

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.

### QUESTION—PENSIONERS' HOMES AND TAXATION.

Hon. T. WALKER asked the Premier: Is it the intention of the Government this session to introduce legislation to amend State and municipal taxation enactments so as to exempt the homes of old age and invalid pensioners from all imposts and burdens by way of rates and taxes?

The PREMIER 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.

### QUESTION—TIMBER LEASES AND CONCESSIONS.

To withhold extension of term.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Premier: In view of the fact that none of Millars' Timber and Trading Company's leases and/or concessions fall due for renewal until 1924, will he withhold the extension of such leases and/or concessions until the House has had an opportunity of perusing the papers called for by notice of motion?

The PREMIER replied: Extension has been agreed to under the provisions of the Act, and formal notification to Millars' Timber and Trading Company will be withheld to enable members to peruse the files.

### QUESTION—FRUIT TRADE, DUTCH EAST INDIES.

Mr. ANGELO asked the Minister for Agriculture:—1, Have the Government of the Dutch East Indies imposed a duty on Australian fruit? 2, Was this done immediately after the Commonwealth had increased the duty on bananas? 3, What effect will the action of the Dutch East Indian Government have upon the export fruit trade of this State?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, So far as we are aware the Government of the Dutch East Indies have not imposed any additional duty on Australian fruit. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, Answered by No. 1.

### MOTION—NOTICES OF QUESTIONS.

Amendments by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) [4.40]: I move—

That the Speaker's action in mutilating and amending notices of questions, and withholding notices of questions from the Notice Paper, is a wrongful interference with the rights and privileges of members of this House.

I regret very much to find that my first effort in this House is to be one in dissent from a ruling given by yourself, Mr. Speaker. As a new member I have no desire whatever to come into conflict with the presiding officer of this Chamber. Though new to Parliament, I have had some considerable experience in various debating assemblies, and I have invariably given my strongest support and my best help to the man who has been entrusted with authority to control the deliberations of the gathering. I hope that, as time goes on, I shall prove that in this Assembly I shall pursue the same course. But as regards the ruling which you gave yesterday, I feel, Sir, that if it is allowed to pass unchallenged and without some explanation so far as I am concerned, the inference may be drawn, firstly, that I plead guilty to having used unbecoming terms, and, secondly, the effect would be, I submit, that of seriously restricting the rights of individual members of this Chamber. Although the powers of the Speaker should be, if possible, upheld in every instance, it is not to be forgotten that the private members of this House also have rights which should be conserved. Therefore, although the ruling in question has been given against myself, a new member, I do not feel disposed to accept it without placing at any rate my views on the subject before the House. One reason which you, Sir, have given for expunging the question which I submitted is the provisions of Standing Order 106, which reads—

If any notice contains unbecoming expressions, the House may order that it shall not be printed, or it may be expunged from the Notice Paper, or amended by order of the Speaker.

That Standing Order sets out three conditions. The first is, an order of the House that the notice shall not be printed. The second is, that the notice may be expunged. The third is, that the notice may be amended by order of the Speaker. But in that Standing Order there is no power given to the Speaker to expunge a notice, or to order that a notice shall not be printed. The Standing Order distinctly limits the power of the Speaker in this connection to amending a notice. No power whatever is given by that Standing Order which you have quoted, Sir, authorising you to keep any question off the Notice Paper. According to that Standing Order, that power is left distinctly in the hands of the House itself. You went on to quote "May," as follows:—

As a Notice Paper is published by authority of the House, all notices of motion or of questions of a member containing unbecoming expressions infringing these rules, or other irregularities, may, by the Speaker's authority, be corrected by the Clerk at the Table.

"Be corrected." There is no authority in the quotation which you have made from "May," Sir, for your preventing a question from appearing on the Notice Paper. Under

both the extract which you have quoted from "May," and the Standing Order which you have cited, there is no power to the Speaker to prevent a question of which notice has been given by any member from appearing on the Notice Paper. By your action you have, Sir, according to the two authorities quoted by you, usurped the functions of the House, and taken upon yourself to do what the Standing Order says can only be done by a decision of the House. On those grounds I take my first stand, that you have done wrong, Sir, in preventing the question of which I gave notice from appearing on the Notice Paper. I maintain that the only authority which can do that is, according to the Standing Order quoted by you, the House itself. Now as to the amending of the questions. You gave as your reason, Sir, that they contained unbecoming expressions. Let me examine the alterations which were made in my first question. In that question you have caused to be struck out the following words:—

their efforts to supplant white labour by Asiatics.

The "their" refers to the licensee and the proprietor of the Esplanade Hotel. The allusion is to the efforts of the licensee and the proprietor to supplant white labour by Asiatics.

Mr. Underwood: That is not a question at all.

Mr. McALLUM: The reference is distinctly to the proprietor and the licensee of the Esplanade Hotel. Now what is there in that which is unbecoming? What is unbecoming in my saying that the proprietor and licensee of the Esplanade Hotel have put forward efforts to supplant white labour by Asiatic? I am not attempting to cast reflections on any member of the House or of the Ministry, I am not questioning their honesty, or casting a slur on them in any way. All I put forward is some action on the part of a publican. What part of the Standing Orders of this House gives you, Sir, authority to protect a publican? Is there any regulation which gives you authority to protect anybody at all outside the House? The Standing Orders distinctly set out to give protection to hon. members. When referring to people outside, members can call them all sorts of names, can even libel them, and action cannot lie against any member using libellous terms against outsiders, so long as those terms are used in this Chamber. This publican is protected against me by you. I am not allowed to refer to him as having put forward efforts to supplant white labour by Asiatics. What is there in the term which is unbecoming? It is merely a statement of fact, the declaration of a truth. How can it be held that a declaration of truth is unbecoming? In question No. 2 you have struck out the words "warlike arrangements including armed forces, barbed wire entanglements, field hospital, and the parading of the police force in battle array displayed." You have

struck out those words. I want to know from you what there is in those words which is unbecoming? They are merely a statement of what has occurred. The Government have admitted that. It has appeared in the public Press, has been criticised. With my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, I was in the Eastern States when the happenings at the Esplanade Hotel, Perth, were reported in each of the daily papers over there. It was the laughing-stock of public men in big cities where the hon. member and I were touring. Everybody knows that it was done; according to Press reports, it was open to the gaze of about 12,000 people. How, then, can it be said that this statement of fact in my question is unbecoming? The only reason you, Sir, have given for altering the question by ruling out portions of it is that those portions are unbecoming. That is the only point I have to answer. No other reason has been given. If there were other reasons, I take it you would have embodied them in your ruling. I say that your action in ruling out those questions has prevented me from getting the information which I require. I can conceive a position where the Government would be compelled to take action and use the police force in circumstances which would prevent me from taking any exception to their action. That has often happened. But what I want the declaration of the Government upon, is the extraordinary arrangements that were made, the extraordinary display of force that occurred at the Esplanade Hotel. I want to know if I am not to state the facts as they occurred, and to put the question in such a way that it will produce the information I require. If I am not to do that, how am I to get the information? The Government admit, everybody knows, that barbed wire entanglements were used, that the police were armed, that a fully equipped field hospital was there, with a nurse in attendance. Those are admitted facts. Yet, when I repeat those facts, I am told that I have used unbecoming expressions. If I want information about barbed wire entanglements, how am I to get it? Am I to refer to the barbed wire entanglements as spring mattresses? If I wish to refer to bayonets, am I to speak of them as toothpicks? Why am I debarred from stating a clear truth in asking for the particulars I require? I want to know in what way you, Sir, find the terms used unbecoming? You are casting a grave reflection on the Government in implying that those statements are so outrageous that they are not to be used, that I must not whisper them or give notice of them, although the Government admit having done those things. If it is so bad that I dare not put the question, what kind of reflection is it on the Government, who admit having done those things? They have erected barbed wire entanglements; they have armed the police; they have made a parade of a field hospital with a nurse in attendance; and the whole affair is so outrageous that I dare not whisper it in this House.

