

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 9th August, 1928.

				PAGE
Committee for the Session	...	...	...	78
Address-in-reply, fourth day	...	...	...	78

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

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, Sessional Committees were appointed as follows:—

Standing Orders—The President, the Chief Secretary, Hon. J. Cornell, Hon. A. Lovekin, and Hon. J. Nicholson.

Library—The President, Hon. J. Ewing, and Hon. A. J. H. Saw.

Printing—The President, Hon. W. H. Kitson, and Hon. A. Lovekin.

Joint House—The President, Hon. J. Cornell, Hon. E. H. Gray, Hon. G. A. Kemp-ton, and Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON V. HAMERSLEY (East) [4.37]: I should not like to let the opportunity go by without mentioning how greatly I was struck with the principal matters dealt with in the Governor's Speech, or without congratulating the Government upon the recognition, apparent throughout the Speech, of the importance of land development to Western Australia. Plainly, the whole idea and intention behind the pronouncements made in the Speech are that this State shall progress by giving every possible attention to the development of our inland areas. That course is being pursued by the Government on sound lines by devoting special attention to water supplies. Land is of little use without a plentiful supply of water, and the Minister in charge of the department has been giving every care to the matter, not only in agricultural areas already settled, but also looking well ahead. Further, the Government are to be commended for their work in establishing new experimental farms. I

refer especially to the farms established in new areas. As the result of these there will eventually be available a considerable body of information of the utmost value to settlers in those areas. In one of them, which has an experimental farm at Dampawah, where irrigation has been started, the Government, in one respect, appear not to have practised what they preach. I have previously appealed to the present Leader of the House for special consideration of a question which concerns so many of our people who are on the land, namely, the employment of Italians in clearing. The matter has been stressed from time to time. Many settlers who wished to get their land cleared were relying upon the Agricultural Bank to help them in that work, but they found themselves hampered if they employed Italians. We know that those men are well accustomed to the work of clearing, and that they will carry it out in the back country, where many of our own people do not care to go. Although the private employer may engage what labour he pleases, the fact remains that much of the development of our lands has been and is being done through the Agricultural Bank, which institution, however, pays for clearing only as the work proceeds.

Hon. J. R. Brown: Who did the work before the Italians came?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: A great many of the men who are at present successful farmers. By the work they did they have become successful, but now they cannot find men equal to themselves who are able and willing to carry out clearing.

Hon. J. R. Brown: That is a slur upon Australians.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I do not wish to cast any slur whatever upon the Australians, who, let me add, are much better employed in working machinery upon land after it has been cleared. In my opinion it is a waste of time for the Australian or the Britisher to fool about clearing land; he is capable of doing something much better.

Hon. J. R. Brown: He does not get the work because he is not cheap enough.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Government do not seem to have practised what they preach in this respect, that when they desired to clear land at Dampawah, they had the work done by Italians. The area to be cleared was 300 acres, and I presume the Italians were paid for clearing it. What

is sauce for the goose, I should say, is sauce for the gander. It is rather hard on many settlers with land to clear that while able to secure the services of Italians, they are not permitted to make use of them, which means that the development of the country is retarded. All the way through, the Governor's Speech refers to that one aim and object, which we all recognise as of the very first importance. We know well that our railways are not getting as much traffic as they should get, and this is largely due to the fact that our lands are not being cleared rapidly enough.

Hon. J. R. Brown: If the proper price were offered, the land would be cleared rapidly.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Many farmers find difficulty in obtaining sufficient funds to spend in the clearing of land. I personally look upon such work as a thoroughly sound investment, but it is difficult to persuade the private banking institutions to advance all the money required for the purpose. Therefore the Government must be looked to in the matter of helping those settlers and farmers who cannot obtain funds from the private banking institutions. I urgently appeal to the Government not to be too rigid in this matter, and I urgently appeal to our people as a whole not to look upon the class of labour in question as detrimental to Western Australia. In America it is well recognised that the Italians are a helpful and important factor in the development of American lands. They do work of a class on which the average American feels his time is wasted, he being much better fitted to do the class of work that is required after the lands have been opened up, than the men who are willing to go into virgin country with the axe. The Governor's Speech gives a large measure of recognition to the importance of land development, and therefore I could not refrain from stressing these points. The Government do not always take the lead in these matters. Private settlers have gone into country districts where the Government have not been inclined to give them support and help. From time to time the Government have hesitated to encourage men to go further afield into new areas, and to give that assistance so invaluable to them. Often people are held up by the idea of a railway being run out later. The settlers were not offered much inducement to go into the Kalgarin area. In spite

