

Legislative Council,*Wednesday, 3rd August, 1921.*

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

QUESTION—TAX COLLECTION AGREEMENT.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON asked the Minister for Education: 1, Have any amendments or alterations been made to the agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments as laid on the Table of the House, and authorised by "The Tax Collection Act, 1920"? If so, what were these amendments or alterations? 2, Will the Minister lay on the Table of the House the agreement as completed, together with a copy of the agreement originally tabled when the Tax Collection Act was introduced? 3, Is there still a State Commissioner of Taxation? Is it a fact that the State Commissioner is known as Deputy Federal Commissioner and not as the State Commissioner?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Yes, but no material alteration. 2, Yes. 3, (a) Yes; (b) No.

QUESTION—PENSIONERS' HOMES AND TAXATION.

Hon. T. MOORE asked the Minister for Education: Is it the intention of the Government to introduce legislation during the present session for the purpose of exempting old age pensioners from the payment of land and other taxes on their homes?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: The question is being considered, and if it is necessary exemption from payment of land and income tax will be provided for in the amending Act. The law relating to payment of rates and taxes to local authorities will be looked into.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1. Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgments.
2. Local Courts Act Amendment.
3. Evidence Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Education

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Third Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM (North) [4.35]: Before addressing myself to the Speech delivered by His Excellency at the opening of Parliament, I would like to extend a welcome to the new member who has come amongst us. It is always an advantage to see fresh individuals and to have new blood and new ideas in this House, but in welcoming them we must not overlook that desirable quality that is so often of great use, namely, experience. In these circumstances I have peculiar pleasure to-day in welcoming here the Hon. F. E. S. Willmott. He has had an experience extending over a good many years in Parliament, and has had the additional advantage of having been a Minister and having administered the laws of the country. I think, therefore, he will be a desirable acquisition to this House, and he will be able to compare the business of the country as carried out between this and another place. If there is another additional advantage in connection with his advent it is that he has a good experience of the country and a full knowledge of the resources of the land and a general knowledge of Western Australia. I was going to say that the Speech itself is colourless, inasmuch as it introduces no new departures, but after careful consideration I have come to the conclusion that it has rather a red appearance, especially in connection with finance. I am afraid there is a good deal of the danger signal in connection with it. There is one paragraph which is familiar to us, for we have had it every year, and that is the one notifying us that there is a deficit. I am sorry to see it. It is to be deplored because it stands as a reproach against us by the neighbouring States. I may be immediately answered that the neighbouring States themselves have deficits, but would it not be much better were we the envied one which had no deficit, and were we a State to be pointed out as the exception which proves the rule? In all seriousness I say the continuation of this deficit for such a long period, accumulating as it is in such an alarming manner, is a grave matter. I believe a great deal more attention would have been paid to the paragraph in the Speech had we not become almost used, by monthly repetition, to a deficit of a similar nature though not quite so large. If it was not so serious it would be exceedingly interesting to see how long a business could be carried on with accumulating deficits monthly and annually. I hope that some means may be found by which they may be put a stop to if only, as I said, to avoid the reproach against us by the other States. So much was said about the finances yesterday by Mr. Nicholson, and said very well too, and as a great

deal has also been stated in the newspapers this morning, I do not propose to devote much time to-day to the question. As I have found fault with the deficit the only reply would be to ask what would I do to stop it. I must admit that the only way I can see of stopping the deficit is that if we have a revenue of six million pounds we must spend only £5,599,000 a year from it. I cannot leave this subject without expressing some sympathy with the Government from two points of view. One is that the Government have every year to pay a contribution to the sinking fund. This is always brought forward as a very meritorious action and one standing much to the credit of the State, but I cannot help feeling that it is by no means a painless operation for the Government when they part with money for this purpose. However meritorious it may be to have a sinking fund—and I do not say that the Government ever hide their light under a bushel in connection with this matter—it does not bring grist to the mill. It does not help to bring revenue into the country. On the contrary it takes so much away from it. Another point in which I sympathise with the Government is in connection with the Arbitration Court. That court is the most severe tax imposer we have. The worst of it is that it is not in any way under the control of Parliament. The Arbitration Court can put taxes on the people by awards, as it has done recently, to a very large amount. I defy any Treasurer to estimate his expenditure for the coming year when he does not know what awards may come against him from the Arbitration Court. It is a very powerful institution. It is in the power of one man—for this is what it means—to impose this taxation without being controlled by any one except by the evidence. In these circumstances I have very great sympathy with the Government because of these two things. I am not going to make this an excuse for the Government for not keeping their expenditure within the limits of their revenue, which is what should be done if possible. There is no doubt that the railways have a great deal to do with the deficit or the receipts paid into revenue from year to year. I listened with considerable interest yesterday to the remarks made by Mr. Nicholson. One of the points brought forward by him was in connection with the lands that are served by existing railways. I am in accord with what he said, and also to a large extent with the interjections by which he was met from the other side of the House. I am not going to say that I would arrive at what he suggested in the same way. It is a most important matter that our railways should be worked to the fullest possible extent. It is essential that the greatest possible quantity of freight should be provided for them, but before we extend our railways in other directions, let us utilise all the land lying adjacent to those railways already con-