The Minister for Mines: There is no necessity to give you the information if you already know all these things.

Mr. McCALLUM: If I had been ruled out on the score that the Government did not want to give information already in my possession, it would be different; but that was not the reason given by the Speaker, who said merely that it was unbecoming. That is the only point I have to answer. I believe that owing to an action of a similar kind used by a Government in another State many years ago you, Sir, had to pay the penalty of the law, had to suffer and put up with the imposition of the law on you, and go through great privations. Now you are shocked merely at the mention of this kind of thing which you yourself had to put up with. What has made the alteration? Are we to be told that although the Government go out and make this kind of display a member is not to be allowed to get up and mention the fact and seek information relating to it? Not only did the Government do these things, but at least one member of the Government appears to be proud of the fact. The Minister for Mines, in his electoral campaign in Albany, boasted that he had raised armed forces in the country.

The Minister for Mines: What has that to do with the Speaker's ruling?

Hon. P. Collier: It is just as well that we should have it.

Mr. McCALLUM: The Speaker has ruled that I am not permitted to use the term "armed forces," yet during his campaign the Minister for Mines used words that were reported in the Press in this way:—

When they marshalled their forces and gave out their policy to the public and those directly interested in that deliberate attempt to make inroads on constituted authority, they told those people distinctly and definitely that there had to be an end to that kind of thing. He had armed a few men, and had asked repeatedly whether, as a matter of fact, that proper preparation made in connection with the Kalgoorlie affair had not actually effected the prevention of bloodshed rather than tend towards bringing it about.

The Minister for Mines: Hear, hear!

Mr. Carter: That was said in Albany, not in the House.

Mr. McCALLUM: The Minister boasted that he had armed men, and went on to refer to bloodshed. I have not gone that far, but have simply referred to armed forces.

The Minister for Mines: Compare the two of us. I think you look more bloodthirsty than I do.

Hon. P. Collier: You always do your fighting by proxy.

Mr. McCALLUM: I do not want to argue as to which is the more ferocious, the Minister for Mines or myself. All I am doing is to state plain facts, which apparently the Minister is proud of; and you, Sir, say it is so awful a thing that it must not be mentioned

in the House. What sort of a reflection is that on the Ministry? The Minister for Mines boasted that he had given a lead to the rest of Australia in arming forces. May I not be allowed to use the same terms here? I do not know what the House itself would class as unbecoming expressions, but I find that in the House of Commons the following terms were used in questions referring to Irish affairs, "arson," "looting," "torture," "murder." Those terms, relating to affairs in Ireland, are permitted in the House of Commons. In connection with Amritsar, the expression "wholesale bloody massacre" was used.

Hon. P. Collier: What would our Speaker say to that?

Mr. McCALLUM: Yes, what would have happened had I used such a phrase as that in my question? I find also that in the other branch of this Parliament, on the same day as I put my question, this question was asked—

On whose authority were the police armed with guns and fixed bayonets on Sunday, 26th June, 1921, in front of the Esplanade Hotel, Perth?

No exception was taken to that question, and it was duly answered yesterday. The next question you, Sir, have ruled out, was as follows:—

In view of the frequency with which armed forces have of late been called into industrial disputes, is it to be taken as the set policy of the Government to take sides with employers and prepare to shoot down workers who may be in dispute with their employers?

I wanted a declaration of policy on the part of the Government on that point. The Government admit that they have armed forces and served out ball cartridges. The public know that the Government have paraded the police with fixed bayonets, and provided hospital arrangements, and I want to know why those ball cartridges were served out to the police force if not to shoot down workers. I want to know why the police have been armed, why the display of force, why the arrangements for the hospital. Were those arrangements made to shoot down the workers? Am I not entitled to ask that? I want to inform the Premier through you that I asked the question—I do not think the Premier or any of his colleagues took exception to it—solely with the desire to get an expression of the Government's intention. My advice to the trades unionists of this State will largely depend on the declaration of Government policy on that particular point. I think that is of some importance, the future policy of the trade unionists of this State. We have had the exhibition here, not in one instance but in several, of armed forces being called out and ball cartridges issued and hospital arrangements made; and now I want to know if that has been done with the deliberate intention of shooting down workers. The information will weigh largely with me in the advice which I will give to the trades

unionists as to their future policy, but I am not permitted to have it.

Mr. Carter: Is that a promise or a threat?

Mr. McCALLUM: I am not particular which way the hon. member takes it. I want to know what the policy of the Government is on that score. They admit having done everything that I have set out. I propose at a later stage to give expression to my views in connection with these happenings, and to say what is in my mind and what I think the attitude of the trades unionists should be. I will state that definitely and clearly and will give the House an opportunity of knowing where I stand in that connection. These briefly are the reasons which have prompted me to move in the direction of disagreeing with the Speaker's ruling. The Speaker only gave one reason for declaring that these questions were unbecoming, and if they were unbecoming to the House they were certainly not unbecoming to any member of the Government in view of what I quoted as having taken place in the House of Commons and elsewhere. I have not attempted to reflect in any way on any member of the Ministry or on any member of the House. If there was a reflection it was against the publican, and I know of no Standing Orders which will protect a publican from any question which may be asked in this Chamber. With regard to the two authorities quoted by the Speaker, neither of them gives the Speaker the power to rule out a question. Both authorities state that the Speaker has the power to amend, but neither gives the power to rule out, and both declare that the only authority which can rule out such a matter is the House itself. Therefore I contend that the Speaker has usurped functions which belong to the House as a whole.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [5.4]: It is not my intention to more than briefly reply to the remarks of the hon. member who has submitted the motion. It is true that we can say anything we like in this Chamber and that we are given protection for whatever remarks we may make here. While that protection is given to us it is expected that we will not abuse it by saying of people outside things that are not true. We have that protection and we are expected to exercise care in regard to any remarks we may make. Of course anything that we may say about each other in the Chamber can be dealt with on the spot. It should be realised by hon. members that that is the position. It is true that any hon. member has a perfect right to ask questions, but the opportunity should not be taken to make a statement while asking those questions. The hon. member has declared that he made a statement in submitting his question, and he said it was a statement of fact. So far as the Government are concerned there is

no objection whatever to answering any questions or letting hon. members have any information they may desire. The hon. member has told us that he will take an early opportunity, presumably on the Address-in-reply, of declaring his views. That is all right. He has a perfect right to do so, and that will be the proper time to air those views.

