

Legislative Assembly,*Wednesday, 8th August, 1928.*

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

**QUESTION—WOOROLOO
SANATORIUM, X-RAY PLANT.**

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Health: In view of the urgent necessity for an X-ray plant at the Wooroloo Sanatorium, will he take the necessary action to ensure the installation of such a plant during the present financial year?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: Provision is made in the current year's estimates for the purchase of a plant, and if the sum provided is passed, a plant will be secured.

**QUESTION—CRIMINALS ORDERED TO
THE COUNTRY.**

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Will he put a stop to the practice of city magistrates and police ordering criminals after their terms of imprisonment expire to go to the country? 2, Is he aware that strong protests have been made by the women in country districts, who object to themselves and their children being placed at the mercy of city criminals?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: 1, I am not aware of any practice being in vogue, of city magistrates ordering criminals, after their terms of imprisonment expire, to go to the country. 2, Protests have been received in connection with the alleged practice. The matter was inquired into and it was ascertained that in practically every case where a person was permitted to go to the country after a charge had been made against him, the charge was not of a criminal nature, but was one of idle and disorderly, made under Section 65 of the Police Act, and the person charged was permitted to go to the country in order to take up work.

QUESTION—MIGRANTS, EXAMINATION.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Lands: What steps are being taken for a tightening up of the examination of migrants as to (1) physique, (2) mentality, (3) character?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: The medical examination and inquiries in respect to migrants are controlled by the Commonwealth, to whom representations have been made in the past as to necessity for greater care in selection.

**QUESTION—ROAD MAKING,
EXPENDITURE.**

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Premier:—1, Has he read a leading article in the "Sunday Times" of the 18th December, 1927, entitled "A Road to Ruin," and one in the "Call" of about the 4th December, 1927, headed, "£12,000 per Mile. Staggering Cost of the Canning Road. A demand for a Royal Commission"? What is (a) the total cost of the road, (b) the length of road being reconstructed? 2, Is it correct, as stated both in the Press and in this Parliament, that the work has cost £16,000 per mile?

The PREMIER replied: 1 (a) The work has not yet been completed; (b) eight miles. 2, Answered by No. 1.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.38]: I listened to the delivery of the Governor's Speech with close attention, and a paragraph which strongly appealed to me was that which stated—

The magnitude of the various projects associated with the speedy development of the primary industries, upon which progress is substantially based, calls for the heartiest co-operation of all sections of the people.

That sentiment, I am confident, has the full concurrence of every member of this Chamber. Further, the Governor's Speech states that in view of the enormous expansion that is taking place in the development of our farming and pastoral industries, it is proposed to develop 3,500 new

farms in wheat growing and sheep carrying country. Our wheat yield for 1927-28, it is gratifying to learn, aggregated 35,134,156 bushels, and a campaign has been initiated to produce 50,000,000 bushels of wheat during the Centenary year. The Speech also states that the number of sheep increased during the past year by 1,000,000 head, while wool production has shown an increase of 9,300,349 lbs. The Speech moreover indicates the great demand for our land by stating that during the year a total of 14,295 applications was received, and that conjointly for agricultural and pastoral purposes 13,242,527 acres have been allotted. The number of new settlers during the year, we learn, was 1,056. It is also stated that the loans approved by the Agricultural Bank during the year totalled £663,100, of which amount £441,502 was allotted for clearing 403,640 acres of new land. In regard to soldier settlement it is stated that consideration has been given to 1,352 soldiers, whose indebtedness has been reduced by £414,312, this being due to the liberal concession granted by the Federal Government. Again, we learn that during the year 2,285 miles of rabbit-proof netting were supplied to settlers at a cost of £104,373, and that extensive operations for water supplies in the agricultural districts were carried out. I desire to congratulate the Government on having continued the policy of land settlement and development which was inaugurated at the inception of responsible Government and has been maintained, more or less with improving conditions, by each successive Administration. In my opinion no Government have had a more favourable opportunity in this respect than have the present Ministry, and certainly they have faced the problems confronting them. Still, they have been in the happy position of being supplied with cheap money. That cheap money, supplied in accordance with the Migration Agreement by the Federal and Imperial Governments, must, if properly expended, prove highly advantageous to Western Australia. Undoubtedly this is a huge country to develop, and we can always find ample room for criticism of Government policy, either Federal or State. A good deal of criticism has been levelled at the Royal Commissions appointed by the Federal Government. One of those Commissions at all events. I sincerely wish, in

the interests of Western Australia, had been brought into existence many years ago. I refer to the Migration and Development Commission, which has probably saved Australia from embarking on schemes which involve millions of pounds and which would have resulted in serious losses. This State has special reason to feel the fullest confidence in the 3,500 new farms scheme, and I take some pride in reflecting that the policy which I enunciated on behalf of the Country Party at the last general election is to a certain extent embodied in that scheme. May I be permitted to recall what was stated by this Party at the general election—

We as a Party believe in a comprehensive policy of railway construction, which should be drawn up by the Railway Advisory Board in consultation with the Lands and Agricultural Departments.

I am indeed glad that the principle which we suggested has been observed in the initiation and preparation of the 3,500 farms scheme. At the general election we also stated that, in our opinion, from Southern Cross in the north to well below Ongerup in the south, far east beyond the railway system, there was a large area of land perfectly suitable for settlement. I can therefore assure the Government of the hearty co-operation of the Country Party in the development of that area. It is pleasant to be able to say that the Country Party were far-sighted enough to put forward that policy when going before the people at the last election. I cannot say, however, that I agree entirely with the railway facilities which it is rumoured will be provided when the area is opened up. I want it to be clearly understood that our party stands strictly true to its policy, namely, the natural flow of produce to the nearest port for export, provided there are natural facilities. The Country Party cannot be accused of being in any way antagonistic to the port of Esperance. You, Sir, will remember that, when you were advocating the railway from Esperance to Norseman, on every occasion you had the hearty support of all members of the Country Party. So I want it to be understood that my present remarks are not in any way antagonistic to the port that you, Sir, have the honour to represent in Parliament. But I do desire to draw attention to the fact that apparently the Migration Commission and

the Engineer-in-Chief, in their examination and rumoured approval of the railway scheme that embodies 600 miles of railway, have apparently not given due consideration to the advantages of the magnificent harbour of Albany. It seems they have not recommended that that harbour should be utilised for our future exports. I hope that consideration will be given to the advantage of utilising what is to-day the best natural port and the safest port in Western Australia, a port that can be developed at a minimum cost. A phase of the question that is well worth considering is whether it might not be cheaper to construct a few additional miles of railway to save the possible expenditure involved in developing another deep-sea port.

The Minister for Lands: The plan has not yet been finally approved in all its details.

Mr. THOMSON: I was quite clear when I made my statement. I said, "apparently," and I spoke of the "rumoured" approval. I am only just safeguarding the position of the people at that end of the State. I know that in this matter the member for Albany (Mr. A. Wansbrough) will welcome my co-operation and that of my party, for it is vital, not only to his electorate, but also to my own that we should have the facilities at the port of Albany utilised to the fullest extent. I want to repeat that the possibilities of that harbour ought to be investigated. It seems to me unthinkable that a magnificent natural port should be permitted to be left apparently high and dry, as seems likely, according to the published statements. Of course I admit that those statements may or may not have been due to the imagination of some pressman. Nevertheless, public credence is given to the statement, and naturally the people concerned are alarmed at the possibility of Albany being left high and dry. In all sincerity my party wish nothing short of 100 per cent. success for the 3,500 farms scheme. That scheme provides for the expenditure of large sums of money on the construction of railways. The State should not have to pay duty or its equivalent on rails, stock and water pipes supplied for the development of that scheme. I am surprised that, since the Imperial Government are supplying a considerable amount of the necessary money, that Government did not insert in the agreement a clause to the effect that in the development of this huge scheme the

State Government should have the right to purchase their requirements duty free, provided those requirements came from within the Empire.

Mr. Teesdale: They could not dictate to the Australian Government.

Mr. THOMSON: They could say, "We are working in co-operation with the Federal Government and are providing a considerable sum of money at a cheap rate." It is not in the interests either of the settlers or of the State that we should have to pay duty on the material required for that scheme. I have had supplied to me some information regarding the rails that will have to be provided. If 60lb. rails are used, it will mean 102 tons to the mile. Therefore the duty will be £205 per mile, or, on the 600 miles, £150,000. If 45lb. rails are used it will mean 80 tons to the mile, and the duty will be £175 per mile, or a total of £105,000. In my view the Premier and his Ministers can with justice approach the Federal Government and say, "Here as a State we are endeavouring to build up the Empire. We have the land and we are prepared to take upon our shoulders great financial responsibility, but we think that, in opening up and developing the country by railways, we should not be penalised to the tune of £105,000 or £150,000, according to what weight of rail is used."

Mr. Teesdale: They might tell you to go Newcastle and use Australian-made rails.

Mr. THOMSON: Well, I said, "duty or its equivalent." I am willing that we should use rails from Newcastle, but I do not think that Western Australia, in embarking upon this huge scheme, should have such a large surcharge placed upon its required rails merely to foster an industry in New South Wales which is of no direct benefit to us. That amount of money represented by the surcharge could be better expended by the Premier within the State, where it would provide 150 additional farms. I commend that to the earnest consideration of the Government.

Hon. G. Taylor: The Country Party and the National Party could help the State Government in bringing it before the Federal Government.