structed. By this means we shall make them pay and enable them to bring in as much revenue as possible. It has been proposed in some quarters to force the utilisation of these lands by taxation. I am opposed to that and I have made my attitude clear on that point in this Chamber before. I am opposed to all land taxation for revenue purposes. In Western Australia we depend chiefly upon the land for the development and welfare of the greatest number of the people, and to tax all land from which we expect to do so well seems to be rather short-sighted. I do not agree with anything savouring of confiscation. Every encouragement should be given to the man on the land, and we should take from him what we require towards the revenue in the form of income tax when he has done well on the land.

Hon. F. A. Baglin: A man can pass on his income tax.

Hon. H. Stewart: The man on the land cannot do that.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: We should subject land to two forms of taxation only. In the country all stations and farms should be subjected to necessary taxation through their road boards for the maintenance of their roads, bridges, and so forth. They should be fully taxed to meet the requirements under those heads.

Hon. J. Cunningham: What about suburban lands?

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: I will come to that. All municipal and city land should be handed over to the municipal councils and, from what I know about them, I do not think those bodies would show too much mercy. They would get out of the suburban land all the revenue that is required to keep their streets and other activities going. By that means each would be able to pay the taxation required in their respective localities and the Government would be relieved of the necessity for paying subsidies to these local governing bodies. I admit that at the present time the Government are not paying any subsidies, but in the past they have done so. I do not contend for a moment that everyone will agree with me under this heading, but I am fully convinced that there should be no taxation on the land for revenue purposes. Such lands should only be taxed to meet the circumstances of the districts surrounding them. In common with everyone else, I desire to see the land adjacent to the railways utilised to the fullest extent. I would give the owners of land adjacent to the railways notice that if, within 12 months, they have not taken the necessary action to bring the land adjacent to the railways into proper use, their holdings will be resumed and taken over by the Government at whatever price was agreed upon, if necessary, through arbitration. I contend that these lands should be taken away from those men who are not prepared to make full use of them. I must candidly admit that I do not know very many places where such lands are situated. Some of these holdings were acquired a very long time ago by men who had

very little means, and in such circumstances the holders have not been able to do very much with them. As these people cannot develop their lands, I take it they cannot pay taxation, and if we impose a heavy tax upon them it will be another way of forcing them off the land. That is not fair. I am perfectly willing to take the land away from the men who will not do anything with it, but if we are to see that these lands are utilised to their fullest extent, let us do it fairly. If such men will not agree to a reasonable price, then the matter should be submitted to arbitration. Perhaps I am one of those who have not travelled through this State as much as they should have done, but I have gained the impression that there is not a great deal of land adjacent to the railways which is not properly utilised. I have travelled from Bridgetown to Perth and from Perth to Nanine and also from Perth to Kalgoorlie. I have travelled along those lines on different occasions and I must candidly confess that I have not seen a great deal of land along those lines which is not being put to reasonable use. I have seen scores of miles where nothing is being done at all, but I do not think that any of us know at the present time what purposes that land could be put to. Let me give hon. members an illustration. If they were to visit the Upper Swan and look at the country up to Gingin, I do not think they would desire to have that land at a gift. Then out from Wanneroo for a distance of 20 miles or so, and also 20 miles out from Geraldton towards Mullewa, land would be seen which comprises largely sand-plain. I am absolutely in accord with Mr. Nicholson and Mr. Baglin in contending that we should do everything possible to utilise lands within 10 miles of the railways. By doing so I hope that we shall be able to get more freight for the railways and eventually make them pay. Let us make those persons who have land which is not used, produce something, or else take it from them by means which must be essentially fair. I do not intend to deal with every item which appears in the Governor's Speech because I candidly confess there are a number of matters contained therein concerning which I do not know very much. It has been said that people speak best on matters regarding which they know nothing. Perhaps that is so, but I do not intend to deal with those matters. Regarding the wheat pool, however, I have given that matter a considerable amount of thought, and I have arrived at the conclusion that I must favour the continuance of the pool. For the last few years there has been an organisation of this nature, and it seems to me that it would be a great pity now if the organisation were to be dropped and individual farmers left to carry on their business with the expert merchants and wheat buyers who, in a great many instances, know too much for them. Wheat growing is a precarious business, and in these circumstances it would be better to continue the wheat pool—whether a

Government pool or a pool controlled by the producers I am not prepared to say—so as to enable those engaged in this industry to secure the best prices they can for their wheat, instead of leaving them to deal with men who have a great deal more knowledge regarding wheat buying than the farmers possess.