of the attitude of a great many who advised against developing that country, those who went there have succeeded in getting very good results. Kondinin, I think, holds the record this year for having delivered to the railway the greatest quantity of wheat that has gone into a siding.

Hon. J. Cornell: And 50 per cent. of it was raised at a distance of over 16 miles from the line.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Those settlers did not receive very much help and support. Probably it was judicious not to rush in, for the country was looked upon as an unsafe area. The settlers deserve great credit for the force and energy they have put into that area. Already they have shown wonderful results, and by the help of motor traction they were able to cart their produce very great distances. But that entails increased cost of production to them, whereas when they get their railway communication they will be able to produce in far larger quantities. Mr. Stephenson had something to say against the bulk handling of wheat. That, of course, has to do with facilities at Fremantle and other harbours. We must try all we can do to reduce the overhead charges to those who are endeavouring to produce wealth from the soil. Fremantle, unfortunately, has the discredit of being the most expensive port in Western Australia. I am assured that in the outside world Fremantle has already been mentioned as one of the places that ships do not care to visit. From a shipowner's point of view it is regarded with disfavour.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Where did you get that information?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: From several magazines, and in correspondence that I have received from people overseas. It comes from outside the State entirely. We must at all times take notice of remarks made from outside, for we require to see these things from the other fellow's point of view. We certainly should do all we can to remove any undue cost, because we must recognise that we cannot produce in competition with the outside world unless we have the very best facilities. Bulk handling I look upon as one of those necessary facilities, and if alterations are to take place at Fremantle we must keep that well in view and not put off any longer the idea of instituting something of the kind. Many people do not realise what a terrible burden the cost of sacks is to the farmer. This

year alone he has had to pay over £600,000 for bags. The moment you go out and buy your sacks to put the wheat into, and pay your money for them, it is very similar to putting so much money into the fire. Because those sacks are of no further use to the farmer. Nevertheless he has to pay for them, including all the intermediate costs. As we go on increasing our production—it is expected that in a few more years we shall double the wheat yield—the farmer very soon will be paying over a million pounds per annum for his bags. It is a very large sum to have to put on the scrap heap every year.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: Does the hon. member know that every ship loading bulk wheat has to take 20 per cent. of bagged wheat?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes, I am aware of that. Still, there are many places in the State where it will be impossible for the farmer to take advantage of bulk handling facilities, for they cannot be provided at every siding or centre. So there will always require to be a proportion of bagged wheat from those centres where bulk handling is not instituted, and that will serve to meet that point of 20 per cent. of bagged wheat in each bulk handling ship. Nevertheless, the fact remains that we would be very much more self-contained in regard to the handling of our produce for overseas were this position of bulk handling gone into. When, previously, it was proposed that we should embark on bulk handling I was averse to the proposal because of the great cost and because it seemed to me the time was not ripe for inaugurating the system. But I believe the time is now very much nearer when it will be essential that this question should be carefully gone into. One of my reasons for so thinking is the belief that we must get into our stride and not put off this problem any longer. In that direction I was pleased to note that Mr. McCallum, the Minister for Public Works, who is abroad, had confessed that he was impressed with the fact that our handling system is not up to date. Although probably he may not have been referring to the bulk handling of wheat, still he recognises that we are a long way behind in our methods of handling the produce that we have to export. If he can help the farmers to put their produce on the markets of the world, it will be very much to his credit.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: Does the hon. member know that one-fifth of the countries

