

This may mean a good deal of work for me as Leader of the House, but I think members are entitled to know how matters stand and the reason for any course of action that is decided upon by the Government. So far as I am able I will supply them with that information. I will do all I can to carry out my duties to the satisfaction of the House and, as I hope, to the advantage of the country.

Question put and passed; the Address-in-reply adopted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the Address be presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor by the President and such members as may desire to accompany him.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 9th September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.34 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 20th August, 1924.

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

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, MERREDIN STATION.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is he aware that the ex-member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) on the 21st December, 1923, wrote to the Merredin Road Board as follows:—"Loan Estimates provide £1,000 to be spent at Merredin station

and yard. Hope this may be increased?" 2, Will he ascertain which of the ex-Ministers, i.e., the Premier, Minister for Works, or Minister for Railways, authorised Mr. Harrison to make such a statement? 3, Will he see the promise made is honoured and £1,000 placed on the 1924-25 Loan Estimates for the Merredin station and yard?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, The sum of £4,000 was included in the Loan Estimates of the Railway Department for 1923-24 for improvements at Merredin if considered necessary, but the expenditure was not authorised by the Government. The hon. member could doubtless ascertain from the ex-Ministers direct which (if any) of them gave Mr. Harrison the information. 3, No promise can be made at present, but the request will be borne in mind.

QUESTION—TRUSTEES COLONIAL INVESTMENT ACT.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is it proposed this session to amend the Act relating to the investment of trust funds? 2, If so, will this be done early in the session?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Elevation Day—Conclusion.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Mr. HUGHES (East Perth) [4.35]: I join with other members in congratulating you, Sir, upon your elevation to the distinguished position of Speaker. I also congratulate the Premier and his colleagues upon their elevation to the Treasury bench.

Mr. George: You will commiserate with them before long.

Mr. HUGHES: I also extend my congratulations to the new members of this House. I am sorry the Leader of the Opposition has been obliged to absent himself from this Chamber for the last fortnight owing to the state of his health, and trust it will not be long before we see him here again. I also desire to extend to him my sympathy. Not long ago he had a great number of friends, but these are evidently not so favourably disposed towards him now as they were. This is one of the things a public man has to put up with. Apparently people must have new gods. It is remarkable how the friends of success leave a man in the hour of adversity. I am pleased to say that Sir James Mitchell's loyal colleague, the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) is still with him and is vigorously fighting on his behalf. I hope that hon. member will remain long enough in the Chamber to become a little modernised.

Mr. George: I will take lessons by correspondence from you.

Mr. HUGHES: He has admitted that he is a trifle old-fashioned in his views. I take it he made that remark for the benefit of new members, for there was no need to make it to old members. It is gratifying to us, who stand for the masses of the people, that, after seven years of administration by those who are politically opposed to us, our party has once more come into possession of the Treasury bench. It is fortunate that the financial debacle brought about by the irresponsible manner in which burdens have been piled upon the State beyond its capacity to bear them, is now at an end. The onerous task of endeavouring to extricate the State from its unfortunate position has devolved upon the Leader of our party, and there is no man more qualified to undertake the task. The most important subject for our consideration is that of finance. It is appalling that a population of roughly 360,000 souls should be weighed down with an accumulated deficit of six million pounds. Some members opposite tell us we ought not to worry about the deficit. The member for Murray-Wellington says it does not matter twopence.

Mr. George: I am not worrying about it, and do not intend to.

Mr. HUGHES: When the deficit was one million the hon. member had a lot to say about it. One of his colleagues became world-famous under the name of "Gone-a-million-Jack."

Mr. George: He was not a colleague of mine when he got that name.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member adopted him, and I should imagine he endorsed his actions when he did so. A deficit of one million pounds was indeed a serious matter, but now that it has exceeded six million pounds it is even more serious. In the Governor's Speech we are told that the deficit for the last financial year was slightly over a quarter of a million pounds. Attention is drawn to the fact that the railway revenue has come within £30,000 of balancing the ledger. One section of the community has received unfair advantages from our railways. If the freights were properly and reasonably assessed the railways would not be showing a deficit of £30,000 but a substantial surplus. Whilst last year our railways showed a loss of £216,000, the freight rate per ton mile was 2.02d. We carried 15,732,837 ton miles of fertiliser at .58d. per ton per mile, which is approximately 25 per cent. of the freight rate. We brought back 40,652,597 ton miles of wheat at .12d. per ton mile, or about 50 per cent. of the average freight. In other words, we gave railway concessions to the farmers amounting to £250,000 in one year, or £34,000 over and above the total deficit on the railway system.

Mr. Thomson: Make the producer pay the lot, of course.

Mr. HUGHES: I should make him pay his fair share.

Mr. Thomson: Let him pay the lot.

Mr. HUGHES: He does not pay the lot.

Mr. Brown: What did the others get indirectly?

Mr. HUGHES: I will show the hon. member. The position this year is even more aggravated. The farmer can well afford, as you, Sir, know, to pay reasonable rates upon super and wheat transport. This year 17,625,144 miles of fertiliser freight was carried at .56d. per ton mile. There has been a slight increase of .03d. per ton per mile. That, on the average freight rate, is 1.95d. per ton per mile. On that item alone the farming community received £102,000 in concessions between the average freight rate and the average rate at which they are having their fertilisers carried. There was brought back from the country in wheat 65,435,641 ton miles at 1.04d. By a reduction of 9d. per ton per mile, this concession below the average freight rate amounted to £245,383. On these two items alone the farming community received a concession worth £347,383.

Mr. Lindsay: The only time the railways pay is when wheat is being carried.

Mr. HUGHES: Does the hon. member suggest that we should consider the railways position as a matter of months and only run them during the period when they pay, owing to the transport of wheat? It is because of the farmers that we run the railways all the year into the outback centres where the settlement is not great. I am surprised to hear such an interjection from the hon. member.

Mr. Thomson: We are not surprised to hear your argument.

Mr. Griffiths: It is a very old one.

Mr. HUGHES: Having read reports of meetings of the Primary Producers' Association, I had gathered the impression that the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) was one member of the Country Party at least who realised the relationship of the railways to the finances generally. Now, however, he tells us that once a year during the period when the wheat is being transported, do the railways pay. Surely he does not suggest we should shut the railways down except during a few months.

Mr. Griffiths: I did not hear the member for Toodyay say that the railways paid once a year only.

Mr. HUGHES: I did. You were probably drafting out a notice of question and did not hear! We know that all businesses have their good and bad periods. We know that entertainments in the city may run at a profit on Friday and Saturday evenings, and may run at a loss during the rest of the week. The member for Toodyay would not suggest that in consequence entertainments should be held on two nights of the week

only. If he were to reconsider the position and look into the statistics, he would be satisfied that the farmers are receiving more concessions regarding the conveyance of wheat and fertilisers than they are entitled to.

Mr. George: You could not live without the farmer, for without him there would be no work elsewhere.

Mr. HUGHES: And would the farmer live without the hon. member and his likes?

Mr. George: Yes, certainly.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member is getting quite modest. It is absurd to say that there would be no work available were it not for the farming community. If I were to view the matter from a narrow standpoint I would retort that if there were not people in the cities to eat the produce, there would be no farmers.

Mr. Lindsay: They do not eat too much of the farmers' produce.

Mr. HUGHES: But they pay a very big price for what they do eat. The hon. member should see that the farmers furnish us with wheat at a cheaper price.

Mr. Thomson: They would be mugs to sell it to you at cheaper rates than they can get elsewhere.

Mr. HUGHES: That is a nice statement for an hon. member to make! If it be true, then it naturally follows that the rest of the people are mugs to permit of such railway concessions to farmers.

Mr. George: The farmers will not get fat on what you give them.

Mr. HUGHES: I will prove later on how the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) has been able to show losses on State trading concerns when in fact there were handsome profits. The hon. member has his fair share of ingenuity. As to his suggestion that if there were no farmers we would have no work to do, surely he realises that every section of the community is dependent one upon the other for the supplying of their demands. Would the hon. member suggest that the labour of the farmer is all that contributes to the crop? He has admitted that he is a trifle old-fashioned, but surely his views are not so ancient that he would support such a contention.

Mr. George: What I meant was that if it were not for the country activities there would be no city.

Mr. HUGHES: That is a crude suggestion. Surely the hon. member realises that if it were not that the industrial workers manufacture machinery, there would be no agriculture in Western Australia. Were it not for the advance in the standard of machinery manufactured in the cities and despatched to the country areas, the farmer would not be able to produce anything like the wheat yield he does to-day. Of course all sections of the community are inter-related. Does the hon. member suggest that the railway workers engaged in the transport of fertilisers to the country areas

and of wheat from those areas has nothing to do with the growing of the crop?

Mr. Millington: They regard us as their poor relations.

Mr. HUGHES: Judging by their charges for wheat, they must think we are their rich uncles. Surely the farming community, and particularly the St. George's-terrace farmers who profess to speak for the man on the land, are aware that successful farming results largely from the use of the implements turned out at the State Implement Works at Fremantle, as much as from the labour of the farmer himself. I do not think the general body of farmers adopt such a narrow-minded view.

Mr. Lutey: Most of the agricultural production is the result of the use of foreign machinery.

Mr. HUGHES: That is so. Although the farmers get such railway concessions, they are not loyal enough to the State to purchase local machinery whenever possible. The farmers could well afford to buy the whole of the machinery from the State Implement Works. By doing so they would support local industry and provide additional employment here. Rather than do that, they import their requirements from the Eastern States. The more industries established here and the more people employed, the lighter will be the burden upon the people as a whole. The time is ripe for a revision of these two railway charges in particular. I am not opposed to the farmer who has his place in society. I am glad to see him prosperous and I would like to see many more farmers here. Each section of the community, however, should pay a fair share for the public services they receive. In my own electorate, that has been my contention when I have been asked to advocate further tramway extensions. I have refused to do so on the ground that it was not a sound policy to adopt. I have always claimed that the citizens have a right to pay for the services rendered to them. For each service the consumer should pay a rate that will cover working expenses, provide for decent wages and conditions for the employees and leave a small margin of profit in addition. No person should desire a public service for which he was not entitled to pay a fair return. When I have been asked to advocate a two-penny section on the trams, I have refused to do so and have told my constituents that if they receive the benefits of a tram service, it is only right they should pay for that service. I have no intention of advocating a reduction in fair rates paid for facilities. I am surprised that I have not heard anything so far about the poor farmers. I know there are some such farmers in Western Australia and I would not object to providing superphosphates free to the struggling farmers whose returns do not provide them with a living wage. Apart from that section of the farmers, however, there are many wealthy agriculturists, who

are becoming more wealthy each year. One can make a general statement of that description but after all it is merely one's own opinion. On the other hand, statistics collected and properly tabulated cannot lie; they place the position truly and fairly before the public. No one will suggest that our income-tax figures do not show the true position. I have made an interesting comparison to ascertain how the wage earner compares with the farmer in relation to income during the last five years. The wage earner includes every man in receipt of a wage or salary whether it be £1,000 a year or £500 a year. I find that in 1918-19 the average taxable income of the wage earner was £216 and in the same year the average taxable income of the farmers and orchardists was £349, or 50 per cent. more than the average taxable income of the wage earners. I know that all farmers do not pay income tax, but the proportion is less than the proportion of wage earners who do not pay income tax. Clearly, these figures have a relative value. It has been stated in a section of the Press that the statistics I quoted formerly regarding the taxable income of farmers, included the pastoralists as well. That was not so. The income-tax schedules show the pastoralists in a separate class. As the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) would remark, the pastoralists do not have an average taxable income of £300; it is something over £3,000.

Mr. Angelo: No, I wish they had.

Mr. HUGHES: In 1919-20 the wage-earner was still on £216, whereas the farmer had gone up to £386. In 1920-21 the wage-earner had secured an increase of £8, thus rising to £224, while the farmer had gone up to £529. In 1921-22 the wage-earner went to £232 and the farmer dropped back to £484, but in 1922-23 the wage-earner was back to £224, while the farmer had gone up to £650.

Mr. Brown: Why don't you get a farm?

Mr. HUGHES: Because the hon. member's Government did not provide for a local resident getting a farm. Why did not the hon. member's Government provide for local boys getting farms?

Mr. Angelo: What did all the other farmers do?

Mr. HUGHES: A Labour Government provided for their going on the land. Even now I have ten Western Australian boys who want to go on the land but cannot get land from the Lands Department.

Mr. Barnard: Why not put them on the group settlements?

Mr. HUGHES: They could not go there if they wanted to. The last time I was in the group settlement office there were 60 men waiting to get on the groups. Unfortunately to-day Western Australian boys cannot get a piece of land on which to go farming, not even if they go out to

the edge of the desert. There is no land available in this State for our own boys. One block thrown open attracted over 80 applicants.

Mr. Lindsay: That was not near a railway, was it?

Mr. HUGHES: It was 15 miles from a railway.

Mr. Lindsay: I went out 40 miles from a railway.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, and we built a railway out to you. Does the hon. member suggest that men to-day can go out 40 miles and grow wheat?

Mr. Lindsay: I did it.

Mr. HUGHES: Can it be done profitably to-day?

Mr. Lindsay: No, but I did it myself.

Mr. HUGHES: Of course, "they were the days," and the men now are not of the same stuff. The men of 70 years ago were much better than are the men to-day. What I cannot understand is, how we have produced so inferior a generation from such good stock.

Mr. Holman: Look at yourself.

Mr. HUGHES: The only thing I can hope is that the second generation, particularly the descendants of the member for Murray-Wellington, will throw back.

Mr. George: I am quite satisfied with what I got in both the first and the second generations; and there are more to follow.

Mr. HUGHES: However, I do not want to be drawn off this important comparison of the incomes earned by the farming community and by the wage-earners. Over those five years—these are figures from the Taxation Commissioner's report and can be verified—from 1919 to 1923 the wage-earner increased his taxable income by £8 per annum, whilst the farmer raised his from £349 to £650, or an increase of £6 per week. So if there be poor farmers, there must also be a large number of prosperous farmers. When the State has assisted a farmer through the Agricultural Bank, the Industries Assistance Board, the Wheat Board and all those beneficent institutions introduced by the previous Labour Government for the benefit of the farmer—when the farmer has all these concessions in addition to railway concessions, and gets to the stage where he is earning in taxable income £12 10s. per week, it is his duty to the State to pay a reasonable freight on his wheat and fertiliser. If we are to have secondary industries we require to lift from them some of the burden that rightly belongs to the prosperous farmer. I do not suggest that anything should be done to a farmer earning less than a living wage, but it is unfair that prosperous farmers should ask us to carry for them fertiliser at 25 per cent. of the normal freight rate. As pointed out by the member for Menzies,

when we consider the railway freight levied on mining essentials, and compare it with the freight levied on farming essentials, we see that there is a marked difference and that justice has not been done to the mining industry. The time is ripe for the Government to revise the railway freights on wheat and fertiliser, and I feel sure the Government will do it. We find, too, that while we carry wheat at 50 per cent. and fertiliser at 25 per cent. of the normal freight rates, there is an enormous increase in motor cars amongst the farming community. We are pleased to see the farmers prosperous, and we say to them, "Now, in your hour of prosperity, you should pay normal railway freights." Unfortunately, with the influx of motor transport a good deal of railway revenue is being lost, for when the farmer and his family come down to the city they come in their motor car, and consequently we are losing even the traffic that would pay if there were no motor cars. If we are to get this State out of the slough of despair in which the late Government left it, these railway freights paid by the farmers must be seriously considered. I believe the farmers themselves will realise that it is their duty to pay increased freights and will pay them willingly. It would be only doing a fair thing by the rest of the community.

Mr. Lindsay: They are doing a fair thing now.

Mr. HUGHES: Is 25 per cent. of the normal freight rate fair?

Mr. Lindsay: Show that the wheat is being carried at a loss.

Mr. HUGHES: If with an average freight of 1.95d. the railways are losing, it is obvious that freight carried at one-quarter of the normal rate is being carried at a loss. Moreover, as the member for Bunbury (Mr. Withers) reminds me, all export wheat is free of wharfage charge. Leaving that aspect of the finances, I want to say a few words about the interest bill. We underwent a period of reckless finance; we had seven and a-half years of finance without regard to financial rules or to the capacity of the State to carry the burden. In 1919 the interest bill was £1,658,951. At the end of 1923 it had risen to £2,351,151, or an increase in four years of £692,200. Last year it was estimated that it would be £2,561,246, or an increase of £900,000 per annum in our interest bill. How can the community, with its small and scattered numbers, stand up to an interest bill of nearly a million per annum? It is beyond the capacity of the State to bear, unless our friends opposite are prepared to take their share of the burden. If it is to be left to the workers to carry that burden, it will be found that they cannot do it. Another question that has

caused a good deal of contention in the House is that of sinking fund. In 1919 the loan indebtedness of the State was £43,637,876, and the accumulated sinking fund £6,139,007, or a net indebtedness of 37½ millions. At the end of 1923 the public debt was £58,485,854, and the accumulated sinking fund was £8,781,050, or a net indebtedness of 49¼ million pounds. If we add the estimate for last year of 4¼ millions, which I presume has been spent, it means that in five years the total indebtedness of this State has increased by over 16 million pounds. Although we had an increase of 16 million pounds in our total debt, there was no increase in the contribution to sinking fund. I regret that the Leader of the Opposition is not present while I am dealing with this question.

Mr. Pantton: If he were here, he would be asleep.

Mr. HUGHES: I think I could manage to wake him up on this question.

Mr. Richardson: It would not interest him.

Mr. HUGHES: Apparently it does not interest him. He seems to think that the principal thing about finance is to borrow money and that the payment of it may be safely left to posterity. In 1919, although we had a net public debt of 37½ millions, we were contributing £313,000 a year to the sinking fund. In 1923 when the net indebtedness had increased to 49¼ millions, we were contributing to sinking fund only £223,000. There we have an inverse ratio, an increase of 12¼ millions in the public debt and a reduction of £90,000 per annum in the sinking fund contribution. This means that when money was borrowed after 1919, no provision was made for its repayment. I do not think anyone would contend that it is sound finance to keep on borrowing and to make less provision for its repayment. If a man owed £1,000 and was contributing £50 a year to a fund for its reduction, and if he borrowed another £1,000, it would naturally follow that to maintain his ratio of sinking fund, he would have to contribute another £50 per annum to the fund.

Mr. Mann: It would depend upon the term of loan.

Mr. HUGHES: I never heard of any loan being repaid unless provision were made for it. Was the hon. member ever fortunate enough to get a loan like that?

Mr. Mann: Some provision would be made.

Mr. HUGHES: But absolutely no provision has been made. If we were contributing only 1s. per year for the repayment of the additional money, there would be an increase to that extent in the sinking fund. When the Great Southern railway loan fell due and was repaid, the sinking fund for the goldfields water supply loan was found to be unnecessary, contributions to sinking fund were relieved to the extent of £90,000. Instead of placing that £90,000 towards the

repayment of the 16 millions borrowed, the sinking fund contribution was reduced, and no charge was made against the revenue therefor. The result is the deficit shown has been decreased to that extent.

Mr. Thomson: I got into serious trouble because I dared to make such a statement as that.

Mr. HUGHES: I congratulate the hon. member. He got down to bedrock in the matter of the sinking fund and pointed that out. He was taken to task for pointing out an ordinary business precaution to the people in charge of the Treasury. If we had provided sinking fund in the same ratio for the additional loans as for previous loans, the deficit would be much nearer to seven millions than to six millions. As one newspaper stated, it would be interesting to have trained accountants to go into the Treasury and compile a statement of the actual position of the State. While we are making no provision for the repayment of the additional loans, we are stating our deficit incorrectly. If we fail to provide an annual contribution to sinking fund, posterity will have to pay all the more. This is a serious position. The State is going on borrowing recklessly. I am not opposed to borrowing, provided the money be judiciously invested and brings in a return, and adequate provision is made for its repayment. Under such conditions a policy of borrowing is sound, but to go on borrowing indiscriminately without taking into reckoning the day of repayment is unsound finance. No business man would finance on those lines. If he was obliged to borrow money he would make provision for its repayment in a specified time. That is the only sound method. I am pleased that the Leader of the Country Party took up this question so forcefully during the elections and made a special issue of it. We have heard a good deal about the reduction of the deficit. So far as I can gather from the public accounts, one cannot be too certain as to what the deficit really is. I have made an exhaustive examination of the public accounts available to a private member, and I would not care to be too definite as to the total deficit. When no sinking fund has been provided on certain loans for five years, it is an important item that should be stated in connection with the deficit. When loan funds are being expended and are bolstering up the revenue—some of those funds, probably rightly chargeable against revenue—no member can say definitely whether or not the deficit as given is correct. I venture to say we do not know what it is. We know it is not less than six millions. That is about the nearest we can get to it. It may be seven millions; it may be more. I suggest to the Premier that the whole of the accounts of the Treasury should be reviewed and proper adjusting entries should be put through to ascertain exactly what the deficit was at the 30th June last, so that when we come to give an account of our

stewardship we shall know by how much the deficit was reduced or increased during our term of office. An hon. member in another place took great credit for the late Government. He said they had reduced the deficit from something over £700,000 per annum to £250,000. He delved into the scriptures and from the Biblical records drew analogies with those who had dared to attack the financial policy of the Mitchell Government. But one important thing the hon. member forgot. When he was detailing how the deficit had been reduced from this extremely high figure to a reasonably low figure, he forgot to mention that the people he was congratulating on having reduced it to a quarter of a million were the very people who had reached the highest mark. That was an important fact that he apparently overlooked. The inference to be drawn from his remarks was that when the late Government came into power the deficit was £700,000 a year, and that they managed to reduce it to about £250,000. He did not go deep enough into the subject; otherwise he would have found that the Government he applauded for reducing the deficit so considerably were the Government who had been responsible for the deficit reaching its highest point. The Mitchell Government added more to the deficit in one year than the previous Labour Government added in three or four years. Unfortunately the Auditor General's report does not reach the House before we discuss the Estimates. It seems rather a useless function to have the Auditor General's report after the business has been dealt with. The report of the Auditor General, the watch-dog for the people, whose duty it is to see that Ministers carry out their functions properly, is not presented until after we have dealt with the Estimates, with the result that we have not detailed information of an examination of the accounts. A report that comes down after the financial statement has been dealt with is not worth the paper it is written on. What chance have members to criticise the financial statements if the Auditor General's report is not received until the discussion is over? Last year it was presented only after many questions had been raised as to when it would be brought down. As we have not had an opportunity to discuss certain comments in it, I intend to take this opportunity to refer to them. I find this interesting note:—

The authority of £500,000 (Treasurer's advance) was considerably overdrawn during the year. The exact figures cannot be obtained from the Treasury books except by dissecting several individual accounts, but the following figures are available:—"Excess expenditure" shown in expenditure returns for the revenue and loan, £523,969; expenditure under the heading of "Loan Suspense" £271,214; total £795,184. This total would be considerably increased if the accounts under the heading of "advances" were dis-

sected and the cash drawn for the year ascertained.

That is a scathing indictment. After telling us that the Treasurer's advance had been overdrawn to the extent of nearly £300,000, he goes on to say that if the advances were examined the increase would be found to be much larger. That is a serious statement for the Auditor General to make. We assume that it is made with a full knowledge of the facts. Unfortunately, when the House was on these items the Auditor General's report was not before us, and consequently members were not able to discuss the items in the light of the report. The Auditor General says—

Excess expenditure shown in case of returns for revenue and loan.

If there is any portion, as he suggests there is, of that amount of £523,000 which belongs to revenue, it should be shown in the accounts of the previous financial year, and it would increase the deficit correspondingly. Therefore on the Auditor General's own showing the accounts presented to Parliament do not show the true position. That is one of the things which make me suggest that it is very doubtful what the deficit really is to-day. One matter which has been the subject of some slight disagreement between the various parties in this House is the question of State trading concerns. Individually hon. members opposite agree with State trading. One finds an hon. member opposite saying, "I am opposed to the State trading concerns generally, but there is one that I do not want to see abolished." One member says, "Don't touch the Government butter factory in my electorate." Another cries out that he is utterly opposed to State trading, and then immediately pays away £70,000 of State funds for a butter factory that has proved a failure. North-Western members have said, "Certainly abolish the State trading concerns, but don't take the State steamers off the North-West coast." Practically the whole House is agreed on the policy of State trading. We have heard much concerning the losses sustained by the State from the trading concerns, but we have never had the true figures put before us. We have never had a correct statement of the position of the trading concerns. I will not weary the House with a lengthy examination of the accounts of the trading concerns, but I do wish to quote two or three salient instances of the manner in which the accounts have been stated to the public. It has been shouted from the house-tops that the State trading concerns are responsible for the deficit. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George), on taking over the trading concerns, burnt numerous midnight candles in his effort to discover the loss on those concerns; but when we got down to tinctacks we found the Premier admitting that the total loss on State trading was £301,000, and the hon. gentleman added that there was £55,000 in the sink-

ing funds and £332,000 in the depreciation reserves. That makes £387,000 in reserve and depreciation, whereas the total loss, according to the Premier, has only been £301,000. Therefore the State trading concerns have brought back to the Treasury £86,000 more than they have taken out of it. And still we have hon. members opposite asserting that the deficit is in the State trading concerns.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: They say that with their tongues in their cheeks; they know it is not so.

