PIESSE: I have not concluded my remarks yet.

Mr. Marshall: Deal with landlordism, and what it means in the metropolis.

Mr. PIESSE: I am not one of those favoured individuals who make a living as the result of interest paid to them. I have paid away a lot in interest, and am doing so now.

Mr. Marshall: And you blame the Workers' Compensation Act for that.

Mr. PIESSE: I cannot see anything fair in it.

Mr. Marshall: None so blind as those that will not see.

Mr. PIESSE: I quite agree with the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) that it is necessary to protect the worker in case of accident or of incapacity as the result of an accident.

Mr. Angelo: You should also curtail the charges levied by doctors.

Mr. Marshall: And curtail the charges made by the Primary Producers' Bank—when you get an opportunity.

Mr. Angelo: You have never had enough money to put into the bank.

Mr. PIESSE: I do not wish to reflect upon our doctors, who are engaged in an honourable and worthy profession.

Mr. Angelo: You know that exceptions prove the rule.

Mr. PIESSE: The doctors I come in contact with are honourable men, and I would not reflect upon their honesty and integrity. But when we have an Act of this description that lends itself to all sorts of impositions, whose incidence has been almost the cause of ruining people on account of circumstances over which they have had no control, that almost invites improper practices. I cannot understand why past Governments have not amended the Act. I will read one or two extracts embodying information I have obtained regarding the operations of the Act. The first one states—

The 1924 amendment of the Workers' Compensation Act imposed a tremendous additional burden on industry. Besides making workers' compensation insurance compulsory, it extended the benefits to the worker and introduced a new second schedule with fixed amounts for disability caused by the loss of fingers, toes, limbs, eyes, etc., in many cases out of all proportion to the manner in which the earning power of the worker was affected.

Mr. McCallum: Which insurance company typed that out for you?

Mr. PIESSE: I can vouch for it that the information came from a reliable source.

Mr. McCallum: Are you interested in any insurance company?

Mr. PIESSE: The hon. member's interjections will not deter me from bringing before the House the standing disgrace of this Act, which stands also to the disgrace of the Minister who administered it in the last Government.

The Attorney General: Why does not the member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) leave the hon. member alone? It is his first go!

Mr. McCallum: Why, he has been in politics longer than I have!

The Attorney General: But he has not been a member of the House for many years.

Mr. Marshall: But he was a member when things were much warmer than they are now.

Mr. PIESSE: When I approach this subject it makes me feel warm. I have knowledge of facts that more than ever convince me of the unfairness of the

Workers' Compensation Act. Within the last few months there was a serious case of injustice and there are others, too, quite apart from those relating to accidents in which the patients, who could probably be dealt with in a few hours are kept on under treatment for much longer periods. I have in mind the case of a farmer in the Cranbrook district. I shall not mention any names, but two farmers were concerned in the matter. I do not wish to bring individual cases before the House, but I cannot give a better illustration of the unfairness of the Act than is disclosed by the particulars of this case. There were two farmers whom I will call A and B. A had a crop of 40 acres of wheat on his property, which adjoined B's property, and B undertook to strip the crop. B wanted some seed wheat and a satisfactory understanding had been arrived at to divide the wheat on the usual terms. B did not live on his property but sent over his man and harvester to do the stripping. A carried on his farm with the aid of his wife and son, employing no hands, and therefore having no insurance policy. During the process of stripping, the man in trying to extract some obstruction from the machine had two of his fingers pulled out. Everyone felt sorry for the injured man; it was a most unfortunate accident, and it is reasonable that he should be protected by insurance. He was protected while he was working on B's farm, the man by whom he was employed, but the insurance company disclaimed liability. B also claimed that the man, while operating the machine, was in the employ of A. The victim of the accident claimed against A and was successful in getting £300 or £400 damages and costs, amounting to £900 in all. A writ of *fi fa* has been served on A. He is a frugal man and was able to raise some £400 and settle the claim on the basis of deferred payment. He paid £400 cash and the balance is to be paid at the rate of £100 a year.

Mr. McCallum: The whole trouble is that the man was not covered by insurance.