taking wheat from Western Australia today are not in a position to handle bulk wheat?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I believe that a number of them are not. However, there will still be plenty of bagged wheat to be sent to them from Western Australia. It is not to say that, because some ports have not the facilities for handling wheat in bulk, we ought not to make the great step forward of instituting bulk handling at our own ports. By far the greater portion of the wheat shipped from this State does go to ports where there are facilities for bulk handling. I do not wish to refer to all the items in the Speech, but I notice there is a suggestion that amongst the Bills likely to come before us will be the Hospital Bill. Of course we shall know much more about it when it is actually brought down to the House. I have understood from many hospitals in various centres that, since the amendments were made to the parent Act and larger amounts paid under the Workers' Compensation Act, many hospitals find it easier to finance their operations. I regret indeed that the money received by them from the entertainments tax has not enabled them to finance.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That does not apply to the Perth Hospital.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It may not, but I should like to know whether the Perth Hospital has lapsed into the position in which it found itself some years ago, namely that it had not attempted to collect its fees from those who had received services at the hands of the hospital. At the period I refer to, it was found that the Perth Hospital had failed to collect from patients dues to the amount of £150,000. What position has been set up since then, I do not know. But Mr. Gray remarks that the Perth Hospital has not been able to finance owing to the matters I have mentioned, and since the Perth Hospital, being almost on the doorstep of the Government, has usually been able to get the lion's share, I am surprised that it is not able to finance, and I feel that perhaps it has not collected as much as it might have done from patients able to pay.

Hon. E. H. Gray. What about the parlous condition of the Children's Hospital?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I have been told privately by people treated at the Perth Hospital that many patients who re-

ceive treatment at the various public hospitals are not looked to for payment of what is due from them. One or two have remarked that when they wanted to pay they found almost an obstacle put in their way. That has been definitely mentioned to me. Frequently the police could follow up those people in the same way as they follow up men who have got fares for the railway in order to go to country employment. From time to time it is found that they do not return those fares to the Labour Bureau, whereupon the police keep track of those people and, when they are in employment, collect the money from them. The same thing could be done in respect of people who could pay for services rendered at the hospital. However, I fear that under this measure, which is not yet before us, will be created one more of those burdens that are put upon those people who never use the hospitals, who are not permitted to go into such hospitals because they are in receipt of incomes of over £6 a week. So they are not permitted to be treated at a public hospital, but must go to a private institution. I do not hold with the idea of putting a tax on one section of the people to provide hospital accommodation for another section of the people, who feel that the Government will pay all these charges. Some people who can well afford to pay the hospital dues, although not in receipt of more than £6 per week have no intention of paying those dues.

Hon. A. Lovekin: You will find that a big percentage of patients at the Perth hospital come from the country.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: That may be so.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Thirty per cent. are from the country.

Hon. H. Stewart: But they get their bills all right.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: A great many of them probably do not pay.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Country people generally are the better payers.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am glad to hear that. We have been told also that it is the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill to deal with profiteering, but we shall have to wait until it comes before us to learn exactly to what it refers.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is sure to aim at the beef and mutton barons.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I wish also to refer to the question of relief works that

have been provided for the unemployed. The Government are convinced in the belief that as relief is provided for the unemployed about the metropolitan area, the ranks of those left without employment in the city are swelled by others coming in from the country. I have always held that that is to be expected. Many people go out into the back country to look for work and failing to find it realise that they must get a living somehow, and therefore return to the city. I know that many men have gone into the country to look for work and that it has been exceedingly difficult for them to get it there. The financial institutions have not been too free with their money in recent years and things have been fairly tight. Thus new works have not been undertaken to the same extent as might have been the case if the banks had treated their clients in the country with greater leniency, those clients who are not too financial but who would, in different circumstances, be only too ready to hold out a helping hand to anyone looking for employment. In these days also, farmers are particularly scared to put on additional hands, because they do not know what liability they will incur in addition to the wages they will have to pay. Many of them are quite prepared to find work at perhaps a nominal wage of £2 per week, but they are not willing to pay the rates fixed by the Arbitration Court.

Hon. E. H. Gray: No rates are fixed by the Arbitration Court for country work.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: No, thank goodness, but the moment rates are fixed the hon. member will find that there will be one big strike, and that strike will be on the part of the farmers.