Mr. McCallum: I have not yet given my views on the question. I said that my views would depend upon your declaration.

The PREMIER: The present is not the time to discuss the Esplanade question, but the time will come when the hon. member will be able to make full use of the opportunity. I was glad to hear him say that the ruling of the Speaker should be upheld.

Hon. T. Walker: Who said that?

The PREMIER: Not on this question, but he said speaking generally that control by the Speaker should be upheld by the House.

Hon. P. Collier: Whether the Speaker be right or wrong?

The PREMIER: Generally.

Hon. P. Collier: Everybody agrees with that if the Speaker is right.

The PREMIER: I agree with that too. The hon. member has, however, argued that only the House has the right to alter questions.

Mr. McCallum: I did not say that.

The PREMIER: It has been the custom here that questions should be considered or disallowed by the Speaker and this is the first time that any exception has been taken to the exercise of that power. I suppose if the motion be carried it will mean that the Standing Orders will have to be altered.

Mr. Willecock: No, they will have to be interpreted correctly.

The PREMIER: If hon. members will read Standing Order 108 they will see that these words occur:—

In putting any such questions no argument or opinion shall be offered, nor any facts stated except so far as may be necessary to explain such question.

Mr. Troy: That is all the hon. member did.

The PREMIER: I am not going to discuss the merits or demerits of the matter. The Standing Order declares all that may be done, and if in the opinion of the Speaker more than that is attempted, the Speaker has a perfect right to alter the question. Our object in asking questions is to gain information. If we wish to make statements, as my friend has done this afternoon, we can do so on other occasions. It is right that questions should be asked only for the purpose of gaining information. It was not necessary for anyone in this Chamber to ask whether the police were at the Esplanade Hotel on that particular Sunday. Everybody knew that they were there. Then further, Standing Order 109 provides that "a member shall not debate

the matter to which the same refers." So it will be seen, that not only is the question controlled by the Speaker, but the Minister in giving his answer is also controlled by the Standing Order. I have endeavoured to show that the question must be bona fide and merely for the sake of seeking information. The position is made even more clear by the "Manual of the House of Commons," 12th edition, page 61, wherein it is set out—

The proper object of a question is to obtain information on a matter of fact within the special cognisance of the member to whom it is addressed. The right to ask a question is governed by the following rules: (1) A question must not publish any name or statement not strictly necessary to make the question intelligible, (2) If a question contains a statement, the member asking it must make himself responsible for the accuracy of the statement, (3) A question must not contain any argument, inference, imputation, epithet or ironical expression.

That makes the position very clear, and if we keep within the four corners of that we shall always be on safe ground. I may also quote a passage from Blackmore's "Practice of the House of Commons" on this question. We find there, on page 126, this quotation—

The rule as to the language of questions is very strict. No argument or opinion shall be offered, nor any facts stated, except so far as may be necessary to explain such question. The object of this is to prevent the use of such language or statements, by means of a question, which might lead to debate.

We have always observed this rule. At any rate we have done so during my 15 years' Parliamentary experience, and we have never questioned the right of the Speaker to amend or, if necessary, suppress a question. I can quote further our Standing Order 106, which has already been read, and also the following passage from "May," 10th edition, page 232, which reads—

As the Notice Paper is published by authority of the House, a notice of motion, or of a question to be put to a member, containing unbecoming expressions, infringing its rules, or otherwise irregular, may, under the Speaker's authority, be corrected by the Clerks at the Table.

Mr. Troy: Where does it say it may be omitted?

The PREMIER: These alterations if necessary are submitted to the Speaker or to the member who gave notice of the question. At any rate I am not going to argue with the ex-Speaker.

Mr. Troy: I am not the ex-Speaker. I am the member for Mount Magnet.

The PREMIER: I remember the hon. gentleman as a Speaker for many years. The application of the rules, I repeat, is a matter for the Speaker. A member has the means by which he can question the ruling of the Speaker. Personally I have no ob-

jection whatever to questions being asked, but if I had been Speaker I would have taken exception to the form in which the hon. member's questions were submitted. I heard them read in their original form to-day for the first time. I hope the House will uphold the Speaker's ruling. I believe it will.

Hon. P. Collier: Rightly or wrongly, the House always does.

The PREMIER: No. If the Speaker were wrong I am sure he would be the first to admit it.

Hon. P. Collier: In the last Parliament he was certainly wrong.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And he acted against the advice of the Attorney General.

The PREMIER: I do not know what the Attorney General would say on this question.

Hon. P. Collier: How could you be expected to know when you have not an Attorney General?

The PREMIER: I think the House will uphold the Speaker's ruling because the case made out by the hon. member is a very poor one. He has admitted that his question contained statements. Of course he contends that they were statements of fact, but that does not alter the position. He admits he did make a statement.

Mr. McCallum: The Speaker is not objecting to all that matter.

The PREMIER: Having admitted so much, the hon. member ought to withdraw his motion. He has ventilated his grievance and, having done that, should be satisfied. If the motion does go to a division, I hope Mr. Speaker's ruling will be supported.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [5.15]: The Standing Order under which you, Mr. Speaker, have acted gives you power both to expunge or to amend any question put by hon. members. Standing Order 106 says—

If any notice contains unbecoming expressions, the House may order that it shall not be printed, or it may be expunged from the Notice Paper, or amended by order of the Speaker.

Mr. McCallum: That is not the punctuation.

Hon. T. WALKER: The punctuation is as I have read it. That is to say, the first "or" is disjunctive.

If any notice contains unbecoming expressions, the House may order that it shall not be printed or it may be expunged from the Notice Paper, or amended by order of the Speaker.

Mr. Troy: Three different propositions!

Hon. T. WALKER: That is not the point I am going to take. The Standing Order clearly gives power to expunge or to amend, and also gives the House the power. That is borne out by other authorities such as "May" and the "Manual of the House of Commons." The point is whether you, Mr. Speaker, have exercised your discretion.

The only point we have to consider is whether you have shown a tendency to wrongly interpret the phrases shown in the question. If your reasoning last night was correct, and you objected to the question placed on the business paper by the member for South Fremantle as being unbecoming, then I think no member of this House would support you. There is not a member who, in his calm moments, could read these questions deliberately and say they were unbecoming. Unbecoming of what? The questioner unbecoming as a member of this House, or the question unbecoming to the person who had to answer it? Was the question unbecoming as a matter of manners to the House? It was not. It cannot be said that that was the case. In the exercise of authority to expunge—it is supposed if this authority be exercised that it shall be exercised with due regard to the rights of this Chamber—this authority should not be exercised at the whim of the Speaker. It should not be done to show any bias in favour of any section of the community or by way of preventing any section of the community being wounded by the directness of the question. It has to be done purely in the protection, not in the abrogation, of the rights and privileges of members of this House. Let us take the question that you expunged—

In view of the frequency with which armed forces have of late been called into industrial disputes, is it to be taken as the set policy of the Government to take sides with employers and prepare to shoot down workers who may be in dispute with their employers?

The Premier: We do not shoot down people. It should not be necessary to ask that question.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Premier can simply answer it in the negative.

Hon. P. Collier: It is no reason why it should not appear on the Notice Paper.

