

Mr. Wilcock: And in feeding their children.

The PREMIER: I firmly believe that a sovereign in the hands of a private individual will bring more lasting good to the country than two sovereigns spent by the State. We have to carry on the services of the country and educate our children. We have to provide for the health of the people and those facilities which make development possible. If our railways could be made to balance, if our trading concerns could be made to balance, all would be well, but unless we can bring this about, and speedily too, we shall have to impose additional taxation.

Hon. P. Collier: I think the railways require overhauling. That is where the whole trouble is. If we balance the £400,000 loss on the railways we need not trouble about the other £300,000.

The PREMIER: That would be satisfactory for a time. The running of 7,000 miles of railways in this country, widespread as it is, with our lands in process of development and with very much reduced traffic on the goldfields, is a difficult task. It is a hard thing to square the ledger and to run the railways under such conditions. I should like to thank the leader of the Opposition for the considerate speech he made last night. I do not know that he intended to be considerate, but his was a perfectly proper and right speech to make.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not intend to be unfair.

The PREMIER: I maintain that there is very little to say against any act of government during the last 12 months.

On motion by Mr. Harrison, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.56 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Thursday, 12th August, 1920.*

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—WHEAT BOARD.

Mr. S. J. McGibbon's Position.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.35]: In accordance with my undertaking of yesterday afternoon, I now ask leave to make a statement regarding the operations of the Wheat Board.

Leave given.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have been twitted in the Press and elsewhere, if not directly challenged, to give the reasons why it has not been considered advisable to recommend His Excellency the Governor to re-appoint Mr. Sinclair J. McGibbon as the Western Australian growers' representative on the Australian Wheat Board. The executive of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association also asked for the reasons, some weeks ago. I replied that it was unusual to make public the reasons for the non-re-appointment of any officer, except with that officer's consent, but that I would do so, of course, if Mr. McGibbon specifically agreed. The letter of permission suggested was, however, not forthcoming. It is fair to Mr. McGibbon to say that I do not know whether he was ever asked for it. I certainly did not ask him. The executive's rejoinder was that as the matter was one of public interest, the information sought should be supplied. I agreed that if Mr. McGibbon withheld his consent and it were shown that the reason for his retirement was of public importance, I would make the information available in the usual way and at the proper time. Questions have been asked in this House regarding Mr. McGibbon's non-reappointment, and the Government have in reply given a promise that I should take an early opportunity of making a statement. Moreover, other members have informed me that unless a statement is made, further questions will follow. A representative meeting of the wheat growers, sitting in Perth on Tuesday, passed a motion recommending the reappointment of Mr. McGibbon as growers' representative on the board pending the election of a member, in order that Western Australian growers might have immediate representation. It is to be regretted that such a motion should have been passed before the reasons actuating the Government in declining to recommend Mr. McGibbon's further membership of the Australian Wheat Board were known. It is to be assumed that as Mr. McGibbon was present at the meeting, he is prepared to accept such nomination. Under these circumstances it is necessary, I think, that the intentions of the Government should at once be made known on this matter. It certainly is desirable that so many farmers with interests in the present and coming wheat pool who are now in the city should not leave Perth until they have had an opportunity of considering the relations of the Government with Mr. McGibbon. I therefore crave the indulgence of this House in order that I may make my statement this afternoon.

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

Hon. J. Cornell: What has the appointment of Mr. McGibbon to do with this House?

The PRESIDENT: This is not a debate, but a statement by the Honorary Minister. It is not possible to debate it afterwards, nor is it seemly to interject during its delivery.

Hon. J. Cornell: I would like to ask whether it is possible to object to the statement being made.

The PRESIDENT: If the hon. member had been in his place when the leave of the House was asked, he could have objected. Now it is too late.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am sorry that there should be a feeling on the part of any hon. member against the making of this statement.