Hon. J. R. Brown: It has not happened in New South Wales.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It has happened over there. But for that New South Wales would have put in a bigger crop. It is the reason why a good many people are disinclined to engage extra hands. It will be remembered that this House threw out a measure introduced by the Scaddan Government some years ago when it was proposed to add a 15 per cent. supertax to incomes to provide relief for the unemployed. It was recognised that if we earmarked a special fund for the unemployed, there would be unemployment throughout the whole country and men would be rushing to the city to see whether they could not be first to participate in the relief. So it is that whenever relief is provided in the city, men rush in from various parts of the country. Those who went

out in a bona fide way to look for work would immediately say, "We go to the country to find employment, and yet those who hang around the city are provided with special relief." Is it any wonder, therefore, that all make for the city? It would be better for the Government, if they desired to assist the unemployed, to provide funds for the clearing of land. I know that all men are not capable of carrying out that work, but it is in that direction that the greatest relief will be afforded and practical results obtained. If it is possible to give men an opportunity to earn a reasonable wage in the country, they should be encouraged to remain there. It would certainly be better to do that than to provide temporary relief in the city.

Hon. J. R. Brown: What do you call a reasonable wage?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: That would depend on the markets of the world. The Arbitration Courts may fix whatever wages they like in regard to employment associated with a commodity for which there is a good market within our own borders, but it is little use their fixing wages in connection with those industries that depend entirely upon the markets of the world. The moment we find the prices of wheat and wool declining, then very little notice will be taken of the rates determined by the courts.

Hon. J. R. Brown: But the clearing will all be done by then.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: There is any amount of clearing yet to be done. That opens up another big question. One wants to know what about all the large areas of land that are held in an unimproved state? I have frequently been twitted as one of the old settlers and a holder of large estates. It would be interesting to know how many large estates have been purchased under the Act that was recently passed. Provision was made under that Act for the appointment of a board, but we have not heard anything of the constitution of that board. I do say that the system we have adopted of making land available on a 25 years' period, the first five years of which are to be rent-free, has opened the door for many abuses. People have taken up land and they look upon it as better than taking a ticket in Tattersalls. A great many of those people are waiting to see whether they cannot sell the land without doing a tap to it. I know that the Minister for Lands recognises this as a serious matter, and that he has stated he will refuse to grant transfers unless certain improve-

ments are carried out. I have raised this question merely because of Mr. Brown's interjection that all the land is cleared. There are millions of acres of splendid land waiting to be cleared and grappled with, and the work of clearing is one of the best investments that can be undertaken. I do not care what class of labour is engaged in the work of clearing, but the more we get cleared the greater will be the traffic provided for the railways, and the greater will be the work for our ports to carry out. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply.

HON. H. STEWART (South-East) [5.11]: I congratulate the Honorary Minister on his elevation to high rank and I feel certain that the courtesy and ability he has displayed since he has been a member of this House will be an assurance that the duties allotted to him will be carried out to the satisfaction of those who are associated with him, and to the members of this House. I also wish to congratulate those new members who have been elected to this Chamber, at the same time regretting the loss of many old colleagues who did excellent work during their period of membership of this Chamber. I welcome the newcomers and feel sure that they will assist to enhance the value of our deliberations. I further wish to congratulate the newly elected member for West Province who made an excellent speech in moving the adoption of the Address-in-Reply. With regard to the hon. member's remarks on the subject of group settlement, the forecasts that were made—forecasts of warnings uttered in this Chamber by men with considerable experience in agricultural matters—have been realised. Those gentlemen wanted to see the problem tackled in a business-like way and on definite plans. Unfortunately that has not been done. No matter what kind of opposition was advanced, no matter what views were expressed as to the manner in which the undertaking should be carried out, the scheme was rushed through and the position became such that no Government coming into power after the initiation of that scheme, could possibly hope to hoodwink the public into believing that it was likely to be the success they claimed for it. One might institute a comparison between that scheme and the appointment by a business concern of a manager who has been highly recommended as