Hon. T. WALKER: There is no reason why it should not be answered. It is a reasonable supposition, for there has been shown in other parts of the world the intention of Governments to take sides with certain classes or sections of the community, and to place others at the mercy of that class.

The Premier: We must preserve law and order, and do no more.

Hon. T. WALKER: It must be fair-sided law and order. It must not be law and order for one side.

The Premier: We know no side.

Hon. T. WALKER: Then the question cannot offend the Premier.

The Premier: It does not offend me in the slightest.

Hon. T. WALKER: To whom can it refer in the way of giving offence? Where is the offence? It is a simple question. It is a conceivable course that Governments may take. They give arms to particular powers and forces in the community for

the protection of one section of the community. It is a reasonable thing to ask, "Is that the policy of this Government?"

The Premier: It is not a fair thing to ask; it is obviously unfair.

Hon. T. WALKER: It may rankle in the breasts of some when questions of this kind are asked, but not in the case of the Premier. In the case of many there is a residuum of consciousness which is stirred by being confronted with an expression of truth by way of questions put in this form. That is the fault of those who take that view of the case. It does not, however, apply to the Premier. There is certainly nothing unbecoming in asking the Premier if this is his policy. The answer is in the negative. "It is not, it never was, and never will be the policy of the Government." Surely we have the right to know what the policy of the Government is. There is no disguising the fact, for it is true that the guns, the sabres and the cartridges are in the hands of one section and that section is not the workers. Too often also they are used to subdue, humiliate, crush and incapacitate the workers. I have in mind numerous instances in America, a civilised country, where that sort of thing is done. Surely we want to know if this is the policy in Western Australia under the rule of the existing Government. Nothing but a thinness of skin would prevent such questions being answered, and answered in such a way as the Government can answer when they get their best men upon the job. There is nothing unbecoming in that question. The danger is that, because one likes to put the interpretation upon a question that it is unbecoming, and hurts someone's feelings, and you, Sir, have the power to suppress that question altogether, the time may come when something of extremely vital importance and urgency may be struck off the Notice Paper, and the public deprived of the information they seek through their members here. It is not the member for South Fremantle who speaks in this matter. I know he is voicing the questioning of thousands, and he has put it in this form for the purpose of giving the Government a chance of expressing their views and their policy on this matter. Therefore it is not the hon. member who is concerned. It is the general public behind the hon. member that we have to consider. Because you think it will hurt someone's feelings, or is unbecoming, it does not savour too nicely of your appreciation of good taste. If you have the right to put your pencil through a question to prevent the public from obtaining certain information, you do wrong. You deprive the people of their representation in this Chamber. You gag their representative. You prevent him from doing his duty to the House and to the country. That is the danger. Far better is it to be a little more liberal and not so thin-skinned, than to take action of this kind and suppress information

of the worst possible character. In the other case the question was asked, "What has been the cost to the taxpayers of this State for the police protection afforded to the proprietor and the licensee of the Esplanade Hotel in their efforts to supplant white labour by Asiatics?" What is wrong with that; what is unbecoming or false about it?

The Premier: It is unnecessary.

Hon. T. WALKER: Why?

The Premier: To ask for such information.

Hon. T. WALKER: It is to gain information upon that very point. It is essential. This is explanatory.

The Premier: I do not think so.

Hon. T. WALKER: What is the dispute about? Who knows what the dispute was? Nothing could be more general than the word "dispute." Let us know what it was. It was then stated definitely and we know what it is about. It was a definite effort to supplant white labour with Asiatics. That was a definite effort which succeeded.

Mr. Underwood: It is a definite statement, not an effort.

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly. It is a statement which enables us to know what we are asking about. If the question had merely mentioned the word "dispute," it might have referred to any dispute. A dispute is a vague word applied to a thousand different commotions. This statement was no more than explanatory of the protection which was to be afforded, a protection due to efforts to supplant white labour by Asiatics.

Mr. Underwood: That is a statement.

Hon. T. WALKER: It clearly defines what we are asking about. I disagree with your ruling, not because I want to lessen your power or challenge your right to rule out of order questions that are clearly of the character set forth in the Standing Orders as objectionable. I fail to see, however, that the questions under discussion come within that category or that the questions are either unbecoming or inadmissible on that ground. The words which have been ruled out of order are essentially necessary in order to make the sense of the questions perfectly clear. Hon. members are entitled to do that. We are entitled to ask questions which may be worrying or exasperating, but that is no reason why they should be suppressed, particularly when the references are such as are necessary to make them intelligent to the outside public, as well as to make the meaning of the questioner perfectly clear. It does not matter how we feel regarding the matter contained in the question, for that is not the point. Everyone has the right to ask questions and to have in those questions relating to current affairs so much as is necessary to make them perfectly plain. The only reason the Speaker gave last night for altering the questions was that those portions which had been deleted were unbecoming. I do not agree with that view and I shall be obliged to vote with the member for South Fremantle as I desire to protect the rights of every member here. In addition I desire to protect the Chair. The Chair may do an injury to the

good government of this Chamber. If wise decisions are not given and wise judgments are not exercised, we will lose our respect for the Chair. It is my respect for the Chair as an institution that compels me to vote for the motion.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [5.33]: I intend to support your ruling Mr. Speaker, and I am pleased that you have given that ruling. I think such a ruling should have been given years ago. The object a member has in asking a question is to gain information and if you put something in the tail in the nature of a statement of fact or alleged fact, then it does not constitute a question. In one of the questions which the member for South Fremantle has brought forward, there is a statement in the tail of it regarding the shooting down of people. No one has been shot down—anyhow, not yet.

Mr. Corboy: It will be bad luck for you if it starts.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: And for you, because I can still hold a gun straight. Never mind about you having been at the War.

Mr. Corboy: I can run pretty well.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is just as well. We have come to a stage where this matter should be clearly defined. For the past 15 years I have heard questions asked which have embodied statements and those questions should always have been ruled out. On every occasion I have asked a question I have merely sought information and I have never put at the end of my question any statement of fact or alleged fact.

Mr. Corboy: You will be growing wings soon.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: No doubt the member for South Fremantle does not know the conditions under which it is possible for him to make any statements he likes in this House. It is perhaps unknown to him that there are numerous opportunities available for making statements and in addition one is not liable for any statement he makes on the floor of the House. In incorporating the extra assertion, the hon. member's question became a statement, not a question. In addition to the Address-in-reply, the hon. member can make any statement he desires dealing with this or other matters on the Estimates and on many other occasions. That is where such information as he has inserted in his question should be dealt with and certainly not in a question. I appreciate the decision Mr. Speaker has given. When I was addressing a meeting in the back country a man got up and put a question to me something like that which the hon. member for South Fremantle has put to the House. My chairman immediately said, "Hold on there, are you asking a question or telling a tale?" Is the member for South Fremantle asking a question or has he told a tale? Most decidedly he has tried to tell a tale by way of a question, and that is not permissible according to the Standing Orders. I hope your ruling will be upheld.



Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [538]: I support the motion dissenting from your ruling, Mr. Speaker, though not because I desire to embarrass you or to take away from your authority in this Chamber. In disallowing this question, however, you have gone too far. I do not deny that there are occasions when the Speaker has seen fit to amend questions. I have looked through these questions under discussion, but I fail to see any serious reasons why they should have been disallowed on the ground that they are unbecoming.