Hon. J. Cornell: The public are not concerned with Mr. McGibbon's appointment.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I think it will be agreed that this is the proper place and the proper time to make the statement, seeing that I am responsible to Parliament for the administration of the wheat scheme. As hon. members are probably aware, farmers' representatives of each wheat-exporting State were at the instigation of the Commonwealth Government early in 1919 appointed by the Governments of the various States concerned to the Australian Wheat Board sitting in Melbourne. After consultation with the Western Australian Farmers' and Settlers' Association, who represent the bulk of the wheat growers in this State concerned in the pool, Mr. Sinclair J. McGibbon, who was then a farmer having wheat interests in the pool, was appointed as the Western Australian growers' representative on the board for a period of one year. Mr. McGibbon's term of office expired on the 2nd April, 1920, and, after allowing him to attend the April conference of the Australian Wheat Board, sitting on the 13th April, for which, he had made special preparation, the Government permitted Mr. McGibbon to retire by effluxion of time. It is perhaps premature for me to assume that the pool will continue for the harvesting of the 1920-21 wheat crop. It is proposed, as mentioned in His Excellency's Speech, that a Wheat Marketing Bill shall shortly be introduced; and hon. members will be asked to give their approval of the measure in order that the Government may have somewhat the same control over next season's wheat as they have had during the past five years. Under a tentative arrangement made with the other wheat-producing States, it is probable that, if the Wheat Marketing Bill is agreed to, growers' representatives from each of those States will be appointed to sit on the board with Ministers, as heretofore. In making the appointment of a representative from this State, certain terms and conditions were laid down by the Government and at the time accepted by the Farmers' and Settlers' Association through its president, and also by Mr. McGibbon, the first appointee. These conditions shortly are, that the representative must be a wheat farmer interested in the pool, must not be a Government-acquiring or miller's agent, or an administrative officer connected with such

agency, nor be a member of Parliament or a public servant in either State or Commonwealth. The reasons for these terms are obvious. With respect to the advisability of a grower being on the board, it must be pointed out that when the agitation originally arose and representations were made to the Commonwealth Government by farmers' organisations throughout Australia, the point was stressed that the Ministerial representatives on the board were not necessarily farmers, nor would they have farmers' interests specially in view. It was asserted that too often parasites had been allowed to batten on the farmer, and that the marketing of his wheat was a matter on which he himself should have an opportunity of directly speaking. As regards "parasites batten on the farmer," though I repeat the expression I do not endorse it. It was mainly because of this argument, I think, that the various States and the Commonwealth ultimately agreed that farmers should be directly represented by farmers on the central board. It would appear from a Press statement made by Mr. McGibbon recently, that he is no longer eligible for appointment under those conditions. In fact, he is reported to have stated that on the selling of his farming interests towards the end of last year, he sent in to the farmers' and settlers' executive his resignation as growers' representative on the board, but that the executive unanimously agreed that he should withdraw his resignation and continue to represent the growers of the Commonwealth. Mr. McGibbon is possibly misreported there. He evidently meant the growers of Western Australia. Of course, hon. members will realise that the proper course for Mr. McGibbon to have pursued when he no longer came within the terms of his appointment, was to send his resignation to the Government. Whether, in any further appointment that might be made, an exemption from the conditions I have mentioned should be made in favour of any particular candidate, is, I suggest, a matter for the Government to determine. As Minister in control of local scheme matters during the past three years, having an intimate knowledge of local and central board matters, I regret to have to form the opinion that the services of Mr. McGibbon to the growers, whom he was appointed directly to represent, have not been such as would warrant an exception from those conditions being made in his case. I am very sorry to have to come to this conclusion because, as members know, I was responsible in the first place for that gentleman's appointment. If, however, Mr. McGibbon were eligible, his reappointment is not favoured. In setting out the reasons for his non-reappointment, first of all in general terms, and afterwards in specific detail, the reasons for Mr. McGibbon's retirement will be apparent. It appeared to the Minister in charge of wheat scheme matters that Mr. McGibbon, by detrimental acts of omission and commission, assisted in causing considerable financial loss to Western Australian pool growers. The interests of those growers were not always considered by him

as being of first importance. The services rendered were not commensurate with the remuneration accepted, and his attitude, as expressed by his public utterances since his period of service, does not indicate the requisite desire to co-operate with his fellow representative from Western Australia for the interests of those growers whom he would be expected to represent.