Mr. HUGHES: Some of them, at any rate, know it is not. I give credit to the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) for knowing better. He has never said, and I hope he never will say, that the State trading concerns have cost Western Australia any money. Like other members, that hon. member has one pet State trading concern. In his case it is the Railway Department, in the matter of carriage of sugar. Let us take the State Sawmills as an instance of the finances of State trading. The sawmills were started on a capital of £254,000, and they had a further advance of £81,000, making a total capitalisation of £335,000. That is to say, within the last 10 years or so the State has invested £335,000 in a sawmilling proposition. The profits on the sawmills to date amount to £142,000, after deduction of £29,000 for sinking fund and £170,000 for depreciation reserve, or total returns of £341,000. So that in 10 years, upon an investment of £335,000, the State Sawmills have returned to the Treasury £341,000, or £6,000 over and above the total amount of money invested by the State in them. It is indeed a prosperous business that within a period of about 10 years can return the whole of its capital and £6,000 to boot.

Mr. Richardson: It looks like profiteering, does it not?

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Yes. The Minister you supported made the State Sawmills a profiteering concern.

Mr. Richardson: I have not noticed any improvement since you have been there.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: We have been there only five minutes. You supported for seven years the Minister who, against our wishes, supported that policy of profiteering.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. S. W. Munsie: We shall soon be out of the combine.

Mr. HUGHES: I would remind hon. members that interjections are disorderly. Now, although the State Sawmills have returned to the Treasury the whole of the capital invested in them, we find that they are still paying interest to the Treasury on the full amount of their capitalisation. Certainly in last year's accounts the State Sawmills are shown to have paid interest to the Treasury on the full amount of the capital originally invested in them, and I dare say that this year's accounts will disclose a similar

position. No business in the world could be successful under such conditions. The conditions are absurd. They do not give the State trading concerns a fair chance. In fact, the system is nothing less than a manipulation of accounts designed to represent the position as being worse than it is. The item is one that strongly illuminates the book-keeping system that has been applied to the State trading concerns. I would not have so much objection to these things if members opposite had in the years gone by stated the true position, if there had not been a crusade against the State trading concerns as losing public money. On the 30th June, 1922, the State Sawmills owed the Treasury £64,000 on an overdraft, and they had £68,000 surplus cash, which they did not require for working expenses. Meantime they were paying interest to the Treasury on the overdraft of £64,000, instead of that overdraft being liquidated from the £68,000 surplus cash, and the interest bill of the State Sawmills thus reduced. The £68,000 was simply transferred to revenue, and the State Sawmills continued to pay interest on the £64,000.

The Premier: Worse than that was done. Anticipated profits of the concern were taken in, and the concern was then made to pay interest on the overdraft.

The Minister for Works: Yes; £900 interest.

Mr. HUGHES: Evidently the late Government were strong finishers. The further they went, the faster they galloped.

Mr. Sampson: Does the Auditor General make any comment on that?

Mr. HUGHES: I presume he will, but I have not yet seen his report for this year.

Mr. Sampson: It is the principle of State trading that is opposed.

Mr. HUGHES: The great objection to State trading was that it showed a loss. Before I entered this House and had the privilege of examining the financial statements, I thought the State trading concerns had lost about six millions of money. As a member of the general public, reading the newspapers, I could not draw any other conclusion than that the State trading concerns were responsible for the deficit.

Mr. Sampson: The question is one of principle, not of profits.

The Premier: It is a question of imagination.

Mr. HUGHES: As a matter of principle, and even rigid principle, when concerns are attacked on the ground that they are losing large sums of money, the accounts should be correctly presented. If the past practice continues with regard to the State Sawmills, that enterprise, even if it makes profits for a hundred years, will still be paying interest on capital and interest on overdraft. No business could

stand up to that sort of thing. The Bank of England could be shown as making losses on those principles of accountancy. The State Sawmills are a glaring example of a particular kind of bookkeeping, of the manner in which the accounts of State trading concerns have been presented to this House, and, what is worse, to the public, who were persuaded that the trading concerns were losing money hand over fist. The late Minister for Railways admitted here that the "Kangaroo" in one year had made a profit of £300,000.

Mr. Thomson: It is a pity the late Government did not sell her at a good price.

Mr. HUGHES: On referring to the accounts we find that the "Kangaroo" originally cost £140,000. In spite of the £300,000 profit she made in one year, she is still paying interest to the State Treasury on her original cost, still paying interest although she repaid her cost twice in one year. On that system of keeping accounts any enterprise can be shown as losing anything. What should be done, and what I suggest the present Treasurer should do, is to go back to the start and put through adjusting entries for all the transfers from the State trading concerns to revenue. The Treasurer should go right back and retransfer to the State trading concerns the profits appropriated from them to revenue, and he should also make due allowance, by way of adjusting entries, for the excess interest with which the concerns have been charged as an effect of the method of keeping the accounts. Then the Treasurer will be in a position to present to Parliament a complete statement definitely showing whether or not the State trading concerns are responsible for any loss to the State; and, if there has been any loss, he will be able to show the extent of that loss, and where the loss occurred. Only after that has been done shall we and the people of this State know just exactly what is the true position of the State trading concerns.

The Premier: On the system of book-keeping which has been adopted, the "Kangaroo," if she made £100,000 in one year and if she had an overdraft of £50,000, would still be charged interest on the overdraft.

Mr. HUGHES: If the £140,000 representing the original cost of the "Kangaroo" was repaid, and if on her account £160,000 was paid into a reserve fund, then, instead of paying interest on her capital cost, she should have been considered as earning interest on her accumulated profits. That £160,000 would have been earning interest to the credit of the "Kangaroo," and if the vessel did show a loss in any one year, the interest on the surplus would have gone to minimise it. That is the way in which financial institutions work. The Western Australian Bank does not distribute all its profits each

year; it puts by so much in reserve and if it has a bad year—I do not recollect that bank ever having had a bad year—or its profits are below the average, the bank transfers from its reserve, sufficient to permit of the payment of the usual dividend. That is what should be done with the State Sawmills, the State steamers and the other trading concerns. I suggest that the Treasurer should do that even now. It will mean of course increasing the deficit; it will mean that all these transfers will increase the deficit to that extent.

Mr. Sampson: How would you get on about the Wyndham Meat Works?

Mr. HUGHES: I would let that concern take its course. What we have lost at Wyndham has been earned by the sawmills, but unfortunately, while we have always got the credit of the losses at Wyndham, we have never heard anything favourable about the sawmill profits. Does the hon. member suggest that the sawmills which are paying the handsome dividend of 10 per cent. per annum should be got rid off?

Mr. Sampson: Certainly.

Mr. HUGHES: For whose benefit?

Mr. Sampson: The Government should attend to affairs of State and not act as traders.

Mr. HUGHES: For whose benefit, I repeat? For the benefit of the people of the State, of course; for the benefit of the workers who have not their own homes and who have to submit to the demands of rapacious landlords! Why should we dispose of a profitable trading concern? Does the hon. member suggest that we should increase taxation in order to make up for the loss that would be sustained by the disposal of a profitable trading concern?

Mr. Sampson: The trading concerns have never helped the working men.

Mr. HUGHES: They employ a great number of men. But for the State Sawmills the combine would have fixed whatever prices they liked. With a vigorous policy the sawmills should run the combine out of business. I hope that when the existing concessions granted to the combine expire, they will be refused any further extensions and that the timber industry will be nationalised. One has only to look at the enormous profits made by the companies trading in timber to get an idea of the extent of the business. All these profits are taken out of the pockets of the people, not only in this State but in other parts of the world, and although the combine made huge profits, they were never prepared to give the men decent wages, until the men fought them for every shilling they were able to get. Never did those people say, "Times are good, we are doing well, we are making fortunes; we will give the men a decent wage." If they had

been able to get their own way they would have reduced the wages of the men.

Mr. Taylor: I think in that respect they are all alike.

Mr. HUGHES: All combines are. I have no fault to find with them; they are honest about it; they want as much as they can get and no one else is to get anything. They expect men to work for them for the absolute minimum wage. It is not within their ethics to share their prosperity; they have no citizen ideas; they have no policy of live and let live; they want to live and crush everyone else out. Had we in this State no private sawmills the revenue and profits would have been such that they would have assisted materially to reduce our enormous deficit. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) suggested that we should dispose of the most profitable trading concern we have. I wonder what he would say if his accountant approached him and said, "This is the most profitable part of your business; you should get rid of it."

Mr. Sampson: But that is private enterprise.

Mr. HUGHES: Evidently the hon. member thinks there is some difference in the business methods of private and State enterprises. I think if such a suggestion came from the hon. member's accountant he would get rid of the gentleman, or perhaps make him general manager for his audacity. We have had hurled at us the fact that Wyndham has lost money, and that the steamers on the North-West coast are also losing propositions. I do not mind admitting that they are. We stand for State trading and we have no desire to place the position incorrectly before the people of the State. No one wishes to have a wrong statement presented of profits and losses, but we do say that if we are to get the credit of the losses we must also be given credit for those concerns that are showing us a profit. In Queensland there is something in the nature of a State Trading Concerns Trust Account, and at the end of each year a statement is prepared by the Commissioner for State Trading showing the individual profits and losses.

Mr. Taylor: How are those concerns progressing?

Mr. HUGHES: The latest figures I saw showed the profits that were being made. If I had thought for a moment that the hon. member intended to raise that point, I would have brought along the Commissioner's report and read it for his edification. I am prepared to say that some of the State trading concerns in Queensland are losing, but from the Commissioner's report it is gathered that all have been of enormous benefit to the State, and taken collectively, have made handsome profits. The true position is placed before Parliament in Western Australia and I do not mind standing up to the charge that the Wyndham Meat Works are a losing proposition, provided, as I said before, that we are given some credit for

the profit made by the sawmills. I hope the Treasurer will deal with that aspect of it.

Mr. Millington: The Wyndham works were built at the urgent request of the primary producers.

Mr. HUGHES: That is so. They were built for the purpose of assisting the primary producers in the Northern part of the State, the small men principally. What were our friends, now in opposition, doing when they were on this side of the House? They were in possession of the Treasury bench for seven years and never made an attempt to close down the works or sell them. Why did they not stop the steamers from trading on the coast?

Mr. Taylor: Did you read the Commission's report on the meat works? It set out that the works cost as much to run as to keep idle.

Mr. HUGHES: The previous Government could have put the works up to auction if they had so desired.

Mr. Taylor: Parliament would not permit them to do so.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member interjecting is an old stager who has been silent for seven years. Now he is bursting with vitality and hopes to be able to distinguish himself on the floor of the House. He knows as well as I do that there were 18 Labour members in a House of 50. Does he wish me to believe that those 18 were able to prevent the Government from selling any of the trading concerns?

Mr. Taylor: I never said so.

Mr. HUGHES: But the hon. member inferred it.

Mr. Taylor: The Government supporters would not stand it.

Mr. Thomson: The Government were pledged to the abolition of the trading concerns, but never did anything.

Mr. HUGHES: The previous Government were never very keen on selling them. The trading concerns were a nest egg for the Government, and when the Leader of the Country Party (Mr. Thomson) tried to introduce a Bill, the object of which was to bring about the disposal of the trading concerns—

Mr. Thomson: No, only to give the Government power to do so.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member's object was to give them the necessary power, but the Government would never have dispensed of them. I am pleased to learn that the hon. member is now a convert to State trading.

Mr. Thomson: I am sorry I am not allowed to interject.

Mr. HUGHES: If the hon. member's desire was merely to give the Government power to sell the trading concerns, and not to actually sell them—

Mr. Thomson: You know well what my object was.

Mr. HUGHES: I think the hon. member's object was to give the Government power to sell, so that they would sell them.

Mr. Richardson: To put the responsibility on them.

Mr. Thomson: To enable them to fulfil their pledges.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member's desire was to make the Government live up to their promises.

Mr. Taylor: The implement works were wanted in one quarter, the ships were wanted in another, the sawmills in another and so on.

Mr. HUGHES: That was the position. One section wanted one thing, another had a reason for something else, and a third wanted another concern retained. The result was that the Government found themselves in the position of having a number of very doubtful supporters.

Mr. Taylor: And that position has not altered.

Mr. HUGHES: Unfortunately the position is getting worse.

The Premier: The member for Mt. Margaret was an on-looker.

Mr. Taylor: Exactly.

Mr. HUGHES: On one occasion my opponent at East Perth said, "What hypocrites these Nationalists are," and he added that they were "fathered by conspiracy and born in the womb of mutiny." That was rather harsh for a Nationalist to say about the National Party.

Mr. Thomson: He must have been a good loyal supporter when he made that statement.

Mr. HUGHES: He was not a Nationalist when he said that, but that was his opinion of the party.

Mr. Taylor: What was he when he made that statement? It is evidently a Beaufort-street remark.

Mr. Sampson: It has an Esplanade flavour.

Mr. HUGHES: I rather think he was dealing unjustly with the party opposite. It was a harsh remark to make concerning people who were to become his political associates.

The Premier: But they took him to their bosoms.

Mr. HUGHES: Last year we saw a great deal of kite-flying on the part of the party that was pledged to sell State trading concerns if they could get no more than 1s. for each of them. One of the Government supporters endeavoured to make the Government carry out their pledges. The support from the Treasury Bench was very lukewarm on the subject. No speech of any vigour came from that quarter in support of the measure introduced by the member for Kutanning. He ploughed a lone furrow on that occasion.

Mr. Thomson: On many occasions.

Mr. Taylor: He had not the strong support he has in this Parliament.

Mr. HUGHES: The member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) has now given away the whole secret. He admits that the party were not pulling well together, and

were at sixes and sevens. What is the use of any party saying it is opposed to State trading when it neglected the opportunities it had for disposing of Government concerns? I would have no objection if the Nationalists had been returned to power pledged to dispose of the trading concerns. I would have said that was what they stood for, and that they were only carrying out their pledges to the electors.

Mr. Thomson: That is what they ought to have done.

Mr. HUGHES: They lacked the wisdom to see the virtues of State trading, and had not the courage to go through with their folly.

Mr. Taylor: They had not the support.

Mr. HUGHES: As a citizen I object to the method that is adopted to show that State trading concerns are losing money. I hope there will be no abatement in the vital policy of State trading, and that the Government will extend the principle wherever it is likely to be of use to the people.

The Minister for Lands: I have a butter factory I am trying to sell.

Mr. HUGHES: Here is a chance for private enterprise, which claims that the State should not interfere with private butter factories. I would suggest that the Minister for Lands might appoint the Leader of the Country Party (Mr. Thomson) as his honorary agent to dispose of that particular trading concern. Let private enterprise control it.

Mr. Taylor: A butter factory would be a good thing to start on. It is a bit slippery.

Mr. HUGHES: We need to extend some of our trading concerns, such as the brickworks. I am glad that the Honorary Minister in charge has told the people who control the trade that there will be no abatement of this policy. We are already short of requirements in bricks. Now that we have a sane and responsible Government I believe our financial position will improve. The Government consists of people who realise their responsibilities to posterity. With regard to land settlement, there are many Western Australian boys who want to go on the land but cannot get any land to take up.

The Minister for Lands: We have none suitable within a reasonable distance of a railway.

Mr. HUGHES: The main policy of the late Government was one of land settlement.

Mr. Panton: It was the only policy.

Mr. HUGHES: It was supposed to be their main policy, and it was a good one if they had carried it out. If we could place on the land our own boys and men, who are thoroughly acclimatised to the country and in most cases have done a considerable amount of hard work, they would be likely to prove far more successful as settlers than the importations from overseas. Our own people are used to

the outdoor life and to the class of work they have to do on the land, whereas the migrant, such as the settler who was once an actor with a Japanese troupe on the London stage, has everything to learn.

Mr. Taylor: Did you get a photograph of him?

Mr. HUGHES: The Australian has a better chance than the man who has come from a London music hall.

Mr. Thomson: Do you say we have a Japanese settler?

Mr. HUGHES: No, but he came from a Japanese troupe. I met him on the Peel Estate. He asked me to look over his block, which appeared to be a mass of stumps. He informed me that the wood cutters had gone over it, and had chopped down all the trees leaving nothing but the stumps. He estimated that he would have to grub at least 7,000 stumps. He told me that up to a year or so before he had been an actor with a Japanese troupe on a London music hall stage.

Mr. Taylor: He is on the wrong stump now.

Mr. HUGHES: This settler was confronted with a formidable task for one whose life had been spent in the environment of a music hall. When he gets his farm he will be carrying a capital load of not less than £1,000, and his chances of success are very small. There will have to be a considerable amount of writing down done with nearly all these settlers. We are placing all these burdens on the newcomer, but have neglected to provide adequate facilities for our own people. This is surprising in the face of the definite land settlement policy of the late Government. With a practical farmer who has spent nearly all his life on the land I have been to the Lands Department, and was unable to get a block for him.

The Minister for Lands: We have no land near the railways.

Mr. HUGHES: That is not very creditable to the late Government.

The Minister for Lands: We have 28,000,000 acres of land alienated, and only 6,000,000 or 8,000,000 under cultivation.

Mr. HUGHES: It is an appalling state of affairs. Had this happened during the Labour regime we would have heard all about it from members opposite. We are always talking about getting people out of the city, but we cannot get any land for them to go to. I hope members opposite will assist the Government in forcing into cultivation the land alongside existing railways. The question of homes for the people is of vital importance. The Workers' Homes Act was brought down by the Labour Government. Those who were fortunate enough to get workers' homes were able to go through all the period of rising rents, paying very often less than half the average rent charged to other people, and at the same time gradually making their homes their own. If the Labour Party had con-

ferred no other benefit upon the people, this particular piece of legislation would stand for ever as a monument to it.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. HUGHES: Prior to the tea adjournment I was dealing with the workers' homes. If the Labour Government had established the workers' homes system alone, that would have justified their existence and stood out as a piece of legislation for the benefit of the people. As with other work done by the Labour Party, our opponents decried our action regarding workers' homes. The Workers' Homes Board is nothing more than a trading concern, but we find that at the end of the last financial year, after paying the statutory sinking fund, it had an accumulated profit of £6,806. In 1914 the then Premier decided that there should be no operations carried out under Part 3 of the Act. That portion of the Act referred to leasehold properties. It enabled a man without any money to procure a home for himself, always providing that he was able to raise the modest sum of £5. It was that portion of the Act that really made the workers' homes scheme. Under that section the poorest worker in the community was able to secure a home, irrespective of whether he had a block of land or not. Part 4 of the Act provided for the workers who were slightly better off, for the men who owned their own blocks and were able to secure assistance to enable them to erect their own homes. The Auditor General discloses an extraordinary position regarding the accumulated profits of the board. Those profits were really a trust fund and the money invested in the Workers' Homes Board was lent to applicants, and as it was repaid it was lent out again to fresh applicants. In the Auditor General's report we find this extraordinary statement:—

Profits earned by the Workers' Homes Board to the 30th June, 1923, amounting to £6,806 12s. 9d. have been paid to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. There is no direction in the Workers' Homes Act to pay profits to State revenue.

That is an extraordinary thing for a Treasurer to do. The Auditor General puts it mildly when he says there was no direction in the Act to transfer profit to Consolidated Revenue. Not only is there no direction for such a course to be followed, but there is no authority for it at all. In transferring those profits to Consolidated Revenue, the ex-Colonial Treasurer did an illegal act. While the transfer performed a useful function in that it reduced the deficit by another £6,000, the fact remains that that money rightly belonged to the Workers' Homes Board and should have been reinvested in homes for the people. The proper action for the present Treasurer to take is to put through a transfer debiting the deficit and re-crediting the Workers' Homes Board with £6,806. We get back to the

same position as with the sawmills. Next year, if the Workers' Homes Board make a loss and the Treasurer makes an advance to the board, they will be charged with interest. The board, however, have not received a penny piece in respect of the profits transferred to Consolidated Revenue. I trust the Government will proceed with the workers' homes policy and re-institute Part 3 so that we may push forward vigorously with the scheme. I realise that any legislation introduced to control rents will not solve the problem of high rents. It will tend to curb rents, however, but the real solution is the nationalisation of housing under which the Government will become the landlord for the whole State. That is the only way to abolish high rents. As it is, with the material we have now and the men available, we could not undertake the shortage of houses for many years to come. Side by side with the workers' homes scheme, we must have a measure to control rents, including the rental of existing premises. If we do that, the time will come when, if the people of Western Australia maintain their political balance and keep Labour in power, there will be no need for legislation of such a description, owing to the number of houses supplied through the Workers' Homes Board.

Mr. Taylor: There is no money to build them.

Mr. HUGHES: Half a million pounds are invested in the Workers' Homes Board's funds and that money, as it is repaid, is loaned afresh for new homes. Of course in his capacity as ex-Speaker, I can understand that the hon. member did not delve into the mistakes of the leader of the party to which he belongs.

Mr. Taylor: I know there is no money available for workers' homes because I have been refused two or three times.

Mr. HUGHES: I am glad to find that the applications made by the hon. member were refused, because there are 14 acres in East Perth containing what I regard as the finest building sites in the city, and I would like to see a start made there. The hon. member may know that £500,000 is held in trust by the board for the purpose of workers' homes, but he probably does not know that although the board have had to pay 4½ or 5 per cent. for the money during the regime of the Nationalist Government, the money instead of being invested at anything from 5 per cent. to 6 per cent., was invested in Treasury bills at 4 per cent. That means to say that the Workers' Homes Board had to pay the Government 4½ per cent., but the Government repaid them only 4 per cent. If the hon. member had known of that he would probably have accepted the suggestion by the member for Cue (Mr. Chesson) and hopped down from his Chair to the floor of the House to enter his protest. The Workers' Homes Board has been treated very unfairly. In spite of that fact, however, the board have been able to show a profit and that profit has been illegally

transferred to revenue. Had the board received proper treatment at the hands of the past Government I have no doubt that a much larger credit balance would have been shown. The Labour Government have so far been immune from criticism. I do not approve of one action of the Government to date. I suggest the Government did something that was wrong, morally and ethically, when in a recent case they commuted a death sentence to one of imprisonment for the term of the prisoner's natural life. We know that sentences imposed upon transgressors convicted of all sorts of crimes have been commuted and that the death penalty has been commuted to life imprisonment. In many cases that life sentence has run its course and the individual has been released. I take the view that if a man is imprisoned for the term of his natural life, the prison then becomes punitive and not reformatory. If a man is convicted and is told that his sentence will extend for the term of his natural life, what inducement is there for him to reform? What hope is there for a man in prison with a sentence covering the term of his natural life hanging over him all the time? Such a course would destroy any hope of reform. No matter how much a man may have erred and transgressed the laws of society, what hope is there under such circumstances of his reforming and becoming a decent citizen? If the Government believed that the man was mentally deficient and not fit to be at large the right place for such an individual is not the prison. There is a proper place in which he should be detained.

Hon. A. H. Panton: But he would never get out of that institution.

Mr. HUGHES: Even after serving an ordinary life sentence, and in the event of the individual being considered of unsound mind, the Government need not release him, but in such circumstances could transfer him to the Hospital for the Insane. I deplore the fact that no matter how much a man may have transgressed the law of society—

Mr. Taylor: Do you call a cold-blooded murder just transgressing the laws of society?

Mr. HUGHES: If there is any hope for a man he should be given a chance to reform. It would not be the first time that men have committed murders, have served their sentences and have lived as decent citizens subsequently.

The Premier: There is nothing to prevent him being released by the Executive Council later on if he has reformed. If this action had not been taken he would have had to be released whether he had reformed or not.

Mr. Taylor: The Government were very lenient.