Hon. F. A. Baglin: You must remember that dear wheat means a dear loaf.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Too much praise cannot be given to the Government for the assistance they have accorded prospecting parties. Ever since I have been in politics I have advocated this work. Years ago, when I was a Minister, I always contended that one of the things we should do was to encourage prospecting as much as possible. What knowledge I had of the gold mines and their situation throughout the State led me to the conviction that it is absurd to think that the discoveries of gold in Western Australia have revealed all the mines that can be opened up. The time will come when we will find, through the aid of prospecting parties, that other mineral fields will be developed and we shall have more good gold mines in different parts of the State. There is no doubt that gold mining constitutes one of the most important industries which will lead to a strong renewal of the business life and prosperity of Western Australia. No effort should be spared to discover fresh deposits of gold. I see that the Government have fitted out a number of prospecting parties, and that is a matter which is greatly to their credit. According to the Governor's Speech, 72 parties, comprising 126 men, have been fitted out. That is an excellent thing. If anyone looks at the geological plan of Western Australia, and knows anything about the trend of the gold deposits which have been found from the Kimberleys right down to Eucla and Esperance, it will be realised that these mines have been discovered in accordance with scientific plans. They have been west of north and east of south, and where we have found mines in the intervening parts these have been mostly outcrops. It has occurred to me on many occasions that it would be interesting to find out whether these outcrops could be followed up and more gold mines discovered. I think the Government should be given every assistance possible in their policy of helping these men to find fresh deposits. The next subject dealt with in the Speech is the North-West, and I address myself pertinently, I hope not impertinently, to the new Minister for the North-West, and I ask him to listen carefully to what I have to say. The Speech contains the following:—

In pursuance of the policy of development of the vast empty territory in the North and the North-West, an exploring party is now engaged on an overland expedition along the coast-line between Dorby and Wyndham, with a view to deciding upon the most suitable harbour in which

to establish a new port, so that now vacant lands to the extent of many millions of acres may be made available for pastoral occupation.

I think that is putting the cart before the horse. Why not give the people already there good facilities to begin with? The whole of the North-West requires what I regard as elementary assistance for carrying out the daily tasks. Why go in for the establishment of a new harbour when we have at least three defective ones already requiring attention in other parts of the North-West? It is of little use inducing people to go into these parts of the State unless we give them some simple means of handling their produce. They should be given reliable means of transport both for themselves and for the goods that they produce. The Government should give them elementary conveniences such as a regular and frequent shipping service, a telegraph service, better postal arrangements and matters of that kind, as well as lighthouses and other such conveniences which I group under the general heading of elementary conveniences suitable to the development of such a country. They only ask for what I call reasonable facilities, and I was glad to see that the Premier took an opportunity recently to visit that distant part of the State. I am very pleased that the Premier was able to take that trip, although in ordinary circumstances, I believe that the proper place for a Premier is in his office in the city, where he should spend most of his time in dealing with matters of importance, rather than running about the country. But a Premier should be conversant with every part of the State over which he has control so that he may have some local knowledge of the requirements of the people in distant parts. I am glad that the Premier was able to visit some of the distant parts, although I do not know that he really anticipated going as far as he did. Perhaps part of the trip especially was not anticipated by him and I, for one, do not think he should have taken so much time on his yachting trip from Port Hedland to Roebourne. Instead of spending some 12 hours on the lugger, he remained there for about 54 hours.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: It was a case of another drift.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: I heard there was a good deal of beating about it. I was very pleased because it was a matter of great assistance to me to have the Premier present and thus go into local matters and save the necessity of correspondence. We were able to get an answer straight away. I advise any hon. members, who desire to have their constituents' requirements looked after, to take the Premier along with them.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What about your remarks regarding the necessity for him remaining in his office?