Hon. J. Corneli: That is a poor compliment to yourself.

The PRESIDENT: I must again ask the hon. member to refrain from interjecting.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Several complaints were voiced last year that New South Wales, though at the time faced with a serious drought, continued to supply wheat for flour export, instead of conserving her stocks for local consumption during the present calendar year, 1920. In spite of this, Mr. McGibbon agreed in November to a resolution to supply wheat from the pool at local consumption rates ruling in the other States for the whole of her local consumption requirements until such time as she could harvest her 1920-21 crop. The estimated quantity at that time was some 12½ million bushels. As under the record of the Wheat Marketing Constitution under which the various States were operating, this was an overseas sale, it should have been at a price equivalent to export parity. At the time the sale was made, however, the price for local consumption in the other States was 5s. 6d. per bushel, whereas overseas sales were at 8s. 3d. per bushel, at any rate in Western Australia. As a result of this resolution, the Australian Wheat Board arranged supplies to New South Wales, and a tentative agreement was made in December. The direct loss to Western Australian growers in connection with this sale, in view of the later increase of overseas prices, is likely to be enormous. It was the custom up to last year for Queensland to receive its local requirements from New South Wales, the latter State supplying the wheat as a local consumption sale and putting into the pool any exportable surplus which she might have after doing so, and after providing her own local requirements. In November, Mr. McGibbon agreed to a resolution authorising the Australian Wheat Board to sell from the pool at local consumption rates some 2,000,000 bushels of wheat to the Brisbane Flour Milling Co. for the Queensland season's local requirements, the price then being 5s. 6d. per bushel. This agreement was actually signed by the Australian Wheat Board and the Brisbane Milling Co. on the 24th December, 1919. Mr. McGibbon agreed to a resolution in December to sell to Tasmania her local requirements from the pool at less than overseas rates, whereas such supplies had hitherto been a local consumption sale from Victoria. The estimated quantity at that time was 1½ million bushels. In connection with the three transactions that I have mentioned, the loss to Western Australian growers would have been enormous if Mr. Mc-

Gibbon had had power to bind this State. The extent of the loss could hardly be stated in definite figures. It may best be realised when it is understood that some 16,000,000 bushels were at the time involved, and the price for local consumption rates was then 5s. 6d., whereas export parity was in the region of 8s. 3d. per bushel f.o.b. The result has been that the whole of the requirements for these three States have been sold at not more than 7s. 8d. per bushel whereas, if that quantity had been on hand for realisation outside Australia, we would have been reaping the advantage of the present export parity in the region of 13s. 4d. per bushel. In connection with the allowance granted to the Australian Wheat Board of £522,000 for losses by weevil, etc., on wheat held on behalf of the Imperial Government, Mr. McGibbon failed to second the Minister's efforts to obtain a proportion of this allowance for Western Australian growers. Mr. McGibbon was pleased to accept as true the statement of the Australian Wheat Board officials that, so far as Western Australia was concerned, the matter had been closed, because that State had made a direct arrangement with the Royal Commission by which it received some £34,000 in connection with a specific claim it had for special consideration. He elected to disbelieve the assurance of the State scheme officials, who were responsible for the negotiations, that the settlement effected was on a specific understanding, which it later transpired was not carried out, and that therefore the matter, far from being finalised, was open for further negotiations and, as a consequence, Western Australia was entitled to a proportion of the general allowance that was paid to the Australian Wheat Board in satisfaction of all claims. He said:—"I dissociate myself, Mr. Baxter; W.A. has already been settled with." It is estimated that the loss to Western Australian growers through the failure to obtain an equitable proportion of such allowance was £20,000. Those four instances serve to show that Mr. McGibbon assisted in causing considerable financial loss to our farmers. Now I come to the specific instances, where, in my opinion, the interests of Western Australian growers were not always considered by Mr. McGibbon as being of paramount importance. I will take first, the matter of London agents' commission. Those who have knowledge of the early stages of the Australian wheat marketing scheme will probably remember the outcry raised by farmers against the exorbitant sums which, it was alleged, were paid to the London selling agents as commission on the Commonwealth's direct wheat sales to the British Government. Those agents, as members are aware, are the expert advisers of the central board in Melbourne, and of the London committee in England. At that time the advising agents comprised representatives of Dar-