Mr. HUGHES: If a man were of unsound mind the Government have the proper course to adopt in placing him elsewhere.

Mr. Taylor: In such cases the persons have served the sentence passed upon them

by the court. In the instance you referred to the prisoner has not.

Mr. HUGHES: There have been any number of cold-blooded murders in Western Australia, and the life sentences have not been extended to cover the full term of the individual's natural life. I regret to see Western Australia going back to the convict days and sentencing individuals to imprisonment for the term of their natural lives. Such a course holds out no hope for such men, and no matter how they may have transgressed the laws, the fact remains that 20 years in prison may sober them down and cause them to reform. If the man is there for the term of his natural life, there is no inducement for him to reform.

The Premier: At any time hence the Government of the day can say whether or not he is to be released.

Mr. HUGHES: I cannot understand why we should have taken that retrograde step.

The Premier: It was not a retrograde step at all.

Mr. Davy: It was a very proper action.

Mr. Taylor: And very lenient.

Mr. HUGHES: I do not think so. You are making the prison a purely punitive measure.

Mr. Taylor: What do you want, to wrap the prisoners in lavender?

Mr. HUGHES: No, nor do I want any retrograde steps. If in 20 years' time the present Government are in power probably they will release the man.

Mr. Taylor: You will have changed your views by that time.

Mr. HUGHES: If the hon. member is any criterion, the views of old age are different from those of our youth.

Mr. Taylor: There is a chance for you yet.

Mr. HUGHES: The hon. member was not always of the opinions he holds now; his views have changed, and I only wish we could think they had changed for the better. I regret it was necessary to go back to our convict days and resuscitate a sentence that took a lot of time and fighting to get rid of. Not long ago a Perth newspaper was very prominent in playing the part of police spy and bringing to book a fortune teller, with the result that he was fined and chased out of the State. Now I notice that same newspaper is running a fortune telling stunt for itself. Having chased one fortune teller out of the State, that paper is prepared to tell fortunes for all and sundry. If it be an offence to tell fortunes, I should like to know whether the Commissioner of Police intends to take action against that paper. When a man is punished and driven out of the State for telling fortunes, it is bad policy for the paper that drove him out to set up in the same business the moment he is gone. I hope the police will give attention to this.

Mr. George: It is a pity we did not consult that paper before the last elections.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, you might have got some good advice. Now I wish to say a few words about the Kendenup Royal Commission and the findings of the Commissioner, Mr. Ross McDonald. There is no need for me to go into details of that sordid adventure that left such a trail of misery amongst so many unfortunate people. I compliment Mr. McDonald on the energy and interest he put into his task. Whilst not agreeing with the whole of his findings, I realise that he did his work conscientiously and came to conclusions that he considered right. He had a particularly odious task to perform, and he displayed great patience under very trying circumstances. Only his respect for the legal profession, of which he is a member, kept him from refusing to hear certain counsel that appeared before the Commission. The moment the Commission was appointed, Mr. DeGaris briefed a lawyer to attend the Commission and do whatever he could to obstruct the Commission, to prevent the Commission getting at the true facts of the case. I was pleased to see that reputable legal firms did not allow themselves to be engaged for that work. To show the limits to which Mr. De Garis's counsel went in order to obstruct the Commission, I may say that as soon as the Commission assembled, under the cloak of the privileges extended to the legal profession, he committed an extraordinary breach and made a personal attack on me. I have no objection to that, because I feel that to be attacked by that man is to gain the respect of a large section of the people. When we consider the lengths to which that man was prepared to go, it is no wonder that a lot of people have not much faith in the legal profession. However, he is not a fair sample of the profession.

Mr. George: Who is the joker?

Mr. HUGHES: I will tell you directly

Mr. Taylor: He is not a joker at all, he is a very serious man.

The Premier: When lawyers fall out, other people come into their own.

Mr. Davy: That man prosecuted you for assault, did he not?

Mr. HUGHES: To show the tactics he was prepared to adopt when briefed to obstruct the Commission, he came up here and pleaded that he had not a copy of Mr. Grogan's report, and so was being prejudiced in his defence. I gave him my own copy of that report in order that whatever Mr. De Garis had to say should be properly presented to the Commission. When I met that lawyer in a tram car he asked me if I would approach the Government to get him his expenses. I told him I would do nothing of the sort. When, later, he made that attack on me before the Commissioner, I met him in the street and told him he was a contemptible little skunk.

Mr. Maley: He is a little chap, is he?

Mr. HUGHES: I did it deliberately, and I am still of the same opinion. I have not met anyone in the State who differs from me in this.

Mr. Taylor: You told him to pull himself down to your weight, didn't you?

Mr. HUGHES: To show the length to which that man was prepared to go, I may say he went into the police court and committed perjury, deliberately swore that he had never approached me to ask for his expenses. When I was in the tram car with him there was also present a member of this House, now a Minister of the Crown, who overheard the conversation. However, that had escaped my memory, and the Minister, as he now is, who could have testified to that lawyer's perjury, was away in his electorate, and so I was not reminded of it until he came back. That lawyer's own witnesses are prepared to say that he went into the box and swore what was false in order to gain a conviction. When the Commissioner had to deal with a lawyer like that, it is no wonder that many matters were overlooked. I have no personal feeling in this matter.

Mr. Richardson: We have just come to the same conclusion.

Mr. HUGHES: By committing perjury that lawyer was able to get a conviction recorded against me. But it did not stop us from getting out a lot of information through the Commission. It was almost impossible for a witness to give his testimony to the Commission. Before I had attended a session, an hon. member sitting on the other side of the House told me that every time a witness tried to say anything this little lawyer would put words into his mouth if he were a favourable witness, or browbeat him if he were unfavourable.

Mr. George: What was the Commissioner doing?

Mr. HUGHES: Mr. McDonald had a very hard task. He did his best to keep that lawyer in order, and ended up with a threat of expulsion. I have a letter in which the writer complains to me of the same thing, and says that before a witness could answer a question, if he were a favourable witness the answer was put into his mouth, while if unfavourable he was brow-beaten.

Mr. George: A good job I was not a witness.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, it is a good job for that lawyer that you were not. I hope the next Royal Commissioner that is asked to allow counsel to attend before him will want to be satisfied that the counsel is there to assist, not to obstruct, the inquiry.

Mr. Taylor: The counsel you speak of is highly respected in the profession.

Mr. HUGHES: Who told you that?

Mr. Taylor: It is generally known.

Mr. Davy: You are not game to repeat your slanders of that gentleman in any place where you are not privileged.

Mr. HUGHES: He was not game to make his statements except under privilege.

Mr. Davy: You have slandered him disgracefully. You have said he was guilty of perjury. I say you are not game to repeat those statements outside the House. I challenge you to do it.

Mr. HUGHES: He was not game to go to the court and tell the truth. He went to the court and committed perjury.

Mr. Davy: I challenge you to repeat that in any place where you have not the privileges that you have here.

Mr. HUGHES: Under privilege he slandered me and went into the court and swore he had never approached me to get his expenses, which was untrue.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Why was he not prosecuted?

Mr. HUGHES: It was not my business to prosecute him. I did not want anything more to do with him.

Mr. Davy: But you get behind a fence and slander him.

Mr. HUGHES: Just as he did.

Mr. George: Why follow a bad example?

Mr. HUGHES: He not only slandered me, but he interfered with and brow-beat witnesses before the Commission.

Mr. Davy: He was not protected from prosecution for perjury.

Mr. HUGHES: That is a pity.

Mr. Davy: Say that outside the House.

Mr. HUGHES: I am saying it here.

Mr. Davy: Where you are safe in saying it.

Mr. HUGHES: Just as he was safe in slandering me before the Commission and safe in committing perjury before the court. I am sorry to see the member for West Perth standing for that sort of thing.

Mr. Davy: I would stand up for any man slandered in this House when he has no remedy.

Mr. HUGHES: I am sorry the hon. member stands up for a man like that.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: He was not privileged to commit perjury.

Mr. HUGHES: He was privileged before the Commission to slander me.

Mr. Taylor: Nonsense!

Mr. HUGHES: And he was privileged in the court to say what he liked. He went into the court and committed perjury to have a conviction recorded against me.

Mr. Richardson: Was he on oath?

Mr. HUGHES: Yes.

Mr. Richardson: Then you have your remedy.

Mr. Taylor: Try your case in the court, not here.

Mr. HUGHES: If a man is to be allowed to abuse the privileges of his profession, I shall reply where I have the privilege to reply to him.

Mr. Davy: You are going to abuse your privilege too.

Mr. HUGHES: I do not think the hon. member approves of what that gentleman did in the Police Court.

Mr. Davy: I am not approving of it; I am disapproving of what you are doing.

Mr. HUGHES: I am not concerned about that. I went before the Commission and gave my testimony and took no advantage. I went so far as to provide the other side with a report in order that their case might be properly presented. Yet wherever privilege could be allowed, I was made the subject of these slanderous attacks. The Commissioner was asked to find whether there had been any (a) misrepresentation or fraudulent misrepresentation to the settlers or debenture holders, (b) criminal act on the part of any person or persons concerned. The Commissioner found—

(1) Whether the scheme of the settlement was sound or not, there was no fraud in the general conception of the Kendenup companies. (2) In the course of the operations of the companies there have been cases of misrepresentation regarding Kendenup as to (a) yields of potatoes and onions; (b) roads; (c) arrangements as to the erection of a sugar beet factory; (d) railway facilities; (e) railway expenditure. Of these (a) and (b) were made by the company recklessly in such circumstances as to be legally fraudulent, but this finding must be read in conjunction with the fact that the settlers made no serious complaint as to misrepresentations until after the collapse of the companies and their organisation and market guarantee.

What does the Commissioner mean by legally fraudulent? Are there two classes of fraud? Can a man commit a fraud that is within the law? I consider that fraud is fraud. It seems somewhat vague to say that the company did something that was legally fraudulent. The Commissioner might have been a little more definite as to what he really meant. If misrepresentations were made and were fraudulent, he should have found that there had been fraudulent misrepresentations. It is rather strange that the moment the Commissioner's report was issued, De Garis telegraphed to him thanking him for having found him not guilty. A great deal of publicity was given to the fact and a statement by De Garis was published under the heading "De Garis an Honest Man." It is extraordinary that a man can regard as a eulogy a finding that he has been guilty of fraudulent misrepresentation. That is my reply to the people who say he was found not guilty. It was proved at the inquiry that the companies were nothing less than De Garis operating under the provisions of our Companies Act. The finding states that there was misrepresentation in circumstances that were legally fraudulent, and this man found guilty of

fraudulent misrepresentation has the audacity to publish a statement in the form of a eulogy. That does not say much for his code of honour. The Commissioner's finding continues—

(3) The Development Company has failed to perform certain promises made by it or on its behalf, in respect of (a) clearing for settlers; (b) purchase of settlers' timber; (c) employment of settlers. These matters may amount to breaches of contract but are not misrepresentations. (4) There was no misrepresentations as to (a) water supply at Kendenup; (b) the settlers' pool of produce formed on liquidation. (5) The sale of Kendenup by Mr. Edmunds to Mr. De Garis was not fraudulent. Mr. De Garis did not participate in the profit made by Mr. Edmunds. Kendenup may have cost Mr. De Garis £50,000 as he represented to the Development Co., but he has failed to advance satisfactory evidence to that effect. If the cost to him should be established by an audit to have been less than £50,000, he is or would have been liable to refund the difference to the Development Company.

That does not sound very much like a verdict of not guilty. It amounts to this, that the statement may have been true but no evidence to that effect was produced.

Mr. Thomson: Do you know that De Garis has paid thousands of pounds in this State since, and is paying it now?

Mr. HUGHES: I shall deal with that presently. The Commissioner was unable to get the books audited. They were in such a hopeless state of confusion that all his efforts to get them audited failed. Not yet has there been any audit to show whether the money was properly expended. The Commissioner could not say whether the money had been correctly expended. On the price paid for the estate to Edmunds the Commissioner says De Garis may have paid the £50,000, and that if he did not, he ought to refund something to the company. Does that sound anything like a clearance that everything was satisfactorily explained? The best that can be got out of that is a verdict of "not proven." I say advisedly that Mr. McDonald was unable to ascertain whether the money received by these people had been correctly accounted for. He had three different auditors on the work, and they all told him it was impossible to make an audit of the books. Yet, after a finding like that De Garis has the audacity to publish a statement under the heading of "An Honest Man." There is one important part in which I disagree with Mr. McDonald. When I was moving for the appointment of the Royal Commission, I claimed that Edmunds was a man of straw and a dummy in the hands of De Garis. The evidence proved that statement up to the hilt.

Mr. Thomson: I do not know that it did.

Mr. HUGHES: Probably the hon. member has not seen the original agreement. This is why I say Mr. McDonald should not have accepted the Commission; he was a member of the firm who drew up the first agreement between De Garis and Edmunds. There were two agreements signed by Edmunds. On one the handwriting was very firm and on the other the handwriting indicated that the man was either on a sick bed or was suffering some serious disability. One witness admitted that the agreement was signed when Edmunds was recovering from a serious attack of D.T.'s. I have no desire to bring this matter forward, but it is necessary to do so in order to show that my contention was correct.

Mr. Sampson: Is this a vendetta? Shall we never hear the end of it?

Mr. Thomson: What is to be gained by continuing it?

Mr. Sampson: They have no opportunity to reply.

Mr. HUGHES: They have had their opportunity. The Royal Commission was appointed on my motion, and I am entitled to deal with this matter on the Address-in-reply.

Mr. Thomson: De Garis is paying all those debts.

Mr. HUGHES: If the hon. member will only have patience, I will show how he is paying them. Those two agreements were signed in the office of the firm of which Mr. McDonald was a member, and they prove conclusively that my statement was correct. Mr. McDonald intended to leave that reference out of the evidence. I do not say he did it with any ulterior motive. I believe he did it with a desire to exclude something that might be injurious to Edmunds, and that it was done out of consideration for the feelings of Edmunds. It is necessary for me to mention it, however, to show the accuracy of my original statement that Edmunds was entirely in the hands of De Garis. One man was simply a tool for the other. As to whether there was any criminal act on the part of any person, the Commissioner says the evidence was not such as to warrant a finding under this heading. There, again, there is simply the statement that the evidence does not warrant a conclusion. I venture to disagree with Mr. McDonald on that finding. Mr. McDonald has found that there was fraudulent misrepresentation on the part of the company. Now, Section 420 of our Criminal Code is especially designed to deal with people who promote companies and put forward false representations. The Section says:

Any person who, being a promoter, director, officer, or auditor of a corporation or company, either existing or intended to be formed, makes, circulates, or publishes or concurs in making, circulating, or publishing any written statement or account which, in any material particular, is to his knowledge false, with intent thereby to effect any of the purposes following, that

is to say:—(a) To deceive or defraud any member, shareholder, or creditor of the corporation or company, whether a particular person or not; (b) To induce any person, whether a particular person or not, to become a member of, or to entrust or advance any property to the corporation or company, or to enter into any security for the benefit thereof; is guilty of a crime, and is liable to imprisonment with hard labour for seven years. The offender cannot be arrested without warrant.

I submit that that section applies to the finding of Mr. McDonald that there was fraudulent misrepresentation. In the interests of this State, and for the purpose of showing that persons cannot come here and play ducks and drakes with our people's money, proceedings ought to be taken against the persons concerned. They ought to be made a warning example to others similarly inclined. It should be made known that our Criminal Code will be put into operation against them. Then Mr. McDonald states in the summary appended to his report:—

The Development Company was formed on the 24th November, 1920, with an authorised capital of £200,000. Six contributing shares were taken up. Its share capital paid in cash at no time exceeded £6. It procured its funds by flotation of debentures charged on its assets. It purchased, subdivided, and partly sold, the Kendenup estate. It went into voluntary liquidation on the 9th March, 1923. The Packing Company was formed on the 24th March, 1921, for the purpose of contracting to purchase the settlers' produce at guaranteed prices for periods from 10 to 15 years and marketing such produce. The authorised capital was £50,000; 1,507 shares were taken up, and its total paid capital was £1,507. It went into voluntary liquidation on the 2nd April, 1923.

The original shareholders in the Packing Company admitted in evidence that they had not paid their £1 and had not subscribed for a share in the company, and that they had no intention of participating in the company. They simply signed the memorandum in order to allow the company to be registered.

Mr. Davy: Every company is registered in the same way.

Mr. HUGHES: Oh, there are many genuine companies in this State. The hon. member interjecting knows that one is not allowed to sign one's name to a memorandum and subscribe for a dummy share in a company.

Mr. Davy: I have signed scores of memoranda of association.

Mr. HUGHES: For the future protection of the hon. member I shall now read read him a couple of sections of the Companies Act.

Mr. Davy: Every lawyer, and every lawyer's clerk, has done the same thing.

Mr. Corboy: That is what one would expect.

Mr. HUGHES: I would commend to the notice of the member for West Perth, who is a legal luminary, Section 9 of the Companies Act—

Any five or more persons associated for any lawful purpose may, by subscribing their names to a memorandum of association and otherwise complying with the requisitions of this Act in respect of registration, form an incorporated company with or without limited liability, or, as to a company formed for mining purposes, with no liability.

Any five person lawfully associated together for a lawful purpose is what the Act contemplates. Does the member for West Perth contend that a gentleman who is going to float a company with a capital of £1,500, which company is to guarantee to purchase the produce of the Kendenup settlers for a period of ten or 15 years, is lawfully associated for that purpose with four dummy shareholders?

Mr. Davy: It is quite lawful.

Mr. HUGHES: According to the hon. member, any private person can float himself into a company by getting any Tom, Dick, or Harry to sign a memorandum.

Mr. Davy: That is so.

Mr. HUGHES: Surely the hon. member does not suggest that.

Mr. Davy: I say it is so. It is done every day in the week except Sunday.

Mr. HUGHES: Then what is the object of the provision that any five persons may be associated for a lawful purpose? These people of the Packing Company were not associated at all. One man was trading as a private individual, and in order to take advantage of the Companies Act he got several people to sign a memorandum of association. But those people had no intention of taking advantage of the Companies Act. I agree with the member for West Perth that the liability was £1, but I am astonished to hear him say that the practice is to sign a company's memorandum of association without any intention of participating in the company.

Mr. Davy: It has always been the practice.

Mr. HUGHES: In support of Section 9, Section 13 provides—

As to all companies having capital divided into shares, each subscriber to the memorandum shall take and subscribe for one share at least, and shall write opposite to his name the number of shares he takes.

If a man takes a share, he becomes a shareholder and accepts all the responsibilities and takes all the privileges of a shareholder. I know the law has never been enforced in that respect.

Mr. Davy: The man's total liability in that case would be £1.

Mr. HUGHES: The Companies Act provides by Section 183 penalties for persons who violate Sections 9 or 13—

If any statement, abstract, or document or the particulars in any memorandum of association required by this Act are false to the knowledge of any person who signs the same, such person shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and, being convicted thereof, shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned, with or without hard labour, for any term not exceeding three years, or to a penalty not exceeding £100.

When those people signed that memorandum, they committed a breach of the Act, and they should be prosecuted under it in order to show them that they cannot do just as they like. The member for West Perth seems to have no regard for the law. He says, "It's all right, we all do it, and the fact of our doing it makes it right. We lawyers are superior to Parliament. It is what we do that matters, not what Parliament prescribes." When the hon. member has been here a few years, his class consciousness may have developed sufficiently to induce him to stand up for Parliament.

Mr. Taylor: You will have the Minister for Justice taking action to-morrow.

Mr. HUGHES: It would be in the interests of the State if he did.

Mr. Taylor: It is a good job we have a layman as Minister for Justice. A lawyer would never take action in this case.

Mr. HUGHES: Private traders have taken advantage of the Companies Act to float themselves into limited liability companies, and in that way have been enabled to escape taxation. I quoted such a case during last session. A man made his wife and his seven or eight children shareholders, with the result that no individual member of the company had an income carrying a higher tax rate than 1s. 3d.

Mr. Davy: The proposition you put is not an abuse of the law, but a strict compliance with the law.

Mr. HUGHES: Probably what a layman considers a proper use of the law is different from what a lawyer would consider a proper use. But I have known legal men who called what I have described, not a compliance with the law, but an evasion of the law, an abuse of a privilege. If that sort of thing is to be permitted, we may as well do away with the Companies Act altogether. For the honour of the State, and for the benefit of the Western Australian people, the Government ought to take action in this Kendenup affair. I hope the Minister for Justice will take action under those sections of the Criminal Code against the people concerned. Mr. McDonald has a finding which declares that the sale from Mr. Edmunds to Mr. De Garis, and also the sale from Mr. De Garis to the company, were bona fide sales. He found that Mr. De Garis bought the Kendenup land from Mr. Edmunds for his

own use, and not for the company. On the other hand, five transfers of land from the Hassells distinctly declare that the lands were purchased by De Garis for and on behalf of the Kendenup Development Company. If he bought those lands for and on behalf of the company, he had no right to sell them to the company. After the estate had been bought for and on behalf of the company, it was sold to the company for £50,000 cash and 150,000 fully paid £1 shares. It is clear that that money was misappropriated from the company. He had no right to get that additional £12,000 over and above what he paid to Edmunds for the property. There is another serious matter that Mr. McDonald overlooked. The trustee declared—

All moneys to arise from the sale of debentures shall be expended, firstly in payment of the balance owing in respect of the purchase of the said (Kendenup) lands and hereditaments and other property (i.e. the stock, plant and machinery thereon) by the company from the executors of the late John Frederick Tasman Hassell, deceased.

These were debenture profits, and one half of the profits should have been placed in trust for the payment of the debenture holders. That was clearly stated in the report, but it was not done. It was absolutely ignored, and, if this is not a breach of trust punishable under our laws, I do not know what is. Undoubtedly it was a breach of the law, and one that the person concerned should be made to answer for in our courts. By not paying that trust money into a proper trust fund it was clearly misappropriated, and the person concerned should be made to answer for it. There were a great many matters that should have been dealt with by the Commissioner. The task was a herculean one, and Mr. McDonald, who did his duty conscientiously, of course was quite satisfied that his findings were correct. I appreciate his efforts, and also the manner in which he conducted the inquiry. Nothing could have been more impartial. He had a trying time, but I really think he overlooked the points to which I have referred. The question of responsibility of these people, and the fraudulent misrepresentation certainly come under our Criminal Code, and there were breaches committed of various sections of our Companies' Act. The fact that trust funds were not banked amounts to fraud. There seems to have been ample evidence that there was criminal intent, and I regret that Mr. MacDonald did not find in that direction. Dealing now with the interjections of the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) we are told with a great flourish of trumpets what Mr. De Garis paid off after leaving Western Australia. It is a strange thing. De Garis leaves the State stony broke,

without a shilling in the world. He has a meeting of his creditors and assigns his estate. Immediately he gets to Melbourne he opens up in a large suite of offices, boasts about employing 35 former Kendenup settlers, and all this is done by a man who, when he left this State, had nothing in the world. The audacity of the man is beyond comprehension. The statement is made now that a certain amount of money has been paid off—a sum of £42,600. How has it been paid off? Not in cash! Here is his statement:—Personal debts completely paid off (as per list), £5,834; personal debts paid on account (as per list) £4,753; Kendenup debentures fully taken up at 20s. in the £ represent £28,800. How were those debentures taken up? De Garis did not pay cash for them. What was proved in the report was that the people who had debentures which were worthless were paid off by De Garis by being given blocks of land in Victoria. De Garis said “I will give you a block of land for your debenture.” And as the debentures were worthless a great number of people took the land that was offered to them.

Mr. Thomson: There are people in this State who also got cash from De Garis.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: I know of one case where he paid £1,700 out of £2,000 owing.

Mr. HUGHES: The debentures have been surrendered for land. This is what the Commissioner had to say on that question—

According to the figures supplied by Mr. De Garis he (or Mrs. V. M. De Garis on his behalf) has since his insolvency discharged by cash or contra liabilities to an amount of £6,871 from which legally he was released by his insolvency and, in addition, had taken over from debenture holders (in order to reimburse them in full) at par for cash, or in exchange for land, debentures of a face value of £14,450.

Mr. Thomson: Some have received cash.

Mr. HUGHES: Very few.

Mr. Thomson: Oh, no!

Mr. HUGHES: Most of them. Land has been given for £28,800 worth of debentures. The people accepted the land. They had no alternative. The debentures were worth nothing, and even if each block of land was worth only £1 that £1 would be worth more than a debenture.

