

garding the catastrophe that occurred there and I want briefly to give members some idea of what took place. The subsidence occurred $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the Cardiff mine. I want members to imagine an area of approximately one acre suddenly disappearing to a depth of 100 feet. The jarrah trees growing on that particular acre of ground vanished. They cannot be seen now. That will give some idea of the fall-in that occurred at the Cardiff mine. It is estimated that approximately 1,000,000 tons of earth have entered the old workings of that mine. Just two hours before the subsidence occurred, 12 men were working under the very spot where it took place. We can imagine how lucky it is that there was not a dreadful catastrophe involving loss of life and desolation in many Collie homes! This is the biggest fall-in that has happened in the district. We have had them in the past, but they have been much smaller. This is something to be dreaded.

By the immediate action of the management and the men, the river was diverted so that it would not flow into the fall-in. A good job has been done and so far the water is still flowing away from that area. The amount of water and slurry that has entered the pit has covered an area, underground, of approximately 30 acres. Fortunately this has occurred in an old section of the mine which was worked out some years ago, with the exception of the pillars, and I think, and the general opinion is, that the fall-in has occurred as a result of extracting the pillars which has consequently prevented any support being afforded to the roof of the particular part of the mine. I am quoting this case to show members that coalmining is not all it is cracked up to be. Goldmining has its risks also, but in the treacherous nature of the country around Collie the work of the coalminers becomes very dangerous and calls for a good deal of skill and courage.

I have already said that the Collie miners hold a good record for their work, and I feel sure that whenever there is an opportunity to make their lot brighter, all members, particularly those of the present Government, will do all they can to that end. They will give them every protection and consideration. The State urgently needs the coal, and I feel it is the duty of all of us to give to the men working in this dangerous environment every consideration and

amenity possible. I hope the Government will do all in its power to give them these things which they deserve for working most of their life in the bowels of the earth, and away from God's sunlight. It is almost dark when they go to work and when they come home, and it is always dark when they are underground. They work under rotten conditions, and I earnestly make the plea that the Government will, whenever possible, afford them every consideration.

MR. ACKLAND (Irwin-Moore) [6.12]: May I join those who have gone before me in congratulating you, Sir, on being elected to the Speakership? As a new member, it is only natural that the first business of the House should be of particular interest to me, and it was with great pleasure that I observed you receive the unanimous endorsement of all members of this Assembly, irrespective of party. It was good to hear the kindly and eulogistic references made both by the Premier and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition when they congratulated you, one of whom was speaking on behalf of the two parties comprising the Government, and the other on behalf of the Western Australian Labour Party. I would also like to congratulate my friend, the member for York, on receiving the appointment of Chairman of Committees. I have for many years worked in close association with him in an industrial organisation, and I know that he will stand up very well indeed to the duties which will fall to him in his new position. I would like to go further and offer my sincere congratulations to the Premier and the team that has been elected to work with him. We have already seen their capacity for hard work. They have not spared themselves for one minute since taking over their departments.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. ACKLAND: Before tea I reached the point where I wished to congratulate the Ministry, and I stated that they had the capacity for work. I am of the opinion that, no matter how large or small the undertaking may be—there are three essentials to success. The first is a capacity for hard work, the second is sincerity of purpose, while the third is a considerable measure of commonsense. In this Ministry we have all three in abundance and, when we have add-

ed to that a great deal of ability, I believe success is assured. I wish I could proceed to congratulate members of the Opposition on the sportsmanship they showed when this House first met. I came here as a new member, without previous knowledge of Parliament, and to me it was indeed a great disappointment to see the tactics that were indulged in during the whole of last week. I expect it was a case of window-dressing in preparation for something to come, but to me it seemed a reflection on the great bulk of Labour supporters throughout Western Australia, in taking them to be arrant fools!