ling's, Dalgety's, Bell's and Dreyfus. Last year a sale of 1,500,000 tons was similarly arranged with the Imperial authorities by the Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes). Then the London agents of the Farmers' Co-operative or producers companies, Messrs. Berry, Barclay & Co., had been added to the London agency. The question of remuneration to be paid to the whole of the London agents for the work they are called upon to do in connection with this last contract, was considered at the April meeting of the board. It was suggested at first, and in this Mr. McGibbon agreed, that from whatever share of the commission the four old agents received they should rebate to the Australian Wheat Board whatever distributing fees they earned from the British Commissioners in connection with certain shipments of this wheat which they were effecting on behalf of the Imperial Government. As the money they were thus earning would in some instances be more than their share of the commission received from the Australian Wheat Board, they would be really doing the work for the Australian Wheat Board for nothing. Berry, Barclay & Co., on the other hand, not being engaged on any such work, would have received their full quota of the commission without any rebate, something like £7,500. This proposal was turned down. After having gone into the matter carefully with our General Manager (Mr. Keys), I moved that a fair and reasonable lump sum to be paid for the work to be done should be £20,000, and that no rebates should be allowed. Mr. McGibbon voted against this and ultimately it was agreed—Mr. Dunn (New South Wales) and myself being the only dissentients—that the commission should be on a certain basis which works out, in round figures, at about £38,000, without rebate. Under this arrangement each agent gets about £7,500, the same amount approximately, as Berry Barclay & Co. alone would have got under the first proposal. The position, so far as Mr. McGibbon is concerned, is this: He agreed, in effect, first, that the work should be done for about £10,000; he then turned down £20,000, and ultimately agreed to pay £38,000. I am perfectly satisfied after hearing the agents in explanation of the services that were being rendered under this contract, that £20,000 was a full and adequate payment for the pool growers to make. I am positive that if Mr. McGibbon had fought with Mr. Dunn and myself we could have saved that £18,000, and not have caused the slightest hardship to the agents. Now to come to a more personal affair which, of itself, is not relatively important, but serves as an indicator. The Board meetings last year averaged about one in two months, it being arranged where possible, to meet in the second week of the month. After the October meeting, Mr. McGibbon indicated that it was his intention to try to arrange, if possible, that meetings be held in both November and December. I urged later, on the other hand, that as Par-

liament was sitting and the business of the House was most urgent at the time, the early part of November, that the November and December meetings might be amalgamated by being held in the first week of December. I failed in this, the two meetings being fixed for 21st November and 15th December, respectively. It was usual for Mr. McGibbon's accounts for expenses for attendances at board meetings to be submitted to me and then passed to the Australian Wheat Board for payment. Besides his daily fee from the time he left home to attend a meeting to the time he could reasonably return, he was allowed all railway and boat fares incurred. On this occasion he left Perth on the 15th November, and returned on the 23rd December. The period of his absence was 38 days. He incurred rail and boat fare from and to Perth once only, the amount involved being £22 4s. His account showed, firstly, 30 days at £4 4s. a day, a total of £126 for the estimated periods he could have attended both meetings and returned to Perth. That is quite all right, but he also included two sets of rail and boat fares, namely £44 8s. when he had incurred only one. For a public accountant and auditor to have done such a thing, was in my opinion inexcusable. There was no mistake, because after my protest to Senator Russell and my request to be dissociated with the account, it being more than a reimbursement of money out of pocket, Mr. McGibbon, on the decision of the board, accepted only one set of fares it is true, but £4 4s. per day for all the intervening days between the estimated travelling periods of the two meetings, or 39 days altogether instead of 29 days.