Mr. THOMSON: It certainly will be brought before Dr. Earle Page, the Federal Treasurer, when he comes over here. As the Premier and his Government have asked,

through His Excellency, for co-operation and co-ordination in the development of our State, I am endeavouring to import into this discussion some useful constructive criticism. The Government also propose to embark on large water supplies for the State, particularly in the farming areas. I congratulate the Government and the Minister for Water Supply on what they propose to do. Certainly, having regard to the funds available, the present Minister has done his best to supply the needs of people in country districts. I understand that on the 1st January, 1929, there will be imposed a 40 per cent. duty on piping, which to-day is free. If that is so, I hope the State Treasurer will make available to the Water Supply Department, in anticipation of his Estimates, a considerable sum of money to enable the department to import the necessary pipes and so save the State the 40 per cent. duty.

Mr. Sleeman: Why import them? Why not make them in the State?

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member will find that many varieties of piping are not being made in the State at all. I am not dealing with cast-iron pipes.

Mr. Sleeman: Cast iron pipes last much longer than the others.

Mr. THOMSON: Not many such pipes of 3in. or less are made. I recommend the Government to seize the opportunity to have their pipes here before the imposition of that 40 per cent. duty, which it is proposed shall be placed upon pipes. Every member of our party is in accord with the desire of the Government in respect of the increased production campaign. We can assure the Government and the Minister for Agriculture and his officers of the hearty co-operation of the farming community. Not only do we wish to see larger areas brought under cultivation, but we desire also that, under the guidance and direction of Mr. Sutton and his field officers, there shall be produced new varieties of wheat which would mean a much greater return than the existing State average of 11.68 bushels per acre. In my opinion we should accept it as a slogan that we must become efficient. To our expert officers in the Agricultural Department we are looking for assistance in this matter, for the experiments they are carrying out in various parts of the State must ultimately prove beneficial. So, too, the advice that they should be able to tender to the farmers, more particularly those in the new areas

brought under cultivation, should ultimately prove of great benefit to the State. I want to congratulate the Minister for Agriculture upon providing a subsidy to encourage the importation of first class stallions. A few years ago the majority of people were under the impression that the day of the horse had passed, and that motor traction was going to displace the horse altogether. But we are now aware of the extraordinary prices that have been paid for horses recently, and we appreciate that the efforts of the Government, through the Minister for Agriculture, must prove beneficial. The departmental officers, ably backed by the Minister, are doing all in their power to improve the yields both from land and from stock. Our sheep have increased by a million, and our wool has returned to the State £4,839,837, which, on the figures for the last year, namely, £3,518,313, shows an increase of £1,321,524. As our farming areas develop and our wool production increases, these figures will become even more impressive. I understand that to-day the farming community have in the aggregate 4,298,211 sheep, while the pastoralists have 3,160,555. From the point of view that the farmers are going further to increase their sheep and wool production, it is seen that all consideration will have to be given to them by the Government. I commend to the Minister in charge the desirability of appointing an assistant to Mr. McCallum, the sheep inspector, who is doing excellent work in going about the country giving instruction and advice to the farming community. As we have increased the staff of departmental advisers on the subject of wheat, I commend to the Government the question of appointing an additional wool inspector. In my opinion, the wool inspector should be provided with better facilities to enable him to travel about the country. That, however, is a matter with which we can deal more fully on the Estimates. Whatever remarks I offer this afternoon are made with an honest desire to further the interests of the State and to direct attention to matters worthy of consideration. We recognise the difficulties that confront the Government. We realise that the prosperity of the people generally is bound up in primary production. We are unable to export our manufactured goods because the cost of manufacture is not comparable with that of other countries. Is it not time that we endeavoured to awaken the

people of Australia, and particularly those of Western Australia, to the dangers of the position into which we are drifting? We are deeply sympathetic with the Government in the unfortunate position in which they found themselves when they were practically besieged by the unemployed. Ably backed by the business men of the community, the Government have done their part to tackle that problem. A conference was convened by the clergy of Perth, and the services of the primary producers' organisation were placed at the disposal of the committee in the effort to grapple with the problem. Circulars are being forwarded to the whole of our country branches. On the question of unemployment I can speak feelingly. During my career I have been in the position of looking for a job and being unable to find one. Consequently, when I touch on this question, I speak as one who has had experiences of both sides of it. I know of nothing that occasions greater anxiety to a man, who has a wife and children dependent upon him, than to be out work and to be unable to supply his family with the necessities of life. The Government have grappled with the difficulty, but the remedy adopted is only a temporary one and the difficulty is ever recurring. Men have been sent out to the country to engage in clearing, forming and constructing roads. Western Australia is taking upon itself great financial responsibility. We are endeavouring to open up and develop the State, and we are doing it by providing assistance through the Agricultural Bank on extended terms. That money is devoted to the purchase of land, to sinking dams, to clearing and to stocking the holdings. Yet, despite the desperate efforts of the State and Federal Governments to further land settlement, the cities and towns continue to increase in size and out of proportion to the country. We are offering inducements for people to pioneer the land and endure the discomforts attending life on the land. It is the hope of ultimate possession that induces them to go out, for it takes many years of hard work before they are in the happy position of being able to say that the property is theirs. It is high time that the trade unions of Australia returned to sanity and common sense. I propose to quote some of the claims that have recently been lodged in the arbitration courts. On the 1st August the Carpenters' Union,

despite the fact that many thousands of their fellow men were unable to get a crust, applied to the Federal Arbitration Court for improved conditions. The log asked for wages of 4s. per hour against 2s. 6¾d. to 2s. 9¼d. under the old award, for a week of 40 hours and the exclusion of Saturday work, for double rates for overtime, time and a half for shift work and 3s. per day extra for leading hands. In this State employees in the coachbuilding industry have lodged a claim in the court. Let me quote, for the consideration of the workers, the position of that industry. The men are asking for better conditions. I quote the following:—

Stanley M. Thyer, accountant from Craik's, Ltd., confirmed the evidence of previous witnesses that the trade in motor body building was rapidly being usurped by Eastern States mass producing firms. He said that during the past year or so, his firm had lost contracts for Morris-Cowley, Essex, Maxwell, Chevrolet, Citroen, Rugby, Oakland and Siger motor car bodies. None of these contracts had been lost to other local firms, but all to the Eastern States, principally South Australia. The last contract was lost in the previous month. Witness produced figures showing that the total number of bodies produced by his firm rose from 399 in 1923-24 to 647 in 1925-26, and then fell to 428 in 1927-28. The average number of bodies produced per month fell from 54 in 1925-26 to 35 in 1927-28. The minimum staff employed fell from 48 in 1925-26 to 25 in 1927-28. The staff was now 22. His firm's wages' bill in 1925-26 was £13,800; it was now at a rate of £5,000 a year. This would have to be considerably reduced in the near future. The average price per car body was now 31.1 per cent. cheaper than the price in 1923-24, which was the year before Eastern States competition began to be felt.

Again, union interference nearly lost the girls working on the Perth-Fremantle motor buses their jobs.

Mr. Sleeman: Very nearly.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes; the decision of the magistrate endangered the employment of those girls. The bus owners said they could not afford to pay the girls the rates for junior workers, and the parties have now agreed to a variation of their industrial agreement providing for the payment of the girls at the rate of £2 a week, rising to £2 10s.

Mr. Sleeman: Do you think that is out of the way?

Mr. THOMSON: I am not thinking at present; I am quoting facts to show that the demands and interference of the unions are not in the interests of the workers as a whole.

Mr. Sleeman: That action was in the interests of the girls, at any rate.

Mr. THOMSON: That is a debatable point. I wish to show that the costs imposed upon industry by the unions—

Mr. Sleeman: To get proper wages.

Mr. THOMSON: Are not in the interests of the workers themselves in the long run.

Mr. Cortoy: Would you like your daughter to work on the buses for what those girls were paid previously?

Mr. THOMSON: Let me refer to one or two other instances. In this State we have the spectacle of timber mills closing down because their costs are too high to enable the timber to compete in the markets abroad. In Tasmania the employers, in criticising the report of the Migration Commission, made the following statement:—

The Commission has not touched on the real cause of the depression in industry in Tasmania, which was the high cost of production brought about by Arbitration Court awards entailing big wages and other charges in connection with timber milling and all stages of transport and excessive freights between Tasmania and the markets. The heavy freights attributable to the Navigation Act were at the root of the whole trouble, yet the Commission had nothing to say about them. Owing to the Navigation Act, it cost as much to send timber to Western Australia as to transport it to England or the Continent. It cost 8s. per 100 super. feet to get seasoned timber to Adelaide from Tasmania, whereas timber could be landed in Adelaide from Scandinavia at 4s. to 5s. per 100 super. feet. Timber could be sent from Victorian mills to Melbourne sidings by rail at an average freight of 2s. to 3s. per 100 super. feet, but if sent from Tasmania to the same destination the freightage was 8s. to 10s.

I make these quotations to show the seriousness of the position with which we are faced. I want our people to realise where they are drifting. Coal is being brought all the way from England and sold in Adelaide at 7s. per ton less than it can be supplied from Newcastle, New South Wales. During my extended trip abroad, as we pulled into Colombo, I noticed a huge stack of coal. Addressing the representative of one of the shipping firms, I said, "Is that coal?" He replied, "Yes; there is an average of 250,000 tons of coal always held in hand in Colombo." I said, "I hope a large percentage of it is Australian coal." He replied, "Not one ton of it is Australian coal." Yet at one time practically three-fourths of the coal supplied to Colombo was sent from Australia. I mention these matters in order to emphasise that it is

time the union leaders realised that every increase of cost forced upon industry inevitably means a curtailment of employment. There is an old saying in the Bible, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Of what benefit is it to the worker that he has all these awards, shorter hours and better conditions, if they do not provide him with work whereby he may keep himself, his wife and his children? It is time the leaders of our workers realised that they are making the position in Australia practically impossible. During my visit to South Africa and also part of India, I regret to say I found that Australia's reputation is something we have no reason to be proud of.