Mr. Sampson: That shows that he had a desire to do his best for those people.

Mr. HUGHES: I would advise the hon. member, before he makes a statement about the bona-fides of this individual, to have a little chat with his own leader, who knows a good deal about the Kendenup business.

Mr. Sampson: I am not going to condemn him when he is doing something.

Mr. HUGHES: It is a strange thing that the first payments by De Garis were not made until notice had been given in this

House for the appointment of a Royal Commission.

Mr. Sampson: There was not much time.

Mr. George: Anyhow, what does it all matter?

The Premier: He will never recompense the people down there whom he deluded.

Mr. HUGHES: The member for Kataning interjected—what does it matter?

Well, does it matter when people come here and float a company with £6 in cash?

Mr. Thomson: I did not say, “What does it matter?” I said that the man was insolvent, and to-day he is paying something that according to law he need not pay.

Mr. HUGHES: Then it was the member for Murray-Wellington who made the interjection.

Mr. George: What I meant was, that we have read it all, and we know all about it. Are you doing any good for the settlers? If so, go on.

Mr. HUGHES: I am hoping that some action will be taken. The Government should take action under the Criminal Code to put these people where they ought to be.

The Premier: De Garis wired me to take up his burden. He declared if I did I would be a statesman for ever afterwards.

Mr. HUGHES: The audacity of these people! Unfortunately the people who invested money in Kendenup were people of the poorer class, and they were the people who suffered. Here is the kind of thing that hurts. Let me quote this instance: A man and his wife came to this State with a modest £500. They invested it at Kendenup, and, after working for three years, as a result of this man's machinations, the woman and her child have had to sleep on the floor.

The Premier: Dozens of goldfields people are in a similar position.

Mr. HUGHES: Is Parliament inclined to allow an unscrupulous adventurer to do this kind of thing, to start a company with a capital of £6, and give a guarantee that the company would purchase produce for a period of 15 years? Even his own solicitor was groggy about this.

The Premier: When his own solicitor raised a point like that it must have been pretty rotten.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, his own solicitor said it was a big undertaking, and De Garis saved the solicitor's conscience by saying, “I will take up a large number of these shares.” Then the solicitor drew up the agreement to be submitted to the meeting of directors, at which De Garis was going to take up 50,000 shares in order to give the thing stability. If the whole affair was not fraudulent misrepresentation I do not know what is. Certainly there was a breach of the Criminal Code, and it should be our duty to see that the law is put into operation.

The Premier: There is something wrong, too, with the Company law if we cannot do so.

Mr. HUGHES: I do not think Parliament should stand by without insisting that people who commit frauds of this description are brought to book. The audacity of these people is beyond comprehension. There is another statement that I wish to read for the information of the House. It is in the form of a telegram that was sent to the Premier. After the trail of misery De Garis left in this State, which he must have known would follow after he started the company with a capital of £3 with which to guarantee the purchase of produce for 15 years, we find he sends this telegram to the Premier of Western Australia:—

Honourable Collier, Premier Western Australia. Seeding season approaching. I am concerned about remaining resident settlers whom I am anxious to assist. Will you extend facilities financial assistance Agricultural Bank or Industries Assistance Board on settlers' freehold titles? If so I will arrange immediately pay off balance owing to trustee by resident settlers with debentures acquired during past ten months. Strongly recommend immediate definite consideration because settlers remaining at Kendenup deserve assistance, not only from myself, but from Western Australian Government, and method suggested is extremely practical; gives them immediate encouragement, represents statesmanlike move your own part, and gives Kendenup settlers some opportunity make good.

That telegram was for publicity purposes.

The Premier: That is why it was sent, I suppose. Is it another advertising scheme?

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. He says, "Kendenup deserves assistance from the Government."

The Premier: Only a boulder such as he is would send a telegram like that.

Mr. HUGHES: I hope he will attend in person at the Premier's office to get his reply.

The Premier: I hope he does.

Mr. HUGHES: Not only do the settlers deserve attention at the hands of the Government, but the perpetrators of this business deserve even more attention. Imagine the audacity of the man! He starts out with £6 and induces people to put up altogether something like £125,000 in cash, and he got more still from the debenture holders. All this money has gone up in smoke and was not accounted for to the Commission. The books were in such a state that they could not be audited, and the Commissioner, therefore, could not get to the bottom of it. It is clear that someone had a rake-off somewhere. Are we the simpletons this man thinks we are? Are we to believe that an individual who was "stony-broke" can now set up in a suite of offices in Melbourne, and send three motor cars to meet a settler from Kendenup who preferred to walk rather than ride? This man,

then, has the confounded impertinence to telegraph to the Premier requesting him to make the Agricultural Bank available to the Kendenup settlers. He says it would be a statesmanlike act on the part of the Premier to do so. I think it would be the act of a strong man if the Premier sent an officer in blue to Melbourne to bring this person back to stand his trial in Perth. The Premier would be doing a good act if he showed these people that the State is not to be exploited by persons of his class. I do not think people in this State will be caught for some time. If persons in the Eastern States fall in, after the example that has been set in Western Australia, it will be their own fault.

The Minister for Lands: If they can give the Kendenup settlers their freehold we will treat each case upon its merits.

Mr. HUGHES: Mr. De Garis knows that. The ex-Premier told him that if the settlers could get their freehold, the Agricultural Bank would deal with them as it would with any other person. There is nothing against the Kendenup settlers, for they are not under a ban. I hope the Government will use all the powers they possess under the Criminal Code and the Companies Act to bring these people to book, and will place the Crown Law Department at the disposal of the settlers to fight an action through the Supreme Court to see if they cannot get some redress. The Commission reported that these people were guilty of fraudulent misrepresentation. This alone should entitle the settlers to relief. The Government should take action to bring the offenders to justice. I have no personal feelings in the matter. I went to Kendenup on a motion carried by a meeting of the party to which I belong, and in reply to a request to the Premier from the settlers. Having taken so much interest in it, and having submitted to a great deal, because I have been trying to get justice for these people, I thought it my duty to make some comments on the findings of the Royal Commission. I am not reflecting on Mr. McDonald, but am exercising my right to disagree with his findings. He was very much perturbed by his task, which gave him a great deal of worry, and he had a hard row to hoe. The thanks of Parliament and the State are due to Mr. Le Mesurier for the part he played in the matter. The settlers had no legal representation on the Commission and there was no person to pay him any fees; unlike the other side who were briefed with a handsome fee. Notwithstanding this, Mr. Le Mesurier attended for hours before the Commission, prosecuting the claims of the Kendenup people and endeavouring to get justice for them, for which work he received no reward. It was simply because he was asked to do so by a friend that he attended the Commission. For the good work he did he deserves the thanks of the State. When he went to Melbourne he was briefed by

the Government, because they realised that to allow the Commission to sit there without a solicitor to represent the settlers would be a farce. Mr. Le Mesurier, for his generous action in working in an honorary capacity for the settlers, deserves the gratitude of the State. But for his services, Mr. McDonald would not have obtained as much information as he did.

The Premier: I think the solicitor on the other side acted in an honorary capacity!

Mr. HUGHES: He may have done so but I very much doubt it. I had his assurance when he was briefed that his fee was all right, and that it was a substantial one. If it did not come to hand I should be surprised.

Mr. George: You would not take his word for anything?

Mr. HUGHES: I would be foolish to do so.

Mr. George: It looks like it.

Mr. HUGHES: After my experience of him I would not take his word.

Mr. George: Perhaps he did not get the fee.

Mr. HUGHES: I am not concerned about that. I know Mr. Le Mesurier received no fee for the work he did before the Commission in Perth. Although the Commission is over and has delivered its findings, we must think of the settlers at Kendenup. It would be a pity for the State, and tragic for the settlers, that they should have to walk out and leave their improvements behind. If there is any way through the law courts by which they can obtain the redress they are entitled to, that way should be taken. One way out is for the debenture holders, who have also been defrauded, to agree to waive their strict legal rights and to have a reassessment of the price of the land, so that they may share the losses of the settlers. If the debenture holders were prepared to accept a reasonable appraisalment and give the settlers their freehold titles, perhaps the Government could, through the Agricultural Bank, go to the assistance of the settlers and maintain them at Kendenup. I suggest this means of overcoming the present difficulty, if the machinery of the Supreme Court fails to give the settlers the desired redress. I have no wish to keep the Kendenup matter alive, but I have no regrets that I moved for the appointment of a Royal Commission. The evidence has justified every statement I made. In connection with our land laws, there is an important question that is fully demonstrated in the Kendenup business. Apparently a man can sell a portion of a piece of land, and it may be sold in good faith to the purchaser. The purchaser is more or less at the mercy of people who are prepared to take advantage of the law. It has come under my notice that land has been put up for sale, and that working people who cannot afford to buy it outright have paid

a deposit upon it and set about purchasing it by instalments. Very often when these people have paid their full instalments they find they cannot get a title because the whole estate has been mortgaged to someone else. That happened in the Gosnells estate and at Kendenup, and in one or two other cases.

Mr. George: It happened in Victoria during the land boom.

Mr. HUGHES: This shows a very serious defect in our land laws. We know the legal maxim, "Let the buyer take precautions." If everyone was well versed in the law perhaps there would be some excuse, but people do not understand it. It is often difficult to get lawyers to agree as to what is the law. How, then, can a layman be expected to know? It is time the matter was taken up so that the people may be given some protection in these matters. We could make it a criminal offence for any person to sell land without first notifying the purchaser of the exact conditions, or we could amend the law so as to provide that the Titles Office could take action the minute they knew the land was being sold, and notify the people buying it that there was an existing mortgage upon it. In many cases the land is sold in good faith. The vendor or his agent wishes to dispose of a property, and has an agreement with the mortgagee that on the full sum being paid the mortgagee will discharge that particular portion of the estate. In the course of time the money that is paid for the estate goes to the wrong quarter, and the person who pays in full for his block and expects to get a title finds the mortgage still exists, and he cannot get his title until that is discharged. This has led to a great deal of unhappiness to a large number of people. I hope the Minister for Lands will give consideration to that aspect of the law. No doubt an investigation by an officer of the Lands Department would reveal many other cases of the kind. If we get nothing more out of the Kendenup Commission than an amendment of the land laws to make it a criminal offence for anyone to do this sort of thing, the Commission will have proved of value as a means of protecting the people of the State from future dealings of this kind.

Mr. RICHARDSON (Subiaco) [9.0]: This is the first opportunity I have had of tendering to you, Sir, my congratulations upon your elevation to the Speakership. I do this sincerely, because I realise that your qualifications are such that you will fill the position with dignity not only to yourself but to the House as well. I congratulate the Premier and those associated with him on the Treasury bench, and also the Honorary Ministers. I always feel it is a matter for congratulation when one's colleagues are deemed to be fit and proper men to administer the affairs of such a fine

State as Western Australia. I also congratulate the Premier on the way he has allocated his portfolios. It appears to me that he has placed those who were selected by his own party in the very positions for which they are most fitted. During the course of the speech delivered by the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes), I was reminded of an interjection that I think came from the Premier, who said "Our party speaks with one voice." When the member for East Perth was speaking I thought this must be "the one voice." I must admit that many of the fine sentiments I had made up my mind to express have been somewhat dislocated by reason of the law we have had delivered to us during the last half hour or so. If I am somewhat disconnected in my remarks I am sure hon. members will give me credit for even attempting to say something after listening to such a fine speech as that of the member for East Perth. As to the Government party speaking with one voice, I hope that is not so. If it were so, I am rather afraid that if members on the Government side of the House hold the same ideas regarding the farmers as does the member for East Perth, then our farmers will not get a very fair deal.

Mr. Corboy: The farmers have no doubt about the deal they will get from us.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I firmly believe that the Labour Party are just as anxious to see every part of the State go ahead as are members on the Opposition side of the House, and therefore I have no fear under that heading. Hon. members who were here three years ago will remember that when I made my first speech I said I was not a party man and that no matter whether measures or motions came from one side or the other, I intended to use my own judgment as to how I should vote. I think I can claim to have carried out that policy during the past and I certainly intend to continue doing so during the next three years. The great problems before Parliament to-day are referred to in the Governor's Speech—migration, finance, and development. The greater part of our development policy is wrapped up in the group settlement scheme. We are committed to that and we must carry it through. It was pointed out by the Minister for Lands in his very able speech the other night—I think every elector in Western Australia will be pleased to have such an elaborate statement presented to them because it gives a reasonable idea of exactly what has been going on—that the agreement made between Sir James Mitchell and the British and Federal Governments had occasioned much discussion. I perused the agreement to-day very carefully, and I am not quite sure in my own mind whether the Minister for Lands was correct when he said we could charge only £1,000 to the settlers on the land. There is room for escape under the agreement, although it is fairly definite. I may not be qualified to express an opinion as to whether the Min-

ister is correct or not, but I hope he is not correct.

The Minister for Lands: I hope so, too.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am sure the Minister does. I think, however, there may be a loophole for escape, but still the Minister may be correct. The intention of the Leader of the Opposition when he made the agreement is indicated in a speech he delivered in 1922. During the course of that speech he told members of this Chamber that the Government were not prepared to spend more than £1,000 on any block.

Mr. Corboy: Evidently Sir James Mitchell expected to be able to do the job for £1,000.

Mr. RICHARDSON: There is no doubt about that.

The Minister for Lands: That is the whole mistake.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Even supposing the Minister's statement is correct, I cannot blame the present Leader of the Opposition altogether, because I would lay the blame also at the doors of the officers who were his advisers at that time.

Mr. Thomson: It is unfortunate to make a charge against the officers without knowing the facts.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am saying it is due to the advice of the officers—

Mr. Corboy: But the Minister must accept the responsibility.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am not taking away one iota of responsibility from the present Leader of the Opposition, but if his advisory officers informed him that blocks could be settled for £1,000, then they must take their share of the blame, too.

The Premier: Does the hon. member realise that the agreement was signed in England when the officers were not with him?

Mr. RICHARDSON: But Sir James Mitchell was well aware of that before he went to England, for he had the figures before him. If the Premier will read Sir James Mitchell's address in this Chamber in 1922, he will see that the Leader of the Opposition was entirely cognisant of the figures he was to place before the British Government.

The Minister for Lands: I do not know about the advices the then Premier received, but I do know that when Mr. Colebatch made a statement, the officers said they did not know where the advice came from.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I cannot conceive that a man who is so absolutely intense in his desire to promote the welfare of this State would make an agreement unless he had advice from the officers who should have known what the work would cost.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You will find that the officers know their job.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The Minister for Lands made another statement that the Government had no authority to collect

more than the interest they had actually paid. I have looked through the agreement and I cannot find any stipulation to that effect. The agreement merely makes the Government responsible for the whole of the interest and then part has to be repaid by the Federal and British Governments. I think the Minister is wrong in his calculations.

Mr. Lutey: We hope so too, and he hopes so himself.

Mr. RICHARDSON: That is so. I know the Minister is anxious that the group settlement scheme shall be a success and no one would feel it more keenly than the Minister himself if the scheme were not successful. I would remind the House again of the statement made by Sir James Mitchell here in 1922 when he said—

With regard to the interest on the £6,000,000 which is to be advanced, the State will not pay it. It will be the borrowers who will pay it.

Then he also said that there would be a saving of interest amounting to £1,200,000 and also that a saving of £1,000,000 on account of fares was probable. That was a definite statement which showed it was the intention to charge the whole of the interest because he claimed there would be a saving of £1,200,000.

The Premier: Sir James Mitchell frequently made that statement and there is no doubt what his intention was.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am pointing out that the agreement itself would imply that the Government are justified in charging up the whole of the interest because the Government became responsible. It is pointed out that each block had to be developed at a cost of £1,000. I am not concerned regarding the full interest, but I am concerned regarding that charge of £1,000.

The Premier: I do not think there is any doubt about that part of the agreement, and the Leader of the Opposition understood that all along.

Mr. RICHARDSON: He evidently had some knowledge, but I would not like to commit myself on the point until I hear what the Leader of the Opposition has to say.

The Minister for Lands: A statement was made in a letter to the effect that the interest paid by the Commonwealth Government should go towards the losses. That was written 10 months before the agreement was entered into.

Mr. Taylor: But that is not embodied in the agreement.

Mr. RICHARDSON: No.

The Premier: That was the intention, but it is not included in the agreement.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I know it is not contained in the agreement, and I must confess I was somewhat alarmed when the Minister made his statement. I looked

through the agreement carefully regarding that point.

The Premier: There is no doubt about the intention of the Leader of the Opposition, but the fact remains that it is not in the agreement.

Mr. RICHARDSON: There is nothing to prevent the Government charging that interest. I have been through the group settlements and I say without hesitation that they will prove successful. We must watch carefully the expenditure. I notice that the Government intend to appoint a Royal Commission. I have no objection to that step, but I do not consider that such a body will find out exactly what the Government desire to know. After all, there is only a circumscribed area within which a Royal Commission can move. I found that out for myself as a member of such a body. We secured evidence from one side and evidence from the other side, which set up a conflict of opinion. In view of what the Minister for Lands has told us, I believe we should know where we stand. We should have a general stocktaking all round. Figures have been placed before us tending to prove what I have always contended, namely, that we do not know exactly where we stand. We do not know what securities we hold, and what assets are being built up through the expenditure of the State's funds. Is it not possible to treat this matter on the same basis as a business? We know what the expenditure has been, but can we ascertain what our securities are? It is only right that the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board should have lent money to the men on the land. We must assist the farmer as much as possible. The metropolitan area cannot survive if the country people do not progress. Although I am a metropolitan member, I agree that the Government should give every reasonable assistance to the people on the land. I know the Government will extend that assistance to the farmers and to the group settlers. At the same time we should ascertain exactly where we stand. Whilst we have had statements placed before us from time to time, we have never had anything from the other side of the ledger. I do not think there is one member who can say what security we have. It would be wise, while making an investigation, to place the full details before Parliament next session so that we shall know exactly what has been done and whether we are likely to lose a considerable amount of money or get through with the scheme swimmingly. Now that the Government have started on this investigation I hope they will not allow it to finish with group settlements, but will let us know exactly how we stand with the wheat farmers also. I could not speak intelligently on this subject, because I do not know both sides of it.

The Premier: Very few people do know.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am glad the Premier realises it, and I hope he will consider my suggestion.

The Premier: I hope we shall have some information before the session closes.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am glad to hear that. Ministers might come down to the House and say they had borrowed ten millions and had been developing the country with it, but members would not know whether the development had been wisely conceived, and therefore could not speak intelligently on the subject. I hope the Government will let us know the exact securities we hold for money loaned to farmers, and let us know also the value of the asset built up on the group settlements. Then we shall have some reason for declaring whether we shall vote for further loan funds, or endeavour to develop the country in some other way.

The Premier: There is an enormous sum in interest owing to the Government.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I assure the Government they have my sympathy. I realise that whichever Government may be in power, they are up against a financial giant. Whether on the Government side or in Opposition, I consider it my duty to assist the Government of the day so that they may be able to provide sufficient loan funds to carry on the work of the State. If we hesitate in our development policy, we are likely to bring about an economic collapse. So I hope every member will, by helpful suggestions, assist the Government in getting through, so that the country shall not have a set-back. It is to be regretted that the Minister for Lands has found occasion to reduce the number of migrants coming to our shores. He must have had good reason for it or he would not have taken that drastic step. No member, save the Leader of the Opposition, desires to see migration coming to the State more than does the Minister for Lands.

The Minister for Lands: The migration was stopped before I got here.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I think you have further reduced it.

The Minister for Lands: And increased it again to-day.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am delighted to hear it. That is indeed good news. Unless we continue a stream of migration of the right sort, men prepared to go out on the land, we are likely to sustain an economic set-back.

Mr. Clydesdale: The right sort is pretty hard to obtain.

Mr. RICHARDSON: But we get some.

Mr. Clydesdale: And some of the others.

Mr. Taylor: Many others.

Mr. Clydesdale: That is so.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am pleased to know that the Government are likely to enforce closer settlement. Probably this is aimed at lands adjoining railways. We are told it is proposed to bring in a land tax

on unimproved values. The suggestion has been made that all moneys so collected should be devoted to a reduction of railway freights and fares. However, there are other equally good objects to which some of that money could be devoted. Quite one half the revenue from the tax will be collected between Midland Junction and South Fremantle. If the people of the metropolitan area are to contribute half the revenue to be collected under that tax, it is scarcely logical that the whole of it should go to relieve people in the country.

The Premier: No other place in the State benefits so much from primary industries as does the city.

Mr. RICHARDSON: But to-day we are too highly taxed on incomes. I have advocated the raising of the exemption to £250. I supported the Premier, then Leader of the Opposition, in that contention. We were defeated, but we got the exemption raised to £200.

The Premier: It is very reasonable now.

Mr. RICHARDSON: But not quite reasonable enough. A married man receiving £250 cannot afford to pay income tax.

The Premier: That argument is peculiar to your side of the House, no matter who sits there.

Mr. RICHARDSON: And we have high taxation on large incomes.

The Premier: Yes, I know. I am feeling that pretty severely.

Mr. RICHARDSON: By high taxation on large incomes we are forcing capital out of the State. That is not good for the State. Therefore I think the Government might give attention to it. We cannot get capital into our secondary industries, and we have difficulty in getting capital to invest in our lands.

Mr. Clydesdale: There is more capital coming into our lands to-day than ever before.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Still, we have some difficulty in getting men to invest in our lands.

Mr. Clydesdale: We have much greater difficulty in obtaining the land for them.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Many men of capital have left the goldfields and gone farming in the Eastern States rather than farm in Western Australia; not because they are afraid of the land here, but because they fear the income tax. It is not good for the State that, while paying thousands of pounds bringing migrants here we allow men with capital to leave the State.

Mr. Heron: There is more money coming in here from South Australia than there has been for many years past.

The Premier: That is because we have a better Labour Government here than they have over there.

Mr. RICHARDSON: We are losing capital that would otherwise be invested in secondary industries in the metropolitan area.

The Premier: It is dumping that the secondary industries are up against.

Mr. RICHARDSON: But any man wishing to invest in secondary industries will go to the Eastern States; primarily because he can dump from the Eastern States, and secondly because if he made as much money here as he will make in the Eastern States he would have to pay a very high rate of income tax. These things are driving capital out of the State. If the Government are going to apply a tax on unimproved values, some at least of the money collected should go to relieve those paying income tax, first by removing the iniquitous supertax, then by raising the exemption to £250, and afterwards by making reductions in other directions.

The Premier: What is to become of the finances of the State? Half our total revenue goes to meet the interest bill.

Mr. RICHARDSON: If the Premier is going to impose this land tax with the object of raising revenue and expending that revenue, I do not think we shall gain very much out of the tax.

The Premier: We are not going to do that.

Mr. RICHARDSON: It would be interesting to know the Treasurer's intentions.

The Premier: I cannot reveal them until I bring in the Bill, but I can assure the hon. member it will be a flawless measure.

Mr. RICHARDSON: At present we have 124 group settlements, embracing 8,776 persons. I hope nothing will be allowed to interfere with the continuation of those groups. Even if, as the Minister suggests, we are to lose £700 on each block, we shall have to stand behind the Government and assist them.

The Premier: What, to the full, extent of 6,000 settlers!

Mr. RICHARDSON: We cannot do that with the money we have coming from the British and Commonwealth Governments. We shall have to stand behind the Government in order that they may do the best they can to prevent the groups getting a setback.

The Minister for Lands: There will be no necessity to do that. If the new agreement does not come, we can get the Victorian agreement.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The Victorian agreement is very much better than the one we have.

The Minister for Lands: Well, that one is promised to us.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The Commonwealth agreement is not very much better than the one we have. I do not think it is going to relieve us at all. I hope the Commonwealth agreement will be set aside, and that we shall come under the Victorian agreement.

The Minister for Lands: As soon as we have that, we shall be all right.

Mr. RICHARDSON: In the meantime it is the duty of every member to assist the Government to carry out group settlement. It has been said that the Leader of the Opposition has done nothing for the agricultural industry. Since the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) made that statement, it has been vigorously combated on both sides of the House. Members have shown that the Leader of the Opposition was a very true friend to the farmers and that his development policy was one of the best ever known in Western Australia. I realise that when the Labour Government were in power they did a great deal for the farmers. It would be idle hypocrisy to contend otherwise. During their term of office from 1912 to 1916 they spent £12,738,000, and out of that they loaned to the farmers £2,017,000. The Mitchell Government from 1919 to 1923 spent £11,093,948, and loans to farmers, including soldier settlers, amounted to £6,986,437.