Hon. J. Duffell: Is that the fee that was agreed upon?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Although you, Mr. President, have ruled that interjections are disorderly, I would like to reply to the question asked by the hon. member by saying that the fee fixed was £4 4s. per day from the time a delegate left his home until the day of his return. That applied to the State the delegate came from and the fee was plus boat or rail expenses, whichever method of travel was adopted. At the April Conference a most peculiar resolution was passed to which Mr. McGibbon agreed. This provided that the quota that each State should supply to the British Government contracts, which are the main sales outstanding, should be such as would leave in all States a similar unsold carry-over, in proportion to the population of those States. Under the terms of the original constitution, all allotments of the overseas pool should be in the proportion of the total quantity of wheat that each State makes available to that overseas pool. To have formed the pool on a population basis would have been absurd and of course impossible. The growers of Western Australia would never have agreed to it. It is an obvious fact that the population of each of the other States is much greater than that of Western Australia. It could therefore

readily happen under this resolution that Western Australia, though putting the least quantity of wheat into the overseas pool, might have to supply the greatest quantity to the British contract or any overseas sale, because of its smaller population. The most serious effect of such an arrangement would of course be apparent in the event of the wind-up of the pool through disagreement or other causes. If this happened we would get credit for any unsold stocks in the pool, only on the population basis instead of on the only business basis possible, namely, according to the proportion of the quantity of wheat we had put into the pool. These three instances show, I think, that Mr. McGibbon did not regard his principals as deserving of first, much less only, consideration. In dealing with the question as to whether the services rendered were commensurate with the remuneration accepted, we have to consider this fact: Mr. McGibbon is a professional man, and in accepting the appointment accepted professional fees, namely, £4 4s. per day for the whole of the period from home back to home again. In addition to this, he received a recoup for boat and rail fares expended whilst on the work of the board. The growers therefore, were entitled to receive the best of his services, having regard to the fact of his business as a public accountant and auditor. On Mr. McGibbon's motion at the November Conference it was decided that New South Wales should be permitted to buy from the other States at export rate a quantity of wheat for the Eastern flour trade, that is Java, Singapore, etc., equal to the average quantity of flour that had been supplied by New South Wales to that market during the three years preceding the war, 1911, 1912, 1913. It was also agreed on Mr. McGibbon's motion that New South Wales should also be permitted to buy from the other States at export rates sufficient wheat to enable her to retain the flour trade with the Pacific Islands. The effect of these two decisions was that the pooling States had to supply New South Wales mills with wheat whilst their own mills would be deprived of such business, and might possibly have to shut down. The foundation of the wheat marketing scheme is the pooling of the overseas trade offering to those States that have wheat to ship. Obviously, if they have not sufficient wheat for their own consumption, they have not sufficient to export. Any business, therefore, offering overseas should, according to the intention of the constitution, go to the States that have the wheat to send. This bolstering up of New South Wales export trade when it could readily have been supplied by the other States' mills was certainly not justifiable in view of the prodigal way in which that State had depleted her stocks when faced with an inevitable drought. The moving of such resolutions did not reveal a business acumen that is to be expected of professional representatives. It was moved

by Mr. Peake and seconded by Mr. McGibbon and carried—

That, subject to the necessary documentary evidence being produced by New South Wales, it is left to the discretion of the Commonwealth Government to remove the embargo upon the shipment of flour, provided the interests of the pool in the transaction are safeguarded.