having been successful elsewhere, being put in charge of a business he was unfitted to control. In such circumstances he would have to be given a chance before an injustice was done to him. So it was with the present Government who came into power in 1924 and who had to look carefully into matters connected with group settlement. The present Government waited for nearly three years before they tackled the position. The Minister for Lands appointed an unbiased board to administer the scheme, a board consisting of agriculturists who soon realised that drastic remedies were necessary. I can refer to the pages of "Hansard" to show that what has happened was forecasted. In speaking on the Loan Bill in 1923, I stressed the position to members, and called for a return. It was tabulated and appears in the second volume of "Hansard" for that year. That return was based on 20 representative groups then established and showed the expenditure as at the 30th June of that year. Then three years later, I again referred to the matter and in "Hansard" of 1926, page 3030, there appears a table showing the same number of groups of a representative character. The details give the acres cropped, acres cleared, advances under bill of sale for stock, plant, etc., average cost per home, and so on. I remember the interjections that were made while I was speaking on that occasion. The figures showed that the total amount owing by each member of the group ranged from £2,238 down to £1,334. At that stage even, there was no finality. While I was speaking, Mr. Ewing interjected, "You are quoting the worst case in the group settlements." I retorted that I was quoting representative cases, but Mr. Ewing said my statements represented adverse criticism of the worst kind. I told Mr. Ewing then that I was quoting facts, and I indicated that the time had arrived when such comparative figures formed a reasonable basis from which we could see how things were going on. In reply to an interjection from Mr. Ewing, regarding the bad advertisement I was giving the State, I said—

How would an hon. member, say Mr. Rose, care to own property of 100 acres, 30 acres of which were cleared and carrying an indebtedness of £2,238?

How would Mr. Rose or other hon. members like to undertake that proposition and pay

interest on such an amount and expect to make a living out of it? That was nearly two years ago and we know the position to-day. The table I quoted in 1926 gave some particulars regarding the Peel Estate. With respect to one group there, the table showed that the settlers had cleared 1,641 acres, while another group had cleared 893 acres. The table includes in parentheses the figures that were embodied in the table I presented in 1923. The advances under bill of sale for stock, plant, etc., to settlers in the last group at the Peel Estate to which I have referred, represented £124 per settler. The average cost per home there amounted to £235 and the total cost, with 9 per cent. to be added for general expenses, amounted to £1,586 per settler. To-day, I believe £2,500,000 has been spent at the Peel Estate, and, as the result of the re-organisation, 170 settlers are now to be carried there. With this huge expenditure, it means that the work has cost over £14,000 per settler. Even then, I am told that 50 per cent. of the 170 settlers will not remain on their holdings.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That was pointed out to the Government long ago.

Hon. H. STEWART: There were frequent warnings of what would happen. The sooner the Government and the Press of this State see to it that the work is done on a proper economical basis, the better it will be. We have already the Federal Government pursuing that course and we have evidence of that in the appointment of the Migration and Development Commission. As to Mr. Ewing's interjections of two years ago, when he suggested that I was ruining the credit of the State, he should remember that it is to-day that the State's credit is being ruined and the borrowing capacity of the State is being adversely affected. I commend the present Minister for Lands upon his effort to grapple with the position, and to endeavour to learn a lesson from the experience of the past 18 months. I said long ago that it was time we had a stock-taking and I felt so concerned about the matter that I sent copies of the tabulated statement to which I have referred, to the Deputy Chairman of the Migration and Development Commission, Sir Charles Nathan, in order that he, as a business man, might know what the real position was. It is this work that has been indirectly the cause of much of the unemployment to-day. In my opinion, that unemployment is largely the

aftermath of the group settlement scheme, not so much the result of the advent of Southern Europeans. Much of the present trouble is due to the fact that so many who were put on the groups at the outset, have left and have not been able to fit in with the general agricultural work of the State.

Hon. J. Ewing: Do you consider the group settlement scheme has been a failure?

Hon. H. STEWART: I consider that much money has been lost through lack of foresight and preparation in the initial stages. We must now do the best we can with the scheme. It is certainly right that every settler on the group settlements shall be given an opportunity to make a living and to bring up his family under reasonable conditions. The position to-day is that much money has been wasted, and that must always be so when we rush into work without proper organisation and without adequate preliminary consideration.