Mr. Underwood: That is not the question.

Mr. TROY: The Speaker gave the reason for his action when he stated last night that he had deleted the words because they were unbecoming. I admit that nothing may be contained in a question which reflects upon a Minister's property, his integrity, morality or honesty. In such a case as that, the inclusion of such words would be resented by members of this House. The member for South Fremantle has not included in his question anything of such a nature.

Mr. Underwood: He told a tale.

Mr. TROY: The member for South Fremantle is justified in including some explanation to render the meaning of his questions clear to the House and the community at large. His references deal with a statement of fact and should not have been disallowed. The Premier has quoted authorities and rules in support of the ruling given by Mr. Speaker showing that statements are not allowed to be included in the questions. The rules governing questions include the following:—

The question must not publish any names or statements not strictly necessary to make the question intelligible.

If the question contains a statement the member asking it must make himself responsible for the accuracy of that statement.

The words which have been deleted from the question were necessary to make the question intelligible, and those portions do not reflect upon the Ministers of the Crown. Then, again, we have been told by no less an authority than the member for Pilbara that a question must not contain a statement. I unhesitatingly say that a question can contain a statement, and in proof of that I will refer to a question which I asked the Minister for Mines yesterday. The question contained the following:—

Having in view the depressed state of the mining industry and the necessity of initiating a vigorous and progressive policy . . . . .

That is a question of fact and it was not disallowed. I included that statement for the express purpose of making the question more intelligible. Why was that question not disallowed on the ground that it contained a statement? I can also quote questions which have been asked by the member for Pilbara which have contained very definite statements, but those questions were not disallowed. In objecting to your ruling, I would point out,

Mr. Speaker, that there is a tendency on the part of human beings in the enjoyment of power to abuse that power, and it would be a regrettable thing for this House if in asserting the authority vested in you, you refused to afford the minority in the Chamber that protection which we are given by the Standing Orders. I disagree with the Premier's statement that the ruling of the Speaker should not be disagreed with. When I was Speaker I had some misgivings when my rulings were challenged, but I took consolation in the fact that in the House of Commons the rulings of the Speaker there were disagreed with. This is a very necessary safeguard, because Speakers may abuse the great powers that are vested in them, and the Premier is not giving good advice when he advises members that they should always support the Speaker's ruling. I, for one, will never attack the Speaker in regard to his honour or fairness unless, of course, I have proof to the contrary. But I do say that it is in the interests of the Government, who one day will again be in the minority, to see that no Speaker sets up a custom which is in defiance of our Standing Orders and of the practice of the House, merely because it meets with the approval of the Government of the day. It would be a very wrong thing indeed, and if that course were frequently adopted, the House would degenerate.

The Minister for Mines: You do not suggest that it will occur on this occasion.

Mr. TROY: I know that it has occurred in this House before, and the Minister knows it too; there was a time in the history of the party led by the hon. member himself. However, I am merely referring to the Premier's statement that we should always support the ruling of the Speaker. I shall do so whenever I consider it right, but whenever I think there is a tendency on the part of the Speaker or some official to abuse the power he enjoys, I shall protest. Any man occupying a position is inclined to abuse his power when that power is placed in his own hands. My chief objection, Sir, is that you have disallowed a plain question. The question struck out was—

In view of the frequency with which armed forces have of late been called into industrial disputes, is it to be taken as the set policy of the Government to take sides with employers and prepare to shoot down workers who may be in dispute with their employers?

There is nothing in the tone of those words to which exception can be taken. The Government might resent with indignation any suggestions that they would be guilty of such an action, but the fact that the Government would resent it does not justify you in refusing to allow the question to be asked. In the British House of Commons questions have been asked with regard to the British armies in Mesopotamia, India, Persia and Ireland, which questions were resented by the Government, but the Speaker did not disallow them.

We shall have reached a bad pass indeed if it be laid down that a question, which might be resented by the Government, shall not be permitted to be asked in this House. It will mean that this House is of the opinion that the minority have no rights, much less privileges, in this House. In striking out that question, Sir, you exceeded the powers conferred on you by the House and by the Standing Orders of the House. I have looked up "May," following on your ruling of yesterday, in order to ascertain whether a Speaker has ever struck out a notice. When a notice publicly given is obviously irregular or unbecoming the Speaker has interposed and the notice has not been received in that form. That is about the worst that has been done. This notice, however, has been disallowed entirely.

Mr. Hickmott: Was not it merely amended?

Mr. TROY: No, it was disallowed.

Hon. P. Collier: Have you been up in the country, dad?

Mr. TROY: A notice of motion may not be permitted if it is designed to cause annoyance. It has been said that the Minister for Mines, when speaking at Albany, made much capital out of the fact that he had armed certain persons and provided ball cartridges. The Minister made use of this fact and put it forth as his policy at an election, and in view of what has transpired in this country during the last few years, it was quite possible that that was the policy of the Government. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) has a perfect right to ask the Government, one of whose Ministers has already asked the approval of the people on the ground that he armed certain forces, a question of this character. In view of what happened at Kalgoorlie when rifles were sent up and people were armed, and in view of what has happened in this country in the last few years, this question is well within the line. The chief objection I take to your ruling, Sir, is that you have disallowed a question which should be admitted. I do not say you have done it because of any hostility to members on this side of the House. I think you have exercised your own judgment, but in my opinion your judgment was in error on this occasion. I, therefore, regret that I must vote for the motion.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.50]: I have no desire to labour the question, because I think the case put forward by the member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) who moved the motion, and the speeches made in support of the motion, amply justify it being carried by this House. I regret that, at the opening of a new Parliament, any member of the Opposition should find himself in conflict with your ruling. I think I can say that throughout all the years I have been a member of this House, I have invariably supported the ruling of the Chair. Wherever a member can conscientiously support the Chair, it is very desirable that this should be done,

but I dissent entirely from the proposition of the Premier that in all cases—

Hon. T. Walker: Right or wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, right or wrong—

The Minister for Mines: The Premier did not say that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He did not use those precise words, I admit, but it was the only reasonable inference to be drawn from his statement, namely, that on all occasions it is the duty of the majority of the members of the House to support the ruling of the Chair. That would be a very false attitude to adopt. It would not be desirable even in the interests of the Speaker, and if pursued for a number of years, it would lead to the whittling away of the rights and privileges of individual members of this House. I need not remind the older members of the House at any rate how jealously the rights and privileges of members are guarded. I need not remind you of it, Sir, because I remember when you were on the floor of the House, especially in the Opposition ranks, no member more vigorously or strenuously fought for the rights and privileges of hon. members. So, I hope we are not going to start off this first session of the new Parliament by putting too fine a point upon questions which may be asked. It might be, as has already been stated, that a question may be submitted not in the best taste, but that of itself is not justification for ruling it out of order. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood), who of course is an authority on all questions, says this question is out of order because it contains a statement of fact. I would draw the hon. member's attention to question No. 11 in to-day's Votes and Proceedings asked by myself of the Minister for Railways yesterday. I asked—

Is he aware that a number of passengers were compelled to stand in the corridors and on the platforms throughout the night journey to Perth in addition to compartments being disgracefully overcrowded?