Mr. PIESSE: The man was on the place for only three days. Surely it would not be unreasonable to expect the employee to protect himself as well.

Mr. McCallum: Surely you do not expect him to lose two fingers for nothing.

Mr. PIESSE: While he was working on B's farm, he was protected.

Mr. McCallum: It does not matter for whom he was working.

Mr. PIESSE: The Act should be amended.

Mr. McCallum: Why?

Mr. PIESSE: Because insurance is made compulsory on the part of the employer. A was not employing labour and why should not the onus rest on the man's employer? There should be some provision in the Act requiring notification to the man for whom the employee was actually working.

Mr. Marshall: The employers have as much right to know the liability as have the employees.

Mr. PIESSE: The hon. member does not care—

Mr. Marshall: You have a very bad case there.

Mr. PIESSE: The hon. member does not care if the farmer is ruined.

Mr. Marshall: I do care about the man.

Mr. McCallum: We do not want any man to be ruined, but a man who is maimed should not be denied compensation.

Mr. PIESSE: I wish to illustrate further the unfairness of the Workers' Compensation Act. The amended Act introduced a new impost whereby the employer was made liable for hospital and medical expenses up to £100 for the treatment of the injured worker. This new £100 clause may be termed the doctor's benefit clause, as the doctor is the sole arbiter whether the whole or any portion of the £100 is to be extracted from the employer or his insurance company. Members will agree that this tax on industry must be lifted. In many cases the doctor gets more out of an accident than does the injured worker, and it seems impossible to place a check upon the doctor's charges. The chief trouble seems to be the Second Schedule, which in my opinion should be amended. A man who depends for his livelihood upon using his fingers, such as a musician, a typist, or a person engaged in handling delicate instruments would only receive as much for the loss of a finger or thumb as a labourer whose earning power was not affected by the loss of a similar member. Similar anomalies exist throughout the schedule. Surely this House will not permit such an unfair Act to remain on the statute-

book. Some protection must be given to employers. I would be the last in the world to say that any man who is injured should not be protected, but we should not allow these improper things to happen under the schedule. The schedule really lends itself to fraud. If we employ labour on our farms for a fortnight we must protect ourselves, and these cases of imposition have led to the agricultural rate being increased. The insurance companies say they are not looking for the business, and that on it they incur a loss even at the present rates. The cost of this insurance must be borne by the employer. In 1920 he could, if he so desired, insure his liability under the Workers' Compensation Act, if he was a farmer, at 22s. 6d. and 27s. 6d. per cent., if a butcher 27s. 6d. and 32s. 6d. per cent., and if a builder 40s. and 70s. per cent. Because of the 1925 amendment, it now costs a farmer 65s. per cent., a butcher 90s. and a builder 70s. and 300s. per cent. In addition insurance is now compulsory. If a man, unemployed, comes looking for work and one is willing to give him a month's work, one must insure him at the rate of at least £150 a year and pay 65s. per cent. That is an imposition. To give a comparison, the premium charged in Victoria is 16s. 6d. and in South Australia 25s. whereas here, as I have stated, it is 65s. per cent. If there is anything I can do in the way of helping to amend the Act to make it more equitable, I shall be only too pleased to do it. Yesterday I asked the Attorney General whether it was intended to introduce this session a Bill to amend the Act, more especially in regard to the liabilities and crushing burdens upon industry, and he replied that the matter was under consideration. It will be necessary to delete the Second Schedule, and set up some authority or qualified board to deal with any case of injury and determine the extent of the disability. Let me show what a burden this legislation is on the agricultural industry. For five years prior to the introduction of the 1924 Act, farmers paid £34,000 as a cost under the Act then in force to meet their liability, whereas under the new Act the cost for three years has been £141,000. There is a reference to workers' compensation in the report of the Commissioner of Railways published in yesterday's "West Australian." I understand that the department have their own insur-