Hon. J. Cornell: The present Government have spent £4,000,000 and the Mitchell Government £1,000,000.

Hon. J. Ewing: That is about the proportion of the expenditure.

Hon. H. STEWART: I presume Mr. Fraser's reference to hospital finances and possible legislation may be taken as an intimation that that legislation will be embodied in the proposed amendment to the Health Act that is referred to in the Governor's Speech. I hope that in this instance the legislation will take the form of taxation that will mean that those who benefit will also contribute their fair proportion. When the Hospitals Bill was before Parliament, the Bill was not passed because an amendment was agreed to in the Legislative Assembly that practically removed the burden from that section of the community who would be the greatest users of our hospitals. That amendment sought to relieve those people from taxation to such an extent that the proposal became inequitable. The suggestion that a tax should be levied largely upon one portion of the community for the benefit of the other, was not acceptable and that resulted in the rejection of the Bill. I desire to associate myself with the remarks of Mr. Holmes when he advised those who are more intimately associated with the workers of the State, to endeavour to bring about a more reasonable frame of mind than was displayed at the time they refused to agree to the proposals of Mr. H. V. McKay

for the introduction of piecework conditions that would have enabled him to establish works here under similar conditions to those operating in Victoria. We talk about our unemployment and our difficulties of development! Our fellow members who are more associated with the industrialists of the State than most of us, must realise the great mistake that was made on that occasion. I look forward with optimism to those members using their best endeavours to have the present position altered. If they make an effort in that direction, we shall have piecework introduced into industries to which it should be applied, and then we shall have our own manufactories here operating under conditions similar to those observed by the workers in the Eastern States. If that should happen, it will assist greatly, not only in the establishment of industries, but in the further progress of the State. It will make that progress much easier than it is under existing conditions. It will mean the saving of money that has to be expended in importing our requirements. I was interested to note the explanation made by the manager of the State Implement Works who indicated that although the number of operatives had been greatly reduced, production had increased as the number of employees had been reduced.

The Honorary Minister: What were you referring to when you mentioned Mr. McKay?

Hon. G. W. Miles: The unions here would not permit piecework conditions.

Hon. H. STEWART: That is so, although the workers in the Eastern States accepted them. Mr. McKay was able to make an agreement with them and establish the works on a better basis. When Mr. McKay came to Western Australia, he wanted to adopt the same course, but the unions would not agree to piecework and the works were not established.

Hon. G. W. Miles: All he asked was what the men in Victoria had agreed to.

Hon. H. STEWART: Yes, with the result that that industry was not established here. As to piecework, I could mention one industry in the southern part of the State to which it can be applied, namely, the Albany Woollen Mills. My new colleague from the South-East Province (Hon. C. H. Wittenoom), who is Mayor of Albany, is also associated with the directorship of those mills, where they are turning out excellent rugs, suitings, and so on, to the satisfaction of the Government.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: To the satisfaction of the shareholders?

Hon. H. STEWART: Perhaps not, but if hon. members will buy rugs, suitings and worsteds from the Albany mills and induce others to do so, and if the importers will take their products, too, then the position will be different.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: They are doing that now.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Some of the importers may be doing it.

Hon. H. STEWART: The sooner that happens, the sooner the woollen mills will be able to pay dividends. I do not think that shareholders, at any rate those who had looked into the economic position of Australia, anticipated that they would receive dividends when they put their money into the concern. On the other hand, I believe many of them considered they were acting philanthropically when they invested their money.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: No.

Hon. H. STEWART: At any rate, that was my attitude. I did not anticipate for a moment receiving dividends except under unexpected circumstances, such as another war.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Then you have not been disappointed.

Hon. H. STEWART: No. If more people were to purchase the products of the Albany mills, it would be of advantage to the State. More hands could be employed, and so we could reduce the amount of money that has to go out of the State for the purchase of woollen goods.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You should go around the shops and make them stock the stuff.