There is a statement of fact.

The Minister for Mines: I could not have given you any information unless you had stated that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Quite so. I declared that the compartments were disgracefully overcrowded.

Mr. Troy: Could not you have excluded the word "disgracefully"?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. If we are going to put too fine a point on the interpretation of what is unbecoming it might be said that the word "overcrowded" was unbecoming.

Hon. T. Walker: In fact, you might have contented yourself with using the word "crowded."

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. I also asked—

Will he cause the matter to be thoroughly sifted and ascertain who was responsible for such callous indifference to passengers' interests?

There is another declaration. "Who was responsible for such callous indifference to passengers' interests?" There is comment in that question. I made a declaration that someone was responsible for callous indifference to passengers' interests. Callous indifference! I do not know how it escaped the eyes of those who censor the questions if they put such a fine point on the meaning of "unbecoming." If, as you say, questions have been ruled out because they were unbecoming, then I must consider myself very lucky indeed to have secured the approval or endorsement of these questions. Now take the question which has been ruled out. It might be well to admit for the moment that, in asking the question with regard to the Esplanade Hotel, it was not essential for the hon. member's purpose to add the words "in their efforts to supplant white labour by Asiatics." The hon. member could have obtained the information he desired without making that addition, which might be considered as something in the nature of a comment. I hold most strongly that the question which has been ruled out was entirely in order. It begins—

In view of the frequency with which armed forces have of late been called into industrial disputes—

There is nothing wrong with that portion of the question. Without entering into the merits of what has been done, it is common knowledge that armed forces have been used in industrial disputes. For the sake of argument, we may say that they have been properly used, although that is not my contention. It is a fact, however, that armed forces have been used on more than one occasion recently in connection with industrial disputes, and so the hon. member, in order to obtain the information he desired, commenced his question in that form—

In view of the frequency with which armed forces have of late been called into industrial disputes, is it to be taken as the set policy of the Government to take sides with employers and prepare to shoot down workers who may be in dispute with their employers?

What is there unbecoming, what is there wrong, or where is there any contravention of the Standing Orders that an hon. member may not ask the Minister the policy of the Government in a given set of circumstances? That is what the member for South Fremantle has done. He desires to know the policy of the Government in a set of circumstances which he mentioned. I admit at once that I do not charge you, Sir, nor do I insinuate or infer in any way

that you were actuated by other than fair motives. I make no insinuation at all of partiality or an unfairness of attitude towards any member of this House with regard to this question, but I do say that you have made an error of judgment in taking such a very fine view of the questions that may be asked. In support of your ruling, you quoted to us passages from "May." The advice given in "May" is based on the practice of many centuries followed in the House of Commons. I think your contention has been well answered by the questions quoted by the member for South Fremantle. He states that only during the past twelve months a question was asked with regard to the affair at Amritsar, when the words "bloody massacre" were used. If such a term as that can be used—others have been quoted in regard to doings in other parts of the world—and if they have passed Speakers of the House of Commons, such comparatively mild terms as those employed by the hon. member in his questions, and they are mild by comparison, might well have been allowed to go through. Even if this question were ruled out, and it had been amended in some way, there might have been some justification for such action. I hold, however, that you committed a serious error of judgment, one which, if allowed, will limit the rights and privileges of members of this House, and set a precedent which will perhaps be quoted later on as showing that you have committed a serious error of judgment in entirely disallowing this question. I regret to find myself in conflict with your ruling. It is the rights of members and not of members as individuals which are affected. Every member has the right to ask questions in order to elicit information on behalf of the people he represents in this Chamber. We are not here as individuals but as representatives of different portions of the community. In that capacity a member has certain rights and privileges, which are set forth in the Standing Orders, and if we are to err at all in maintaining those rights and privileges, it would be wiser to err on the side of leniency and not in the way of restricting the rights of members.

Hon. T. Walker: Broad-minded judgment.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have listened very patiently to the remarks of the mover of the motion, and also to the debate which followed. I am pleased to know that the only suspicion of bias on my part was suggested in the remarks of the member for South Fremantle. Later on he corrected those remarks. He suggested that I was biased in my views on this question, but I would tell hon. members that I am not in any way biased. I am here as Speaker to interpret the Standing Orders, and to control the business of the House under the Standing Orders as I find them. If I am guilty of anything, I am guilty of not showing sufficient discretion in giving my decision. There is no ruling ob-

jected to. It is a matter concerning the motion moved in the following language:—

That the Speaker's action in mutilating and amending notices of questions, and withholding notices of questions from the Notice Paper, is a wrongful interference with the rights and privileges of members of this House.

If I had been guilty of wrongful interference with the rights of this House, then the motion should be carried. I have quoted Standing Order 106, which, on the marginal note, indicates what the order means, "Unbecoming notices expunged." The Standing Order reads as follows:—

If any notice contains unbecoming expressions, the House may order that it shall not be printed, or it may be expunged from the Notice Paper, or amended by order of the Speaker.

I have not set up the argument that there was any unbecoming language in any of these questions, but I do say, under the Standing Orders as I interpret them, that there was language unbecoming in a question. The hon. member put forward the suggestion that if this were allowed, members would be gagged. The Standing Orders provide for the asking of questions, and also provide how these questions shall be put to the House, and in what manner the Speaker or the House shall decide as to these questions. The Standing Orders also provide that when a member desires to debate a question he must do so on a substantive motion. When an hon. member is addressing the House on a motion, he is at liberty to say anything he pleases, irrespective of whether he hurts the feelings of others outside the Chamber or not. He speaks under these rafters with very great privilege. There is no place in the world where one can speak with greater privilege than under the roof of Parliament. I would point out that the hon. member's position in putting a question, and his position in addressing himself to a motion before the Chair, are two different things. Standing Orders Nos. 8, 9, and 10 deal with the same matter. These Standing Orders have been in existence for years, and have been acted upon in this Chamber ever since I have been here, a matter of over 20 years. Similar Standing Orders have been used in the House of Commons for many years, and indeed in the Parliament of every English-speaking community in the world. I am not depending solely upon the Standing Orders, but I am depending upon every text book dealing with the conduct of the business of Parliament, and am supported by them. Blackmore says—

No argument or opinion shall be offered, nor any facts stated, except so far as may be necessary to explain such question. The object of this is to prevent the use of such language or statement, by means of a question, which might lead to debate.

If hon. members will ponder over these authorities, I think they will see that I am fully justified in the action I have taken.

Hon. T. Walker: On the contrary!

Mr. Pickering: All I can say is, if the House carries this motion, it will mean that members are condemning their own Standing Orders.

Hon. T. Walker: No.

Mr. SPEAKER: I cannot interpret them in any other way.

Question put and negatived.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Pickering, leave of absence for two weeks granted to the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) on the ground of ill-health.

On motion by Mr. A. Thomson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to the member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) on the ground of ill-health.

#### BILL—SUPPLY, £1,640,320.

##### Standing Orders Suspension.

The PREMIER (without notice) moved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable resolutions from the Committee of Supply and Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees, and also the passing of a Supply Bill through all its stages in one day, and to enable the business aforesaid to be entered upon and dealt with before the Address-in-Reply is adopted.