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: One cannot have it both ways. The first matter which requires most careful attention is that of providing frequent and regular steam communication. The Government have undertaken to give us frequent and regular steam communication, but how do they do it? At present, they are trying to do it with one steamer, the "Bambra," and while she is doing all the good work which it is possible for one steamer to do, I ask what would happen if she broke down?

Hon. F. A. Baglin: Get another one.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Were it not for the fact that there are three steamers belonging to private companies trading along the coast, the "Bambra" could not possibly cope with the work. Moreover, if anything happened to those three steamers, for instance in connection with the Navigation Act, and they were to leave the coast, the Government would have to get some additional means of transport and communication for this part of the State. It must always be remembered that the steamers on the North-West coast represent to the people there what the railways in these parts represent to the people down here. After hearing Mr. Nicholson's remarks yesterday about the trading concerns, my opinion is that it would be far better if the Government gave up the shipping business and called for tenders under a schedule of rates for the carriage of passengers and cargo, giving a bonus or subsidy. By giving a bonus or subsidy in this way the Government would know exactly their liability for the year. Now we do not know what our liability is. The "Kangaroo" was to come out here but she had to go into dock at Plymouth. The "Kwinana" was burnt; perhaps that was lucky because the Government got the insurance. The "Bambra" broke her rudder at Fremantle and had to go to Sydney. Were a contract let and a subsidy of £10,000 or £15,000 granted by the Government, we would know our liability and the service, I think, would be just as well conducted as it is at present.

Hon. F. A. Baglin: The Government's source of revenue would be cut off.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: No steamer trading between Fremantle and Wyndham, that is, on our coast alone, could make it pay. Therefore a subsidy must be given. Some critics will say, "Look at the expense of a subsidy!" I have already pointed out, however, that these steamers represent to the people of the North-West what our railways represent to the people down here. The shipping service is their means of transport and communication, and if it be said that this service does not pay, well, the same argument might be applied to the railways here. Unless the Government are prepared to go into the steamship business very thoroughly—and this would be a great expense—surely it would be wise to arrange for other boats to do

it. I understand that there is no intention of taking those other boats off the coast unless they are interfered with. Looking at the question from all points of view after my trip to the North-West, I think it would be in the interests of the State to call for tenders, and to offer whatever is considered a fair subsidy or bonus for a frequent and regular service. The Government would know their liability, they would have a schedule of rates for the carriage of passengers and cargo, and would know exactly what service they would get. There is another important matter I want to mention and I hope that the Minister for the North-West has taken notice of it before this. It is the matter of lighthouses. The North-West coast is an exceedingly dangerous coast. On several occasions the need for more lighthouses has been pointed out. I believe this is a Federal matter. I am informed that four or five additional lighthouses are required and that this will mean a large expense, but in these days there are automatic lighthouses so that the provision of these necessary safeguards should not be excessively costly. Unless the greatest care is exercised in navigating those waters, what with the currents and falls of the tide, the greatest danger might result. We had one experience when going into King's Sound. We happened to meet the tide and although the boat was steaming at 11 knots, in three hours we made only one mile headway. I had never seen such a sight before.

The Minister for Education: I had the same experience.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: The captain said, "We are not making any headway," and I replied, "How absurd! I can see that we are." He said, "Watch those islands." I did so and the headway we made was one mile in three hours. It was unfortunate management, perhaps, that we arrived there at that particular time, but if we had not gone in the boat would have lost perhaps a full day, and I understand that this would have represented a loss of at least £100 for the day. I fully recognise that with the present state of the finances, it is almost unfair to ask the Government to incur any expenditure. Still, there are two or three items on which expenditure would be justified. Instead of making this new port, the Government should provide reasonable facilities which are badly wanted. One requirement is a jetty at Denham, Shark Bay. I believe the Engineer (Mr. Tindale) knows all about it. The boats have to anchor in about 20 feet of water. A lighter goes out and that lighter cannot get closer inshore than 8ft. depth of water. It is then necessary to employ a dinghy or small boat to take off the cargo from the lighter to the shore, and great inconvenience results. The people of Shark Bay ask that the jetty be carried into 8ft. of water so that the lighter can lie alongside and discharge. There is a little township there and pearl shell, wool, and sheep are produced. The