Hon. H. STEWART: If we got the people to insist upon being supplied with Albany material, the shops would stock it. I wish to direct attention to the great benefit that has resulted from the Federal Government's policy of encouraging science as applied to industry. They have established the Bureau of Science and Industry on a sound basis instead of on oral fireworks—as Mr. Hughes was content to do—with no finance to back it, and the work of the institution has enhanced the prestige and value of the Commonwealth in the eyes of other nations. Work such as that of the Migration and Development Commission and of the Bureau of Science and Industry is only what other nations and dominions have been engaged in for the last quarter of a century

at least, whereas Australia has only recently recognised how science can enhance the value of any industry by indicating how economies might be introduced and production increased. In industries such as engineering, agriculture and mining, particularly mining engineering, men with a knowledge of science were formerly looked at askance. In recent years the Federal Government have been instrumental in bringing many distinguished scientists to Australia, while the best of our young scientists have been afforded opportunities to extend their knowledge in the centre of Empire. Amongst the distinguished scientists who have recently visited Australia was Sir Arnold Theiler, who is recognised as one of the leading veterinary pathologists of the world. He was the chief veterinary authority in the Transvaal. He conferred with the Federal Government on matters of veterinary pathology, an important branch of science dealing with diseases and pests that cause such enormous economic loss to the country. Sir John Russell was also brought out, indirectly through the Federal Government. We had the pleasure of hearing him in this State, and our University authorities consulted him as to how they might assist in the development of this State. Sir John Russell indicated directions in which he believed the University could render valuable assistance to the agricultural industry, largely by research work in the field of pure science. In the matter of the extension of wheat-growing to areas having lighter rainfalls, Sir John was able to indicate safe lines that might be followed. On this important question, which should appeal to every member, Sir John stated—

The soils I have seen in the wheat belt and beyond (Northam, Kooberrin and beyond, Southern Cross and beyond), differ in several important respects from the soils of the northern hemisphere, and it is important, therefore, to investigate the constitution of the soil particles on lines similar to those adopted by Gedroiz, Wiegner, Bradfield, Hissink, and the Rothamsted workers.

Sir John does not say that it is possible to increase the rainfall, but he is of opinion that investigation will show settlers how they may better conserve the moisture so that areas of light rainfall may be made to yield profitable results and the range of the wheat-growing areas may be appreciably extended. I congratulate the State Government on their decision to mark the

centenary of the State by providing the necessary funds to house the University in its proper home at Crawley. I wish also to commend them for having granted greater financial consideration to the institution. I read with interest the report of the University Senate, and I think we might well congratulate that body on the intimation that as from January of this year a scheme of endowment insurance has been instituted. There is no harm in referring to the position that has arisen through the generous bequests made to the University by the late Sir Winthrop Hackett and Mr. Gledden, though no doubt the Minister is well aware of it. Those bequests have imposed on the University authorities the obligation of providing additional teachers. The requirements of the University have been well set out in the report, so that prospective benefactors may know how they can best help this institution. To increase the efficiency of the University and enable it to carry out its work money is required for books and extra tutorial assistance in the arts department, and books and scientific apparatus in the science and applied science departments. Other requirements, under the heading of new departments, include funds for diploma courses in commerce, domestic science and journalism. Money is needed for building funds and endowment for colleges, especially a women's college. Notwithstanding the great achievements of the University crew in winning the interstate boat race two years in succession, they have not a boat shed. Sheds and pavilions are required for all forms of sport. I believe the students are prepared to raise the money to erect a boat shed at Crawley, but have been unable to overcome objection by the people who govern reserves.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: I think that difficulty has been removed.

Hon. H. STEWART: I am glad to hear that. A few weeks ago I know the difficulty existed. I wish to refer briefly to the question of primary education. In the Press yesterday there appeared a half column article dealing with the psychological clinic. While we all have sympathy for mentally defective children, we have to consider what the purse will stand before we undertake to provide farms and homes for them. Work of that description, in my opinion, should be undertaken by philanthropic institutions. I am more concerned about the position of normal children living in the country. I wonder if members

are aware that it is necessary to have eight children of school age and to provide a schoolroom before a country centre is given a teacher. I shall not be satisfied until we get a teacher wherever there are four children of school age, and the building should be provided by the Government. The system of education by correspondence is efficient so far as it goes. I am not blaming the Minister for Education. He is not able to do everything with the funds at his disposal, but the people who go out to develop the State are entitled to have educational facilities for their children before we start to provide institutions for mental defectives.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You cannot do it on £473,000 obtained from indirect taxation a year.