Mr. Ashford undertook that if the flour were allowed to go and it were found that the price at which New South Wales made this sale was too low they would make good the difference. In the early part of last year, shortly after the cessation of hostilities there was an opportunity offering to millers to do profitable private flour business with Egypt and Mediterranean ports. The Australian Wheat Board issued an embargo prohibiting shipments of such flour, and instructed that all such sales would be arranged by the Australian Wheat Board to prevent competition between the States, mills having the privilege of buying wheat from the scheme for such flour export, but, at wheat prices fixed by the Australian Wheat Board. After those instructions were issued, the New South Wales wheat scheme permitted the sales of two cargoes by one of the local mills. The shipments were held up by the Commonwealth Government on the advice of the Australian Wheat Board. It was considered most unfair that New South Wales millers should be allowed to do this business, when all the other States were stopped. Several months later, after continued representations by the New South Wales Government, the Australian Wheat Board decided, Mr. McGibbon agreeing, to allow these cargoes to go. I maintain, as Mr. McGibbon should have maintained, that the cargoes, if allowed to go at all, should have been taken over by the pool, and any benefit arising therefrom should have gone to all the States, and not only to New South Wales. It is true that the resolution is worded in a very guarded manner and makes provision for certain contingencies, but the responsibility of allowing the cargoes to go after all, is transferred from the Australian Wheat Board to the Commonwealth Government, a position which could have obtained months before. It was no more right in December to allow those cargoes to go than it was in May. Mr. McGibbon had been in close touch with the matter all along and he should have been the first to object, if for no other reason than that the millers in our own State had been fighting for the business and had been deprived of it. Another matter that does not reveal that commercial astuteness with which Mr. McGibbon has been credited was his action in agreeing, in spite of my opposition, to the resolution in April that the gristing at the mills in the respective States should be employed—inclusive of local business—so far as possible for the same proportion of time throughout the three States. This means that Victoria, with a crop, say, of 12 million bushels and a milling capacity of 22 millions, would have her mills going

for about six months, and that Western Australia, with a crop of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  million bushels and a milling capacity of only  $7\frac{1}{2}$  million bushels would be compelled to grist only for the same limited time as Victoria, whereas, as a fact, she had the ability to keep going for say 14 months. Our policy has been all along, as far as possible, to arrange that our mills should be kept going full time, so that there would be full employment in the State and there would be sufficient offal supplies conserved in Western Australia for the benefit of our minor industries, such as poultry and pig farming. By the resolution, however, our wheat was to be sent in fulfilment of overseas commitments, in order that the Eastern States should be able to keep their mills going as long as ours, although their milling capacity was greatly in excess this year of their acquisitions. I wonder what would have happened if the converse had been the case—would we have received the same consideration from the East as Mr. McGibbon would now give them from the West? It certainly would have been far better if, in any fight the Minister was putting up on behalf of the State or of the growers, with which Mr. McGibbon might not happen to agree, he had remained neutral and did not do as I have shown he did, fight actively against our actions. Since his retirement from the Board Mr. McGibbon has seen fit to make against me a certain charge of repudiation. In support of this he quoted confidential records. This was done in order to attempt to prove that in connection with the sale to New South Wales, in which he took an active part in November, we were committed to be a party by the alleged statements of Mr. Colebatch towards the end of January. In view of the agreements in connection with this sale having been made in December, I can come to no other conclusion than that Mr. McGibbon attempted to shift the onus of responsibility in connection with this business off his own shoulders. Whether we were committed or not, whether in November or January, I maintain and have maintained all along, that there was a clear element of doubt, which justified me in fighting this matter in the interests of the Western Australian growers to an ultimate decision, if need be, by the Court. It, therefore, ill became Mr. McGibbon, as direct representative of the growers, to attempt to prejudice their case either here or in the East. Such action on his part does not leave the way open for an amicable and united co-operation with the Minister of the State in any future activities on the Australian Wheat Board. I think, Mr. President, that I have said sufficient to show that it would not be in the best interests either of the State or of the growers, for Mr. McGibbon further to be a member on the Australian Wheat Board.

Hon. J. Cornell: May I make a personal explanation?

The PRESIDENT: What is the subject?

Hon. J. Cornell: On the subject of the statement which has just been made by the Honorary Minister.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member cannot do so. I do not think it is necessary.