people have been working hard for years and are entitled to some consideration. The next place is Onslow, which has an open roadstead which is quite dangerous. The Government have decided to move the town to another part, and a jetty is wanted there also. I was with the Premier at Broome and I was surprised how few were the things that the people of Broome asked for. Only two requests were made, one of which I cannot remember, and the other was for a hospital. A hospital is badly needed at Broome. Instead of opening this new port and incurring the expense, which would be all very well if we had a bigger population and a strong demand for it, let us provide the people who are already there with such reasonable conveniences and facilities as are necessary. These people have had the pluck to go out there and have started these places, and therefore we should give them reasonable facilities before we begin to open up new ports. There is another convenience required which also is under the control of the Federal Government. There are three wireless stations north of Perth, one at Geraldton, one at Broome, and one at Wyndham. Surely some arrangement could be made whereby items of news, both European and Australian, could be transmitted to these stations and then telegraphed to the different centres so that residents of the North-West would be made to feel that they were not entirely out of touch with the world. No very great expense need be involved. If the Federal Government agreed that these wireless stations might receive a certain amount of news and that it might be telegraphed to the different stations, the people in these districts would not feel anything like so isolated as they do at present. While I was in the North-West I think I saw a newspaper on one occasion only, and one realised how out of touch with the world the people are. A little concession like this, which the Government might well ask of the Federal Government, would be of the greatest assistance to the people and would be fully appreciated. I hope that the Government will take up the question of the duty on bananas. This, too, is a Federal matter. Unless one has been in those parts of the State, he cannot realise the hardship which the extra duty will inflict. The proposed duty is actually 1d. per pound, and the weight includes the weight of the stalk. The duty amounts to £3 6s. 8d. per ton, which is prohibitive. The people of the North-West get a little citrus fruit and bananas from Java. A man buys a bunch of bananas and hangs them up until they ripen, and they make a nice change for him. I have written to the Premier, I have wired to Mr. Gregory, I have talked to Mr. Prowse and I have wired to the Federal Treasurer, Sir Joseph Cook, regarding the matter. I have a letter in reply from Sir Joseph Cook in which he says the matter will receive consideration, but he has not undertaken to remove the duty. I pointed out that if this duty was imposed,

he might see his way to exempt the North-West from the proclamation.

Hon. F. A. Baglin: Why cannot they grow bananas in the North-West?

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Because the cost of labour is so great and the climate is so severe that it is impossible to get anyone to do the work. If, as Mr. Durack stated the other day, they had some indentured labour it might be possible to grow sufficient for requirements. I hope the Federal Treasurer will do something for the North-West in this connection. If that part of the State could be exempted, it would be a very great boon to the people, and I am not sure whether it would not be advantageous to extend the exemption to Perth. I suppose the duty is imposed in order to encourage banana growing in Queensland. I do not know that we ever see Queensland bananas here; all we see are Piji or Java bananas. If later on it were found that we could produce our own requirements, the exemption could be removed. Another concession that the Government might give to the residents of the North-West is cheap fares once a year on the State steamers so that a trip may be made to the South and back again, say a few months later. This would place within the reach of many women and children an opportunity of having a change to the South which at present rates they cannot afford, and it would only be placing the North-West people on the same footing as people in the South, so far as reduced holiday excursion fares were concerned. One of the greatest calamities which the Government have to face is that of the Wyndham Meat Works. I had a look over the works and it was with the greatest regret that I saw such magnificent works, so well erected, and so excellently kept, idle. Unfortunately, the last expenditure has yet to be faced. Without entering into the merits of the question as to why the works are not operating, there is not the smallest doubt that if work is resumed, there must be a further expenditure, and a good deal, too, in order to provide adequate storage accommodation. There is every facility for killing; in fact no works could be better equipped. I went through the works from the stage where the bullocks enter to the freezing chamber, but it was patent that more storage is required. At an isolated port like Wyndham, vessels do not call unless they are specially contracted for, and proper storage is essential. It is not like the port of Fremantle or Geraldton, where a vessel might call in for 200 or 300 tons of cargo or perhaps even 1,000 tons. At Wyndham it is necessary to guarantee a full load, and when an army of men are employed in killing, it is necessary to have space for storing the meat. There is not the smallest doubt that the storage will have to be extended.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The works are useless until sufficient storage is provided.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Yes, unless regular shipments can be arranged. I am sorry to say that whilst I was in the