Mr. Sleeman: It is a wonder you came back.

Mr. Kennelly: The people there must have read some of your speeches.

Mr. THOMSON: When a man is speaking in all earnestness, with a genuine desire to do what is best for Western Australia and for the people of Australia, we find that leaders of the Labour movement make interjections of that nature. I want the people of this country to be able to earn their bread and butter.

Mr. Marshall: There is nothing beyond bread and butter in it for them.

Mr. THOMSON: The policy that is adopted by leaders of the Labour movement in Australia is not in the interests of the workers. I speak as a worker myself. My personal conviction is that it is of no benefit to the coal miners in Newcastle if they are able to get splendid working conditions, but have no work to do. Why is it we have lost our coal trade at Colombo? We have lost it because of the conditions that have been imposed by the unions in Newcastle, and by the conditions imposed under the Navigation Act. Instead of people being able to work, and to live at a reasonable cost, they have the poor satisfaction of knowing that, whilst they have secured many fine awards, they are not able to get work to do under those awards.

Mr. Sleeman: It is because of the fact that the shipping companies favour the employment of niggers.

Mr. THOMSON: It is a matter of pounds, shilling and pence with the shipping companies. We all want to see our people getting the best possible advantages and working under the best conditions. I am not advocating any reduction in wages,

but that we should get back to an age of sanity and common sense.

Mr. Sleeman: You are advocating the repeal of the Navigation Act.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes. That is not in the interests of Australia.

Mr. Sleeman: Of course it would not be in the interests of your workshops if they could employ niggers instead of white men!

Mr. THOMSON: That is a very generous interjection.

Mr. Kenneally: If you have niggers working on ships, you might as well have them in the shops as well.

Mr. THOMSON: I should like to take hon. members opposite to South Africa.

Mr. Kenneally: No doubt!

Mr. Teesdale: And leave them there, perhaps.

Mr. THOMSON: I should like them to have the opportunity of seeing the conditions that exist there.

Mr. Sleeman: You would like to bring our people down to the level of the conditions there.

Mr. THOMSON: The policy of the Labour Party in Australia is tending towards bringing down the level of the conditions of our workers, so that ultimately they will not have an opportunity to earn their livelihood. My desire is that every man and woman in the country should have an opportunity to earn a living.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is the stuff to give the troops.

Mr. THOMSON: South Africa is a primary producing country just as this is, but it is a fortnight nearer to the London market. We look to those markets that we can best exploit and cater for, and those markets are to be found in England, Scotland and Ireland. South Africa, however, is a fortnight nearer than we are to those markets, and has the decided advantage to be gained by cheap labour. I do not advocate that our people should come down to the same level as the natives.

Mr. Sleeman: You want us to come below it.

Mr. THOMSON: Is it not time leaders of the Labour movement realised that there is an economic force that will make it impossible for us in Australia to send our goods to the world's markets, and that we cannot for ever live by taking in each other's washing? Does my friend opposite think the Government of this State would go on with the 3,500 farms scheme if all the wheat that was to be produced on those properties

had to be consumed in Australia? They would not consider it for a moment; for they would say it was an economically unsound proposition. We are not able to sell our dried fruits overseas, because we cannot produce them at the price that will ensure a profit to the producers. The continually increasing costs placed upon industries in the Commonwealth will be a detriment to the workers. I should be wanting in my duty, as one who has seriously studied the problem, if I did not endeavour by my voice to induce the workers to realise that it is time they came back to sanity and common sense. Our competitors in primary industries in South Africa have the advantage of cheap labour. No doubt members opposite will say that labour is not efficient. I would point out that the work on the farms there is being done just as well and efficiently as is the case with many of the farms here.

Mr. Sleeman: Therefore we have to get below their standard in order to compete with them.

Mr. THOMSON: Some of the labour employed on our farms is not by any means efficient. We may to a certain extent be handicapped. The average farmer in Australia is the most efficient workman in the world, because he is using the most modern and up-to-date machinery. What would we think if we saw a man here with a span of a dozen oxen ploughing with a two-furrow plough? We would say he was hopelessly out of date and inefficient. It is dangerous to criticise the methods in use in another country. The average pay of the native in South Africa is 1s. a day. With his span of oxen and a plough he can handle a little more than two acres a day. His food, which consists of mealies, costs on the average about 3d. a day, which makes a total of 1s. 3d. The member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) has interjected a good deal concerning the level of the workers in Australia being brought down to that of the workers in South Africa. How could any wheatgrower in this State expect to compete on the London market with the South African wheat grown under those conditions?

Mr. Sleeman: You are putting up an argument to bring our conditions down below theirs.

Mr. THOMSON: Farmers using the most modern machinery cannot in Australia bring their costs down much below 6s. an acre, and yet in South Africa farmers are able to plough at a cost of less than 1s. an

acre. Our primary industries cannot possibly bear the burdens that are being continually placed upon them.

Mr. Teesdale: You cannot bridge that gap.

Mr. THOMSON: No, but I can appeal to the sanity of the people of Australia not to make the position impossible for those who are producing the wealth of the country. Let me show in what direction the unions in Western Australia are doing very serious injury to wheat growing. Last year agricultural machinery to the value of £880,612 was imported into this State, this being an increase of £152,311 over the previous year.

Mr. Sleeman: That should all have been built within the State

Mr. THOMSON: I will show the hon. member how it was he and his friends prevented it from being built in the State. The average price of machinery manufactured in Victoria is 15 per cent. cheaper as supplied to the Victorian farmers than it is as supplied to the Western Australian farmers. I am indebted to the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) for this information, which I received at a meeting held elsewhere.

Mr. Teesdale: Is that American machinery?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It is Australian.

Mr. THOMSON: It is McKay's machinery. The action of the unions in Western Australia has compelled the farmers here to pay 15 per cent. more on the cost of their machinery, namely, £112,311.

Mr. Sleeman: They have not done anything of the sort.

Mr. THOMSON: I will prove it. The unions have therefore been directly responsible for a loss to the farmers of at least £132,091. The figures I quoted before denoted the increase over the previous year.

Hon. G. Taylor: What year does that cover?

Mr. THOMSON: It covers the last 12 months. McKay Bros., recognising that Western Australia offered an excellent market for agricultural machinery, came here with a desire to establish works for the manufacture of implements. They desired that the unionists here should work under the conditions that apply at the Sunshine Harvester Works in Victoria namely, piece work. The unions, however, refused to allow their members to work under piece work conditions. If we take from the £880,612 worth of machinery that

was imported last year, the £132,091, I have referred to, made up of freight, assembly charges, etc., it means that the machinery used in Western Australia last year should really have cost only £748,521 instead of £880,612.

Mr. Mann: Have you deducted the cost of bringing the raw material here?

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member can put up his own argument. If he had any knowledge of the subject, he would know that raw material does not represent one-tenth of the cost of the parts to be assembled. The machinery has to be assembled in Melbourne, then taken down and packed in the cases, and freighted over here, where it is re-assembled.

Mr. Sleeman: Why should it not all be made here, not re-assembled here?

Mr. THOMSON: I want to show that the workers have an opportunity to get those machines made here, but the hon. member is so impatient. According to the Commonwealth Year Book the average percentage cost of labour to the total cost of production in Australia is 21.66. I frankly admit, in my opinion that is very low. In some instances, the cost of production—I refer to labour—is as high as 45 per cent. I am not dealing with it from that aspect, but am taking the average figures so that I may present everything in favour of those who say that we ought to produce these things in Western Australia. Whereas the average for Australia is 21.66 per cent., we find that the average in Western Australia is 29.32 per cent., or 7.66 per cent. above the average for the whole of Australia. If we take the cost at the lowest percentage, that of the average throughout the Commonwealth, it will be seen that we lost in wages on account of the manufacture in the East of articles that represented an expenditure of £748,521, no less than £157,189. Had the unions here agreed to work under piece work conditions in common with their fellow workers of the Eastern States, we would not have so many unemployed in this State to-day. We would have benefited by the distribution of over £150,000 in wages in this State, but, on the contrary, Government members interject and ask why we do not buy Western Australian machinery. The explanation is to be found in the fact that the unions refused point blank the request of a manufacturer who came here with a pro-

posal that would have meant supplying the requirements of the farming community of this State under more advantageous conditions.

Mr. Sleeman: If the people you represent refuse to employ Southern Europeans, there will be no unemployment here.

Mr. THOMSON: Because of the refusal of the unions to adopt the piece work system, although their fellow workers in the East have done so, we lost not only £157,189 in wages, but added £132,090 to the cost of machinery necessary for the development of our agricultural lands.

Hon. G. Taylor: Shame!

Mr. THOMSON: We are told that we should support local industries and manufactures. The example I have given shows how the unions have determined upon a line of action that has represented direct loss to them and increased cost to the farmers of this State. Had the £132,090 extra that we have had to pay for our machinery been available because the work was undertaken here, it would have provided, through the funds of the Agricultural Bank, for an additional 132 farmers.