BILL—SUPPLY, £2,059,000.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Minister for Education, the Standing Orders were in part suspended to permit of the passage of the Bill at the one sitting.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.22] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual Supply Bill introduced at the opening of the session to cover the ordinary expenditure of the Government for the first three months of the financial year, pending the presentation to Parliament of the Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. The amount asked for is just one-fourth of the expenditure on revenue and loan account respectively actually incurred during the previous 12 months. The amount provided for expenditure from loan funds is large, but it is almost exclusively for the purpose of land settlement of returned soldiers, other loan expenditure being but a very small amount. I do not propose—it is not usual in introducing the Supply Bill—to discuss the finances, but merely for the sake of affording information to hon. members I may say that it will not be necessary for Western Australia to go on the money market for some months to come. We have in hand, and due from the Commonwealth for expenditure that has actually been incurred, the sum of £1,900,000, and in addition we have available £800,000, representing Savings Bank money which is on fixed deposit or current account with the banks. It is the intention of the Treasurer to submit the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure at the earliest possible moment, and although considerable delay in their preparation has necessarily resulted from the closing of the offices during the last three weeks in July, it is confidently believed that those Estimates will be submitted earlier than usual. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [5.24]: I trust we shall have the assurance of the leader of the House that none of this money will be applied to the purchase of industrial enterprises.

The Minister for Education: Oh, no, nothing of the sort.

Hon. J. Cornell: It has already been spent.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES, ELECTION.

The **MINISTER FOR EDUCATION** (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.25]: It will be within the knowledge of hon. members that since the last session of Parliament our Chairman of Committees was defeated at the polls. Without in any way detracting from the welcome which I am sure we all extend to his successor, Mr. Baglin, I am confident I shall be voicing the feelings of hon. members if I say that from the personal standpoint we all deeply regret that Mr. Allen is no longer with us. He made an admirable chairman, his contributions to debate were always of value, and he was a very good friend to all of us. However, he was defeated at the polls, and it is now necessary for us to fill the office of Chairman of Committees. Therefore I have pleasure in moving—

That Mr. Ewing be elected as Chairman of Committees in this House.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM (North-East) [5.26]: I have pleasure in seconding the nomination. Hon. members will agree that we have in Mr. Ewing a man who will make a really good Chairman of Committees, one who will do his best to safeguard the interests of hon. members. I have pleasure in seconding the nomination.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [5.27]: I am deeply sensible of the honour conferred upon me, and I submit myself to the will of the Council.

Question put and passed.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [5.28]: I desire to express my gratitude to hon. members for having conferred this honour upon me. I can assure them all that I will do my level best to carry out the duties of the position, maintain the privileges of hon. members and uphold the prestige my predecessor established in the past. I am at a disadvantage, because I have been preceded by such excellent men of marked tact and ability, in whom the House has had the greatest confidence, and I can only hope that when my term expires it will be found that I have at least endeavoured to live up to the traditions of the past. I will do my level best, and I hope I shall give entire satisfaction to hon. members.

## BILL—SUPPLY.

In Committee, etc.

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

Read a third time and passed.

House adjourned at 5.32 p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 12th August, 1920.

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

## QUESTION—OLD AGE PENSIONERS, RATIONS.

Mr. **ROCKE** asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, In view of his reply to a question relating to the discontinuance of the issue of rations to persons at Fremantle in receipt of old age pensions, in which he stated that the responsibility of providing for aged persons rests upon the Commonwealth Government, and that very few cases are affected, will he reconsider his decision and order the issue of rations to continue, pending further negotiations with the Commonwealth Government, in view of the fact that fifteen pensioners are suffering severely by reason of their inability to obtain sufficient food? 2, Is he aware that instructions have been given to discontinue the issue of rations known as "extras," which include milk, rice, sago, and oatmeal, to indigent persons? 3, If so, will he give further consideration to the question, as it especially relates to the cases of children? 4, Is the saving alleged to be effected due to the activities of the recently appointed business manager, Mr. Simpson?

The **MINISTER FOR MINES** (for the Colonial Secretary) replied: 1, If any of these pensioners are unable to obtain sufficient food they have the right to apply for admission to either of the homes for the aged. 2, Yes; as the issue was being abused. 3, The officer at Fremantle was instructed to report specially to head office in any deserving case. These are being considered on their merits. 4, As regards pensioners, yes; as regards extras, no.

## QUESTION—BORING PLANT.

Hon. W. C. **ANGWIN** asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that a boring plant has been lying under water for some considerable time at Fremantle? 2, Will salt water thus be the means of destroying