The Minister for Lands: The great proportion of that was used for buying land.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I know the conditions were entirely different from those that prevailed during the Labour regime, but it goes to show that the Mitchell Government did spend money in the country areas, and therefore it cannot be contended they were not friends of the country people. While the Labour Government did much during their term, the Mitchell Government did considerably more, though I admit that different conditions prevailed.

The Premier: The figures are not comparable.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am fair enough to admit that. Practically three times as much was loaned during the term of the Mitchell Government as during that of the Scaddan Government. This, however, is no indication that the Labour Government did not advance sufficient during their four years of office. I admit that soldier settlement made a big difference.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: Nearly the whole of the expenditure on public works during the time of the Scaddan Government was for the building of agricultural railways.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am pleased that considerable areas in the groups are now under pasture. There is no doubt that the dairying industry in Western Australia will pay. I am very dubious as to the ability of the Government to finance the scheme if the present agreement be carried out to the letter. But even if each block does cost £1,700, that will not eventually militate against the success of the group settlements.

The Minister for Lands: It will mean an additional £4,200,000.

Mr. RICHARDSON: But if we can raise that money, I am sure the group settlements will be a success. The dairying industry

will pay, and it can be carried on in the South-West as well as in any other part of Australia. We have the land and the right climatic conditions, and it is all a question now of whether the Government will be able to finance the settlers until they can bring their holdings into production. We on the Opposition side must assist the Government in every possible way. If the dairying industry gets a fair start, pig raising will be engaged in, and following that we shall have a large poultry industry too. It will be worth while even at £1,700 per block, provided the money can be found by the Government.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: What if we can charge settlers only £1,000?

Mr. RICHARDSON: It is the duty of members on this side of the House to assist the Government in every possible way. I am satisfied holdings will be payable propositions even at £1,700 a block. Now we are committed to group settlements, it is necessary to carry on the scheme.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Would you make group settlers a present of £700 each?

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am not going to commit myself as to whether that is necessary, but if it be necessary, we shall have to make a new agreement in respect to future blocks.

The Premier: We cannot go ahead on that.

Mr. RICHARDSON: That is so; it is an impossibility. I cannot see how the Government are going to finance it. They will certainly experience great difficulty in financing what is left over from the present groups. No doubt some Government of the future will reap the benefit of what will cost the present Premier many a headache. I intend to support the Premier to pass a Closer Settlement Bill. In years gone by we have gone too far afield for land, while millions of acres of land in proximity to our railways have been locked up. Three years ago I was challenged on my statement that millions of acres of land were locked up, and was told there were not 20,000 acres lying idle alongside existing railways. I repeat my statement that there are millions of acres that must be brought under production and the only way to attain that end is by means of taxation.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Where is that land?

Mr. RICHARDSON: Has not the hon. member travelled and seen it?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: I have seen most of it improved.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I have seen millions of acres of good land unimproved. If I had a map I would indicate it for the hon. member, who is representing the farmers' party in this House and yet does not know where this idle land is.

Mr. Taylor: And deputy leader at that!

Mr. Clydesdale: Some of it is near Perenjori.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: I have none there.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I cannot discuss the measure, because we have not yet been informed of the principles involved, but I take it the Government have one object in view, namely, to bring the idle lands under production so that we shall have closer settlement and secure increased revenue from the railways.

The Premier: We can place migrants on land in the wheat belt for £1,000.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: And with far better prospects, too.

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The Premier will require a new agreement to do that because the present agreement applies to land situated below a line drawn from Albany to Bunbury.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It is a South-West and not a Western Australian agreement.

Mr. RICHARDSON: That is so. It would be most useful if we could secure land for migrants along existing railways under a Closer Settlement Bill. We would get production much quicker in that way, and it would assist the railways considerably. Funds would return to the Treasury much more quickly than from the South-West propositions. I do not decry the South-West propositions and I say to some members on my side of the House that it is wrong to decry these group settlements simply because we have not got other propositions going at present. Let us push ahead with settlement in the agricultural areas and also in the North-West. I hope the Government will carefully consider the claims of the North-West. There is no doubt that markets can be found for everything grown in the North-West, and I believe it would be a cheap proposition to settle people up there. We hear from members who know the country of its great possibilities. The Premier will perhaps wonder where he is going to find all the money that will be necessary. Of course these schemes cannot be carried out in a day, but we may go along surely if slowly. I think it would be a better proposition once we finished with group settlements in the South-West and are considering further settlements—

Mr. Clydesdale: Neither of us will be alive then.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I hope to live that long, but of course I am not so old as is the member for Canning. I hope that when future schemes of settlement are proposed, each portion of the State will be given a fair share. It is not wise to put all our eggs in one basket. If we had a failure of the wheat crops this year, we would be practically done. Our dairying industry is not far enough advanced and we have no other industry capable of taking the place of wheat growing and keeping us afloat until next harvest. Because of that I advocate schemes of settlement in the agricultural areas, the South-West and the North-West. Instead of spending the whole of the money

in one part of the State, let us split it up and gradually develop the whole of the State. The Government propose to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the mining industry. At first this appealed to me as being a rather peculiar proposal. I looked around the Government benches and counted 16 members representing mining districts, and it appealed to me as being somewhat in the nature of an admission that they were not quite alive to what is necessary to secure a revival of mining. I do not know that it is so. I hope members representing mining districts are fully alive to the needs of the industry. Seeing that the Premier represents one of the most wealthy mining districts, however, he must have some good reason for wishing to appoint a Royal Commission. I am rather optimistic regarding the future of mining in Western Australia. I do not think we are likely to find another Golden Mile, but I believe there is plenty of gold scattered about the auriferous areas, and that any Government would be justified in promoting the industry as far as lay in its power. It is all a question of finance. We cannot consider the mining industry in the same light that we would consider making advances to farmers. There is no tangible asset in mining. Therefore it becomes a matter not of business but of the personal equation. If the Government are satisfied that a prospector is genuine and is going out on a properly equipped prospecting tour, the personal equation must appeal to them. There may be indications on the surface; but such indications have appeared in many cases without anything being found on sinking. Because of that, the Government must expect to make some losses when advancing money on mining propositions. The matter is not one that can be treated on strictly business lines. That is utterly impossible. When advancing to farmers, one knows exactly what assets the borrowers have. One can see what there is to advance upon, and one advances up to a certain amount. But in mining it is a matter of the personal equation. On this aspect I have often been challenged by men who have said to me, "Five hundred pounds have been advanced on this proposition, and there isn't five pounds to show for it." I have replied that in mining it is impossible to advance on anything except the personal equation. Because of that consideration, I do hope the Government will render every reasonable assistance. I also trust that the Royal Commission, if appointed, will consist of experts. I feel that members on both sides of the Chamber are well aware of the difficulties which have confronted prospectors and mining men generally during the past seven or eight years. Taxation, needless to say, is one, and the high cost of explosives another. But many more factors could be mentioned. Still, hon. members know all about these things. A Royal Commission of experts could go into the question from the geological aspect and otherwise, and furnish recommendations

which would be of real help to the mining industry. What the industry is languishing for is a little support. To give that support is well worth while, because in mining there is always the possibility of striking something big. But what must always be borne in mind is that even a large mine is a diminishing asset. Doubtless many members, like myself, have occasion to remember that splendid indications may prove fallacious. Someone says he has a real bonanza, and we put a few pounds into the show, only to find, eventually, that there is no gold in it. I trust the Premier will lose no time in appointing the Commission. Let us get busy on the mining industry, because, failing help, that industry is likely to fall flat in a short space of time—very flat indeed. It is generally recognised that goldfields people are optimistic, but during my latest trips to the fields I have observed in the residents a tendency towards pessimism. Therefore it behoves the Government to take immediate action, which would at all events have the good effect of letting our goldfields friends know that the State is standing behind them in their efforts to help the goldmining industry through. I observe that the Government propose to bring down a Fair Rents Bill. My opinions on that subject are well-known. Thrice already have I spoken in favour of the establishment of a fair rents court. I realise the great difficulty of drafting a measure that will be equitable to all parties concerned. A suggestion I would press on the attention of the Government is that their Bill must not carry any risk of doing away with the speculative builder, who is a highly valuable asset to the residents of the metropolitan area. He builds houses cheaply because the principal labour he employs is his own. As a result he is able to sell houses cheaply and let them cheaply. The enactment of the last Fair Rents Bill introduced would have proved disastrous, because it would have prevented further "spec" building, since the measure as drafted left the "spec" builder without hope of realising even the small profit that contents him. I trust the "spec" building phase will be carefully watched by the Government. The Governor's Speech mentions a Drainage Bill. I do not for a moment assume that the measure will take in the metropolitan area, but I would press on the Government's notice the absolute need for immediately thinking—let me put it that way—of commencing a comprehensive drainage scheme for that area. During the past few years the water level has been steadily rising, and it is now six or seven feet higher in the metropolitan area than it was, say, 25 years ago. We know that in various spots the rise of water has made it impossible for people to live in their houses. In that connection the late Government were mulet in heavy compensation to the residents of a part of my electorate. Another part of it is being gradually washed out. The local authorities apparently have no means of ridding

their areas of storm waters except to lead them into the Shenton Park lake. As a consequence residents in the neighbourhood of the lake will be flooded out after the lapse of another year or two. This condition of things prevails not only in my electorate, but in practically all the metropolitan districts; and therefore I earnestly request Ministers to consider a drainage scheme covering the entire metropolitan area. I trust that in the near future matters of purely local interest within that area will be placed under the control of a board, the members of which should be drawn from the local authorities affected.

The Premier: Hear, hear! I will gladly hand such matters over.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Doubtless the Premier will be pleased to relieve himself of those responsibilities. There are some phases of municipal matters with regard to which I would have been glad to have my own way as a councillor 15 or 16 years ago. At that time there was an excellent opportunity to municipalise the tramways, and I trust I may be permitted to say that I was the first councillor in the metropolitan area to move in that direction. However, the Government of the day stepped in and took the tramways over. Various considerations arise on the proposal to hand over such utilities to a board. One consideration which is frequently urged, but which in my opinion has no application, is that on such a board the larger bodies will swamp the smaller. Means could be devised of affording all parties equitable representation. Seeing that the matters in question are of purely local interest, within the metropolitan area, they are more likely to be dealt with speedily and effectively by such a board than by any Government, whether National, Liberal, or Labour. The board's functions would be restricted to various public utilities which are all of a reproductive nature. If founded on an economical basis, those utilities would be made to pay under the management of a board; and incidentally the Government would be relieved of matters which are not of immediate importance to them. Therefore I urge that especially water supply, sewerage, and drainage should be handed over as speedily as possible to a metropolitan board of works. I am pleased to learn that the Government are about to introduce a Bill to amend the Industrial Arbitration Act. I am prepared to give the Government every assistance in my power towards bringing about a condition of things that will enable the unions to get before the Arbitration tribunal promptly. Unions have been blamed for striking, but many strikes have been due to inability to get before the Arbitration Court and obtain a hearing there. For my part I fail to see any real reason for the congestion of business in the Arbitration Court. I hold that in that court there is

brought forward a good deal of matter that is not germane to the issues. The practice of introducing what is really irrelevant matter has grown up in that court, and is still expanding.

The Premier: Under the existing Act it is unavoidable.

Mr. RICHARDSON: A mass of verbiage without any bearing on the issues is uttered in the Arbitration Court, and so cases are dragged out. While the Government are amending the Industrial Arbitration Act, they ought to see that that sort of thing is cut out in future. I am prepared to assist them in that direction. There is also to be a Bill to amend the Municipalities Act. In drafting that measure I hope the Government will consider the advisableness of empowering municipalities to rate on the unimproved value of land. I feel sure that that system has the Premier's sympathy. Its introduction is desired by every municipality I know. I fail to understand why it is held up. Perhaps it was overlooked when an amendment of the Road Districts Act was passed a few years ago. I believe the ratepayers in the metropolitan area, as well as the municipal councils, want that system of rating, which, indeed, would meet with a great deal of approval throughout the State. Then there is the question of water supply. In my district there is a fairly good supply. I am pleased to know that the present Government propose to extend operations in this respect on the lines suggested by the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George), namely, to lift the 8-inch main to Claremont and replace it by a 12-inch main. Some years ago I suggested this course. On the higher parts of Nedlands the residents during the summer months are compelled to go for as long as five days without a drop of water. It has been a positive scandal. I may say that I know something about water pressure, which subject I have had occasion to study. In my opinion it will be necessary for the Government in the near future to give consideration to the re-reticulation of the greater part of the metropolitan area. Even with a 30-inch main running from Mt. Eliza to Claremont, the people in the more elevated parts of Nedlands will not be too sure of sufficient water during the greater part of the summer. The reticulation there is by means of very small mains. Unless those localities are re-reticulated with larger mains, it will not be possible to send through the volume of water necessary to give the residents an adequate supply, or at times even a small supply. I know the Government are pushed for money. Perhaps I should say that the late Government were pushed and that the present Government will be. However, for a scheme of this sort I feel justified in asking the Government to consider the possibility of raising the necessary funds. If they cannot see their way to re-reticulate the higher

portions of Nedlands, then I urge on the Minister for Works the plan of cutting off at different times the water in different parts of the district. That expedient has already been adopted on various occasions with the object of building up a reserve of water for the people on the higher lands, who otherwise would not have been able to get any water. Temporary cutting off on the low lands gives the higher lands a chance of securing a supply. Unfortunately the Minister for Works is not present; but perhaps he will read my speech in "Hansard," and if so I do ask him to consider the possibility of devising a scheme whereby the residents of the higher districts of Nedlands may be granted the use of water flowing from Nedlands through a 30-inch main, and thus be given a chance of securing an adequate supply of the prime necessary of life. Like the member for Leederville (Mr. Millington), I regretted to hear the Minister for Railways declare that no tramway extensions were to be undertaken during the financial year. I desire to be fair, and I realise that the Government have to take into consideration the question of motor bus traffic. I know many places where tramway extensions, if provided, would become payable immediately. Having determined upon that course, I know the Government will not go back on their declaration, but I trust that at the end of the present financial year they will take into consideration extensions that will be payable from the inception. If the people are prepared to pay for the service, I see no reason why the Government should not go on with the work. I am in sympathy with the Government when they refuse to provide tramway facilities to places where it is not likely the system will be payable for some time to come. The Government cannot afford to undertake such works. At the present time it is better for the Government to go in for motor buses and test districts out until they are convinced that a tramway will pay. There are many places where a motor bus would pay but where a tramway would show a loss.

Mr. Clydesdale: Are you in favour of the Government running the buses themselves?

Mr. RICHARDSON: No, not at present.

Mr. Clydesdale: Why?

Mr. RICHARDSON: I think the Government should let men prepared to put their money into motor buses do so for the present.

Mr. Clydesdale: And who will pay for the upkeep of the roads?

Mr. RICHARDSON: That can be rectified. It is not insuperable. I know that if it is found that the roads are cut up by the motor buses the Government will take action because the municipal councils and the road boards will be on the doorstep of the Minister for Works very

promptly. Furthermore, if the motor buses do such damage to the roads, it is easy to tax the proprietors of those conveyances. For the time being, however, I do not know that the Government are justified in going in for enterprises that they are not sure about. It is better to wait for a while.

Mr. Clydesdale: In Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide they are running motor buses.

Mr. RICHARDSON: A number of private companies are running buses there.

The Minister for Railways: And if they will not provide an adequate service, what then?

Mr. RICHARDSON: The Government then are justified in stepping in and providing an adequate service. That is the position in a nutshell. One or two questions have been dealt with, and I probably would not have referred to them, but for the fact that they brought the member for Perth (Mr. Mann) and myself into the limelight. I do not intend to debate the advisability of the 44-hour week, or whether it should have been conceded or not. The Premier saw fit to launch an attack on me on that particular question, and I feel I should make a statement in reply. In his remarks the Premier said that prior to polling day the members for Perth and Subiaco had not the courage to mention what their attitude was.

The Premier: Did I include you in that?

Mr. RICHARDSON: Yes, I was surprised to find that the Premier mentioned my name.

The Premier: I thought I was referring to the member for Perth.

Mr. RICHARDSON: There is a saying that the Premier very often quotes when he desires to emphasise a point. It is: "Not on your life."

The Premier: I do not think so. I will look up "Hansard."

Mr. RICHARDSON: You will find it recorded on page 36. The Premier said "not on your life," and added that there were Labour second preference votes to be considered at the time. He further said that the two hon. members he mentioned were courageous enough now because they had an easy three-year period ahead of them. But the Premier said that during the course of the election, our courage had oozed out of the toes of our boots.

Mr. Taylor: He did not mean it, though.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Unfortunately for the Premier, that statement appeared in the "Daily News" and it was then that my attention was drawn to it. A number of people asked me where my courage had oozed to. I did not hear the Premier making the statement in the House, and I looked up "Hansard" and found that the newspaper report was quite correct.

The Premier: I think it must have been a misprint.

Mr. Taylor: You have a complaint against "Hansard." They knew what you were going to say.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The Premier challenged me by saying that I was afraid to speak on this particular subject. Let me tell the Premier that many big guns of the Trades Hall were in my electorate during the campaign and those big guns did not allow me one moment's rest on this particular question.

Mr. Panton: They had only blank ammunition.

Mr. RICHARDSON: At any rate, it had no effect. My replies were such that the electors of Subiaco must have been convinced, for my majority of 1,000 was increased to 1,600. Seeing that the Premier has set himself on a high pedestal of courage and has looked down with sympathetic contempt upon the member for Perth and myself, I set out to ascertain how the Premier had dealt with the 44-hour week question himself. He declared in effect, that in his policy speech at Boulder he had said in no uncertain manner that if Labour were returned to power they would restore the 44-hour week to the unions that had previously had that concession under the Mitchell Government. He said that those unions had been deprived of it only towards the end of last year. The Premier said he had made that statement in Perth as well as at Boulder. Later on he said there that the Government had not given the 44-hour week outside or to any unions other than those to whom the late Government gave it in 1919. That was evidence that the Premier was trying to show this House that he had finished with the 44-hour week. During the debate in the House the Leader of the Opposition, by way of interjection, asked the Premier if he intended to give the 44-hour week to all the unions in Western Australia. The Premier replied, "To those unions the hon. member gave it to." I said that the Premier had placed himself on a high pedestal of courage. Let us see what the Premier said when he was Leader of the Opposition and was speaking at both Boulder and Perth. During the Boulder speech, according to the report in the "Kalgoorlie Miner," which has not been denied, he said that the Labour Party stood solidly for a 44-hour week.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: So we do.

Mr. RICHARDSON: He also said that they wanted by legislation to establish the 44-hour week.

Ministerial Members: Quite right, too.

Mr. RICHARDSON: There is further evidence that the Premier intended at that time to create the impression that at the first opportunity he would bring forward a Bill to provide for a 44-hour week for all employees.

The Premier: What about it? I have not introduced any Bill yet.

Mr. RICHARDSON: According to the report in the "West Australian," the Premier said that the Labour Party stood solidly for a 44-hour week.

Mr. Lutey: Are you agitated for fear he will not bring in the legislation?

Mr. RICHARDSON: The Premier further stated that the eight-hour day had been established for 30 years, and in some parts a good deal longer. He further stated that in view of the march of science, of latter-day inventions, and of the lower cost to the employers of production, it was time that the workers also received some benefit.

The Premier: What is wrong with that?

Mr. RICHARDSON: Compare that statement with the ones made in the House by the Premier in which he indicated that the Government were prepared to give the 44-hour week only to those men who formerly had it.

The Premier: I did not say any such thing. The hon. member is entirely wrong. It would have been better had the hon. member made these statements during the debate so that I could have replied to them. He is misrepresenting me now.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I have indicated what was in the Boulder speech of the Premier.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: That is true, and that is what will be done.

The Premier: And there is not one word of inconsistency in my remarks.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am not challenging the Premier as to what should be done. I am saying that the Premier attacked me on the point and contended that I had not sufficient courage to express my opinions.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: You did not vigorously oppose the 44-hour week at Subiaco.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I ask that that statement be withdrawn. It is wrong.

Mr. SPEAKER: What is the statement?

Mr. RICHARDSON: The Honorary Minister said that I vigorously opposed the 44-hour week at Subiaco.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: I said that I did not hear you vigorously oppose the 44-hour week at Subiaco.

Mr. RICHARDSON: If that is so, I do not object to that statement at all.

The Premier: It bears out what I say, that there were Labour second preferences to be considered.

Mr. Lutey: There were no crocodile tears when the Mitchell Government did not give the men the 44-hour week.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I congratulate the Minister for Works on immediately giving effect to the 44-hour week policy. If a man stands on the hustings and declares himself in favour of a certain policy, and has power later on to give effect to that policy, he should do so. The Premier did not give us an indication the other night of his intention. The only thing one could draw from his speech was that he was endeavouring to shelve the 44-hour week question.

The Premier: Nonsense.

Mr. RICHARDSON: That is the way I read it. If that is so, then the Premier is not standing up to his policy speech statement.

The Premier: I am standing up to it.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am pleased to hear it.

The Premier: This is all nonsense.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am pleased to know that the Premier intends to carry out his policy.

The Premier: You were not warranted in your assumption that I did not intend to do so.

Mr. Davy: There was no mention of the Bill in the Governor's Speech.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The Premier has a very keen way of expressing his intentions. The fact remains that no Bill has been foreshadowed.

The Premier: I have foreshadowed it. Your legal adviser is on the wrong track. Mention of the Bill appears on the notice paper.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I did not notice any mention of it in the Governor's Speech.

Mr. Corboy: Yes, it is in the Governor's Speech too.

The Premier: The hon. member is a bit previous in his criticism.

Mr. RICHARDSON: No. It was the Premier who was previous. There was no necessity for him to attack me on the subject of the 44-hour week, so I am just showing the weak spot in the hon. member's speech of the other night. The Premier said he would bring in the reform by legislation.

Mr. Corboy: His speech the other night was such that you would not get up and support your leader against him.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The member for Yilgarn was silent on the question. The Premier said he would bring about the 44-hour week for all employees. That was in the Boulder speech.

The Premier: And you are charging me with running away from it.

Mr. RICHARDSON: He did not say he would bring it in by arbitration or administration. He said he would do it by legislation. He has broken that promise by bringing it in as an act of administration.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: It was definitely promised that it would be done.

The Premier: Wait till the end of the session, and then perhaps you will be able to charge me.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Another little question on which members of the Government side have remained silent: On the 14th September last a motion was moved by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) as follows:—

That in the opinion of the House the long service leave conditions applied to the salaried staff of Government em-

ployees should apply also to the wages staff.

Only one member has mentioned that matter of vital importance to the railway men.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: You are wrong there again.

Mr. Corboy: Several members have mentioned it.

The Minister for Works: It is not going to be limited to railway men, either.

Mr. RICHARDSON: If it is right for one it is right for all, but why was this not mentioned in the Speech?

The Premier: We cannot mention everything in the Speech.

Mr. RICHARDSON: This is what the member for Geraldton said in support of that motion. He was speaking in reply to an interjection made by the then Minister for Railways to the effect that the reform would cost £600,000 in the first year. The member for Geraldton told a harrowing tale of the nerve-racked men on the locomotives and in the signal boxes, and I know that he was quite justified in what he said. These were his remarks:—

If the Minister's sole objection is on the score of finance, my reply is that he is in charge of railway administration, and should be able to arrange things by adjusting charges or by altering the working system to overcome the difficulty.

Now that the hon. member is himself in charge of the railways, I use that argument back at him. Why does not he jump into the breach and do it now in the interests of the railway men?

Hon. S. W. Munsie: He has been there three weeks or so! What would you have?

Mr. RICHARDSON: I know that the Minister is very much in earnest, and therefore I appeal to him. This is a burning question in the metropolitan area, and for that reason I have supported it right through the election and am still supporting it.

The Minister for Railways: You may have another opportunity later.

The Premier: For what reason do you support it? Because it is a burning question?

Mr. RICHARDSON: No, I put it to the Minister on that score.

The Minister for Works: Cannot you convince some of your friends over there?

Mr. RICHARDSON: I do not bother about my friends.

The Minister for Works: Then why do you sit with them?