Mr. Sleeman: You have not told us why you do not buy local manufactures.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Because you would not let McKay start here under Victorian wages conditions.

Mr. THOMSON: Then again the waterside workers are asking for 7s. per hour for the handling of wheat at Fremantle.

Mr. Sleeman: That is the wheat you want to poison them with.

Mr. THOMSON: We are endeavouring to preserve that wheat from the ravages of weevils, and yet that is the assistance that the waterside workers extend to the primary producers! However, in my opinion, they are doing the Western Australian farmers a signal service, because their action will probably hasten the consideration of the institution of a system of bulk handling in this State. Again I say we have to get back to sanity and commonsense. I gave a lot of thought to considering whether I would touch upon this subject in my speech, for I realised what would be the upshot. Criticism is cheap, but in putting forward the proposals I have indicated, I have been influenced by an honest and sincere desire to do genuine service to the State in particular and the Commonwealth as a whole. I will be criticised and I will be charged with an

attempt to bring down wages, but I do so with the intention of giving the people a better chance. Let me give an illustration of what is taking place. In different parts of the Commonwealth endeavours are being made to build up the cotton industry. Cotton is grown in Northern Africa and is taken to Bombay in India, where some of the most modern up-to-date mills have been established. The employees receive one rupee per day!

Mr. Pantou: That is the place!

Mr. THOMSON: No, it is not.

Mr. Lutey: They could not get labour cheaper than that, or they would have done so.

Mr. THOMSON: In my opinion, it is not in the interests of Australia to build up and foster an industry when such cheap labour is available elsewhere.

Mr. Kenneally: Having gone to Africa and India, I suppose you will now take us to a white man's country for a comparison.

Mr. THOMSON: If we want to keep Australia as a white man's country, we shall have to revert to commonsense and sanity. There is only one way by which we can keep Australia white and that is by bringing in people and finding employment for them. There is only one way we can keep them in employment and that is by seeing that we get an adequate return for every penny expended. We shall never build up the Commonwealth by means of a 44-hour or a 40-hour week, by asking 7s. for handling wheat at Fremantle, and by forcing up costs all around so that we cannot compete in the world's markets. It is the primary production of the Commonwealth that is providing funds to keep the country going. There is another phase to which I must refer. That is, to the unskilled worker. The problem involved must cause all Governments considerable worry at certain periods of the year. The present system adopted by the unions must have the effect of driving boys into blind-alley occupations. According to the report of the Education Department for the year ended 30th June, 1927, there were 51,462 children attending our primary schools. I wrote to the Government Statistician to ascertain whether he had any information available regarding what became of boys after they left school. Unfortunately he could not give me any information on that point. In order to arrive at some comparison I turned to the Education Depart-

ment's report and ascertained the number of children attending the primary schools. I also ascertained that the average birth rate increase is 22 per cent. for Western Australia over a given number of years. On that basis, it was safe to assume that 22 per cent. of the children go to the primary schools and that 22 per cent. leave each year. I think that basis of reasoning is fairly sound. Fortunately, the figures show a slight preponderance in the birth of boys in this State. If we take it, however, that an equal proportion of boys and girls are born each year, we can apply that test to the numbers attending our primary schools, omitting all private, secondary and denominational schools. Taking the average at 22 per cent. we find that each year 11,321 children leave our primary schools. Taking half of that number, we have 5,660 boys who leave school each year. The only information the Government Statistician could supply referred to registrations in connection with our factories. In this State it must be remembered factories cover every concern where articles are manufactured and these include brick-making, wood-turning, and, in fact, any class of work carried on under a roof. Of those registrations, the total number of employees was 20,417, of whom 16,796 were males. Of the latter, only 614 were boys under the age of 16 years. It is apparent therefore that the boys who leave school do not become apprentices to any extent.

Mr. Mann: Would they not be apprentices under 16 years of age?

Mr. THOMSON: No, I will deal with that phase later. From the report made available by the Minister for Labour, we find that the apprentices registered with the Arbitration Court numbered 359, apart from which there were 62 employed by the Commissioner of Railways, giving a total of 421 apprentices registered during that particular year. Thus, out of 5,660 boys who left school that year, 421 were registered as apprentices and that left 5,239 boys of whom we know nothing. We do not know what has happened to them, or where they have gone. I know that a considerable number of them may have gone into shops or into various professions. It would be in the interests of the State if an endeavour were made to ascertain the percentage of the boys who are learning a trade or have entered a profession here. The

action of the unions in prohibiting or endeavouring to restrict the number of apprentices is evidenced by the awards of the Arbitration Court. Of course, I know Government members will say that they have nothing to do with that, because the decisions are those of the Arbitration Court. On the other hand, if we strike an average from the various awards, we find that the number of apprentices is one to every three journeymen.

Mr. Panton: In what?

Mr. THOMSON: Throughout all the trades.

Mr. Panton: Where did you get those figures?

Mr. THOMSON: My statement is not hearsay. I have come armed with a report from the Registrar of the Court. From the report, I find that in brickyards there is one to every four journeymen, or fraction of four; in bootmaking, one to three, or fraction of three; in boiler making one to two, or fraction of two; in carpentry one to two, or fraction of two; in the clothing trade, three male apprentices to one journeyman—that is a small industry, but those are the proportions; in coachbuilding, one to three; in the butchering trade, one to four; in the slaughtering trade, one to four; and in engineering, one to three.

Mr. Panton: Did you work out that proportion of one to three yourself? I do not think you took into consideration the fractions.

Mr. THOMSON: We need not deal with the fractions.

Mr. Panton: Of course not! They work on the fractions! That is why you will not deal with them.

Mr. THOMSON: That is where I differ from hon. members opposite. They are denying our boys the opportunity to learn a trade. I say that is not right.

Mr. Kenneally: If the hon. member claims that the average works out at a fraction of three, surely he will give the House the information as to how he came to that decision.

Mr. THOMSON: I can only take the basis of the Arbitration Court's awards, which distinctly lay it down that in the baking trade there shall be not more than one apprentice for every four men permanently employed.

Mr. Marshall: And if five men were employed, how many apprentices would there be?

Mr. THOMSON: One.

Mr. Marshall: Nothing of the sort; there would be two.

Mr. THOMSON: Even assuming that the employer is permitted to have two apprentices for every five men, if there be seven men or even eight men, there will be but two apprentices. So that is no wonderful argument in favour of the principle. The policy insisted upon by the unions is an absolute restriction on our boys and girls, and I say this as one who has had personal experience. We should give our boys better opportunities, and not drive them into the blind alleyways of industrialism. It is up to the unions to withdraw those restrictions upon which they have insisted. I say unhesitatingly that the average is one apprentice to every three men. That does not give efficient results.

Mr. Panton: How many apprentices are allowed in the building trade?

Mr. THOMSON: Speaking for myself, I am proud to say that I have turned out quite a number of excellent tradesmen.

Mr. Panton: But you cannot get builders in the metropolitan area to take on apprentices.

Mr. THOMSON: No, because the hon. member's union and other unions have debarred employers from taking apprentices. Look at it from the practical viewpoint. I may be a handy man of considerable experience. If I go before the union and admit that I am not an expert workman I may or may not be permitted to work. I may possibly get a union ticket. But men are denied the opportunity they had years ago to improve their position.

Mr. Panton: Just now you were discussing apprentices.

Mr. THOMSON: I am now discussing improvers. In Victoria, the improver system is recognised, but it is not allowed in Western Australia. That is the reason why so many of our young men are pushed into the blind alleyways of industrialism. Let me speak from practical experience. I myself was not an indentured apprentice; I was not able to get an opportunity to go right through the full time, as apprentices do under the indenture system.

Mr. Panton: You did not blame the union for that, did you?

Mr. THOMSON: No, but if it were to occur to-day I should not be permitted to work.

Mr. Panton: If the unions had their way, you would not be here.

Mr. THOMSON: I am well aware of that. I know of a boy who spent four years learn-

ing his trade in the country. In order to secure fuller opportunities he came down to the metropolitan area to finish his training, which had only 12 months to go. But the union secretary would not allow him to work as an improver, and so he had to become an apprentice for 12 months. That young lad lost four or five weeks of work as the result of the action of the union secretary.

Mr. Panton: At all events, they made a tradesman of him.

Mr. THOMSON: The unions did? No fear! All they did was to extract fees from him. The unions are not fair to the boys of Western Australia.

Hon. G. Taylor: That's the way to trim them up.

Mr. THOMSON: Under our education system we compel our boys to go to school, and while at school they are compelled to undergo certain manual training. There it is recognised that manual training is essential. But when the boys leave school and go out into the world, it is compulsion of a different sort. It is deplorable, this system that has been created of no union ticket, no living. That is the position to-day. That statement appears in the Press. It is declared that men out of work, the unemployed, have to get a union ticket before they can go to work. The abominable restrictions that have been imposed are allegedly in the interests of the workers. Ultimately, I am sure, they will prove to be the misfortune of the workers. I should like to see a little more sweet reasonableness exercised. I know that a number of the leaders of the movement have no desire to see extreme steps taken. We should give every boy an opportunity to learn a trade. That is debarred while the present system remains. Whether a carpenter, an engineer or a bricklayer, a man can always become an efficient labourer, because he has had the training. So, if unfortunately things are bad in his trade, he can step into the ranks of unskilled labour and take a temporary job. But it is not possible for an unskilled man to suddenly become an efficient tradesman. I appeal to the Minister that during the next 12 months he instruct the statistician to obtain full information as to where our boys are going and what callings they are taking up. We can get all sorts of information about our stock and the wealth they are producing. I say we should be encouraged to look after the best stock we have, namely our boys and girls, and I sug-

gest that during the next 12 months we secure the fullest information as to the vocations they are choosing. We should see to it that our boys and girls have every opportunity to learn a trade or profession. If we do want any hewers of wood and drawers of water, let us get them from some other place.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Do you suggest that we instruct the Arbitration Court?