It was said that the last election was won on misrepresentation and advertising. That, coming from a Labour Opposition, would be amusing if it were not so ridiculous. The excuses for defeat were indeed laughable. We had a Labour Government in charge of the Treasury bench in Western Australia for 20 out of the last 23 years. At election after election promises were made to the people but were not fulfilled. We have the Government of today in office for four months, and right from its inception an attempt has been made to embarrass it. If we wanted proof of what has not happened in the past it could be found in the facts surrounding a deputation that was taken by the Leader of the Opposition to the Premier shortly after he took office. That, in my opinion, amounted to an admission of failure on the part of the previous Government to do what was required when it had the opportunity.

As the newly elected member for Irwin-Moore it is only reasonable and, I believe, right, that I should confine my remarks mainly to matters related to agriculture. Practically the whole of the electors of Irwin-Moore are to some extent dependent on the products of the soil. I can go further and say that all the people of Western Australia are dependent for their stability on the seasons, prices and conditions related to primary production. Tonight I will deal first with the wheat industry and wheat stabilisation. It is indeed pleasant to know that to-day all the wheat producers throughout Australia are speaking with one voice. It is particularly pleasing to me because, for a number of years, I have been working—together with a most sincere body of men—to bring into being a fair and reasonable

wheat stabilisation scheme, one under which the rights of both producer and consumer would receive fair treatment. Before I take my seat again I hope to have convinced the House that had a wheat stabilisation scheme such as that suggested by the ex-Minister for Commerce, Mr. Scully, become the law of this land, the producers would have contributed more than £180,000,000, which is a vast sum of money.

At the outset I will make the admission that the wheatgrowers of Australia are under a debt of gratitude and an obligation to the taxpayers of the Commonwealth. They have received considerable sums of money from the Commonwealth Treasurer. They are willing to admit that and to honour any obligation arising from it. From 1930 to 1941 they received an amount of almost £22,000,000 in subsidies from one source or another. From 1938 to 1943 they received, by reason of the flour tax, a further £4,500,000. Over a period of 13 years they received nearly £26,000,000. I will not tell the House that that was nearly sufficient to keep the wheat industry solvent. It was not, but at the same time the wheat industry should recognise that obligation, and is willing and anxious to do so.

I have said that up to 1943 the industry received nearly £26,000,000. In the succeeding two years, it contributed to the people of this country nearly £22,000,000. I am in a difficulty to find a term to describe this scheme, but had it come into operation, during the next five years the farmers would have contributed £32,500,000 per annum to the people of this country. This can easily be worked out. Sixty million bushels of wheat were used by the people of Australia; 32,000,000 bushels were used in the form of flour, 25,000,000 bushels were used by the stock feeders and the rest was used by breakfast-food manufacturers and processors of wheat generally. Every bushel of that wheat returned to the grower 4s. 1d. at siding. In 1938, when the flour tax legislation was introduced, the growers received 5s. 2d. per bushel bag basis port, and at that time the wheat was worth 4s. 4d. per bushel at the average siding on a bulk basis. Owing to increased handling costs, the value of that wheat had depreciated by 1945 to 4s. 1d. per bushel, or 3d. per bushel less than it was worth in 1938.

I have figures to prove conclusively that the cost of wheat production over that period increased by more than 50 per cent. The basic wage in 1938 was £3 15s. and at present the wheatgrower, in common with other industries, is paying £5 12s. 6d. A 20-combine in 1938 cost £164. The same implement was quoted this morning at £295, with another increase expected because no implement can be booked at a firm price. A header-harvester in 1938 cost £295 whereas this year the price is £366. Members opposite will readily admit that the ordinary cost of living, which the primary producer as well as everyone else has to bear, has risen considerably. Two years ago together with the member for York, and Mr. W. J. Russell, of Bilbarin, I was a member of a committee that made an honest attempt to ascertain the cost of producing wheat in this State. We do not say that we arrived at the exact cost, but we do say it was an under estimate because, every time we were in doubt, we took a lower figure.