Mr. RICHARDSON: I love them more because I love the other fellow less. I thought it my duty to bring this matter before the House so that some action might be immediately taken. Another matter of vital importance to many workers in the metropolitan area is that of

overdue increments in the Public Service. This has not been mentioned in the House during the present session. The Public Service are due for two years' increments.

The Minister for Lands: They got increments last year.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The increment paid last year was one due from three years previously.

Mr. Corboy: I do not remember your protesting last session because the then Government did not pay it.

Mr. RICHARDSON: If the hon. member will read "Hansard," he will see that I mentioned the subject. I learn on the best authority that the public servants are loyal enough to say they realise the Government are not in a very sound financial position, but that they require an amendment to the Public Service Act to make it perfectly definite that in the future the increments will have to be paid at the end of each year. They are prepared to forego two years' increments if the Government will amend the Act so that in future there cannot be any chance of the Government escaping their due responsibility. I understand the Government are not exclusively to blame in this matter, because the Public Service Commissioner has ruled that the Government are not indebted to the amount claimed. I bring this up believing the Government will amend the Act during the present session. That is all the public servants are asking for. Let me say in conclusion that I stand here to express my own opinions, not the opinions of other members of this party. I am here to do as I did during the past three years, namely to assist the Government in any way I can. I tender them that offer. If I believe in any measure they may bring down, I will speak and act according to what I believe. On several occasions during last Parliament I crossed the floor. I am not ashamed of that. I stood up to it at election time, and three years hence I will again stand up to any action of my own.

Mr. HOLMAN (Forrest) [10.26]: 1 move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

Mr. HOLMAN: I am sorry that the Government have seen fit to bludgeon the debate through to-night. It is about the latest we have sat this session, and I am sorry the Government have refused to grant an adjournment.

Mr. Taylor: They are a bit tyrannical, you know, as well as other Governments.

Mr. Corboy: Three weeks is a fair time.

Mr. HOLMAN: Some members as soon as they have spoken to the debate think the debate should conclude. Each and every member should have an opportunity for placing his views before the House. I have

heard many members condemn the Address-in-reply as a waste of time, but those members generally exhaust themselves in speaking, and as soon as they sit down they seem to lose all interest in the question before the House. During a long Parliamentary experience I have always found that the Address-in-reply debate gives opportunity for the voicing of grievances, an opportunity that does not again present itself during the session. On the Address-in-reply members can bring forward many matters of vital importance to themselves and their electors. The first question dealt with in His Excellency's Speech is that of revenue for the year ended June 30. It shows that the revenue collected from the population of Western Australia has reached a very high figure, indicating that there is heavy taxation on the community. It also shows that interest and sinking fund have reached huge proportions, and are increasing year by year. It is marvellous the burdens our small population have to bear. The Speech mentions that the condition of the mining industry is receiving special consideration and points out the value of gold and mineral produced last year. This shows that there has been a big decline in production. We in Western Australia have to face the problem of the mining industry that has confronted other countries. Mining anywhere in the world is only a fleeting industry; there is none more fleeting. I was born on the first goldfield discovered in Victoria and have seen hundreds of gold mining centres rise and decline. I have seen hundreds of mining districts in this State rise and fall and any mining camp, and particularly a gold mining camp, can be expected to have a life of only five to 50 years. Ballarat was one of the greatest gold mining fields in Victoria in the early fifties and for many years afterwards, but not a miner is working there to-day. It is pleasing to record, however, that the district is more prosperous now than ever before in its history, and we can only look forward to the time when something else will take the place of our gold mining. Years ago no one ever dreamt that agriculture would be extended as far east as Southern Cross. In the early days no one dreamt that the northern fields would be teeming with sheep, and I am safe in saying that in the not distant future there will be many more sheep in those parts. At the same time we must view with apprehension the fact that our gold mines are increasing in value and that the production is much lower than in years past. Some members have suggested that fields of greater magnitude may be opened up. When the early pioneers went through this country, they made a pretty careful search of it, and although many important discoveries may yet be made, in no gold mining country has any very important discovery been made after the first finds were worked out.

Mr. Chesson: They picked up the outcrops.

Mr. HOLMAN: That is so. In the past all the most important discoveries were made when the particular country was first opened up. That is the history of the other States and of New Zealand. Rich patches, of course, will be found, but we cannot look forward to many very important discoveries such as were made in the early days. In Bendigo, it is true, there was a second rush, but that was the reefing rush after the workings had been carried through the poor zone. Consequently, we must prepare for something to take the place amongst our industries so long held by mining. Mining has done a great deal for Western Australia. Had it not been for that industry, this State would not have been what it is. We cannot do too much to assist those who are trying to open up fresh fields and develop the older fields. I know of many places which prospectors should be assisted to examine. I am pleased that the Wiluna field promises in the not distant future to take a new lease of life. In the Peak Hill and Cue districts important discoveries have been made and are giving fair returns. So it is still possible to obtain a great deal of wealth and increase the avenues of employment by assisting prospectors to open up our mining centres. We are told that other industries are in a satisfactory condition. The wheat yield last year constituted a record; the average was reasonable and prices were fairly good. We are also told that the timber trade is in a buoyant state. The Speech goes on to say—

The demand for Western Australian hardwoods from overseas continues at satisfactory prices. During the past year a record was established in the value of the timber exported, which amounted to £1,367,718. Re-afforestation measures are being extended with a view to making forest regeneration bear a reasonable relation to our timber consumption.

That sounds very fine—a record year for exports. We all know the value of our hardwoods, but it is a matter for regret that, though the State employs nearly one-half of the workers in the timber industry, those workers do not receive the consideration to which they are justly entitled. The men are working under conditions that give them no chance to make homes for themselves. Theirs are the worst conditions of any class of worker in the country. They have to suffer privations and they are bound down in many ways. I intend to point out some of the trials and tribulations they have to bear. Let me first refer to the great difficulties the Government will have to contend with and indicate what they may expect within the next year or two, what with the heavy burden of debt, hundreds of unemployed, and our large accumulated deficit. In addition special taxation has been found necessary. Our mining industry, as shown by the closing down of some of the big mines on the eastern fields, is on the decline. We have to face many difficulties.

The workers are not receiving that consideration to which they are entitled owing to the fact that the basic wage is based on Knibbs' cost-of-living figures. These figures are unfair to the workers and we have to see what we can do to improve the position. Instead of the basic wage in this State being about 9s. per week behind Melbourne it should be higher. The cost of food and groceries in Perth is more than 12 per cent. higher than it is in Melbourne. I had records taken out when I was in Melbourne last month concerning the cost of food and groceries and I found that this was the difference between the cost of living in Perth and that in Melbourne. The rentals asked for four or five-roomed brick houses in Perth are exactly identical with those asked in Melbourne for similar houses. Our workers are suffering from grave injustice. In Melbourne when wages are being fixed the rentals of all the dwellings are lumped together, which means that the rental for the superior class of buildings greatly increases the average. There is not the same class of good building in Western Australia, but under the system that is adopted for the regulation of wages, the worker here receives 9s. a week less than he does in Melbourne. When the Government amend the Arbitration Act these anomalies can be taken into consideration. The Arbitration Courts, both Federal and State, take it upon themselves to base wages on Knibbs' cost-of-living figures, and thus a grave injustice is perpetrated to the workers. These figures were not compiled for the regulation of wages; they were compiled to show the rise and fall in the purchasing power of the sovereign. They have been used by the courts in regulating wages because they thought it the best method to adopt in the circumstances. The 44-hour question seems to have given members opposite, almost without exception, a great deal of worry and trouble. The Government have shown great weakness in not extending to all Government employees, who once enjoyed the 44-hour week, the privilege that was taken away from them by the unjust action of another Government some two years ago. The 44-hour week was given in Western Australia as a result of an application to the Arbitration Court. The timber workers were the people principally concerned. When they first made the application to have a 44-hour week established for their industry, it was made the subject of world-wide inquiry. The timber workers' case before Mr. Justice Higgins was adjourned for some six months to enable the Employers' Federation and the unions to make the necessary inquiries. The Government were given an opportunity of being represented, and also the Federal Council of Employers, the latter having promised to appear before the Court when the question was being dealt with. The Chamber of Manufactures and other

employing bodies were invited to attend. All these organisations were invited to send representatives to the court to protect their own interests. The public were also invited to be represented, as they were an interested party in the alteration of hours. When the case came before the Federal Court and the hours question was opened, the employers, who had promised to assist in the matter and to be represented and have the whole question dealt with in a systematic manner, declined to attend. There were no employers represented when the case was opened. In the meantime influence was brought to bear in the Federal House to amend the Arbitration laws, so as to prevent that court, as then constituted, from dealing with the question of hours. No protest was heard against the unjust action of the National Government in preventing the matter being dealt with, and no opposition was heard to their action in endeavouring to introduce legislation that would prevent the Arbitration Court from granting the 44-hour week. This, however, did not bluff Mr. Justice Higgins from going on with the case. A day or so after it started the representatives of the employers began to drift back to the court and fight the case. Acting upon information supplied by me, the Labour Party in the Federal House made a strong protest on the subject. When the case was heard evidence was adduced not only from Australia and New Zealand, but from all over the civilised world on the question of the necessity for altering the 48-hour week to 44. After Mr. Justice Higgins had received all the information and the returns, he opened his remarks by stating that he would refer to the cases in which 44 hours or less had been secured, and said there were many cases in which the maximum hours were then 48, but that for simplicity and brevity he proposed to confine himself to the cases of 44 hours a week or less. He went on to say—

In Great Britain and Ireland, wood cutting machines (building trade—decision of National Board). Labourers in saw-mills (Teeside). Furniture trades (Huddersfield, Sheffield, Bradford, Reading). Cabinetmakers, etc. (Oldham, Chesterfield, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton, Edinburgh). The whole building trade, including carpenters, bricklayers, masons, plasterers, painters, plumbers, labourers, etc., (under decision of National Board of Conciliation). Flour mill employees (shift workers). Packing case makers (Belfast). Stone carvers. Coal miners (42-hours, to be shortly 36). Shale and underground miners (Scotland, 42 hours). Slate quarry men (41½ hours in winter). Quarry men, turners, scabblers, hand or machine polishers (Aberdeen). Transport workers and dock labourers (inside and outside—under National agreement). Cold storage engine-drivers, firemen, etc. (Liverpool). Car repair

shops and power station employees (Newcastle-on-Tyne). Boiler scalers (Glasgow). Printing employees, newspapers (44 to 38½ hours). Compositors (London). Stenographers, street sweepers, labourers, etc. (South Shields). Clerks in newspaper offices (London). Clerks of co-operative societies (Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, and North Wales). Bakers and confectioners (Scotland). Cocoa, chocolate, etc., employees (shift workers). Dressmakers and milliners (female), retail shops (Scotland). Paper mills (shift workers). Decorative glass workers (Manchester). Thread mill employees (Paisley).

Then he proceeds—

In Canada (44 hours or less): Electrical workers (London and various counties of Ontario and Calgary). Railway shop workers (in the larger shops where the heavy work is carried on). Moulders (Aberhurst—39 hours). Bridge, structural, and ornamental workers (Montreal). Boilermakers, iron ship builders, and helpers (Toronto). Sheet-metal workers (Montreal, Toronto, Quebec). Plumbers and steam fitters (Ontario). Paving cutters (Granteville). Plasterers and cement finishers (London). Bricklayers (Ottawa). Carpenters and joiners (Fort William). Clothing workers (Toronto). Typographical Society (London). "Machinists," a term including fitters, etc. (Dominion Bridge Company, Lahine; Berliner Gramophone Co., Montreal).

The position is similar in the United States as regards hundreds of classes of workers in numerous cities and towns. Then there are references to trades working 44 hours in Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania. Further, the judge quotes various foreign countries. These facts go to show that the 44-hour week was becoming universal. It is surprising, then, that such a hullabaloo should have been raised over the granting of a 44-hour week to a few workers here.

Mr. Taylor: The objection was to the manner in which it was done.

Mr. HOLMAN: If the Government were able to deal with the question of the 44-hour week by administrative act, there was no reason why they should not do so.

Mr. Taylor: Do you believe in over-riding the court?

Mr. HOLMAN: That interjection illustrates the hon. member's ignorance of the Arbitration Court. It would be over-riding the court to increase the number of hours. In reducing the number of hours the Government were, in fact, carrying out the principle and spirit of arbitration awards, which prescribe the minimum wage below which the employer cannot go, and the maximum hours which cannot be exceeded. The employers, whom the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) is nowadays so fond of defending, always pay the minimum wage and exact the full number of working hours. The Government, as a model employer,

should grant the best rate of wages and the shortest hours.

Mr. Taylor: The Arbitration Court reduced the hours to 44, and gave that system a trial for a year or so. After that the Arbitration Court reverted to 48 hours, and then the Government over-rode the court.

Mr. HOLMAN: It was done by agreement originally. However, there is the remarkable fact that when hours were least throughout Australia, production was greatest and profits were highest throughout Australia.

Mr. Taylor: It is refreshing to know that.

Mr. HOLMAN: It is a fact. Further, we have the remarkable circumstance that when the employers used unfair methods and tactics to bring about increased hours, no protest came from hon. members opposite. During the investigation which resulted in the granting of the 44-hour week, evidence was adduced from all over the world. On the other hand, the increased hours were granted without any evidence whatever being taken. Some of the Acting Presidents of the Federal Arbitration Court have stated since that their minds were made up regarding the increase of hours before ever they were raised to the Bench.

Mr. Taylor: I was not referring to the Federal Arbitration Court.

Mr. HOLMAN: But that is the place where the question of hours was opened and settled, and then re-settled. I could quote the Federal Arbitration Court's judgment on the 44-hour proposition, but perhaps there is no necessity for that. I regard this matter as of vital importance, and I fail to understand how it is possible to grant the 44-hour week to a section of the Government employees only, instead of to all. The declaration that this matter is to be dealt with by legislation is a mere staving-off of a promise that was given during the general election. There is not the slightest chance of getting a 44-hour Bill through another place. Therefore it is absurd to talk of introducing the 44-hour week by legislation. The Labour Government are in office to carry on the administration of the country on the lines which, when on the hustings, we promised to adopt; and we shall be failing in our promises if we do not institute the 44-hour week by administrative act when it is in our power to do so. No doubt we shall be told, "If you can get the other employers to fall into line with us, we will grant the 44-hour week to all the Government employees." Such a stand is unreasonable. Ministers who hold ideals and have made promises should use every possible opportunity to force other employers to follow them. It is ridiculous to expect private employers to lead the way in such an important reform as the 44-hour week. The shorter week was not granted by the Federal Arbitration Court without grave consideration. It was granted by the man

who is of all men in the Commonwealth best qualified to deal with industrial questions. I refer, almost needless to say, to Mr. Justice Higgins, who in his work "A New Province for Law and Order" writes as follows under the heading "Reduction of Hours":—

In the case of the Australian Timber Workers' Union the Court reduced the ordinary hours from 48 to 44 per week. Extra payment has to be made for any overtime. Before coming to this conclusion, the Court adopted a course which is unusual, but clearly within its powers to "inform its mind in such manner as it thinks just." Feeling that it should not prescribe 44 hours for this industry unless it saw its way to prescribe similar hours in many other similar industries, especially industries involving the tending of time-saving machines, the Court invited the Federal Council of Employers, the Chambers of Manufacturers, and the Trades Hall Councils (of unions) to appear, and it allowed certain great undertakings and interests to be represented on their request. The Federal Government was also invited to appear as representing the general public; but it refused the invitation. The evidence and arguments took a much longer time than all the rest of the 267 claims in the log; but the issue at stake was worthy of all the time expended. Judgment was given on this issue on November 12, 1920, in favour of the union. Substantially it means that the workers get a "clean" eight hours' day, with half-holiday on Saturdays. Hitherto they had to purchase the half-holiday by working an extra three-quarters of an hour on five days, and an extra quarter on Saturday; and this meant that they had to rise, breakfast, travel, and start work at the mill or shop (usually) at 7.30 a.m. in winter as well as in summer. It is impossible to set out here all the considerations which influenced the Court; they can be found in reports for the year 1920 (Vol. xiv).

Mr. Justice Higgins has given more consideration to industrial problems than any other man in the Commonwealth, and I could go on quoting from his writings and judgments numerous other callings working less than 48 hours per week—some working only 36 hours, and some even less than that. In Queensland the great majority of the workers have the 44-hour week. The Queensland timber industry has had 44 hours for about 15 years, and there never has been any suggestion of a reversion to the 48-hour week. It was said that the output fell when the working week was reduced to 44 hours. In the case heard by Justices Duffy, Powers, and Rich during December of 1921 that allegation was made—made at a time when

some 400,000 of the cream of Australia's manhood were away at the front. Under those conditions, in the absence of all those men, the production per head of population was taken, and it was alleged that production was going down. But what do we find to be actually the case? That 1921-22, the full year in which the 44-hour week was worked, proved to be the most highly productive—and this when the Australians were working the shortest hours in the world. During that year the number of factories working was highest, the number of workers employed was highest, salaries and wages were the highest ever known, and the production per head rose by £20. The value of the production for that year was 81 millions sterling as against 56 millions sterling for the previous year. The output for that year rose by about 45 millions sterling over the output for the year preceding. That shows that the production under the 44-hour week was considerably higher than under the 48-hour regime. These statistics have been taken from the publication issued by the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, and represent a little over the 12 months ended March 1923. These facts were brought before the Court and it is impossible to refute them. The Government should take these facts into consideration and secure to the men what they are justly entitled to. Complaints have been made that the overseas competition prevents the adoption of the 44-hour week by the Government of Western Australia. That competition has always been advanced as an argument against the employees. It is a remarkable fact, however, that that argument does not apply in the timber workers' case, because it was shown that originally oregon pine was sold here at 20s. per hundred super feet and since the hours were increased from 44 to 48 per week, the prices for Australian hardwoods as well as for imported timbers were increased. This shows that the public were being victimised by the employers as much as was possible and increased profits were being made by the timber concerns even with the increased hours. The total value of timber exported from Western Australia during 1919-20, which was the last year during which the 48-hour week operated, represented £465,734, while for the six months ended December 1922, under the 44-hour week system, the value of the timber exported rose to £532,353, or considerably more in the six months than during the whole of the previous 12 months.

Mr. Taylor: I suppose the companies got their sales through then.

Mr. HOLMAN: It shows that bigger sales took place in the latter period under the 44-hour regime.

Mr. Taylor: The hours had nothing to do with it. It was a question of markets.

Mr. HOLMAN: The hours had something to do with it as well, because for the number of men employed in the timber industry in Western Australia, according to the statistics, the production of timber was greater than elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Taylor: They did more work in shorter hours.

Mr. HOLMAN: The production was greater with the shorter hours than during the 48-hour week.

Mr. Taylor: Then let us go home.

Mr. HOLMAN: We should have been allowed to do so. Injustice is being done to Parliament in that members are asked to sit here at this late hour.

The Minister for Lands: We have been adjourning every night about 8.30 and no one wanted to speak. You know that as well as I do.

Mr. HOLMAN: I asked for the adjournment but I was not allowed to have it. I was told that we were to put through the Address-in-reply to-night. I do not know what attitude the Government are adopting nor yet what they are doing. As I stated, under the 44-hour week there was also increased employment. In Western Australia, however, an attempt was made to bludgeon the Court into granting the 48-hour week, and in order to secure that end, nearly a thousand men were dismissed from the timber mills here. That was done when the case was before the court to show the necessity for increasing the hours. When I dealt with the case I took extracts from the year books of the different States. In Victoria I found that in 1919-20 the number of employees in the sawmilling, moulding trades, etc., was 4,747, and in 1921-22 the number was 5,006, or an increase of nearly 300. In 1919-20 there were 2,627 men engaged in sawmilling in the forest and in the following year 3,014. Those figures disclose a very fair increase under the 44-hour system. In Western Australia there were 41 sawmills operating in 1919 and 2,975 men were employed. That was under the 48-hour system. In 1921, with the introduction of the 44-hour week, the number of men employed was increased to 4,687. In New South Wales a considerable increase was shown. In fact the same applied in other parts of the Commonwealth. Despite the fact that the hours were decreased the production of timber in every State of the Commonwealth shows an increase per foot per man under the 44-hour system. These are facts taken, not from my own records, but from official statistics.

Mr. Taylor: In those States do they work by day labour or by contract.

Mr. HOLMAN: There was no alteration regarding the conditions of work. In Victoria there is no piece work in connection with the timber industry. In New South Wales and Tasmania there is very little

piece work done, but in Western Australia much of the bush work has been carried out by piece work. In 1919-20, working 48 hours, the sawmills in the forests of Victoria produced £913,551. In 1921-22, working 44 hours, those mills produced £1,122,102, or an increased value under 44 hours of £308,551, equal to 37.9 per cent. In 1919-20, working 48 hours, the sawmilling, moulding, etc., produced £2,817,902. In 1921-22, working 44 hours, the sawmilling, moulding, etc., produced £3,649,316, or an increased value under the 44 hours of £831,414, equal to 29.5 per cent.

Mr. Taylor: Is it not remarkable that they can do more work in the shorter period?

Mr. HOLMAN: No, because men can do only a certain amount of work, and it has been proved that proportionately they do more work in the shorter time. I can quote the inquiry held in Victoria on the question, to show that the production is proportionately greater when the hours are shorter.

Mr. Taylor: How do you get the overtime? There must be a terrible loss on that.

Mr. HOLMAN: Yes, there is. My friend knows it is impossible to do as much work proportionately in 16 hours as can be done in eight hours. It is impossible to keep up the same rate of speed over 200 yards as one can maintain over 100 yards.

Mr. Taylor: Some of us, old New South Wales men, never got a go on until we had done 10 hours.

Mr. HOLMAN: One might be inclined to think that, but the reverse has been proved. Here is what Mr. Justice Higgins said—

There is nothing in which labour is more vitally interested than in fewer hours of daily toil whereby are afforded leisure for rest and recuperation and opportunity for the things that make life worth living.

Mr. Taylor: He was a bit of a socialist.

Mr. HOLMAN: He was also a just man.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, that is right.

Mr. HOLMAN: To-day there is not any man more freely quoted in the discussion of industrial problems than is Mr. Justice Higgins.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, he did the pioneering work in Commonwealth arbitration.

Mr. HOLMAN: Mr. Justice Higgins continued—

These words are no make-believe, as I know from frequent experience. The feeling is that all the energies of a man's waking hours should not be given to the making of a living; that he should have some energy left for other and higher things—art, education, science, literature, even hobbies or amusements, as he selects; and that where machinery is introduced whereby five, ten, fifty times as much is produced as one was produced before machinery, he should not be kept to the same 48 hours of work.

Mr. Taylor: I would sooner go before him as a worker than an an employer.

Mr. HOLMAN: I am sorry others have not followed his lead. They have had the same opportunity, but have not taken it. Mr. Justice Higgins continued—

Since high speed tool steel was introduced in 1904, and the lathes altered, 10 pairs of carriage wheels are turned out in one day, even by boys, instead of barely two pairs. When workers secured the 48 hours in New South Wales and Victoria, there was very little machinery in most of our industries; and it is urged machinery that brings speed of output should bring with it a reduction of hours. Else, how is it labour-saving? No doubt machinery takes physical weight off men moving or handling logs; but as the speed and the concentration and the monotonous use of the same set of nerves and muscles are increased, it is urged there is no saving of the workers' store of energy, no real saving of labour to the worker unless his hours of work be decreased. With the progressive division of labour, work has become more and more mechanical. A definite share of over-fatigue and its consequences, especially neurasthenia, must be ascribed to the monotony, to the absence of spontaneity or joy in work. There is not for the machine worker any ever so slight satisfaction of the creative sense or the dimmest feelings of mastery or self-expression in work.

He then went on to quote the machinery scrapping. He said—

There is more strain on a man driving a fast machine than on a man using a saw. To my mind there is much force in these arguments, but there are other considerations to be weighed, for the times are very grave, and production is much needed. Meantime I feel sure that the people of Australia have no desire to keep the employees at work for a longer time than is necessary for the needs of the industry and of the country; and that if it can safely be done they would be glad to consent to the increased leisure.