Mr. THOMSON: I do suggest that, in the interests of the boys and girls of Western Australia, we instruct the Arbitration Court.

Mr. Kenneally: Now we are getting to it.

Mr. THOMSON: I go further and say that the men representing the unions should not ask for the restrictions that have been imposed on the various trades. It is of no use blaming the Arbitration Court for the percentage of apprentices, because it is the policy of the unions to restrict the number of apprentices. It is those men I hold responsible for the restriction, which certainly did not originate with the Arbitration Court. Now let me turn to land and its settlement. Numbers of settlers are coming from the Eastern States and other parts of the world, and in accordance with the terms of our agreement we must absorb a percentage from overseas. But I feel—and I commend this to the earnest consideration of the Minister—that at least a certain degree of preference should be given to the boys of Western Australia. I do not say that with the object of preventing people coming here from overseas, or from the Eastern States. A number of young men who will make good citizens and worthy settlers are fortunate enough to have parents who can afford to come here and buy farms for them. I have no desire to see the value of our land soar in price like that in the Eastern States. It is undoubtedly true that the relatively low price of our land has attracted a considerable number of men from the Eastern States. We welcome them, but while recognising the difficulty confronting the Land Board, I really think there should be certain preference given to the young men of Western Australia.

Mr. Teesdale: Mr. Scullin said yesterday that there should be no State distinctions.

Mr. THOMSON: We are not discussing Mr. Scullin. I wish to congratulate the Minister for Lands and the Trustees of the

Agricultural Bank upon having decided to make money available for the establishment of pastures in my district. That was the result of their visit to an area that has been revolutionised by subterranean clover and topdressing. I trust that the Minister will afford liberal assistance in respect of superphosphate where required.

Mr. Teesdale: Since you have got that lot, you are justified in congratulating the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: We might have topdressed the North-West pastures if application had been made.

Mr. THOMSON: I always endeavour to be perfectly fair in my criticism. This State has advanced money to assist the establishment of the viticultural industry. It is unfortunate that at present, owing to the disabilities from which the wine producers suffer those who have previously purchased grapes from the small growers now have their wine cellars full, and so are not in a position to acquire the grapes of the coming season. I do not propose to deal with this subject at any length, for it more particularly affects the areas represented by the member for Moore; but I want to commend to the consideration of the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Lands the opinion of the Solicitor General, namely, that the wine industry might be assisted by the making of provision in future licenses that the licensee shall sell Western Australian wine. Let me now deal briefly with the question of the Fremantle harbour.

Hon. G. Taylor: I think you had better reserve that until the Government bring down a Bill.

Mr. THOMSON: It is a matter of vital importance to the primary producers of Western Australia—

Hon. G. Taylor: And to Western Australia as a whole.

Mr. THOMSON: And the primary producers of this State are of vital importance to the workers at Fremantle. I think I am safe in saying that the primary producers provide probably half of the wages paid week in and week out at the port of Fremantle. That, however, is only a wild guess.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is wool as well as wheat.

Mr. THOMSON: Both are primary products and I include both of them.

Mr. Kenneally: They both come in the wild guess.

Mr. THOMSON: It is an extraordinary wild guess to say that wool and wheat are primary products. However, I shall let it go at that. Speaking personally and not for my party, I view the position at Fremantle with considerable concern. Sooner or later the Government will be compelled to inaugurate bulk handling of grain at the port if this State is to compete in the markets of the world. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) has given that question much consideration and no doubt he will have some interesting information to place before members.

The Premier: I am afraid bulk handling is some years ahead of us yet.

Mr. THOMSON: The cost of installing bulk-handling appliances would be great, but it is necessary for us to look ahead. Recently the Press published a cable message from Canada stating that the Minister for Works (Hon. A. McCallum) had been favourably impressed with the benefits of bulk handling to the farmers of that country.

The Minister for Lands: Sometimes I am impressed with a magnificent mansion or a fine motor car mentioned in the Press.

Mr. THOMSON: Last session we passed a Bill authorising the Government to resume certain land for a proposed railway in connection with the harbour. The expenditure of a certain sum of money was also authorised for boring to determine whether the foundations for the proposed bridge over the river would be satisfactory. According to Press reports, the boring has proved satisfactory and the plans and specifications for the work will be submitted to Parliament for consideration. Although we shall be considering the construction of the bridge only, admittedly our decision on that question will commit the State to the huge expenditure on an outer harbour scheme. I do not wish to enter into the pros and cons of the two schemes beyond referring to the Premier's answers to my questions regarding accidents to shipping in the Fremantle harbour. On each occasion where accidents have happened the Press has attributed the cause to strong winds having forced the vessels against the wharf with the result that considerable damage has been done.

Mr. Sleeman: You cannot believe the newspapers.

Mr. THOMSON: Then suppose I believe the statement in the answer to my question given by the Premier yesterday. In the "Surrey" case the master of the ship wrote

to the Harbour Trust exonerating the pilot from all blame. In the "Moreton Bay" case, the mishap is attributed to the fact that one engine being out of commission the ship had not sufficient power to overcome a sudden squall, which drove her into the wharf. If it is possible for such things to happen in the existing harbour, how much more likely are they to happen if we build an outer harbour to accommodate the huge ships of the future? The general indication is that steamers are being built larger and larger in order that they may lift bigger cargoes. We have not sufficient data to justify us in committing the State to the construction of the bridge and consequently to the construction of an outer harbour. Sir George Buchanan recommended an extension of the harbour up-river. As a representative of the primary producers, it seems to me that the most suitable place for the erection of grain silos is at Rocky Bay. If located there, it would be possible to run the grain into the ships by gravitation. For this reason alone, further consideration should be given to the question before the country is committed to such a large expenditure. I am not in any way antagonistic to the extension of the Fremantle harbour. The greater the progress made by the State, the greater will be the harbour facilities required to despatch our products to the markets of the world.

Hon. G. Taylor: You think an inner harbour is the better scheme?

Mr. THOMSON: I certainly do, especially when we find steamers crashing into the wharves of the existing harbour owing to strong winds and squalls. In the case of the "Jervis Bay" the mishap was attributed to the ship's tow line attached to a tug boat carrying away, "owing to unskilful handling by the ship's crew directed by a responsible ship's officer, and to the fact that a responsible ship's officer so unskilfully handled the ship's anchor that it failed to hold." If a tow line carries away it is probably an unavoidable accident, although blame was attributed to a ship's officer for not having skilfully handled the ship's anchor.

Mr. Sleeman: A similar thing could happen in any harbour.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes, but such accidents are more likely to happen in an outer harbour.

Mr. Panton: Not necessarily, because the boats would have more room.

Hon. G. Taylor: And more wind, too.

Mr. THOMSON: The interjection of the member for Menzies shows that he has not studied the question. The published sketch of the proposed outer harbour indicates that a vessel would have to come in between the moles, pass a breakwater, and then moor at a jetty. If vessels crash after a straight run into the inner harbour, they are more likely to crash when endeavouring to negotiate an outer harbour such as is proposed. I hope the Premier will afford Parliament an opportunity to discuss the whole question thoroughly. If we had a public works committee, this would be a golden opportunity for it to do useful service for the State.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: If we had a public works committee we could be sure that the bridge was put in the right place.

Mr. THOMSON: The Government are in a difficult position because the Engineer-in-Chief—a most eminent engineer—has recommended an outer harbour, and they naturally hesitate to combat the proposals of such an adviser. Still, in a scheme involving the expenditure of millions of pounds and the whole future of the State's chief seaport, we should be afforded more information than we have at present. For years I have advocated the appointment of a public works committee. When the present Premier was a member of the Scaddan Ministry, his Government brought down a measure for a public works committee. It was not the fault of this House that such a committee was not appointed. If we had a public works committee to investigate the whole question thoroughly, the Government would be relieved from the difficult position of closely probing the recommendations of one of their responsible officers. Let me give an illustration to show the need for obtaining a second opinion before embarking upon huge schemes of public works. The Peel Estate scheme was prepared by engineers, and no doubt the Minister of the day accepted the statements submitted to him. Now, however, we know what an unfortunate position the Peel Estate is in; probably £2,500,000 worth of work will have to be scrapped. If it is not scrapped, the Government will have to incur much additional expense, which will probably be unwarranted with our present limited population. A public works com-

mittee to investigate that question could have done good work for the State.

The Premier: Would a scheme like the Peel Estate be referred to a public works committee? It was consequent on the settlement scheme.

Mr. THOMSON: I think it would. A public works committee should examine all schemes, just as the Federal Migration Commission is examining the 3,500 farms scheme, safeguarding the interests of the country and relieving the Government of the day of considerable responsibility.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: All public works involving more than a certain expenditure should be referred to a public works committee.

Mr. THOMSON: Had such a committee investigated the Peel Estate scheme, the State might have been saved from a very serious blunder. I am sure the Premier in his heart wishes to heaven that the scheme had been investigated by such a committee.