After seven months of very hard work, during which time we co-opted a great many people to help us, we reached a decision that the conservative price was 5s. 5½d. per bushel at siding. Since then there has been another inquiry. The Farmers' Union of Western Australia asked our chairman, Mr. Russell, who, by the way, as well as being a practical wheat farmer, is also an accountant, to investigate the costs again. Instead of working along the lines we had adopted,—we tried to find an average farmer on an average farm receiving an average yield—he took something far more definite. He obtained the figures as presented by farmers to the Taxation Department. I saw the conclusions he arrived at. Since then Prof. Underwood of the University, who is in charge of the Institute of Agriculture, made available Miss Rowley to travel through the agricultural areas. Names of 100 farmers were taken at random and she inspected their books and taxation returns for the past two years. These figures are not quite complete, but it can be accepted that the cost of producing a bushel of wheat in Western Australia today is slightly over 6s. per bushel. For that, the grower is receiving 4s. 1d. at sidings today.

I have already mentioned that stock feeders were using 25,000,000 bushels of wheat yearly. Before the war, when the price of wheat was on all fours with the price of other commodities, stock feeders used an average of 8,000,000 bushels yearly. Then the price of wheat started to rise and, by 1944, they used 51,500,000 bushels of wheat. They were good business men; they were using wheat because it was the cheapest feed they could buy. Now they are permitted to buy 25,000,000 bushels yearly and they are getting it at 4s. 1d. per bushel at siding, whereas the grower could get an oversea market price of 16s. per bushel.

I do not for one moment contend that those industries can possibly afford to buy wheat at 16s. per bushel. I also say that those industries are necessary for the economic set-up of this country. We must keep the pig feeders, poultry farmers and dairy farmers in this country. Today, however, these industries are subsidised to the extent of £13,750,000 yearly by the wheat-grower by reason of the fact that we are selling wheat so much below the oversea value.

We are, however, prepared to fall into line with the rest of the people of Australia and keep those industries in production, but we are not prepared to continue carrying all the burden by supplying at the present price, and any Government that forced us to do so would be acting most unjustly, to say the least. It is the responsibility of all the people, and not of one section, to bear that burden. I have said that I support and am very much in favour of a wheat stabilisation scheme, a scheme which is just and equitable to all the people, the consumer just as much as the producer. I believe that it should be a Commonwealth scheme based upon the cost of production, with a reasonable profit; but I am going to ask members of this House if they think there is the slightest possibility of getting such a just and equitable scheme from the Commonwealth Government.

That Government refused emphatically the requests of the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation. It wants to retain to itself the right to sell millions of pounds worth of our wheat to countries like New Zealand at a ridiculously low figure. It wants, also, to retain the right to do exactly as it likes with our product, without any consideration to us at all. It is not pre-

pared to give us justice. I doubt whether there is a single State Parliament in Australia willing to pass enabling legislation which will allow the Commonwealth to do that. We have the experience of South Australia, where the growers turned down the proposal by referendum. We have the experience of New South Wales and Victoria, as well as of this State. In the last session of our Parliament an amendment was moved to the enabling legislation. I believe the then Government was quite prepared to pass that enabling legislation and so inflict an injustice on the wheatgrowers not only of Australia but of Western Australia in particular.

I am quite convinced that we cannot get an Australian stabilisation scheme that would be suitable to the growers today and I strongly support the movement which I believe will be initiated by our Government to have a Western Australian wheat pool along the lines proposed by the Royal Commission which recently sat in this State. The people of Western Australia are under a heavy debt to that Commission. Its report and findings form a very valuable document; and the introduction of such a scheme in this State might well be the forerunner of similar schemes in other parts of the Commonwealth that could be allied to a central selling organisation to handle all our oversea wheat sales. Western Australia is in a most enviable position. We are cut off by great distances from the Eastern States and there would be very little fear of our contravening the Constitution, as there would be but little likelihood of trade between the States so far as Western Australia is concerned.