North the prospects were not by any means encouraging. As we all know, wool at that time was almost unsaleable. There was a glut in the market of three million bales which could not be sold, and there was a new clip coming on. Whatever quantities of wool were sold, were disposed of at prices which hardly repaid the cost of production; and they were only small lots. Pearlsell, I regret to say, had no market at all. When I arrived at Wyndham the Government could not take delivery of the cattle which they had purchased, owing to the works being closed down. In the circumstances, matters were not cheerful; but I am glad to say that by now they have improved considerably. In regard to pearlsell, the change is due to some action which was taken, action in which I had some part; a representative of a financial institution with which I am connected went to New York, and I am pleased to say that, as a result, a cable has been received stating that in connection with pearlsell matters have improved a good deal. Accordingly, people are much more cheerful, and there is a promise of business going on in a better way than it has done recently. That is fairly comforting, and I am glad to be able to report it, because the men up in the North deserve every encouragement, having regard to the hard life they lead. As regards wool, the position has improved to this extent, that the wool is selling, is going into consumption. As long as it is going into consumption, it is doing good. But the commercial atmosphere of the wool market will never be cleared till the whole of the wool which is on hand has gone into consumption. That will have two good effects. On the one hand it will cheapen clothing and thus cheapen the cost of living, and on the other hand it will clear the warehouses of all stocks of wool, so that we shall know exactly what we have in front of us to deal with in the future. I see a remark in the Governor's Speech as to the Government having kept their promise to obtain a report from a Royal Commission on Education. We are now promised that this report will be laid on the Table of the House. Of course, it would be premature to offer any remarks on that report until one has had the opportunity of reading it. To my mind, that report is a very important one. First of all we have to consider whether the Royal Commission, constituted as it was, has the confidence of Parliament and of the community. Secondly, we have to consider whether the evidence which was tendered or invited was of as comprehensive a nature as it should be in order that all sides of the education question might be fairly reviewed. Presuming those two questions are answered in the affirmative, then the further question arises for Parliament to decide, whether we can afford half a million a year amongst 300,000 people. As soon

as the report is laid on the Table of the House, we shall have an opportunity of perusing it and probably of discussing it. Until then, I do not propose to make any further remarks on the subject. The last matter I wish to refer to is the water supply of the metropolitan area. I am pleased to see some steps have been taken in that connection. Last year, and for many years past, this has been a very troublesome and irritating question, especially to those people who live in localities on top of the hills, to which the water does not easily reach. It may not sound very important, but a failure of the metropolitan water supply spoils the homes of numbers of people. This is especially displeasing to women, who take a great interest in their gardens. What is the use of working for 10 months of the year getting a garden into nice order, and then receiving an instruction that for the two hottest months of the year one must not use any water for the garden? Such a position is most discouraging, and I believe the Government recognise it: there is a reference to the subject in the Speech. The only difficulty is the question of money. I am one of those who firmly believe in making use of the water in the Mundaring Weir. There is that huge quantity of water, but the old story was that it was unwise to touch that supply for fear of impoverishing the store needed to supply the requirements of the goldfields although it contained sufficient for three years. I do not think there has ever been a year when the dam has not been full. In fact, a great deal of the Mundaring water has been deflected from the goldfields, and has done a great deal of good among the farming community. Even in spite of all that, there is, I understand, a very large quantity of superfluous water which might well be utilised in connection with Perth. I am told that this will require 27 miles of pipes, and I do not know what that will cost. So it all comes back to the old question of where the money is to come from. However, a supply ought to be made available, and I take this opportunity of urging the Government to get the work done before the next summer comes, so that then it will not be necessary for them to tell consumers that the Government have the matter in hand and that something will be done "next year." In conclusion, I note that a number of Bills are foreshadowed. I throw out a suggestion, not by way of criticism, that the Bills be brought down as expeditiously as possible, instead of being left to the last two or three weeks of the session. Many of us, in fact all of us, are desirous of giving as much attention as possible to the Bills brought down; but it is impossible to accord full consideration to a number of measures all introduced within a week or two. Some of us have occupations besides politics. As I say, all of us are anxious to do justice to the legislation sub-