Mr. Teesdale: But the Government still have the same officials advising them to-day.

The Minister for Mines: No.

Mr. Teesdale: You drowned one of them; that is about all.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Such a committee would increase Parliamentary control over public works.

Mr. THOMSON: A public works committee would be able to save the State a considerable sum of money.

The Premier: I think so, too. We twice tried to get such a committee, in succeeding sessions, but the Bill failed to pass another place.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Premier introduces such a measure amongst the "other matters" mentioned in the Governor's Speech, I will guarantee him the support of members of the Country Party.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. THOMSON: Before tea I was expressing my anxiety lest the country should be committed to the present proposal for the extension of the Fremantle harbour. It is a very important question. During the recess there has been a good deal of correspondence in the Press. The matter could well be reviewed. In the Press we have also seen statements by Sir George Buchanan, the

eminent engineer, who has reiterated his opinion as to the desirability of the harbour being extended up river. One reason why it was suggested we should go outside the present harbour was that if it was extended up river it would lead to the flooding of the foreshore at Perth. That statement has been refuted. I deplore the fact that we have not a public works committee in existence to deal with this matter. Before incurring the expenditure involved in this work, it would be wise in the interest of the State if the whole question were reviewed. I know there is a good deal of discussion at Fremantle upon the question of the resumption of land.

Mr. Lutey: A lot of interest is taken in it.

Mr. THOMSON: People say it is waste of money, and that there is no reason why the railway on crossing the river should not follow the shore line. The whole matter is of great public importance, and I trust that it will be carefully reviewed before any decision is arrived at. I would urge upon the Government to consider the possibility of increasing our trade in certain directions with South Africa. Cape Town is only a fortnight's steam from Fremantle, and there should be a good opening for certain commodities from this State in that country. For certain reasons I will not make public what these commodities are, because the Eastern States are already doing business with South Africa. There is no reason why we should not do more trade with South Africa than we have been doing. It would be a good thing if the Government appointed a Trade Commissioner to go thoroughly into the matter. I believe excellent results would accrue to the State from such an appointment. The principal products of the farmers inland in South Africa are mealies or maize, but in Cape Colony they are producing a considerable quantity of wheat, though not sufficient to supply the wants of what is termed the Union. I was considerably surprised to find that that country was importing wheat from the Argentine. The Argentine is practically in the same position as we are, namely, a fortnight's sail from Capetown. We are therefore likely to have serious competition from that country. We should be able to open up several avenues of export trade in commodities that we produce, but which South Africa does not produce. I have no desire to enumerate them. The visitor to that country finds

that a considerable number of commodities which Western Australia, by virtue of its geographical position should be supplying, come from Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Why not give us the benefit of your knowledge?

Mr. THOMSON: It is not politic to enumerate the particular industries concerned. That is a matter for the Government to deal with.

Mr. J. H. Smith: For what reason do you withhold the information?

Mr. THOMSON: It would not be good business to publish it. When a business man is travelling he does not always let his opponents know what wares he is selling.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That is very narrow.

Mr. THOMSON: I think I am on safe ground in this matter. I should like to have an opportunity to discuss this with the Premier. There are several lines in respect of which business could be done with great benefit to Western Australia.

Mr. Teesdale: Then it is a good thing to withhold the information.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Does that mean you will confer with the Government in the matter?

Mr. THOMSON: Let me illustrate one of the disabilities from which the people of South Africa are safeguarded. Australian flour cannot compete with flour gristed in South Africa, even though it may be gristed from Australian wheat, because the authorities have given a differential rate for wheat that is ground into flour within the Union. One of the disabilities from which the local flour trade suffers is in the matter of freights. It is desired that secondary industries should be encouraged in the country districts, but we invariably find that rail freights place them at a decided disadvantage. The member for Albany (Mr. A. Wansbrough) took me to task in the Press when I strongly advocated what is called a "through the mill" rate. The Commissioner of Railways saw fit to turn down that proposal. If we desire to encourage our secondary industries and use the raw materials we produce, we have to do what other countries and the other States do, and provide the cheapest possible rates for the products that go overseas. The local railway rate for the Australian consumption of dried fruits from Mildura to Melbourne is between £4 and £4 10s. per ton on raisins and other products of that kind. When it is railed for export the rate is £2

5s. per ton, exactly half the local rate. I commend to the Government the suggestion that a similar concession should be given to our exporters when they come to compete in the world's markets. I wish to pay a tribute to the Publicity Department in Western Australia. When visiting Cape Town and Durban I could find no information in the publicity offices and no pamphlets concerning this State. That is to be deplored. The officers there assured me they would be only too glad to give such pamphlets prominence in their rooms. Over-sea passengers are constantly passing through Cape Town and Durban. South Africa has found that the overseas tourists are a source of great benefit to it. Special trains are run for tourists, and large sums of money flow into the country from the pockets of those who visit it for their holidays.

Mr. Griffiths: What about literature on the steamers?

Mr. THOMSON: Visitors to Cape Town are deluged with literature and pamphlets showing the places they can visit in South Africa. I know the Treasurer has a big task in front of him, but I am sure it would be money well spent if, on the Estimates, he provided a little more for publicity purposes. When in Bombay, and visiting Cook's Tourist Bureau there, I was gratified to see a supply of Western Australian pamphlets in the office. This showed that Mr. Hayward, the officer in charge of the Tourist Bureau in Perth, was alive to the possibilities of tourist traffic. These pamphlets pointed out the benefits that would accrue to those who came to Western Australia and established themselves on the land. There is certainly a market to be exploited from the point of view of settlers, of men with capital. It is generally recognised that quite a number of men who retire from the Civil Service and the army leave India every year. They are not able to live in England because of the cold climate. The thing that hurt me as a Western Australian was that Australia had a bad name in India because of strikes and industrial unrest, and people said it was a good place from which to keep away. They also said there was a difficulty in obtaining servants in Australia. I pointed out that, whilst in India people might have three or four servants to do the work, in Australia people had one efficient servant, the cost of whom was about equal to the cost of the four or

five who were employed in India. I also pointed out that Australia offered excellent opportunities for settlement on the land. It may surprise members to know that Indian officers are going to Africa, particularly Rhodesia, taking up land there, and planting Australian blue gums for the timber. They estimated that in seven years they would get a profitable crop, which could be cut up and used for mine props in Rhodesia. Men go from India to Durban to establish plantations of one of our natural products, the wattle. I commend this information to the notice of the Minister for Agriculture, who I regret is absent; no doubt the Minister for Lands will also give the matter consideration. On almost every farm in Durban is to be seen a wattle plantation. The farmers there plant a number of trees every year. I have been informed that retired Indian officers are settling in Natal to plant wattle. It comes as a surprise to learn that Australia, the home of the wattle, imports wattle bark from South Africa for tanning purposes.

Mr. Griffiths: We have been doing that for years.

Mr. THOMSON: The matter is worthy of consideration. In consultation with the Forestry Department, the Agricultural Department might arrange with farmers to put their poor or scrub land to profitable use by growing wattle on it. I have not had an opportunity of discussing the matter with the departments, but wattle growing strikes me as a suitable adjunct to farming. I hope the Government will expend a little more money in sending out pamphlets concerning Western Australia and also in advertising through certain Indian papers in the same way as South Africa does. What I may term a profitable source of migration is available in India. The majority of the men I refer to retire with a certain amount of money and an assured pension, which means that they will not become a charge on the State and will be self-supporting from the start. Thus they are a desirable type of immigrant, representing an advantageous addition to the population of Western Australia. I fear that the Premier will not view with over-much pleasure some suggestions I have to offer regarding the vermin tax. The Country Party consider that a readjustment of the tax should be brought about. We regard it as grossly unfair that the farming community, with only half the sheep in the State, should contribute approximately £20,000 by way of vermin tax, while the pastoralists, with the other half of the sheep, contribute

only £13,000. Such an arrangement stands in need of alteration.

Mr. Griffiths: The respective amounts are £22,000 and £10,000.

Mr. THOMSON: In that case the farmers contribute more than twice as much as the pastoralists. With regard to extermination of vermin, moreover, the figures are reversed; twice as much money is spent on the pastoral areas as in the agricultural districts. We are desirous of doing what is fair to all sections, and I think Ministers will agree that the present incidence of vermin taxation is unjust. I commend the matter to the Government's consideration. While amendment of the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act is not mentioned in the Governor's Speech, I am hopeful that Parliament will have an opportunity to discuss that measure. Now that the Premier has joined the ranks of the farmers, I trust he will realise that land tax as at present imposed is highly unfair. The Country Party wish to see reinstated the repealed section under which a man who was deriving his income from land would pay only one tax. We contend, believing our contention to be right, that where a man is making his living from land, which represents his entire capital, he should not have to pay a tax upon his principal and a tax upon his income as well. I hope the Government will see fit to alter that arrangement and to restore the farming community to exactly the same position as they were in prior to the amendment of the law relating to land tax. Recently there has been considerable criticism upon the operations of the Main Roads Board. For many years our road boards advocated that main roads should be a charge upon the revenue of the State, and that local authorities should not be called upon to bear the cost of them, as in fact they were not in a position to do. The existing legislation is certainly the best that could be obtained at the time of its introduction. The Bill was referred to a select committee of another place, who brought in recommendations which were accepted by the Government of the day. I hope that as the result of the deliberations of road board conferences which have been held, constructive criticism and practical suggestions will be forthcoming for the amendment of the Act. I feel fairly confident that the Government will accept such recommendations as far as possible. For the members of the Main Roads Board I have much sympathy. One has to bear in mind that their organisation was brought into existence hurriedly,

and that the office accommodation provided for it was disgraceful—merely a small dogbox. In the circumstances, it was impossible for the board to perform their work efficiently. They were launched without proper preparation, and then were expected to spend double the amount of money that had been expended on road construction in previous years. If the Government had adhered to the contract system, proper plans and specifications must necessarily have been prepared for the construction of the roads; and under those conditions we would not have had the spectacle of men being rushed out on jobs as they were prior to the last general election, without the responsible officers knowing that the men had been despatched to the various districts. Thus there has been considerable bungling, with costly work as the result. In my opinion the responsible officers would welcome a Royal Commission to inquire into the general working of the Main Roads Board.