From stabilisation I propose to proceed to wheat-handling. At the outset, I desire to congratulate the Government on the prompt action it took in handing over the bulkhandling installations at Fremantle to the farmers' company. This co-operative company, which is in existence to render a service without profit, is one in which every wheatgrower who delivers wheat in bulk in this State is a shareholder. It has 7,316 farmer shareholders. Under the Bulk Handling Act, the company is responsible for the wheat from the time it is delivered at the siding until it is put in the ship's hold. During the war years, however, under war legislation, the Commonwealth Government built what is called

a hospital silo, a gantry and weighing hoppers at Fremantle. These cost £70,000. I say most emphatically that these were built despite strenuous opposition not only from Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., but also from the two Western Australian members of the Australian Wheat Board, Messrs. Teasdale and Dyer, who cast the only dissentient votes when the matter came before the Australian Wheat Board. In addition, we find that the Western Australian Labour Government built a transfer tower and conveyor and shipping gatherer costing another £100,000.

There is no co-ordination between these systems. The capacity of the hospital silo is nominally 600 tons an hour; in fact, it handles 450 tons. The previous State Government's installation was built with the object of carrying 1,800 tons. It was only half-equipped and has a capacity of 900 tons an hour at present. When that wheat is shot into the ship's hold, there is a wheat trimmer which can only handle 300 tons an hour. Worse still, the maximum capacity of the Railway Department to deliver wheat to Fremantle over the past two years has been 3,000 tons per week, not sufficient to keep the State gantry working for two hours. When this work was completed, the Public Works Department approached the farmers' company and asked for comments. Previous to that, the farmers' company had submitted plans and specifications drawn up by men who had grown up in the wheat trade. These plans would have resulted in the Government securing a scheme which would have cost £118,000, and would have been suitable for Fremantle for very many years. But that is not all.

Had there not been a change of Government at the recent elections, plans were drawn up by the Public Works Department for the spending of a further £270,000 at the port of Fremantle. That would have been an absolute waste of money at a time when the State was crying out for useful expenditure. I desire to tell the House what that really means to the wheat industry. Had the £118,000 plan been adopted, the fixed charges—interest, sinking fund, maintenance and other charges which go with them—would have been 6½d. per ton and the working costs 8¼d., a total of 1s. 2¾d. per ton. Had the £270,000 been expended by the State and thus added to

the expenditure already incurred by the Commonwealth and State Governments, the fixed charges would have been 1s. 10¼d., and the working costs 7¼d., a total of 2s. 5½d. per ton; double the expenditure which would have been incurred under the co-operative company's plan.

From bulkhandling I would like to turn to railway matters, particularly as they affect wheat farmers. I claim to be able to speak with some authority on this subject. Since the inception of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. I have been a director. I was one of the first directors elected by the farmers of Western Australia. At that period, in 1933, I represented all the farmers north of the east-west railway, but today I am a director representing all the wheat farmers throughout the State. Our railway problems have been very serious indeed. As far as railway matters are concerned it has really been a godsend to the Government of this State that we have had two very lean years. Unless there is a considerable stepping-up of railway efficiency, it will take considerably more than two years to move this year's crop. I think that a conservative estimate of that crop is 30,000,000 bushels of saleable wheat, which means that 16,000 tons will have to be moved weekly. The highest weekly railage has been 13,000 tons in the past year; and, even excluding the period when we had a strike, it went as low as 3,000 tons. The average hauled is considerably below half what it is necessary to clear in 12 months.

Through their company, the farmers of this State have paid to the Railway Department the sum of £4,250,000 on the railage of bulk wheat. That represents in round figures £500,000 a year on an average crop; and ever since the company has been in existence, which is from 1933, it has been penalised right and left by the State Government. When the company first came into existence it altered at its own expense 160 railway trucks to make them fit to carry bulk wheat and provided fittings for extensions so that the maximum quantity could be carried in otherwise unsuitable trucks. That involved the expenditure of £55,820. Yet those same trucks were used for other industries, very often at the expense of Co-operative Bulk Handling. On one occasion, to suit the convenience of another industry, some

alterations to the trucks were made and the account was sent to the farmers' company to meet. I have mentioned that those alterations cost £55,820. The cost of handling those lines and extensions, which was done to make the trucks suitable, was £41,418.