ance fund. The Commissioner states that contributions from the working expenses and general loan fund for workers compensation totalled £188,349 for the past two years, while the payments from the fund amounted to £182,275. If the railway claims have been decided by the same process and on the same basis as those of other employees, I should say it is necessary for the Government to investigate the railway fund closely and bring about an early amendment of the Act. One member made reference to the high rates of interest prevailing throughout the Commonwealth militating against the development of primary industry and retarding the progress of all industry. It is indisputable that if interest is high, there is less inclination to borrow money. Seeing that so many of our agriculturists have to resort to national assistance, it is important that we should know more about this important question. I congratulate the member for South Fremantle on his excellent address, and the able manner in which he applied himself to the question of our loan indebtedness and more particularly our war debts. I have lived in this country all my life and have found it necessary to watch the interest rate closely in the course of my business, and it is only natural that members should view with some alarm the increased rates we have to pay, not only for agricultural development but for every business undertaking. I cannot see for the moment how we are going to get cheaper money. I have been told by financial people, who know more about the matter than I do, that the only solution of our difficulties is increased production of wealth. We must ask the people to work harder. I am not going to say that we are a country of shirkers, but there is a tendency, a great tendency indeed, to build up artificial conditions industrially, which cannot be sustained. No one would be more sorry than I to see a reduction brought about in wages. With the present high cost of living I am quite certain that the average worker has not very much left to spend on commodities other than those required for domestic purposes. I regret to say that, consequent upon decreased production, and because of the stoppage of loan expenditure, the State will see even worse times. In expressing this view, I hope I shall not be considered a pessimist, but I really fear that we have not touched

bedrock. We shall have less than two millions of loan money to spend this year, and we are not sure even of that. We shall also have a million less to spend on main roads than was spent last year, and there is also less activity in development of agriculture generally, because that development does not now offer the same inducements as other avocations. Who is going into the country to open up our undeveloped areas and put up with all the inconveniences associated with such work, perhaps in country where there are no water supplies, for the purpose of carving out a home? I cannot see anybody doing that under existing conditions. It behoves this Parliament to apply itself diligently and earnestly to fostering and encouraging settlement in the country and making it more attractive. We should give the farmer some assurance that as soon as he builds up an asset, he is not going to be taxed until he has nothing left. A tax on unimproved land, that is, land not being put to its best use, is all right and something might be said in favour of it. But a general land tax is an old-fashioned idea of Henry George. Why should we impose a tax on land that is being properly used, and about which there is a doubt as to whether, while being properly used, it is proving profitable? At the present time there are many sheep owners on the bread line. I have already pointed out that wool has dropped from £27 a bale to £10 a bale. How can sheep owners pay land tax in such circumstances? If Parliament thinks it is going to lift the State out of its present financial difficulty by renewing the land tax, it will realise its mistake. Many of our landholders will not be able to pay it. Therefore, I hope that hon. members will get it out of their heads that land is the first source of taxation. Where is the encouragement to put one's money into land and develop it, when it is possible to invest in Commonwealth bonds and get 6 per cent., together with exemption from Federal taxation? That is one of the positions the Government will have to face, and I hope there will be a measure of relief—if it is at all possible for the Government to introduce it—in the direction of reducing the tax on land. We know that the unimproved values increased considerably last year as the result of the high price wool realised a couple of years ago. Now one of the first duties of this House is to bring down taxation to a

reasonable limit. I desire to remind the House of some old promises made by previous Governments in regard to railway construction. I shall be brief because there will be another opportunity of referring to the matter. There has been a long delay in carrying out the construction of the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook railway. If this line had been built six years ago, when it was authorised by Parliament, many of the settlers in the Cranbrook area would not be in the difficult position in which they find themselves to-day. I agree that this is a bad time to ask the Government to build railways, but I do suggest that the position should be thoroughly grasped, and that to make the areas that have already been taken up more productive, the advisableness of constructing this line should be earnestly considered as soon as money for this kind of work becomes available. Another line that is badly required is the Needilup extension, about which the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) knows a good deal. When that hon. member was Minister for Works in 1914 I accompanied him on an expedition to that district. The settlers there have been long-suffering and some have almost gone to the wall because of the absence of railway communication. I hope that this matter also will not be overlooked and that, when funds are available, the work of building the line will be carried out. If the hon. member made a trip to that district to-day he would be surprised to note what had been accomplished by the settlers. They have remained there and carted their produce over long distances. Had they been given the same facilities that have been accorded to other parts of the State, I am certain that it would have made a great difference to the financial position of Western Australia. There is a very good claim for early consideration, that is, immediately funds are available. They are intensely disappointed with past Governments for having neglected their interests. For nearly 20 years they have been asking for this railway, and what I cannot understand is that the vision of Parliament never seems to go beyond Wagin. I congratulate the Speaker, who is the member for Wagin, on his success in having secured so much for his district. As far back as 1910 Bills were passed for the construction of certain railways which were part of the development policy of the Government, and although something like 25 millions sterling was spent from loan funds by the Government that has