mitted to this Chamber. If Bills are brought down in the early part of the session, as they may be, we shall not be overwhelmed with a multitude of them at the end of the session. With these remarks I have pleasure in supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West) [5.24]: Like the previous speaker, I wish to congratulate Mr. Willmott on his return to this House. I may express the hope that the hon. member will find the environment here such that at the expiration of his term he will consider the atmosphere of the Legislative Council more congenial than that of another place. I do not propose to say much on the Address-in-reply, realising that the Leader of the House is anxious to have this debate concluded at the earliest date possible. However, this Address-in-reply appeals to me as being very different from any Address-in-reply which has come under my notice since I have been a member of the Council. My personal view is that the present session should be devoted almost entirely to the question of finance, and to urgent questions relating to administration in general. There are, of course, certain other matters which must be considered during the session; certain Bills must be carried in connection with such subjects as a wheat pool, and various administrative affairs. Apart from those matters, I consider that we should devote our time during this session to dealing with questions of finance. Like the last speaker, I shall refrain from detailing many matters relating to the State finances. Unfortunately, those matters are, all of them, known to us only too well. This ever recurring deficit and the sinking fund represent, to my mind, one of the worst possible advertisements we can have as a State. I am willing to admit that in various directions it is quite impossible for the Government to stop the financial drift. I realise that when one has a huge capital expenditure, with very heavy interest and sinking fund charges, accompanied by a falling-off in trade, it would be futile to close down an enterprise, because then no interest and sinking fund whatever would be earned. But I do consider that the Government might well move to obtain the appointment of a joint select committee of both Houses of Parliament to go into the question of State trading concerns—a committee which would have the confidence of both sides in another place, and which would possess some community of interests with the State enterprises to be inquired into. If the State Implement Works, for instance, are not to-day providing any interest or sinking fund, then, if that continues, the general revenue is called upon to provide finance for those works. In such circumstances I hold that the Government should decide to dispose of them immediately. The Government should cut off as soon as possible all those State trading concerns where the drift shows, and appears likely to continue. As regards State steamers, I am quite in accordance with Sir Ed-

ward Wittenoom. I agree that by far the better course would be that we as a State should know exactly where we are by offering a bonus of a certain amount for a certain service to be run on our North-West coast. In consideration of the subsidy, a schedule of fares and freights could be arranged whereby the people would obtain a much better service than the present one, and at a considerably less cost than that involved in Government control. I think all hon. members will admit that it is quite impossible for the Government to furnish anything like a reasonable service with only two or three steamers at their command—and those steamers not suitable for the trade. There is no gainsaying the fact that, serviceable as the "Bambra" has proved, she is not suited to the North-West trade. There are certain distances to be run between ports within a certain number of hours, failing which there is much loss of time. Unfortunately for the Government, the "Bambra" is not able to make those runs. Then there is the "Kangaroo," as to which I question very much whether she will prove suitable for the trade into which the Government propose to put her upon her return to this State. As Sir Edward Wittenoom has said, suppose an accident happens to one of those steamers: then there will be dislocation and disorganisation, with the expense of the department still continuing, and no revenue coming in. In my opinion, tenders should be called for a service on our North-West coast; and in that way we could obtain for a given sum a certain fixed service, at specified rates for passengers and goods. This, in my opinion, is one of the questions upon which a joint select committee of both Houses might advise the Government. But unfortunately the Government have drifted, just as the Leader of the House predicted some years ago. The hon. member was one of the strongest opponents in the House of any form of Government by regulation. I remember his protests against government by regulation. As I stated at a public function in the West Province, I consider any member of Parliament outside the Cabinet is quite useless to his constituents, and of no good to Parliament. No matter what suggestion a private member may put up, very little notice is taken of it. We pass Acts of Parliament, but their interpretation is altered entirely by a regulation subsequently framed and administered by a departmental officer with, perhaps, no sympathy for the department, and very little for the people who have to deal with him. Then in addition to the State steamers we have numerous other trading concerns calling for the expenditure of huge sums of money. Yet we in this House are never given an opportunity to consider the Estimates until the closing hours of the session, and when any member protests against the Estimates coming down so late, no notice whatever is taken of the objection. Year after year the Estimates go through with nothing more than a pious protest and

a declaration that if they are so late next time, a stand will be made against the practice. Another thing I am concerned about is this: During recent years we have seen heavy imposts placed on all sorts of industries. If, as the result of those imposts, we could see daylight at the end, if the revenue derived from that taxation were used for balancing the ledger, there would be some hope of relief in the future. It appears to me that in every Government department there is a huge staff which must be maintained. The Minister responsible notifies that something must be cut down, or additional revenue secured. To-day people are being harassed by the departments for additional revenue, so that it shall not appear that the departments themselves are too great a tax on the State. And, notwithstanding all the additional taxation, the drift continues. We have industries suffering to such an extent that any additional impost will mean their extinction. If this year and next year we continue this financial drift and the Government, deciding upon additional revenue, attempt to impose any further taxation on our industries, it will result in the industries being closed down altogether. Cabinet, although it may contain the cream of Parliament and the genius of the State, does not necessarily know everything about all questions. Rather than allow the drift to continue, Cabinet should invite from members suggestions likely to be of benefit to the State. We all know that there is a certain cynical class ever prone to think they know a little more than the other fellow. We have these so-called experts in every walk of life. In many cases experts are dangerous. My experience has been that they are never practical. If the Government are not prepared to allow financial questions to be freely and openly discussed on the floor of the House, the drift must continue. Surely, as members of Parliament we have some right to offer friendly criticism of the balance sheets of the various departments! If we had opportunity for offering criticism on the trading concerns, if we came here as shareholders of those concerns, I think many of us, possibly, might be able to make suggestions which would result in an improved state of affairs. The Government to-day may be described as a huge trading concern. The Government are in competition in almost every walk of life. The unfortunate thing is that, although as a trading competitor the Government can continue losing money, the private competitor has to pay taxation in order to make good the loss on the Government enterprise. In my opinion the present session ought to be devoted to finance. The House should refuse to grant even supplies until opportunity is given for inspecting the various balance sheets and the financial side of each of the trading concerns. We should have placed before us in clear, concise manner the actual expenditure on, say, the State Implement Works. That enterprise cost approximately £300,000 in the beginning. Then the present Minister for Works came along and said it was quite im-