That was the opinion of Mr. Justice Higgins when he delivered judgment in the timber workers' case. I can quote the production of timber under the two different systems. In Victoria, in 1920-21, under the 48-hour week, 3,180 men employed 48 hours produced 35,591 superficial feet per man, but in 1921-22 the 3,014 men employed in the bush, working 44 hours, turned out 37,102 superficial feet per man, or an increase of nearly 2,000 feet per man. The same thing obtained in Tasmania and in the other States, such as New South Wales—the production under the 44 hours was considerably higher than under the 48 hours. So, too, in Western Australia. And the profits made under the 44 hours were considerably higher than those made under the 48 hours. And, on the other side, the prices charged under the 48 hours were higher than those charged under the 44 hours. That is a remarkable fact. James Moore & Son quoted Melbourne, August,

1922, building hardwood from 27s. 6d. up to 35s. per 100 superficial feet. Exactly the same prices were quoted in January, 1923. Building oregon ranged from 32s. 6d. up to 45s. 6d. per 100 superficial feet in August, 1922. The same lines increased to 37s. 6d. up to 50s. 6d. per 100 superficial feet in January, 1923, under the increased hours. The profits made were considerably higher under the 44 hours. In Victoria the added value on manufacturing production increased from £34,259,060 in 1919-20 to £43,592,856 in 1921-22, or an increase of production per head of the population between 1919-20 and 1921-22 from £22 to £28. Reynolds Driver made a claim over one contract alone for £192,000 compensation. That was dealt with by arbitration, but I do not think the matter has yet been definitely settled. The profits made under the 44-hour week were considerable. The Kauri Timber Company, operating in Western Australia, made a greater profit for the year ended August, 1922, under the 44-hour week than in any previous year under the 48-hour week. In 1922 their profit was £69,103, while for the year ended August, 1919, it was £59,000. The Western Australian Government purchased the interests of the South-West Timber Hewers' Co-operative Society, Ltd., and the employees made for them an increase of several hundred per cent. on the volume of business. The State Sawmills at the time had a fixed capital of £378,650 and there was paid in profits, depreciation, interest and sinking fund £254,637, thus further exemplifying the vast profits in the timber trade. Last year the State Sawmills showed a net profit of £62,121 after providing £28,195 for depreciation, £5,000 for mill store reserve, £1,771 for bad and doubtful debts, £17,412 interest on capital, and £648 sinking fund. That is a remarkable return on the capital invested in these works. Yet the men doing the work are not allowed to participate in the prosperity at all. They are called upon to work under the worst possible conditions. Their conditions of life in the bush are more severe than are those of any other class of employees. I could quote considerably as to the increased production under the 44-hour week, but apparently we shall have to wait until the Legislative Council is pleased to grant us the shorter working week. The request of the organisation is a reasonable one and I cannot understand why greater consideration has not been given to it. Unfortunately the 44-hour week is not the only problem we have to face at present. A serious position has arisen owing to the unsatisfactory treatment of piece-workers, and there may be a cessation of work in the whole of the timber industry after the end of the present month. We are asking the Government and other timber employers to give the men what we maintain the award entitles them to, namely, a percentage increase on the piece-work rates similar to

that granted on the basic wage. That was brought about by agreement prior to the previous award being delivered, and when the present award was delivered, the judge said the rates should be maintained. We contend that there should be an increase in the piece-work rates as from the 1st June, just as the basic wage was increased to those in receipt of a weekly wage. We are really asking very little. An agreement was made in 1914 when the falling rate per load was 1s. 8d. Although the cost of living and of working tools has increased by 100 per cent. or more since then, the men are now receiving only 1s. 10d. Per load for falling timber in the karri country. The employees of the railway and other sawmills have combined to see that these men get what they are entitled to. An increased margin has been given to other workers, and yet efforts are being made to deprive these men of their increase. As many as four applications have been made to the Arbitration Court for variations to prevent these men from receiving what they are entitled to. It is difficult to understand why the employers adopt this line of action. Recently representations were made by the executive of the Timber Workers' Union and by delegation of piece-workers to the employers, including the State departments, asking that these matters be rectified, that provision be made to treat the men in the bush fairly and that they be not forced to take the extreme step of ceasing work, which would cause great loss to the industry. It is a remarkable fact that the Government of this State should have paid a man named Alcock some thousands of pounds during the last few years to protect the interests of foreign companies registered in New Zealand, Great Britain and elsewhere, to extract from the worker all that is possible, to advise regarding breaches of the award, and to enter appearances in the court on applications for variation. This man has received thousands of pounds from the State Government. I wonder what members of the Opposition would say if the Labour Government did what they should do, namely, spent thousands of pounds to protect the interests of the workers—the men who have made the State and whose interests should be protected. There would be an outcry. Because the Government restored the 44-hour week to a few workers in Western Australia, they are receiving a great deal of criticism. This same individual, Alcock, on every possible occasion in the Eastern States is reviling Western Australia. He says we have no timber suitable for making staves, handles, shafts, naves, spokes, etc. I contend that we have better timber for work of this description than has any other State of the Commonwealth. Yet this man is in Melbourne to-day and, while drawing a huge sum of money from the Government, is reviling the products of the State that has treated him so well. I trust, the Govern-

ment will make short shrift of him and put him in his proper place. He was once Deputy Public Service Commissioner. When I was Minister for Labour 20 years ago and took action against the Pitosa Company for endeavouring to reduce the wages of its employees the Legislative Council carried a vote of censure against the Labour Government because I dared to brief Mr. (now Justice) Ewing, and paid him £100 to conduct the case for the workers against the company. They talked of the injustice that had been done to the people of the country, and said that the workers themselves should have fought the case. I had, however, the courage to brief this barrister and give him this fee. The case was fought in the Police Court and the Supreme Court, and was won for the men. Their interests were thus protected and the company was fined. The policy of any Government, especially a Labour Government, should be to spend money in protecting the interests of the people instead of the interests of foreign boodlers, as has been done by previous Governments. A labour bureau is in existence. I am sorry that this has not been made an entirely separate department. The industrial life of any country is its life's blood. The industrial problems we have to face are of such vital importance that a labour department is particularly necessary. The Secretary for Labour is, I understand, Mr. Munt. I have known him for many years, but I do not think he will make a fit secretary for labour, or be able to handle the many industrial problems we shall no doubt have to face in the immediate future. Twenty years ago, when the bureau was first opened, it was of a more progressive nature than it is now. Branches were established in the country and it was the custom to send to a job men who were fitted for that job. Subsequent Governments, however, allowed that system to drift. Fortunately we have a Factories Act, which has effected many improvements in our industrial affairs. The present system of handling labour could be greatly improved. We should not send any class of man to any class of job. I hope the Government will consider the necessity for establishing a proper labour department to control industrial life, industrial centres, and the industrial workers of the State. Let me take the system of wages operating at the timber mills. Almost the whole control of stores and supplies is in the hands of the mill owners, the State as well as private owners. The cost of living, the cost of food and groceries, on the mills is 25 per cent. higher than it is in Melbourne, and between 12 per cent. and 13 per cent. higher than it is in Perth. The timber workers are thus penalised. In many cases no accommodation is provided for them in the bush. There is a timber ring in existence. Even the State is mixed up in it. This ring or combination has increased the price of timber, and controls practically

every man who deals in timber by compelling him to buy from them. No one connected with the ring is allowed to sell timber to others who do not belong to the association. If a man is doing a little work, such as putting up a building, he is compelled to join the association, or his timber supplies are cut off. One complaint is made by a man in Walcott-street, Mt. Lawley, who refused to sign an agreement, on the ground that it interfered with his liberty, and he stated he intended to send information to "Smith's Weekly," which had been publishing articles dealing with the principle of combines. Other people did sign the agreement. People have sold timber and inquiries have been made as to why they did so. They cannot sell any class of timber without first quoting the price laid down by the combine. The State should protect the interests of the people as well as treat its employees in a reasonable manner. The Government, instead of grinding down the workers, should supply them with timber at reasonable rates, and, indeed, supply the public in general in the same way. People should not be compelled to join the combine and sign the agreement before they can purchase timber or receive the discounts that others who sign the agreement obtain. I trust that action will be taken to make our State timber mills a medium for supplies of timber at reasonable rates. When we are exporting timber overseas, we are justified in getting the highest possible price, but when it is a question of utilising the products of the State within our borders, we should give the people some of the advantages to be derived from local products. I now come to the question of life on the mills. It has been said that members voice the grievances of those they represent for a particular purpose. After 20 years' experience amongst bush workers of the State, I realised that the gold-mining industry was a fluctuating one, and that it was advisable to establish suitable conditions amongst our workers so that they could live in some degree of comfort. I am glad to say we have made some progress along those lines. The position is different from what it was in previous years, but the condition of life for our bush workers and their wives and families is still deplorably unsatisfactory. When I tell members what has taken place in the past, they will wonder. We have asked for schools in some of the timber centres. The member for Albany (Mr. A. Wansbrough) has put forward a feasible proposition in connection with educational facilities, namely, that at the bush landings we should utilise old railway coaches for schools. Landings sometimes shift four or five times in the course of a year. A permanent school building at a landing would therefore involve great trouble and expense in the matter of removal. But if the Railway Department supplied the Education Department, at a reasonable cost, with some of the old composite carriages, those carriages could be shunted along the bush lines and

the children at the landings would then be enabled to obtain a little education. One carriage could be utilised as a school room and another as quarters for the teacher. The very first place where that suggestion should be carried out is the Jarrahdale bush, where there are at the present moment 10 children who have no chance whatever of obtaining any education. If such school accommodation were provided in the Jarrahdale bush other families would probably send their children along. The suggestion of the member for Albany is well worthy of close consideration by the Government. Many of us have read Upton Sinclair's "Jungle," but the conditions of life in our jarrah and karri forests out-jungle even that gruesome book. Hon. members will find it hard to believe, but it is a fact, that as late as last Thursday or Friday I received from one mill centre a letter complaining that the company were conveying the workers' meat and groceries out to the bush camps in a sanitary cart! If that is not disgusting and disgraceful I do not know what is. The Health Department should take the matter up. Such was the means of conveyance of the workers' food adopted by the Kauri Company, which in three years paid £180,000 in dividends. Notwithstanding that prosperity the company use a sanitary cart to deliver provisions! At other bush landings provisions are still brought out on open trucks, and simply thrown off to lie in the dust of summer or in the rain of winter, and possibly be nosed by dogs. The people at the bush landings have no homes, cannot have any homes. Camp is shifted every three or four months, and for that reason those workers find it impossible to establish a home. In the ordinary hut or shack to be found on timber camps the bedding becomes wet early in the winter and does not become dry again until the summer arrives. The people get neither reasonable accommodation nor a fair return for their work. Millars Company use locomotive tanks to cart water to the men out in the bush, and they use the locomotive tanks also for the conveyance of crude oil. The next time after the tank has been used for oil, the men get a mixture of oil and water to drink. Such a fact needs no comment. Again, the cost of food and groceries on the mill camps is 25 per cent. higher than in Melbourne and 13 per cent. higher than in Perth. I am giving these figures from the Federal statistics. The rates for carriage of goods on bush lines are simply prohibitive. This applies not only to private employers but even to our State sawmills. The few miles' haulage from Jarnadup to Pemberton costs as much as the transport of the goods from Perth to the junction of the mill line with the railway system. Where the timber kings are in full control they will not allow any competition whatever in the matter of groceries and other provisions. I contend that where they fail to supply the workers on the mills and timber concessions with the necessities

of life at proper and reasonable prices, the Government should compel them to carry such supplies over the bush lines at ordinary railway rates. I may be asked, how can that be done? I go so far as to say that if the timber companies will not do it as a result of reasonable persuasion, steps should be taken to compel them. If they will not carry supplies to the workers at ordinary railrage charges, legislation should be introduced to force them to do so. One expedient would be to refuse the timber companies the use of Government trucks on their lines unless they carry goods for the workers at the ordinary Government rates. Further, there is the fact that the timber companies carry meat and stores out into the bush in open trucks over distances up to 23 miles. At Holyoake the food of the workers is simply dumped out, and the men complain that their meat and groceries are frequently sodden by the rain. Here is another fact: at Kirup some of the houses now occupied by workers were formerly occupied by pigs. My statements are irrefutable. I have evidence in writing of everything that I bring forward. The employers own the stores and compel the workers, by threats, to purchase all their supplies at those stores; and the prices are considerably higher than those at which the workers could obtain supplies from ordinary traders, supplies delivered in good condition. I emphasise that on some timber camps the house accommodation is simply vile. At the Railway Department's sawmill the houses are good, and Pemberton comes next in that respect; but at many mill centres the housing accommodation is deplorable. The accident rate among timber workers is the highest I have ever observed in world-wide records. I have myself kept a record of accidents among timber workers during a period of nearly 15 years, and I find that the proportion of mill workers to whom payments are made from the accident fund is equal to 25 per cent. of the total number employed. It means that every man who pays into the accident fund is bound to get injured once in four years. Many of the mill workers are crippled or crushed or killed. Life on the sawmills is miserable and melancholy. Only a little while ago three men were killed on the railway at Holyoake, being run down and smashed up by the log rake. We maintain that a staff system should be provided there in order to prevent these accidents. It is better to go to a little expenditure along those lines rather than to lose men's lives. A few days before that accident half a train was smashed up and overturned. The reason was that the torpedo trucks, which comprised the first set, caused trouble and a pin jumped out, with the result that the trucks became separated from the rake. Part of the train ran back and was upset, smashing up the line. Then came the fatal accident. A few days later a train ran into a tree that had dropped across the line. An axle broke and the train ran away. The guard clung on to his position at the end

of the rake for a considerable time, endeavouring to attract the driver's attention. The trucks ran off the line and the logs were thrown about. The sleepers were cut and the line itself was broken. I quote those instances to show the dangers that have to be faced by men employed on these lines. Everything possible should be done to prevent the occurrence of such accidents, so that we may save the lives of the workers. To show that what I have stated in connection with the jarrah jungle is true, I will quote what some of our workers and their wives have to put up with in these places. If I had the power I would compel the judges of the Arbitration Court, who do not give these men the consideration they deserve, to proceed with their wives and families to the mills in order that they should live under the same conditions as the timber workers. I would compel them to endeavour to keep their wives and families on what the judges could earn in the bush. If that were done, I am convinced they would treat the men with much more consideration. I will deal with some of the evidence that was tendered to show the conditions of the men in the bush and what they have to put up with. Regarding the shifting camps, men have to build their houses with their own materials and sometimes have to shift four or five times a year. Evidence was produced to show that these houses had bag walls, iron roofs, and some had boarded floors. They were wet in winter and hot in summer. Ordinary rates were paid for the time taken up with shifting but at most 12 hours were paid. No coverings were provided for the trucks and the clothes often got wet, and remained in that condition for a considerable time. In one instance a man had to shift and he had a family comprising five children. It rained from the time the house was pulled down until the next day. In such circumstances it would probably take the material a week to dry. The company charges £1 for the truck to take the property to the new camp and in winter the goods very often get wet. Then, again, in summer there is a danger from sparks flying from the engine. In one instance, a man lost all his bedding but there was no compensation allowed him. There is practically no medical attention in most of these places and in the Jarrahdale bush the nearest place where medical attention could be obtained would be at Jarrahdale, 20 miles from the camp sites. If they could not get attention there, Perth would be the nearest centre to them. There is no means of quick communication in the case of an accident. The men pay 4s. a month into the medical fund and although there is a hospital at the mill, the facilities are 20 miles away from the workers. I have known an instance of a man being run over by a truck. The wheels passed over his feet. It was 24 hours before he received attention at the Perth hospital. In another instance, an injured man had to

suffer for 10 hours before receiving attention. A special train had to be run into Mundijong. In another case a grocer's cart took a man with a broken leg 17 miles over a rough bush road. That gives some idea as to the sufferings of these workers. I have known a man to remain suffering for 24 hours before getting medical attention. In cases of sickness the women have had to suffer without attention for a long time. In one instance a baby became sick and had to be taken 20 miles to Jarrahdale in an open truck. The nurse advised the mother to return home with the baby in order to keep it warm. On Sunday she walked four miles to the Albany-road to get a man to drive them to Perth. On arrival there the baby was found to be suffering from pneumonia and was placed on the danger list. Again, no provision is made for maternity cases. In one instance the husband had to get a nurse from Armadale, but the nurse could not stay for any length of time. The neighbours took the baby to Jarrahdale, where it died. In another instance a mother nearly lost her life. The husband went to the mill for a nurse but there was no rake returning to the bush. School facilities have been provided at the Jarrahdale landing but the conditions are not satisfactory. Children have had to travel 10 miles on a rake and then walk another mile and a half to the school and return home in the same way. That means to say those children have to travel 20 miles by rail and walk three miles a day in order to attend school. Next I will mention the conditions at Ellis Creek. The housing conditions are anything but satisfactory. There are no drains there and the water is ankle deep at times in winter. There are no houses at the bush landing and the men have to keep a horse in order to get to their work in the bush, or else maintain two homes. The bush camps comprise wooden frames covered with hessian. The men get waste timber and have to do their own work. Townspeople would not put their dogs into such houses. There is no doctor available at that centre and the men have to rely on the assistance of a man who knows something about first aid to the injured. There is no nurse available and the nearest doctor is at Greenbushes, 30 miles away from the camp. Sometimes the doctor is called upon to attend a case, but will not do so. There are two doctors at Busselton, but when their services have been required one would not go out because there was no road over which he could drive his motor; the other required a deposit of £10 before he would visit the patient. As to accidents there, a swamper had his leg broken. The employees had to take the bagging from the horses' collars to make a stretcher and then had to carry him on it for over a mile. They went on horseback for an engine, which took him to Nanup and then he was motored to hospital at a cost of £5. Cases have been known where subscriptions had to be taken up to send

men away for medical attention. No provision in such places is made for maternity cases. Mrs. Jean Beadle, who is well known to most hon. members as being interested in reform movements, and who is a very advanced woman, was sent to these areas by us in order to make inquiries. She made a thorough investigation and saw what was taking place. She said that the houses contained no conveniences whatever; they were just bare rooms and a verandah with no conveniences, no washhouse, no bathroom, no coppers, and no shelves unless the workers chose to erect them themselves. Many homes were in bad condition and needed repairing. She also ascertained that women in some cases had covered the walls with brown paper and renovations had been carried out at the workers' expense. Certainly no provision was made for a large family. She found that they had to go to the bush in open trucks, and there was no protection for them whatever. Only one or two homes had been supplied by the company at bush camps. Mostly they were built by the workers themselves, and comprised uprights made of saplings with walls made of flour bags or pieces of hessian. The roof was of galvanised iron and the saplings and the roof were supplied by the company. As the houses were not lined, the frost dripped through and wet everything inside. The floor boards were uneven and, generally speaking, the huts could not be made comfortable. There was no ventilation and the windows were covered with strips of bags. As to the water supply, the women had to carry what they required from the brooks. Mrs. Beadle saw one woman who had carried 18 tins in one day and she had carried them hung on a stick over her shoulder. She found that the shifting of camp was one of the horrors of bush life. At Jarrahdale, according to her evidence, there was a well equipped hospital but no midwifery ward was provided. There was one qualified woman at the mill but none in the bush. The result was that the women had to be attended to by neighbours or else brought to Jarrahdale. The nearest doctor in that instance was 25 miles away. No provision was made for sick women and children when travelling, and again the rake constituted the only conveyance available. Under the heading of maternity matters she gave one instance of a mother who had given birth prematurely to a child. The infant was brought in from the bush to the mill but died before the doctor could be procured. That woman is still a physical wreck. Another woman was taken ill prematurely but a nurse could not be secured at Jarrahdale. The husband went to Arma-dale and brought a nurse who could stay for only an hour and a half. The husband could not get a doctor until the following week. The services of a nurse cost three guineas and the workers have to pay a woman to attend their wives when the midwife is not available. The doctor

charges subscribers to the medical fund three guineas at Jarrahdale and what he likes to non-subscribers. Generally speaking, there are no conveniences in the bush and the workers have to depend upon their neighbours. At North Dandalup the maternity conditions are even worse, and expectant mothers have had to come in on the tender of an engine. No provision is made for the children and girls have to go into domestic service miles away from home, while the boys follow their fathers in the mills. The men have not the money with which to provide for the education of their children and certainly no facilities are available for higher education. Children at Jarrahdale have to walk 1½ miles to school from the bush. At Whittaker's, the cooking has to be done in boilers and camp ovens and there are no washhouses or baths. The cost of clothing is very high there and a list that was prepared showed increases of 107 per cent. on articles that were absolutely necessary. In one instance the increase amounted to 203 per cent. That applied to calico, which is a necessary article for the home. In the course of evidence given by a man named Jarvis, it was shown that an employee in the timber yard broke both bones of one of his legs. The accident occurred at 10 o'clock on a Wednesday morning. First aid was rendered but the man had to wait on a stretcher for six hours for the mill train to take him to the siding. He remained on the stretcher all night and left in the morning for the hospital which was 59 miles away. He had to travel in an empty van and owing to the grade it rocked and jumped about.

12 o'clock midnight.

The man suffered excruciating pain, to modify which the bearers travelled on their knees, holding up the stretcher. They reached the hospital 30 hours after the accident. The man's leg was then in a shocking state. Then I have another instance: A woman bore twins, 27 miles away from the doctor. Both the mother and the twins were very ill. She was too poor to be able to afford the doctor's fee of £10 per visit. The mother and twins had to be taken by road. One child died on the journey, and the other died at the hospital, owing to complications from exposure. Then there was another instance: The dress of a woman working at a bush camp caught fire. She was 11 miles from the mill and 13 miles from the doctor. There were no means of treating her. A man had to be sent on horse-back to bring out the doctor. However, the doctor had to wait for steam to be got up in the locomotive in order to take him out to give treatment. During that time the woman, in acute torment, was brought in to the mill on a log wagon and taken to the

hospital 17 miles from the mill. There she died. These are a few instances of what those people have to bear. The conditions are even worse than those set down by Upton Sinclair when he wrote "The Jungle." All those matters should receive attention. The profits on the sawmills amount to 40 per cent. of the capital expenditure. Surely, then, those workers are entitled to some consideration! A few years ago I was able to get from the department's reports the percentage of profits to show what they were doing, but to-day the reports give no such information. I hope the Government will see that the form of the reports is amended so that we can see what the percentage of profits is. At present the reports give no information at all in that respect, although they show the production and the expenditure. In 1921-22 the profit amounted to over 23 per cent. During the last two years they have been still higher, although we cannot get them from the reports. In the State Sawmills the year before last the net profit amounted to £38,964, and the average earned on loan capital, after deducting depreciation and reserve, was 23.91 per cent. During the year just closed the net profit was considerably higher, amounting to over £62,000. In the face of that, surely something should be done for those men compelled to carry on the work in the mills! I am gravely disappointed that nothing should have been done for them. The employers quote the amount those men earn in the bush on the best work. If they work long hours and on Sundays, surely they are entitled to high wages! The average amount earned by the whole of the men is never quoted, but only the amount earned by a few men, which is misleading. The men are compelled to work under deplorable conditions that should be imposed upon no civilised men. The men are afraid to take their womenfolk and children into such places. The Government should step in and see that the condition of affairs is altered, and that the men pioneering in our bush receive some remuneration for the labour they give. When dealing with the welfare of thousands of men, women and children, a member ought to have reasonable opportunity for placing his grievances before the House on the Address-in-reply debate. Coming to re-afforestation, a great deal could be done in the interests of the country, and the timber workers could be afforded an opportunity to make homes for themselves. The Forests Department could open up the bush and bring in thousands of loads of timber for firewood, supplying townspeople and the people in the city with that commodity at a much cheaper price than that ruling to-day. But our department started re-afforestation on the outskirts of the forest, instead of starting on the side nearest to civilisation. They should be cleaning up the country, utilising the firewood for the benefit of people in settled dis-

tricts, opening up and developing the forest, planting trees where necessary, cleaning up the bush, encouraging the growth of younger trees, and placing in favoured spots the timber workers who know so much about the forest and who therefore would make capital foresters. Those men could be gathered together and settled on their own little plots.

Lieut.-Col. Denton: Another group settlement.

Mr. HOLMAN: It would be a settlement of competent foresters who would safeguard the forest and see that it had a fair chance of growing.

Lieut.-Col. Denton: Could it be done?

Mr. HOLMAN: Yes, and my friend knows it. It would take me hours to fully expound the proposal.

Lieut.-Col. Denton: Keep it till to-morrow.