just left office, we find that only 22 miles of railway were built in the Great Southern district. When we remember that we are still spending two millions annually on dairy produce that we are obliged to import from the Eastern States, it is regrettable that so little attention has been given to the provision of railway communication to those districts that would have helped considerably towards reducing that great drain of wealth from this State. The ex-Government and previous Governments neglected the Great Southern.

Hon. P. Collier: Poor representation!

Mr. PIESSE: That part of the State will carry more people in the not distant future than any other part of Western Australia. There are great opportunities there for small holders. It has been found that it is possible to do better on 500 or 1,000 acres than on holdings of greater area. The Government are aware of this and I understand the Minister is considering the matter and that investigations are being made with a view to closer settlement there. What has kept it back so long has been the neglect to spend public money there. I wish to say a few words on the subject of hospital accommodation. This is a matter of pressing importance so far as the country districts are concerned, and I trust that the Government, however stringent the financial position may be, will be able to give the subject immediate consideration. There is one other matter to which I wish to refer, and it is the development of those light lands that for so long have lain idle. Perhaps it would be better if hon. members could have a personal knowledge of that land before they attempt to follow what I mean by the development of those light lands. There is adjacent to the various railways in my district many thousands of acres of light land which could be brought into profitable use if the conditions of improvement were satisfactory and the assistance given was in the right direction. I hope the Minister for Lands, just as soon as he has time to spare, will go down to that district. The people down there have extended to him an invitation and I am sure they will be able to put up to him a practical proposition. It will be of great benefit to this country if the policy of light land development is seriously entertained. Now I want to say a word or two about the insinuation made that I did something of a questionable character in re-

gard to the railway employees. No one could be more sorry than I am that the Government should be faced with the position of having to do something in regard to hours and district allowances, including those relating to railway employees. I want to take members into my confidence and to say straightway that the insinuation that I went to a meeting of railway employees for the purpose of making promises that I could not carry out, is absolutely incorrect. I value the friendship and support given to me during the elections by many personal friends that I have in the Railway Department. I want to make no secret of it; indeed no secret of it was made at the time. I met those men in conference and, as was stated last night, on a Sunday morning. Surely there was no harm in my meeting them. I was very pleased to receive their invitation, but I made it clear to them that I felt they had not asked me there in order to extract some impossible promises from me. It was explained that it was all done in a friendly way in order that I might understand more thoroughly their position. Certainly there was no misunderstanding between the railway employees at Katanning and myself. During the whole of the election campaign I was not asked a single embarrassing question by any of the railway employees. I take it they were pleased that I was standing as a candidate, and as far as I knew then or know now, they were ready to give me liberal support. I made no promise to those gentlemen beyond safeguarding their interests, and I made no secret of my visit to their meeting. It was held in broad daylight, and I cannot see anything improper in my attendance there. Those men are my own townsmen, and very estimable people they are. My desire was to do what I could to assist them to any extent that might lie in my power. Last night Mr. Willecock said I had definitely promised them something. So far as I can remember, I did not touch on the 44-hour week, although it was a prominent question at the time. As to the district allowances, I realised that this question might arise sooner or later, and probably I said that if it did arise I could not see, unless an injustice was being done to the railway employees, that it would be proper for me to interfere. What is the Arbitration Court for, if it is not to remove all these questions

from political influence? If there are anomalies in the service, surely the very best tribunal to which they can be referred is the Arbitration Court. We have not yet touched bedrock in the present serious position, and at a later date Government employees might be very glad to uphold the Arbitration Court as the best possible means of settling anomalies.