We not only paid freight on the commodity in the loaded vehicles; but in order to make the Government's trucks suitable, we paid freight on the return journey so that they could be used again. Replacements and repairs cost £15,342 and in all, with the freight paid on those items—another £50,000—the expenditure totalled £162,580, or .16d. per bushel of the wheat carried. On behalf of 7,000 odd wheat-growers in this State I wish to thank the present Government for one of the very first things it effected on assuming office; namely, the removal of that unjust charge from the shoulders of the growers.

I should like to speak briefly on the matter of flood relief. I do not know whether members of this House are aware that two years ago an industrial organisation of which I am a member approached the Commonwealth Government for some relief for those farmers who had lost their crops through floods. We were told to go to our State Government, which we promptly did. We had a reply from the then Minister for Agriculture to the effect that the matter had been put to the Commonwealth Government. He also suggested that we should get a loan from the Rural Bank. At the same time that we were experiencing floods, New South Wales had droughts. The wheatgrowers of New South Wales received £1,500,000 and the dairy farmers received £234,000. Of the £1,500,000, £843,000 came from flour tax collections. The farmers in Western Australia had contributed their quota of that money, and in some instances the people whose crops were devastated by floods had a lower yield than the people whom they assisted to obtain relief. The present Government is going to be asked, even at this late date, to approach the Commonwealth Government for relief for those folk. In my pocket I have a list of more than 100 farmers who have sent in claims voluntarily; and not one of those men had a yield higher than five bushels, while many had no crop at all.

To the west of the Midland Railway there is a tract of poor country extending

from Gingin to Dongarra. I understand there are 2,000,000 acres of light land there and I am going to ask the Government if it will establish a light lands farm in that country. I do not request a big expenditure as at this stage that is not warranted; but a small pilot farm, where fodder crops could be tried out, is certainly called for. At Wongan Hills we have a light land experimental station. That came into existence after considerable opposition from the Agricultural Department. It was an almost unheard of thing to establish a farm on poor land, the idea being rather to establish one on good country. But several of us persisted and, as a result, the light land farm at Wongan Hills was established and has been of tremendous benefit to Western Australia. It has proved what can be done with soils of poor fertility, and today it is entering into an even more important role with reference to pastures and pasture improvements. Though I do not ask the Government to spend anything like the same amount of money on the west side of the Midland Railway, I do ask it to give consideration to and make preparation for the establishment of such a farm in that big tract of country. There we have the advantages of proximity to a railway and a very heavy rainfall. Even though the land itself is poor, I think the expenditure would be absolutely justified.

Within the boundaries of the Irwin-Moore electorate we have the Moore River native settlement. I do not pretend to be an authority on native affairs. Prior to my election I had nothing whatever to do with them. The information I want to give the House is certainly first-hand as I gained it after visiting this place and inspecting the conditions, and the suggestions I wish to make come from those whom I have been able to contact and who have been associated with the natives, and are very worried about them. I do not blame any Government, past or present, for the conditions at Mogumber, but they are a reflection not only on this Chamber but on all the people of Western Australia, and they should not be allowed to continue. I want to make it quite clear that, after my contact with the people administering that settlement, I have nothing but the greatest admiration for them. They are fighting an absolutely losing battle. They have no

opportunity to alter the conditions as they exist.

The Mogumber native settlement is a festering sore and a reflection on every one of us. The settlement contains school children, medical cases, v.d. cases, warrant cases, indigent natives and blind and deaf natives. They are all herded together. I went through the school there and I believe that the average intelligence of those children is nearly as good as that of white children. Their art work is outstanding. There were boys and girls of various ages together, and the school teacher in talking about them and expressing her worry at the conditions said—"In this class there are three pregnant girls, and I expect there are some with venereal disease." There are compounds for both young men and boys, and for girls. But it can be seen that the heavy link mesh netting has been torn down so that there is no hope of keeping the sexes separated. The natives who go there to recuperate, or who go there because of trouble with the police, are able to roam from one end of the place to the other. A valiant attempt is made to keep some sort of order, but it is quite impossible for that to be done.