Mr. HOLMAN: If I thought I could thus get for those men in the bush what they are entitled to, I would speak until to-morrow. If the Government will promise me to do justice to those men, I shall not delay very much longer. It is remarkable that, although we exported £1,400,000 worth of timber last year, very little money has been spent either on the men or on opening up roads. Since 18½ per cent. of our railway freight is derived from timber, surely those districts are entitled to some consideration! The pioneer farmer has my deepest sympathy. I do not begrudge him anything he has got, and I hope he gets a lot more. The timber workers, however, are pioneering without the prospect of getting homes for themselves. They cannot even get a grant for a road. When they wanted a road at North Dandalup they made it themselves. The same men are opening up a road from North Dandalup to Dwellingup, and they want some assistance. I hope the Minister for Works will help them to carry out this work. In places like Dwellingup where practically the whole of the mills are owned by the State and the roads are utilised for mill traffic, a few pounds may be required to repair the road.

Lieut.-Col. Denton: How much do they want?

Mr. HOLMAN: About a couple of hundred pounds. Considering the revenue derived by our railways from the transport of timber, surely these men are entitled to a little consideration. No men are so large-hearted as are these workers in the bush. They have to face all sorts of dangers, and the women and children have to lead lives that are really deplorable. The very worst class of life in the agricultural areas cannot be compared with theirs, because the farmers are carving out homes for themselves and have something to look forward to. We have heard a great deal about victimisation. Special reference has been made to one of the magistrates and to a superintendent of police. I do not know the facts of either case, and do not intend to

express any opinion. It is stated that the Government have adopted a policy of spoils to the victors, but I maintain they are justified in appointing to such positions men who will carry out their policy as it should be carried out. The Government would merit strong condemnation if they did not do so. What has taken place in this House? I was Chairman of Committees for six years, and members of the opposite party did me the honour to say I was the best chairman that ever occupied the position. Yet when they were returned to power, they appointed someone else to the position. If that is not an example of spoils to the victors I do not know what is. I did my duty while in the Chair, irrespective of whether I pleased or offended anyone. Throughout my six years of office I never had to name a member, and I had to speak harshly only twice. Never was a decision of mine challenged, nor a ruling disputed. We had a strenuous time during those years. On occasions when I left the Chamber for a few minutes' spell, the temporary chairmen who relieved me had to name members. The Leader of the Opposition and other members said I was the best chairman they had ever sat under, and yet they victimised me on the first day they came back with a majority. Why then should they criticise the actions of the present Government? Here is probably a worse example of victimisation. I was one of the oldest volunteer firemen in the State. I had a good knowledge of the work, and helped to make the volunteer movement what it was. I was appointed to the Fire Brigades Board, and was an ordinary member of it for two years. During that time I received £50 in fees.

Lieut.-Col. Denton: How many fires did you have?

Mr. HOLMAN: When I was in the One fire brigade, we had the champion brigade of the State. The fees I received from the board I put towards a championship shield worth 57 guineas for competition amongst the different brigades. Then I was appointed president of the board, and held that position for three or four months. Although efforts had been made to fix up an agreement with the men during the previous year, the board during my presidency fixed up a satisfactory agreement, and the men were fairly well contented. As soon as the new Government got into power, I was put out of that position, and the mayor of Northam, a friend of the Premier and of Mr. Colebatch, was given a place on the board. If the present Government are worthy of their name, it will not be long before there is a further firing out. I could quote other instances. Whatever criticism may be directed against me, I have a record that it would be difficult to beat. Within the last year or two charges were made against me by a certain newspaper, and I wish to show the difficulty that any man has to protect his character when attacked by an unscrupulous paper. I was accused of being a traitor to my country. It was said I had

gone the whole hog in the conspiracy against British industry and British survival. No more cowardly or dirty attack could be made on any man. Although I was above the age and had nine children, I volunteered for service on two occasions. I have my rejection badge and certificates. That showed I was willing to do my duty. Mr. MacCallum Smith never offered himself, and he is as young a man as I am, in a better position financially, and without chick or child dependent upon him. But because I would not be a traitor to the party to which I had belonged since 1892, I was stigmatised as a traitor to my country. I was attacked because I would not be a traitor to my party. I defended my character in the courts and obtained a verdict. I was compelled to go to Sydney at heavy expense to fight against a man of no standing. He was hired by the "Sunday Times" in an endeavour to still further damn my character. They had a man named Catts giving evidence against me. When he deserted the Labour Party he was able to publish whole pages of advertisements in the big morning and evening papers. An effort was made to use that against me as evidence before the Commission that sat in New South Wales. Another witness, a perjurer named Fletcher, who was in the Prime Minister's Department, was also brought against me before the Commission. He swore that I had been in Melbourne attending a deputation to the Prime Minister, Mr. Hughes, and that he took notes of what I had said, whereas I was not in Melbourne. These perjurers, and worse, were hired as tools by that newspaper to damn my character. I had to pay my own costs in this case. I was called upon to go to Sydney and had very little costs in any direction. The case was carried from one court to another in order to make it difficult for me to defend my character. It is time the libel laws were amended to give greater protection to individuals against the unscrupulous attacks of those who, to suit their own base purposes, go for everyone they can. The Special Jury Act should also be amended, for it places people at a great disadvantage. I would prefer to have a case dealt with before a judge from whom I would expect to receive greater consideration than I did receive. I hope the Government will carry out the pre-election pledges they made to the country, and will put into effect the policy they were sent here to carry out. I hope they will endeavour to put into force every plank of the platform of our party. When the Government can by administrative act do a thing, they should do it without hesitation. They are justified in appointing to positions men who will administer sympathetically any department over which the Government have control. The Government are justified in placing in those positions the men who are available to fill them. I must express my deep regret at the necessity for the change of representation for my district through the death of Peter O'Loughlen. I should have greatly

preferred to see him still filling his old position, one that he occupied for so many years with such advantage to the State. I may not be connected with the timber workers' union for very long because there may be trouble there, but so long as I have the ability and knowledge I will continue to lay before the House the conditions under which the timber workers live, the dangers they encounter, and the many privations they undergo. So long as I am able I will raise my voice in their interests and do so without fear or favour. It will always be my endeavour to see that there is meted out to them the justice to which they are entitled.

Mr. CLYDESDALE (Canning) [12.25 a.m.]: I believe I am to be the last speaker on the Address-in-reply. I must congratulate you, Sir, upon your accession to the high office you now hold. If you feel as happy as you look you must be well satisfied with your present position. I have been keenly interested in the debate and have asked myself the question, does the time that has been wasted justify the expenditure? No doubt I will be taken to task by members for that remark, but it does appear to me that some alteration in the present system is necessary. I have asked several members why we should make such long speeches, and I am told that these speeches are made so that they may be conveyed to their constituents. If the electors knew the enormous cost to the country consequent upon the making of these speeches, no doubt they would tell members to curtail their remarks. We are expected to set an example to the people. If business men in this State were to waste three weeks of their time out of 12 months, as we are wasting it here now, there would soon be very few solvent businesses left in the city. During the course of the debate many requests have been made to the Treasurer for expenditure in certain directions. I have worked these requests out to a total of something like £20,000,000. Later on members of the Opposition and probably some on this side will be telling the Premier he must keep down his expenditure to avoid increasing the deficit. I do not wish to be looked upon as parochial, but desire to refer to the disappointment I felt at the announcement of the Minister for Railways that there were not going to be any further tramway extensions in the metropolitan area.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You are now going to raise the expenditure to £21,000,000.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: The Minister is to be congratulated on taking a firm stand, for he realised that motor buses are going to be serious competitors with the trams. The possibility is that if the trams were extended the system would be out of date in a short time. Some of my constituents do not endorse that view. Although it is not always the best thing to do to congratulate

a Minister when his views are in opposition to those of one's constituents, I do say he has taken up the right stand on this point. We have to consider that there are invested in our trams £1,000,000, and the interest has to be paid on this for all time. In Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide the authorities have arrived at an important decision, namely, that there is insufficient traffic for both motors and trams. If there is insufficient traffic in cities like those where the population is so large, how can we possibly run our trams successfully if we allow motor buses to compete with us? We cannot do so. Both Melbourne and Adelaide, after allowing the buses to compete with the trams for a number of years, have decided to buy buses of their own and run them in competition with the other buses and the trams. In this matter we must have either nothing but private enterprise, or else nothing but State or municipal control. To me the only solution of the difficulty seems to be for the Government to run motor buses in conjunction with the existing tramways. Doubtless it will be said that the motor buses would represent another State trading concern. People can call the concern what they like, but I say it would be at all events a sensible concern. Some years ago the local authorities were clamouring for municipal control of the trams. How many of those local authorities would to-day accept the trams if the Government offered to hand them over? Not one of them would do so, and the reason for the refusal would be simply the opposition of the motor buses. If we permit the competition of private motor buses, there is no possible chance of any further tramway extension in the metropolitan area during the next 10 years. No doubt it is easy to say this and that should be done. Nevertheless I do suggest to the Government that they instal a motor bus service on the Lord-street line and on the proposed extension. I mean an up-to-date service, not one running every hour or every hour and a-half. Let them give a good motor bus service six months' trial, and at the end of that time they will know whether a tramway extension is justified. Then they could instal the motor bus service in another district where the residents were clamouring for tramway extension. Under those conditions it would be useless for deputations to go to the Government and say, "This service would pay, and pay handsomely, right from the jump." I believe I have made such statements on two or three occasions. However, I have always been right. If my suggestion is adopted, the people running the motor bus services will complain that their living is being taken away. Speaking as a motor car owner, I should say that the average charabanc now in use here has cost £800.

The depreciation on such a vehicle is heavy; I estimate it at £200 for 12 months and at £400 for two years. If the Government allow these charabancs to run in competition with them for two years, what will be the result? Undoubtedly the Government will have to buy out the owners of the charabancs. There is not sufficient traffic for both.

The Minister for Railways: What about the charabanc owners buying us out?

Mr. CLYDESDALE: In reply to that interjection I have to point out that earlier in my speech I said the service must be either all Government or all private enterprise. If the Government would now purchase those motor buses, whose owners probably have some sort of right, since their vehicles have been so long on the road, the Government would get the buses in good order, and would probably make a good bargain. The men employed on the buses could enter the Government service, and thus there would be little damage done to anybody. Two years from now the proprietors would probably ask £800 per bus. Very few people allow sufficient depreciation on a car, simply because they do not appreciate how much a car deteriorates in 12 months. If the Government refuse to purchase the buses and allow the present condition of affairs to continue for two years, private enterprise will have built up big business and will make heavy claims against the Government for compensation. From every aspect the position will then be much worse than it is now. Melbourne and Sydney find that their tramway services cannot compete with the motor buses. Six months ago I went to the Government and said, "Don't let these people invest their money; step in now and tell them not to invest it." Had that course been adopted, there would not be nearly as many buses on the roads to-day as there actually are. I have been reading what some experts have to say about the cost of road construction and tramway construction per mile. Their estimate is that to construct a mile of road would cost £8,000. We have passed the period when we could do with a 9-foot ribbon road which would carry only ordinary traffic. Nowadays it is more economical to build a good road costing £8,000 per mile than to build a cheap road at £4,000. The figure of £8,000, of course, refers to the metropolitan area, in which there is so much motor traffic. Tramway extension, according to the experts, will cost £12,000 per mile. Add the £12,000 per mile for the tramway to the £8,000 per mile for the road, and where is revenue adequate to the cost to come from if we allow competition? There is no chance of getting the money required unless we tax the man who occupies a small house and probably never rides in a motor car. To-day motor cars are doing

more damage than they are blamed for. Motor car owners will have to pay considerably more taxation; otherwise the occupant of a four-roomed cottage will have his rates increased. In the past I have advocated that we should endeavour to arrange with the Commonwealth Government for the imposition of a petrol tax. Some people have argued that it would be an unfair tax. For my part I contend that it would be perfectly fair.

Lieut.-Col. Denton: What about a tyre tax?

Mr. CLYDESDALE: That, too, would be a good tax; but one man might get 5,000 miles out of a tyre, and another 8,000.

Lieut.-Col. Denton: How would you work it; on the consumption of petrol?

Mr. CLYDESDALE: The man who uses his car merely for pleasure outings during week-ends pays for all the damage he does; but the man who covers thousands of miles every week does not pay in proportion, and he should be made to do so. In the metropolitan area there are some char-a-bancs and trucks that carry up to seven or eight tons. How are we to construct roads to carry that weight? If the load were distributed, I would say it was all right.

Mr. Sampson: What about the steam trucks?

Mr. Davy: The roads belong to the owners of those vehicles as well as to us.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: True; but where can we find the money to construct roads for those owners? We may possibly be able to find sufficient money to construct roads for the average traffic; but, in view of the huge mileage of roads we need, it is not possible for us to construct roads suitable for those motor owners.

Lieut.-Col. Denton: The heavy traffic comes into the country districts, too, and does damage there.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: When I was connected with the South Perth council that body used to top-dress a certain mileage of road and have it tested. Before the introduction of motor traffic our roads would last on an average for three years and three months. Then with the motor traffic developing and becoming heavier, the roads did not last for 13 months. Yet we hear people say that the motor traffic is not the cause of the roads being cut up! It is because of that that many local governing bodies are without funds. In fact some of them are bankrupt and have to come to the Government to provide money to build roads for motorists who do not pay for them. That is the position.

Mr. Sampson: The roads are so bad that they play havoc with the tyres.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: If the motorists paid more and better roads were provided, it would be cheaper for them in the long run.

Mr. Sampson: I am sure that is so.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: We must have roads constructed on scientific principles.

Mr. Richardson: We must have a standard for the roads.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: Quite so. Further than that, before building roads we should have a laboratory to test the material to be laid down. I know of one instance where £1,600 was spent out of traffic fees to repair a road, and the material used was soft limestone that one could cut with a knife. That was covered with two inches of gravel. The road looks beautiful, but in six months' time it will be clearly demonstrated that that money has been thrown away. Unless the motorists are compelled by the Government to pay for the damage, people owning small houses will have to contribute more than they should do. I know I am not popular among the motor owners because of my attitude, but I do not care a rap about that.

Mr. Panton: It is not only the motorists who do the damage.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: I have shown the position. The people possessing heavy motors come along and break down the top of the road, and then the suction from the fast traffic draws up the substance of the road. That is what is going on. I am convinced that the fast traffic does more damage than the heavy traffic. I am not condemning motorists, for motor vehicles have come to stay. We must encourage them, but they must pay a fair share towards the upkeep of the roads they damage so much now. I believe that a petrol tax, if such an imposition could be arranged with the Federal Government, or some other tax, should be imposed.

Mr. Sampson: There is already a tax imposed on petrol, tyres, parts, and so on.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: If the Vacuum Oil Company imposed an increase of 2s. a case on petrol to-morrow, nothing would be said. On the other hand if the Government imposed a tax of 2s., there would be a howl. When 32s. a case was charged for petrol there was no complaint. If 26s. was charged for petrol to-morrow the consumption would not decrease by 10 per cent.

The Minister for Works: What is the price of petrol now?

Mr. CLYDESDALE: It is now 19s. 6d.

Mr. Sampson: The Commonwealth collected £92,000 last year from the motor industry in Western Australia.

Mr. Chesson: What did the State get?

Mr. Sampson: Nothing. That should have gone to the State.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: What did the oil monopolists collect? At any rate, I have expressed my views and I hope something will be done in that direction, not only in the interests of the local governing bodies, but of the motor owners themselves.

Mr. Panton: With the advent of heavier traffic and big tractors, the country roads are being damaged.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: Of course each class of traffic will have to be dealt with on its merits.

Mr. Davy: You have a remedy under the Road Districts Act.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: What is the remedy allowed?

Mr. Davy: A road board can proceed against anyone who damages a road.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, but they have to catch the offenders.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: Road board members in some instances own the vehicles themselves and in those circumstances they are not likely to take proceedings. Still I maintain that the fast traffic does as much harm as does heavy vehicular traffic.

Mr. Chesson: It does more damage.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: The fact remains that we cannot provide sufficient money to build roads to carry such traffic.

The Minister for Lands: The trouble is that our people want the same as obtains in countries where they have millions.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: I wish to refer to the question of unsatisfactory tramway services in the metropolitan area, particularly on the Victoria Park route. The three best paying lines in the metropolitan area are those serving Victoria Park, Subiaco and Mt. Lawley. In Subiaco and Mt. Lawley there are double lines.

Mr. Sampson: Do not overlook the Como route.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: I have nothing to complain about regarding that line. On the Victoria Park route, however, there is the Causeway difficulty and the Como holiday traffic. There is only a single line from the Causeway to Mint-street. It is almost impossible to get a seat in the trams along that route, and if it were possible to extend the loops on the Causeway and build a double line in Victoria Park matters would be improved. I do not ask, as has been done in other instances, for the construction of a double line on the ground that people will be encouraged to build houses along the route. In this instance the traffic is already there and the Government cannot cope with it. It is nothing new for a tram to be held up for 20 minutes, and under such circumstances, bearing in mind the Como traffic, there may be a serious accident on the Causeway one of these days. The service is not what it should be. I want to impress upon the Minister that he should recognise the necessity for constructing a double line along this route. By so doing he will not violate his expressed determination that it is essential that no further tramways shall be carried out this year. What I advocate is merely an improvement to the existing line. There is another matter to which I desire to refer in connection with tramway work. I do not condemn the Government in this respect, but I think they made a mistake when they decided to build a tramline over the horseshoe bridge. At the north end of that bridge the traffic goes

in three directions and anyone who drives a motor car and desires to go to the parcels office has to turn at an angle of 45 degrees now. With the trams passing over the bridge the cars will be on the curve, with the result that the big bogies will project over the rails for three or four feet. By that means they will take up a lot of the road. I am satisfied that if the tramline is taken over the horseshoe bridge, within five years it will have to be pulled up. The bridge is congested enough now.

The Minister for Railways: It carries the traffic now.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: The motor and vehicular traffic over the bridge now is quite enough.

Mr. Sampson: Then there is the traffic from the railways as well.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: If Perth progresses as rapidly during the future as it has during the past ten years the horseshoe bridge will not be adequate to carry the traffic, apart altogether from the trams. It is not suitable for trams. It has a sharp curve, and there is no room at the far end. There will be nothing but congestion. That would occur to-day if the trams were there, so what is going to happen in a few years' time? Either a straight-across bridge for trams should be built, or they should be taken along to the Melbourne-road crossing. To run the trams over the existing bridge would be a lamentable mistake. I would say that in face of all the engineers in Western Australia. I hope the Government will give this serious consideration. I want to make reference to the State assistance rendered to indigent persons. Take the case of a mother with four children. She receives 9s. weekly per child until the children arrive at the age of 14 years. I do not wish to cast reflections on the officers controlling the department, for they appear to be doing their work well. The widow herself also receives 9s. weekly. Therefore she receives a total of £2 5s. for five persons. Suppose she has to pay 15s. per week rent. She is left with £1 10s. weekly for the keep of five persons. How in the name of God can a woman with four children live on 30s. a week? She has no possible chance. I belong to an organisation that knows these things, knows what is done. The good mother stints herself to feed her children to the best of her ability, while the bad mother lets the State take charge of the kiddies and put them in a home where, I admit, they are well looked after. The Government should increase the weekly amount. It is a disgrace to any Government. Take the price of meat to-day—1s. or 1s. 3d. per lb. How then can a mother keep four children and herself on 30s. a week? Is that a fair deal? But when one of the children reaches 14 years of age the amount for that child is cut off. The mother receives nothing for it. How much can a child of 14 years of age earn? Will he not be lucky to get a job at all?

Mr. Chesson: Except as a nurse girl.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: The Minister for Lands to-day told a deputation that there is a number of young boys in the metropolitan area out of work. When one of the children reaches 14 years of age, the mother is worse off than before. I appeal to the Minister to see that the amount is increased to at least 10s. weekly, no matter what may be the position of the State finances. I also wish to refer to the Golden Casket system of maintaining hospitals. We should introduce that system into Western Australia. We have the example of Queensland. Queensland people are very shrewd. They saw that their old system of financing hospitals imposed too great a burden upon a few, so they decided to indulge in a so-called gambling stunt and get people all over the world to finance the Queensland hospitals, instead of the people of Queensland having to do it themselves. That is the position. Investors from far and wide are responding to the Golden Casket appeal. Why cannot we do the same? The curse of Western Australia is that we are sending too much money to the other States.

Mr. Sampson: Yes, in every way.

Mr. CLYDESDALE: Well, here is the first step towards remedying the defect and getting some money from outside with which to finance our hospitals. Take the existing appeal for the Perth hospital. Every day we read in the newspapers that the secretary has been visiting different organisations, cadging for money for the care of our sick poor. If the system of the Golden Casket be wrong, it is not nearly so wrong as our existing system of cadging on street corners. When Mr. Ford, a member of the Federal Parliament, was over here, I asked him what would be the position in Queensland if the Labour Government were ousted from power. He said he did not care which party attained power, no Queensland Government would be game to cancel the Golden Casket. We hear about the opposition that would be raised in Western Australia. Where is it? I have waited in vain for that opposition to find a better system. It is up to them to find a better system or for ever remain silent. I hope the Government this session will bring down a Bill for the initiation of the Golden Casket system. Mr. Ford also told me that at the outset many people of Queensland were opposed to this system, but that now they looked upon it as their duty to contribute 5s. per week or per month. Of course, I can quite understand the influence that the chance of winning a prize exercises. However, people of Queensland who never previously contributed to the hospitals, now contribute freely. I wish to commend the Government on what they are doing for the mining industry, but it seems to me that a man trying to develop a mine is in much the same position as a farmer in the wheat areas. If a farmer's property be 25 miles away from the railway, it is not a payable proposition. So, too, in the mining industry. The Mitchell Government spent thousands of pounds.

in sending out prospectors hundreds of miles. Suppose the present Government were to send a prospecting party from Kalgoorlie 200 miles out, and that party found gold. How long would it be before any practical results would accrue, and what must the show be worth before it becomes a payable proposition? To me there seems a better system available, namely, to devote energies to areas lying close to railway lines and develop well-known lodes. If they adopt that course I am satisfied they will get better results. I recall that at the conference of those interested in mining, I advocated the boring system. There are many fine lodes between Yalgoo and Meekatharra; some have shown promise, some have gone down to water level and been abandoned there, and some have petered out. If efforts were confined to boring, better results would be obtained than by sending prospectors out hundreds of miles into the back country. I hope the Minister for Mines will consider this point. The Address-in-reply has now extended into the fourth week of the sitting, and it is one o'clock in the morning and everyone is pleased that the long discussion is nearing an end. Those people who stand for conducting the affairs of the House in a business-like manner are not satisfied with this Address-in-reply farce. That is rather strong language, but I do not think that the time involved and the expense entailed in printing the "Hansard" reports justify the results, namely, the desire of members to have their speeches reported for the benefit of their constituents.

Question put and passed; the Address-in-reply adopted.

BILLS (8)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Legal Practitioners Act Amendment.
Introduced by Mr. Hughes.
- 2, Closer Settlement.
Introduced by the Minister for Lands.
- 3, Arbitration Act Amendment.
- 4, Workers Compensation Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Works.
- 5, Private Savings Bank.
Introduced by the Premier.
- 6, Inspection of Scaffolding.
- 7, Road Districts Rates.
Introduced by the Minister for Works.
- 8, Jury Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

House adjourned at 1.10 a.m. (Thursday.)

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 21st August, 1924.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 1.30 p.m., and read prayers.

URGENCY MOTION—GROUP SETTLEMENTS, IMPERIAL AGREEMENT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson):—

Dear Sir, I desire to inform you that it is my intention to move for the adjournment of the House as a matter of urgency under Standing Orders 47 and 47A, to call attention to the serious and alarming statements made by the Minister for Lands (Hon. W. C. Angwin) in the metropolitan Press, wherein he states that according to the interpretation of the Crown Law authorities the agreement made between the Imperial and Western Australian Governments if carried out on present conditions would entail the loss of about £4,000,000.

The Standing Orders referred to give the Speaker power to decide whether or not a motion of this kind is in order, and to some extent that includes the question of urgency. It would be obviously unwise and out of order to permit a matter of urgency to be moved when it could be moved and properly dealt with on ordinary notice. However, the Standing Orders provide that the responsibility of urgency shall be divided between the Speaker and the hon. member, and seven other hon. members who must stand in their place. This matter is one of importance—

Mr. Holman: It is not a matter of urgency.

Mr. SPEAKER: And being of importance, it may be one of urgency.

Mr. Holman: It may be used for some flag flapping.

Mr. SPEAKER: I will, therefore, allow this matter to go, upon seven hon. members rising in their places.

Seven members having risen in their places—

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.35]: I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr. Holman: In which hand are you going to wave the flag?