Mr. Withers: Was it not said at your meeting that if Mr. Thomson were returned something would happen to the railway men's wages?

Mr. PIESSE: I will be perfectly honest; I believe something of the sort was said. There was a great deal of anxiety in the minds of the railway men at Katanning. I told them at the meeting that as far as I could see a certain section of the railway employees had enjoyed these privileges for many years past, and for the life of me I could not see, so long as they were justified and part of the policy of the Commissioner of Railways, why the permanent way men and engine drivers, who performed very valuable skilled services, should not enjoy those privileges. I pointed out it was all a question of finance, and that the control of the railways was exclusively in the hands of the Commissioner of Railways, and that under a special Act members of Parliament were expressly precluded from interfering, even to the length of introducing deputations. Nobody could be prouder of the services rendered by the railway employees than am I. In them we have a very estimable lot of men, efficiently performing very valuable services. But of course there are improvements that could be made in the railway service. One of the greatest blunders made by my friends opposite, who are so anxious about this question and so ready to criticise the Government over their moving of the Arbitration Court, was their failure adequately to deal with the railway finances. Had they stood up to that obligation, probably there would not be any necessity for the present Government to approach the Arbitration Court now. When I returned to the State five years ago and drove up to Northam, I was astounded to find the road in an appalling condition owing to heavy traffic, including loads of galvanised iron. That was five years ago. I want to know why a Traffic Act preventing competition with our railways by motor vehicles.

was not put through Parliament years ago. And what have we done in regard to main road construction? When you travel along the Albany-road, you find that the natural barriers have been graded down and thousands of pounds have been spent in improving the main roads. Why should a Government make it easy for a motor truck to carry 30 cwt., where previously it could not have carried ten? No wonder our railways are feeling the pinch. To grade down the natural barriers of the Darling Range was a mistaken policy. Why should we make it easier for motor trucks to enter into competition with the railways? I repeat, it was altogether a mistaken policy.

The Minister for Works: The Main Roads Act specifies the grades.

Mr. PIESSE: Well, we might well have deferred that work for years to come, and so given the railways some protection. I think a great deal might be done towards popularising the railways now that petrol has increased in price. I want to know whether the Railway Department cannot hold out increased inducements to travel by train rather than by motor vehicles. I suggest to the Minister for Railways that a return ticket issued at a reduced rate might do much to induce people to travel by train. Certainly many people who come to Perth by road would use the train if they could get a return ticket at a reduced fee. I am not sure that the time has not arrived when we should erect a toll gate on the Albany-road and charge 5s. for each passenger vehicle and 10s. for each truck passing through the gate.

Mr. Brown: Is that a national road?

Mr. PIESSE: I do not know that in our time we shall be able to build many national roads. At present we have not the money to carry out necessary services. The general consensus of opinion is that a road like the Albany-road should be wholly constructed out of national funds.

The Minister for Works: It is so now.

Mr. PIESSE: I understand that under the amended Act the local authorities have to pay annually a certain proportion of the costs of the maintenance of that road. I am not throwing bouquets at members opposite, but I think we are very fortunate in that our railways have not shown a greater shrinkage than actually obtains. In the Eastern

States the railways have made tremendous leeway. As I say, we are fortunate in that our losses are not greater even than they are. But that is no reason why the Minister for Railways should not devote himself to bringing railway expenditure within revenue.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. PIESSE: It is the duty of every member, both by act and by suggestion, to do all in his power to assist the Commissioner to make the railways more profitable, and consequently to increase the work for railway employees and make them contented. I suggest to the Minister that on long-distance journeys some special reduction might be made in return fares, and that on certain days the speed of trains might be accelerated, especially where the railway mileage exceeds that of the road route, in order to make railway travelling more popular with the public. Inconvenience is being suffered by passengers on the Great Southern line because of the lack of adequate refreshment room provision. Probably the Commissioner was justified in discontinuing the running of the dining coach, because so far as I could judge it was not patronised sufficiently, but something like the provision made in South Australia should be adopted here. I do not see why passengers should be required to line up at a refreshment room and scramble for refreshments when that could be avoided by accelerating the speed of the train and cutting out unnecessary stops, as could be done on a couple of trains a week. This would make train travelling more popular with the public and more remunerative to the department. At present there are many unnecessary stoppages on long-distance journeys. The Minister might consider the question of building the refreshment rooms at Spencer's Brook. We have every reason to be proud of our railway employees who, so far as one can judge, give good service. At some of the country stations, however, particularly those of the larger towns, a little more attention might be devoted to providing seats for passengers and attending to their comfort generally. In the old days the stationmaster made it his duty to ensure that passengers were comfortably seated before sending his train out. This is

still done on the Perth station, and it might well be done at the large country stations.