Instead of having so many stations for these people, where they are all mixed up, I am going to ask the Government to establish six, one for male children, one for female children, a third for male v.d., warrant and delinquent cases, and the same for female cases, together with a station in the north and another in the south for the indigent natives. I believe that unless these people are separated there will be no hope of their ever being anything better than at present. I am going to make another suggestion which I believe will raise a storm of protest in some quarters in Perth, and that is that the wasteful expenditure of educating these children until they are a certain age and then passing them back to the influence of their homes, be discontinued. It is indeed a waste of money. I say that the children at a young age—I do not pretend to know just when; others will be more competent to give that information—should be taken away from their parents, except in the case of natives who have proved themselves to be good citizens. They should be removed altogether and trained for the industry, profession or calling for which they are most

fitted. I am convinced from what I have seen at Mogumber that it is an absolute waste of money to educate these children so far and then send them back to conditions where they can slip into the morass from which they came.

In conclusion, I want to make this point, and I appeal to both sides of the House, that we have in this Parliament one which is very nearly equal in numbers. We have a great opportunity to work for the welfare of all the people of this country. We in Australia are, perhaps, unique inasmuch as we emerged from this war far better, in a material sense, than we entered it. Great Britain has been forced to her knees because of the terrific sacrifices she made during the war and because of the attitude of her former allies. She has protected us since the foundation of our country. She protected us during this war. I am not suggesting for a moment that we did not contribute considerably to our own defence and to the winning of the war, but we are in a totally different position from that of Great Britain. We need to produce in abundance, and I believe that though this Parliament has not the influence of the Commonwealth Government it can, if it approaches this matter with a feeling of co-operation and a knowledge of its responsibilities and obligations to Great Britain, leave its mark on the history of Australia.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [8.20]: Might I be allowed to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on attaining your present high and honourable position.

Mr. Marshall: You are not sincere.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Out of all the members opposite I was most pleased to know that you, Sir, were to succeed to the office of Speaker. I feel sure you will conduct the business of the House as it should be conducted and will carry out the duties of your high office with great credit to yourself. Should you at any time be unfortunate enough to find your rulings disagreed with, do not let that worry you; the leading judges of the world have their decisions disagreed to at times. I wish you a happy time while you are in the Chair, though I cannot say I expect you to be there for more than two or three years. However, I wish you success while you are there. It is not my intention to keep the House long tonight, as I feel

that the Government must be given a chance to show what it can do. As someone has said, "By their deeds you shall know them."

I have no objection to the Government having made promises when it went to the country, as long as it attempts to fulfil such promises, but I find that it is falling down on the job and is not much good to the people of this State. I believe this Government will be known to posterity as "the cobweb Government." I think the Government tried to fasten that name on those sitting on this side of the House, but it is now getting tangled in cobwebs of its own invention. I will refer first to the cobweb of the Grosvenor Hospital at Fremantle. It is closed down, with a cobweb and a spider on top of it. After the election we thought it was only a matter of going to the Government in order to get it to lift the cobwebs from that hospital and re-open it, and that everything in the garden would be lovely, but on going to the Minister for Health and putting up a proposition relating to that and several other hospitals, this is the reply we received:—

In reference to the deputation re hospital accommodation in Fremantle. The suggestion that private hospitals are being closed by this department because they do not comply with the Private Hospitals Regulations is not correct—

That was dated the 7th May. This Government took office on the 1st April, and I shall always remember that date:—

—but actually none of the private hospitals in Fremantle comply with the minimum requirements of the Regulations and some of them deviate from standards so widely that in normal times they would never be licensed. Notices of existing defects have been served by inspectors upon hospitals and where immediate remedy is practicable it has been demanded. Wherever, through shortage of material or labour, inordinate expense or other difficulty, correction of a defect appeared likely to jeopardize the operation of the hospital, action has been limited to long term notices without penalty clauses. It has been the policy of the department to keep the private hospitals open even though the Private Hospital Regulations are not fully complied with. "Grosvenor" hospital was not closed by the department. This hospital has, for some years, been the subject of adverse reports by the department's inspectors and during 1946, notices were served upon the owner warning him that unless certain urgent corrective work was undertaken, a license would be refused him for 1947.

There we have the words of the Minister in denying that the Grosvenor Hospital at