Mr. SPEAKER: Before putting the question, I would inform members that it will be necessary to have a majority of the House in order to carry this motion, because it has been moved without notice. I have counted the House and find there is a majority present, and unless there is any negative vote, I will declare the motion carried.

Question put and passed.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

##### In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the motion by the Premier "That there be granted to His Majesty on account of the service of the year ending 30th June, 1922, a sum not exceeding £1,640,320," and on the amendment by Hon. P. Collier "That the amount be reduced by £50,000"; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	..	..	14

Majority against .. 2

## AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Collier	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Corboy	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Heron	(Teller.)
Mr. Lutey	

## NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Boyland	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Broun	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Denton	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. Durack	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Davies
Mr. H. K. Maley	(Teller.)
Mr. Mann	

Amendment thus negatived.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

In Committee of Ways and Means.

THE PREMIER: (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [7.39]: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the service of the year ending 30th June, 1922, a sum not exceeding £813,670 be granted from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, £500,000 from the General Loan Fund, £20,000 from the Government Property Sales Fund, £6,650 from the Land Improvement Loan Fund, and £300,000 from the Public Account, for the purposes of temporary advances to be made by the Colonial Treasurer.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.40]: Before that motion is carried, I should like the Premier to give us some assurance that during this session members will be furnished with the reports and balance sheets of the various undertakings and enterprises in which the Government are engaged. The Premier will agree with me when I say that there is something radically wrong when one finds an institution like the Agricultural Bank, which has approximately four millions of public money under its control, failing to present any report to Parliament since the year 1918. The people's representatives are entitled to know what is being done with the public money, whether the money is wisely expended or not. I repeat, there has been no report from the Agricultural Bank since 1918. This scandalous state of affairs is directly contrary to the provisions of the Act of Parliament governing the matter. The Minister controlling the Agricultural Bank is expected to see that the institution's report is presented to Parliament every year.

The Premier: It was here last year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No; and I drew the Premier's attention to the matter on the last day of the session. I expected the report to be here to-day, but it is not. The

State Trading Concerns Act lays it down definitely that the audited accounts shall be presented to Parliament before the 30th September in each year. No such accounts were presented to Parliament last year for 1919-20. As yet, not one audited account relative to the State trading concerns has been presented to Parliament for that year.

The Premier: Are you quite sure of that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes. I made inquiries yesterday. I wanted some of those accounts yesterday, and I could get only one unaudited statement—a statement referring to the State Sawmills, and showing a net profit of about £17,000. Hon. members may recollect that the present Minister for Mines, when Treasurer, used to be twitted almost day after day by some of his present colleagues with the fact that those reports and audited balance sheets were not presented. As a consequence, the Government that followed the Labour Party in office introduced legislation laying it down that reports and audited accounts for these concerns should be presented to Parliament before the 30th September in each year.

The Minister for Mines: There are some of the State trading concerns as to which we cannot possibly do it. In the case of the State Steamship Service, for instance, we are compelled to wait for accounts from the Agent General.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Then let the legislation be altered. Ministers have three months to present the accounts of those concerns, but the accounts have not yet been presented for one single concern. Last year Parliament was furnished with typewritten statements of accounts, unaudited. As regards the State Implement Works, the Boya quarries, and the State Brickworks, we have not yet been furnished with the true accounts. This is a matter of urgency for one reason: there prevails throughout Western Australia at the present time a false impression regarding the State trading concerns. That is the reason why I want Parliament to get the audited accounts. One thing or the other has happened in regard to the State trading concerns: either the Government have drawn from those concerns—I am not speaking only of the present Government, but of the various Governments since 1916, since the passing of the State Trading Concerns Act—dishonestly drawn from them a total of £319,000 in addition to interest, reconps, etc., or the State trading concerns have made that amount of profit. According to the returns for the year 1920-21, published in the "West Australian" of the 13th July last—and that newspaper presumably gets its information from the Treasury—such is the position. The "West Australian" would get its figures from the Treasury, and according to the figures published by the "West Australian" there was last year a recoup from State trading concerns for departmental charges, interest, etc., of £179,558. That is included in the debit and credit accounts issued

regarding the State trading concerns. That warranted the Government taking it because of the expenses they incurred, either paid on account of interest or sinking fund and recoups for expenses given to those particular trading concerns by departmental officers. It was for the recoup of charges made by the various departments.

The Minister for Mines: It is the same with expenditure from revenue; that is always recouped afterwards.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The interest according to the "West Australian" averages £9,558 per month. That will not reach £179,000. That is published in the analysis of what the Under Treasurer informed me yesterday, is the monthly amount which is due and paid every month, although it is collected every six months. It was also said that there was an amount secured from the State trading concerns, small I admit, but it shows £7,784 in addition, for which there was no expenditure. Last year, according to this statement, the State trading concerns showed an excess amount of £7,784, and that was transferred to Consolidated Revenue. We are justified in coming to the conclusion that this represented profits and was taken into the revenue account which is published yearly, and that it represents the profits made from the various trading concerns. If there were no profits, the Government had no right to transfer even that amount from the State trading concerns for the purpose of increasing the revenue account. I do not think that the Government did that and I believe the amount represents profits. These amounts altogether aggregate more than £319,000 after repayments of recoups and charges, etc. It is necessary to understand the position satisfactorily that the audited balance sheets should be here, at least before the close of the session.

The Premier: I agree with you.

Hon. P. Collier: And also the reports from the various departments.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I think the Premier should censure—

The Premier: I will do so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I think this House also should censure the trustees of the Agricultural Bank for keeping from Parliament and the public generally knowledge of what has been done with their funds, and information to show how the bank has been progressing from 1918 to the present year. It is a scandalous state of affairs and I do not think anybody will agree that it is right, not even the Premier. Unless we get the information we desire, we cannot assist the Government to put the finances in order. It will take us all our time to get the information we require. We are always willing to help the Premier in his difficulties. He is in a difficult position, I admit, and I think we all realise that fact. The Premier makes mistakes as we all do.

The Premier: I do not admit that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There are only two kinds of men—the man who does nothing and the man who makes mistakes. We should try to do something in order to rectify the financial position, and in justice to the electors we represent, we should have information regarding the State trading concerns. I hope the Premier will see that these reports are furnished to the House.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [8.50]: I agree with the member for North-East Fremantle that these reports should be here not only regarding the bank, but also the various departments. It is only right that members should have the fullest information possible during the session. We cannot produce the balance-sheets of the trading concerns till the close of the year, and then some three months are allowed in which to prepare them. The cash statement in connection with these trading concerns conveys very little indeed because of the fact that they are trading concerns. Take the timber mills, for instance; they are engaged upon cutting timber and putting the timber into stock. The stock may represent hundreds of thousands of pounds in addition, by reason of the nature of the business, there must be book debts, because they are making large sales all the time. A timber mill is a very extensive business, and the operations include very large deals. In these circumstances it will be seen that the cash statement means nothing. It is true that we have had considerable profits from the State Steamship Service.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Mr. Gardiner said they constituted the one bright spot.

The PREMIER: When the freights were high shipping was good and our ships made a good deal of money. I doubt if they will make any more. At any rate they will make very little more.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: In that case, however, actual cash has gone into revenue.