possible to provide interest, sinking fund and depreciation on an over capitalised concern. In order to make a success of the undertaking, the capital was reduced by £110,000. Notwithstanding this, the State Implement Works still show a huge loss. I should like to know on how much capital is interest and sinking fund being provided.

Hon. J. Nicholson: We are in total ignorance of that.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: The Commissioner of Railways, apparently, is making an honest attempt to square his ledger. I expect we shall have a howl from some members respecting the cutting down of railway services, but I believe the Commissioner is endeavouring to bring his expenditure within bounds. The same thing will have to be done with all the other trading concerns. As for the Wyndham Meat Works, I do not wish to offer any suggestions concerning the probable outcome of that enterprise. The expenditure to-day is so enormous that I agree with Sir Edward Wittenoom that additional expenditure will have to be incurred in order to save some of the wreck. Anyone who has been to Wyndham knows that it is right out of the trading route, and that in consequence provision will have to be made for fairly large shipments, to induce steamers to go there. I daresay it will be possible to induce steamers to go there for shipments of 1,000 or 1,500 tons, but only at a prohibitive rate. It will be necessary to cater for that business by a special class of steamer.

Hon. H. Stewart: That should have been foreseen.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: If I can possibly offer any suggestions to the Government which will be of service to them I shall be only too pleased to do so, for I do view with genuine alarm the ever increasing deficit and the effect it will have on industry. For I realise that the additional taxation necessary to balance the ledger will seriously affect many of our industries. In respect of the measures mentioned in the Governor's Speech, some of them may be of importance but, generally speaking, they are a colourless lot. I see a reference to a proposed Coal Mines Regulation Bill. I hope there will be no introduction of any Coal Mines Regulation Bill which will tend to further harass the industry. We have enough legislation affecting this industry to-day, and if the proposed Coal Mines Regulation Bill means an amendment of existing legislation in the direction of harassing the industry, then I shall be sorry indeed to see such a measure. It is unfortunate, but it is true, that any one to-day dealing with Government Departments is considerably harassed in many directions. One only needs to be associated with an industry or a business that brings him into contact with a number of departments to truly find out what those Government departments really are. In view of what I have said I hope the Minister will consider the advisability of bringing down the Estimates at the earliest possible date,

and thus give this House an opportunity to at least discuss the financial position of the State irrespective of a lot of colourless legislation.

On motion by Hon. J. Mills debate adjourned.

House 'adjourned at 5.40 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 3rd August, 1921.

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

QUESTION—LIQUOR LICENSE TO ASIATIC.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Is it a fact that Quan Sing, of Derby, has received a license to sell liquor? 2, Does the Licensing Act permit Asiatics to hold gallon licenses? 3, Did Quan Sing, after being refused his license, wait on the Minister in Perth and have his license restored? 4, Did the Minister receive an application from a white trader at Derby? 5, If so, why this discrimination between white and tan?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, No. 2, No. 3, No. 4, No. 5, There is no discrimination. Mr. Quan Sing held a gallon license prior to being disqualified by the Licensing Act, 1911. He had stocks of liquor. As far back as 1915 the then Colonial Treasurer consented to abstain from taking action against Quan Sing as an unlicensed person in the disposal of the stocks in question. Mr. Quan Sing did not dispose of the stocks under that undertaking, seeking instead to have his license reinstated. Finding after many years that his wishes could not be complied with, he is now disposing of the stocks held ever since, under a similar guarantee by the present Government not to interfere. An inventory of the stock held by the police has been taken by the police, and when exhausted any further sales by Quan Sing would mean the enforcement of the law for illegal dealing in liquor, the same as in any other case.