The Premier: Could we not get a select committee of another place to make the investigation?

Mr. THOMSON: A select committee of another place put up a thoroughly workable measure on the last occasion. If the Premier thinks better results would be obtained from a select committee of another place—

The Premier: I do think so.

Mr. THOMSON: The report of such a body would no doubt be beneficial to the State. However, I believe that a Royal Commission would yield even better results. I shall not traverse the many faults or disabilities which have been apparent to the officers of the Main Roads Board. The chief man, Mr. Tindale, has been absent, having been sent abroad, and on Mr. Ankettell devolved one of the biggest tasks a man ever had to face—the handling of numerous men scattered all over the country. This feature in itself rendered the task extremely difficult. The Main Roads Board and its administration have been landed in practically the same mess as was the Industries Assistance Board when first brought into existence many years ago. If ever there was a state of chaos produced it was that which arose in connection with the Industries Assistance Board at its inception. The straightening out of the muddle took considerable time, and a great deal of credit for that straightening out attaches to Mr. Camm, now Surveyor General.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It was a blessing we had a man named Mitchell at the time.

Mr. Teesdale: At first it was all experimental, and so was the group settlement scheme; but Western Australia had the necessary initiative.

The Minister for Lands: The Industries Assistance Board was created by a Labour Government.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But it was a blessing we had a man named Mitchell to pull the affair out of the mud.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. THOMSON: I am dealing with the Industries Assistance Board, and am giving credit to the man who took hold of it and evolved system out of chaos. His job, though, was small compared with that which fell upon the shoulders of members of the Main Roads Board.

The Premier: The opinions of members and ex-members at the Road Board Conference should be sufficient to straighten things out.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The results of the conferences are good, anyway.

Mr. THOMSON: The Acting Minister for Works made an excellent speech at the opening of the conference, and I have been dealing with the question purely from a road board aspect. Last night the Leader of the Opposition dealt fully with the Auditor General's report, and I do not propose to traverse that document; but it does seem to me that a good deal of explanation is required, and I hope the Premier will vouchsafe more information regarding the construction of the Canning-Fremantle road than he gave in replying to the questions asked by the member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths).

The Premier: I answered the questions.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes. The replies were most illuminating, and chockfull of information; but when one realises that railways can be constructed in Western Australia for £2,000, £3,000, or £4,000 per mile—

The Premier: Not now. About £5,000.

Mr. THOMSON: Let us say £5,000 per mile. Then when one calls to mind that this section of road, which is not yet complete but still requires its bitumen blanket, has cost over £12,000 per mile, according to the information available, one must come to the conclusion that somebody has blundered. Certainly it is an extraordinary position that a sum of £120,000 should have been

spent on the construction of eight or nine miles of road.

The Premier: Someone has got the sack over it.

Mr. THOMSON: I feel confident that no one is more amazed or more disgusted over the extraordinary cost of this road than the Premier is. Assuredly, if a proposal for eight or nine miles of road to cost £120,000 were submitted to a public works committee, it would receive the most searching inquiry.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Both the South Swan railway and the road could have been built for that amount.

Mr. THOMSON: Certainly the railway could have been constructed for that amount of money, and when the railway had been built the requirements for the road could have been brought to the site much more cheaply. It is possible that, as my friend has interjected, both the railway and the road could have been built for the amount which the road alone has cost. There is certainly much information contained in the report of the Auditor General. The Leader of the Opposition last night referred to large sums that had been disallowed by the Federal Government. In his report dealing with Commonwealth contributions to roads, the Auditor General discloses an overdraft on trust account as at 30th June, 1927, of £187,442, and dealing with the reconciliation of that overdraft with transactions since the close of that year he gives the following items:—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Expenditure transferred to other Votes and Accounts (A) ... ..	...	...	...	55,685	9	0
Suspense Items—						
Overdrawn authorities ...	11,841	12	0			
Fodder and plant in store, etc.	1,701	10	0			
Interest on Suspense plant	622	7	5			
				14,165	9	5
Expenditure recouped by the Commonwealth on 3rd October, 1927 ... ..	...	...	...	79,368	10	8
Transfer made from State Votes ... ..	...	...	...	59,518	18	0
				£208,929	7	1
Less—						
Advance by the Commonwealth	20,000	0	0			
State's contribution on account of amount received from the Commonwealth for supervision (£1,981 3s. 1d.—included in £133,939 2s. 8d. above)	1,485	17	4	21,485	17	4
Overdraft on Trust Account ...	...	...	...	£187,442	9	9

(a) This item includes £53,353 19s. 1d. disallowed by the Commonwealth.

Of course, that represents what might be termed the aftermath of the last election. I will not say for a moment that Western

Australia has lost to the extent of that figure. That money has been held up because the expenditure was not approved in connection with the construction of the roads. Wherever those roads were constructed, the districts must benefit, and we hope that ultimately additional funds will be made available. It shows clearly, however, that in sending out men to those districts, there was incurred by the Minister for Works an expenditure of over £53,000 that was not approved by the Federal authorities under the main roads scheme. I sincerely hope we shall never again have any similar experience. To a certain extent it must have embarrassed the Treasurer, seeing that he expected to receive that amount, and had to raise the money from revenue or from loan funds. I do not intend to deal exhaustively with the finances. I hope that before we deal with the Estimates, the Auditor General will supply the House with his report. We are in the unfortunate position of having to review in 1928 the expenditure that we passed in 1927. That is not in the interests of the State. I am not speaking from any personal point of view, because there is nothing personal in it. I know the Premier is not responsible for the report of the Auditor General not being available. It would be in the best interests of the State and its finances if the report of the Auditor General were available when we receive the Estimates, for if that were done, we would be able to deliver a more impartial and sounder criticism of the financial position. I certainly did congratulate the Premier upon having secured a surplus, and I am very sorry that the State is not now in that satisfactory position. I absolve the Premier regarding the complaints that have been made with reference to the non-charging up of amounts and to interest charges against Loan, but the fact remains that if £33,268 had been charged up, instead of a surplus last year there would have been an actual deficit of £4,023. At the same time, if we can balance the finances as closely as that, we shall not need to worry. When we study the Auditor General's report, however, it seems to me that there are many matters that require explanation, and I hope that the Premier will give us the reason why we are taking interest from our loan funds and crediting it to revenue. I also hope he will tell us who was responsible for the initiation of such a scheme. The Auditor General tells us that interest on expenditure on works

under construction was again charged to Loan Fund and credited to Revenue Fund, amounting for the year 1926-27 to £353,184. Later on the Auditor General says that the calculations have been upon the basis of simple interest, and he points out that "a further gain to revenue, not shown by the statement, would be interest on interest previously transferred to revenue." The figures on that basis totalled, for the years 1923-24, 1924-25, 1925-26 and 1926-27, £212,719. That amount has been taken from loan and placed to the credit of revenue. I congratulate the Treasurer upon at last facing the position of the group settlement scheme and upon having placed £150,000 to the credit of a trust account to meet possible losses on group settlement. No doubt the Treasurer will make a statement giving us the reasons why such a system has been inaugurated. In my opinion, we are not doing the right thing. I endeavour to view the finances of the State in exactly the same way as I consider the finances of my own business. I would not dream of borrowing from my bank say, £1,000, making a charge upon it of 7 per cent, taking £70 from the money I so borrowed, and claiming that I had made a profit of £70. I may be wrong, but, as I understand the report of the Auditor-General, that is the principle we are following in connection with the State finances. If that is so, we are certainly not in the financial position we anticipated. We must have a better system than is apparently operating to-day. When we established the group settlements, we knew that a certain amount of money would be necessary to meet losses that were anticipated. As far as I can gather, the same principle has applied to the money utilised in connection with that scheme. Although we have borrowed money at the rate of 1 per cent., the full amount of interest has been charged up, and the difference between the full amount and the 1 per cent. has been placed to the credit of revenue, and has been shown as profit. No doubt the Premier will say that, from the point of view of the Treasury, that is quite all right, because ultimately the State will have to pay, and if we take credit for that amount, to that extent we shall not have to borrow to carry on ordinary services. At the same time I fear that the day of reckoning will have to come.

Mr. Lindsay: Surely the Government are not regarding that as revenue!

Mr. THOMSON: Well, they are. I will again refer to the Auditor-General's report to further emphasise the necessity for its being before us when we are discussing the finances. Dealing with the loan account, we find that part of the cost of certain footpaths payable to the Perth Municipality was charged as follows:—

Footpath in front of the Agricultural Bank—to Government Property Sales Fund.

Footpath in front of the Perth Technical School—to Government Property Sales Fund.

Footpath in front of the Chief Secretary's Department—to Government Property Sales Fund.