The PREMIER: That is so, but we are not getting cash in now. Reverting to the State timber mills there is a tremendous turnover. The timber is cut and stacked pending shipment. We often have to pay freight on shipments as we do, for instance, on shipments to India. A large order represents a lot of money, and this outlay is recouped later on in London when the debit is transferred to a credit. To-day we have in stock and in money owing to these trading concerns some hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The bank overdraft is £600,000.

The PREMIER: Yes. The House can rest assured that all possible information will be given to members. In the case of the State Sawmills, the depreciation must be very considerable because they are constantly cutting out the forests. The State Implement Works is another big business, but very little profit is returned.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Last year it was about £2,000.

The PREMIER: That is very little compared with the turnover. There again there are large stocks on hand and the book debts are very considerable. In addition there is a considerable quantity of machinery in course of construction.

Mr. Pickering: What is the position regarding the State Brickworks?

The PREMIER: That is a very small concern; the products from the brickworks are sold readily for cash.

Mr. Davies: The brickworks are in a good position.

The PREMIER: That is so. Regarding the implement works and the sawmills, on the contrary, the business is very extensive, and the book debts are considerable as well. I will endeavour to have these balance-sheets presented as soon as possible. I think we had a statement last year, but the member for North-East Fremantle states that it was not audited. I will endeavour to meet his wishes as I am anxious that the State trading concerns should be thoroughly understood by members. The Wyndham meat works are not operating this year. Up there we have a very large amount of material on hand representing about £100,000. Tin, of course, runs into a great deal of money, and other material necessary for the conduct of that business means a considerable cash outlay. We have large stocks on hand for sale. The principal reason why the meat works are not in operation this year is because the price of beef fell rapidly. There was another reason, but that was the principal one.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Then there was the case of Darwin too.

The PREMIER: Those works ceased a long time ago. We had thought of starting the Wyndham works and we made an offer to the men, but they wanted more than we offered. It was fortunate that the delay occurred because if we had proceeded we should have lost a considerable amount of money.

Mr. Corboy: Strikes are useful sometimes.

The PREMIER: It was not a strike in this case. I hope that the Wyndham works will be operated when the meat business improves. We have good reason to suppose that the position will become easier. If the world could only buy meat to the extent apparent before the War, then we would be able to operate.

Mr. J. Thomson: If the Government received an offer for the purchase of the Wyndham works, would they sell?

The PREMIER: That is for the House to consider. If we were to receive an offer, I would submit it to the House.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Some people never object to the Government taking on an enterprise if they have it to sell.

The PREMIER: Oh no, of course not. On the whole the men operating the different State trading concerns get no more than if they were operated by private concerns, and in some cases they get less. I

will not discuss the merits of these concerns on this motion, but I will endeavour to get all the information available for the convenience of members. It is for the House to give serious consideration to that side of the work. The legitimate functions of Government, apart from competitive trading, are quite enough, I think, for Parliament to handle. Ministers know that, before the trading concerns were introduced, the life of a member of the Cabinet was much more simple than it is now. After all, unless we can have these concerns well managed by men who know their business, it is quite impossible to expect the average Minister to manage a great industry such as the sawmills or the implement works.

Hon. P. Collier: What about the wheat pool?

The PREMIER: That is a very simple matter.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is larger and it covers more money.

The PREMIER: Fortunately when it comes to dealing with the wheat pool, the Government take no real responsibility. There is a board appointed to manage the wheat pool and the wheat forms the security for the advances made, the Government thus taking no risk.

Hon. P. Collier: They took a little responsibility in connection with the fixing of the price of wheat.

The PREMIER: I do not know about that.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What about last session?

The PREMIER: Last year the price of wheat was fixed at 7s. 8d. and when it was being sold at 7s. 8d. to the consumers here, it was being exported for twice that amount.

Hon. P. Collier: Oh no, not at all.

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes it was.

The PREMIER: The consumer has been very fortunate in the establishment of that pool. He has had the cheapest bread the world has known for years past.

Hon. T. Walker: They cannot get any now.

Mr. McCallum: It is dearer now.

The PREMIER: Let us be fair. Last year the consumer received supplies at 7s. 8d. when wheat could be exported for twice that amount. This year the price has been fixed at 9s.

Hon. P. Collier: The farmers could not have sold at all without the backing and security of the public.

Mr. McCallum: They would have been forced off their farms.

The PREMIER: It would be a very poor community that would not back up its producers.

Hon. P. Collier: And the community should receive consideration.

The PREMIER: There is scarcely a place in the world which does not care for its producers. God help the country that does not! In America to-day they are taking extraordinary steps to protect their producers.

I should like to know where Perth would be if we did not have our primary producers.

Hon. P. Collier: You are not inferring that anybody is opposed to them?

The PREMIER: We ought to protect them and assist them.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They are protected all right.

The PREMIER: We did not protect them too well when wheat was being sold locally at 7s. 8d. with the export price at twice that figure.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Don't forget you told us last night that most of the wheat was still here.

The PREMIER: No, I said the railways had not earned all that they expected to earn, because we had considerable wheat at country sidings still.

Mr. O'Loughlen: If there were ten times as much wheat, the people would not get cheaper bread.

The PREMIER: If they counted on some people for it, they would not get any bread at all. However, I will see that these reports are presented to the House as soon as possible.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

Bill introduced.

Supply Bill introduced, passed through all stages, and transmitted to the Council.

*House adjourned at 8.9 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Thursday, 4th August, 1921.*

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

### COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motions by the MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch), sessional committees were appointed as follows:—

Standing Orders: The President, the Chairman of Committees, and the Minister for Education.

Library: The President, Hon. A. Lovekin, and Hon. J. Nicholson.

Printing: The President, Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom, and Hon. A. H. Panton.

House: The President, Hon. J. Cornell, Hon. J. Duffell, Hon. J. Ewing, and Hon. J. W. Hickey.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1) £1,640,320.

All Stages.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.33]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a Supply Bill to be received from the Legislative Assembly, and to be passed through all stages in one sitting.

It is customary to move a motion of this description during the first week of the session. I might at this stage inform Mr. Nicholson that his suggestion has been anticipated and that the Supply asked for covers a period only until the end of the present month.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [4.34]: It is pleasing to hear that the Supply asked for is restricted to a certain extent. We know from the published reports that certain discussions took place elsewhere with regard to this measure. It is not my intention to allude to those discussions, but in view of the protests which have been made by members from time to time, it is our duty to get some assurance from the Leader of the House that the Estimates will be laid before us at an early date. I should like to hear from him some definite date as to when the Estimates will be presented, because this may have considerable weight in deciding as to whether the Standing Orders should be suspended.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [4.35]: I do not wish to delay the House, but in view of the fact that the life of the last Parliament was extended, presumably with the idea of calling Parliament together earlier in the year, the Government might reasonably have been expected to summon Parliament at a stage sufficiently early to obviate the necessity of having to rush through a measure of this nature.

The PRESIDENT: There is no measure at present before the House. The question is the motion to suspend the Standing Orders.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I have no desire to oppose the motion; in fact, I shall support it and reserve any remarks I have to make until a later stage.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East—in reply) [4.36]: It is, of course, impossible for me to give the hon. member a positive assurance as to the exact date when the Estimates will be sub-