Mr. Wansbrough: Especially when passengers are joining a train after midnight.

Mr. PIESSE: Yes. Often they crowd a compartment, thus causing discomfort to others, when there is plenty of room on another part of the train. If stationmasters gave a little more attention to the comfort of the travelling public, it would encourage people to patronise rail rather than road transport. Let me refer to the responsibility that rests upon Parliament to devise means for providing the necessary capital for carrying on the ordinary avocations of the State, even if money cannot be made available for expenditure on loan works. I have been supplied with some figures, which to my knowledge have not been published, but which fairly show the precarious position of the State as regards its need for finance for the carrying on of business. The banks are refusing to make advances for various activities, which fact is accounted for by the serious falling off of deposits. This statement shows a comparison of the banking figures in Western Australia—

ADVANCES.			
Quarter ended June 24, 1929.	Quarter ended June 30, 1930.	Increase.	Per cent.
£17,471,000	£19,707,000	£2,236,000	12·8
DEPOSITS.			
Not bearing interest			
Quarter ended June 24, 1929.	Quarter ended June 30, 1930.	Decrease.	Per cent.
£5,582,000	£4,607,000	£1,075,000	19·26
Bearing interest.			
£5,758,000	£5,696,000	£62,000	1·03
<u>Total £11,340,000</u>	<u>£10,203,000</u>	<u>£1,137,000</u>	<u>10·02</u>

Those figures show the seriousness of the position. We cannot carry on our ordinary business avocations unless we have a reasonable supply of money available at a reasonable rate of interest. The remedy is to inspire confidence in the country and encourage people possessed of capital to come here and produce more wealth. Undoubtedly the present low prices for exportable commodities will greatly militate against increased production. Wheat to-day is quoted at 2s. 10d. at sidings, at which figure members will realise that farming is not going to be very profitable in future. It

should be our aim to assist the settlers who are being hampered by shortness of cash and low prices of produce. I hope every member will fully realise the responsibility devolving upon him. This is a time for co-operating, not for emphasising party differences. The country expects us to unite and give our best service to assist the Government in carrying out the administration of affairs. I regret that unemployment in the country is so acute. Many people are in a very sorry plight, much of which, it seems to me, is due to want of thrift and care to provide for a rainy day. During the last few months many unemployed have been tramping the country, including my district, and it has become a very difficult matter to provide them with temporary sustenance to carry them on. I cannot understand how it is that able-bodied young men, born in this country and only recently thrown out of work, should be already suffering want. Seven young men of 25 to 30 years of age, who must have earned £4 or £5 a week for years, came into my office begging for bread. Is there anything more pitiable than to see athletic young fellows begging for bread? They told me they belonged to Kalgoorlie and Boulder and had been in work up to two or three months ago. Surely they could have saved some money during the years they had been in work. It shows a lack of frugality on the part of our people. When others have denied themselves in order to save a few pounds for the lean times, the improvident cannot expect to be carried on their backs. Steps should be taken to create an insurance scheme against unemployment. The present position is degrading. I hope the Government will not be hindered in their performance of the onerous duties that rest upon them. I shall do my utmost to assist them in their undertaking and help the country out of its difficulties, so that our people once more may have full-time work restored to them and may be enabled to enjoy a reasonable standard of comfort.

MR. DONEY (Williams - Narrogin) [7.45]: I believe I shall be associating myself with the prevailing sentiment of this Chamber if I congratulate you, Sir, not only upon your acquisition of the very high position which is now rightly yours, but also upon the very marked unanimity of opinion as to the fitness and propriety of your occupying a place of such distinction.