The cost of a new wing for the Children's Hospital, Perth, was treated as "public buildings," and charged to Loan Vote 80, "Public Buildings," etc.

The point I want to make is embodied in the following extract—

A query was raised as to the reason Loan Vote 53 "Water Supply for Towns Generally," was charged with the cost of repairing water meters, but a reply has not been received.

The expenditure on salaries by the Public Works Department is allocated between Loan, Revenue, and the Government Property Sales Fund on a percentage basis approved each year by the Minister. The percentages for the year 1926-27 were—

Public Works Department—	Per cent.
Loan	53.874
Government Property Sales	8.191
Revenue	7.018
Goldfields Water Supply—	
Loan	3.417
Revenue	14.042
Other Hydraulic Undertakings—	
Loan	9.362
Revenue	4.096
	<hr/> 100.000

The expenditure, after deducting recoveries from Trading Concerns, Metropolitan Water Supply, etc., was £88,979 1s. This amount was not used as the basis of distribution between the funds, but an amount greater by £1,106 8s. 1d. due to the estimated recoups from Trading Concerns, etc., in lieu of the actual recoveries, having been used to arrive at the expenditure to be distributed. On the basis approved by the Minister the procedure had the effect of overcharging the Loan and Government Property Sales Funds and undercharging the Revenue Fund.

I am not holding the Premier responsible for that, but that is what the Auditor-General has reported. It seems to me that we are charging too much to Loan Account, taking interest from loan and charging it

as revenue. That does not seem sound finance. If we had a stocktaking, I consider that the assets of the State, which we have placed at a fairly substantial sum, would in some instances drop almost to vanishing point. Such an investigation would be in the interests of the Treasurer himself. We have been under the impression that the Treasury has been an almost overflowing one, and that the Premier has been in the happy position of being able to find quite a considerable sum of money. When we analyse the figures supplied by the Auditor-General, we can now understand why the Premier, from time to time, has stated that money has not been available when various propositions were placed before him. In the circumstances, it will be in the interests of the State if, while we are apparently in a position of prosperity, we institute what might be termed an economy campaign. The Commissioner of Railways has shown excellent results because he has around him an efficient body of officers, and inspectors as well. He has his own personal inspector, and that is of great value to a man holding such a responsible position as that of Commissioner of Railways. It is impossible for Ministers to go round their departments and determine for themselves whether those departments are overmanned or overlapping. It may be said that that is the duty of the Public Service Commissioner, but, in my opinion, it would be in the interests of the State and a sound business proposition if the Government were to appoint one or two expert officers under the Premier, to go round the various departments to see if they were overstaffed or if there was any overlapping. If that course were adopted, it would not do an injury to anyone, but it would mean that the State would secure more efficient service. It would be advantageous to the officers themselves. I believe many capable officials are kept in the background because those in authority would be willing to make use of valuable services if they knew an officer was capable of rendering them, but of whose existence they are not aware. However, I commend that to the earnest consideration of the Premier, and I hope that when he speaks he will give us an explanation of the various statements made in the Auditor General's report. I should like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation of the excellent work rendered by the Commissioner of Railways and his officers and staff in handling the wheat har-

vest of the past season. It was certainly a splendid achievement to handle that harvest in the way they did.

Mr. Lindsay: There is a lot of it to be handled yet.

Mr. THOMSON: Still they have broken all records, which speaks well for the organisation of the responsible officers, and also for the co-operation of the men who had to work under the direction of those officers.

Mr. Lindsay: Surely you do not approve of keeping our wheat out in the country at this time of the year.

Mr. THOMSON: Certainly not, but with the facilities available to them the railway organisation have done very valuable work.

Mr. Lindsay: Do you not think they should have had more trucks available?

Mr. THOMSON: Perhaps so. I will deal with that when on the Estimates. The concluding part of the Speech treats of group settlement. That is a question regarding which we have been charged with approaching it from a political point of view and with a desire to obtain some little advantage over each other, rather than from any desire to do what is in the best interests of the State. I regret very much indeed that we have not had a migration commission, for I believe that if it had been in existence a considerable sum of money would be saved to the State, while a large number of settlers who have gone off the land would have been there to-day. It is not a question of who is responsible to-day or who was responsible yesterday; it is not whether or not we believe in group settlement. Every member of the House has strongly affirmed the desirability of making of the group settlement a complete success. I have been considerably criticised in the past for statements I have made in the House and elsewhere. The Leader of the Opposition said he had not been given an opportunity to visit the groups. During the whole period the groups have been in existence, with the exception of the occasion when the first Parliamentary party made its visit, I have never had an invitation to inspect the groups with a view to obtaining first-hand information.

The Minister for Lands: I will be glad to give you an invitation the next time I am going down there.

Mr. THOMSON: On the occasions when I have visited the group settlements I have been accused of going down there for political reasons. The position is of too grave a character for us to be charging one another with endeavouring to get an advantage over

each other. Also if one says anything whatever against the group settlements, he is at once charged with being against the South-West. That, as levelled at me or my party, is absolutely incorrect. All the criticism in which my party has indulged regarding the group settlements has been given with a genuine desire to see that the settlers should be afforded an opportunity to become successful. I hope the Minister for Lands will give the House a full and detailed statement of the position. The Leader of the Opposition said last night that he accepted responsibility for the group settlements up to the time when he vacated office.

The Premier: The evil that men do lives after them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yours will be alive long after you are forgotten.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The hand of the builder is taken away.

Mr. THOMSON: After the foundations were laid, the superstructure had to be completed. There is no gainsaying the fact that the laying of the foundations made it compulsory for the present Administration to carry on and give the settlers a reasonable chance to succeed. I am confident that if the present Administration on coming into power had immediately changed the policy that had been in existence since the inception of the scheme, they would have been rightly chargeable with the whole of the blame if the thing had proved a failure. But a Royal Commission was appointed, and that Commission submitted to Parliament a very important document. I regret to say that the House was not given an opportunity to discuss the report of that Commission. Whilst the previous Administration must accept responsibility for the inauguration of the group settlement scheme, the present Administration must carry out its responsibility. Although, under the administration of Mr. Angwin, some of the recommendations of the Royal Commission were put into effect, it remained for the present Minister to boldly grapple with the position. His has been one of the most difficult tasks that any Minister has ever been asked to solve. In considering this problem of the group settlements, we require to be united in an endeavour to give the Government every assistance, to the end that they may evolve some scheme whereby we can give the settlers that have come out from the Old Country an opportunity to make good. Whilst certain men under that scheme have been failures, and probably

would have been failures in any walk of life, still quite a large number of the settlers have shown themselves deserving and should be given a reasonable chance to make a success of their holdings. The scheme must be grappled with. While the Minister and his departmental officers are doing excellent work, yet in my opinion they are not going as far as they should go. We have to face the fact that we must lose a considerable sum of money. But ultimately, as the Minister himself said in my electorate recently, we shall receive the full benefit. It is unfortunate that in the meantime the taxpayers will have to carry the burden.

The Minister for Lands: In ten years' time the whole thing will be established, but in the meantime the people as a whole will have to carry the burden.

Mr THOMSON: What is the use of saying to the settlers: "Here is the capital amount with which you are going to be charged on your properties, namely, anything up to £5,000." That statement has appeared in the Press. Of course, when we hear the Minister's statement we shall be in a better position to discuss the problem.

The Minister for Lands: The newspapers have not been told anything. Parliament will be the first to be told.

Mr. THOMSON: It is of no use living in a fool's paradise and saying that the group settlements are a success. They have not realised all that we hoped they would realise in the interests of the settlers and of the State. I want to carry back the minds of members to the position with which we were faced in respect of the Industries Assistance Board. Also here I would express my sincere thanks to the Government and to Mr. Angwin, who immediately on resuming office introduced a Bill giving the Industries Assistance Board power to write down their securities. The position was that for years previously we had had a book debt of £4,000 or £5,000 or £6,000 against the man on the land, and in consequence he had no hope of making a success. But we have now written down the securities to a reasonable rate, which enables a man to carry on successfully. In my opinion that is what we have to do with the group settlements; we have to assess the true value of the improvements on the land and say to the individual settler, "That is the amount we are going to charge up to you." That will give the

settlers greater encouragement to work, and will weed out the men who are not triers. It is only common justice to the deserving settlers, even if we make a loss, to bring it down to a position at which the settlers can pay interest and go ahead. Then, no doubt, the scheme will begin to deliver the goods we all hoped for when it was inaugurated. I do not know the exact position of affairs at the Peel Estate. We have invested large sums there, and I hope that at least if there is to be any suffering sustained the State will be prepared to suffer a little, and that we shall give those settlers a reasonable chance to achieve success. In any criticism from our party directed at group settlement, it must be remembered that we have just as unbounded a faith in the South-West as has any other party in the House. It is more in the interests of the State and of the South-West to have half a dozen settlers successful than to have hundreds of them up to their necks in debt and not able to pay anybody. I do not propose to detain the House any longer. I desire to congratulate the Government on having done the best possible with the very many difficult problems with which they are faced. I know of no greater problem than that any Minister has ever had to tackle than that of the group settlements. Let me just repeat my opening remarks, shaping them to my conclusion: I desire to assure the Premier and his Government, on behalf of the Country Party, that in the magnitude of the various projects associated with the speedy development of our primary industries, upon which our progress is based, he will have the heartiest co-operation of our party and our people in those measures that stand for the progress and stability of our State.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1) £1,910,500.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 8.30 p.m.