Hon. J. R. Brown interjected.

Hon. H. STEWART: I am concerned about normal children in the country who are denied educational facilities to which they are entitled. Sometimes there are children just over or under the school age whose parents would be willing for them to attend in order that a teacher might be provided, but the regulation stipulates eight children of school age. Mr. Brown should be strongly supporting me instead of interjecting in an antagonistic tone. If the Government embark on expenditure to provide institutions for mental defectives, they will be showing a lack of appreciation for the normal children in the country who at present cannot obtain reasonable education.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What about the lack of conveyances for them?

Hon. J. R. Brown: Children will ride eight or nine miles to school.

Hon. H. STEWART: I do not wish to be drawn out unduly on this matter, but desire to warn the Government not to be cajoled into spending money in a way which I do not think is relatively as important as the promotion of education amongst those children who are fully normal. We now come to those who are mentally defective. This makes one suggest that both the Federal and State Governments should direct the attention of those who have to do with migration to the necessity for very careful supervision over those people who come to this State, not only as regards the examination at the port of embarkation, but the examination at a stage prior to that. I do not want to say anything which could be taken as a reflection upon the calibre of the people who are

coming from another land, but I think I am justified in pointing to the fact that there has not been a sufficiently stringent examination of all these people in the past. There have been two cases in the country districts this year, two shocking cases. I refer to the dreadful case at Darkan, and the other at Wubin. Grave tragedies occurred there through people who recently arrived in this State, and whose condition should have been detected before they left their home country. In my opinion women in the Australian bush have been safe with the Australian bushman. They have always been safe because of the Australian's appreciation of Australian womanhood. A few cases like those I have mentioned undermine the feeling of security of those who are pioneering the development of this State. Many women in the country have to be left long hours during the day, and even at night time, merely trusting to the high level of the Australian respect for womanhood. This is a matter which undoubtedly requires grave consideration at the hands of both the State and Federal Governments.

Hon. J. R. Brown: These were migrants.

Hon. H. STEWART: I am sure the hon. member is fully in accord with the sentiments I am trying to voice. I wish now to refer briefly to the Main Roads Act of 1925. In that connection a conference was convened by the Mayor of Perth and commenced its proceedings yesterday. It was the outcome of many serious protests on the part of local governing authorities against the administration of the Main Roads Board, and what was claimed to be wasteful expenditure by that board. There were outcries for amendments to existing legislation, and for the wiping out of the board, etc. The agenda submitted to the conference put up nothing which would involve an amendment of the Act, except in one instance, the contributions the local authorities are called upon to make for the development of main roads. When going through the motions and taking them by and large, as chairman of the select committee which reported on the Bill, I could see nothing in them to take exception to. The attitude of delegates showed that they were alive to the mistakes made in the administration, and which the chairman of the board had been busy explaining away. The leading article in to-day's "West Australian" puts the position in a fair and reasonable light. It showed that during the last finan-

cial year £479,077 had been expended from State funds alone on account of roads. The article continues—

The vital question is is the country getting value for its outlay?

The other main point in the leading article is where it says—

The principle incorporated in Section 30 of the Main Roads Act, 1925, which deals with the matter of these allocations, is in itself sound enough. It was laid down in order that those who benefited should pay in equitable proportions, and in order that escape might be made from the alternative of saddling those ratepayers with financial responsibilities for services from which they could not possibly receive benefit directly or indirectly. Possibly the duty of apportioning these responsibilities to the communities which are beneficiaries might prudently have been assigned to some authority other than the Main Roads Board, with peculiar qualifications for so unpleasant a task. Among a score of other questions this may well engage the attention of the Royal Commission if and when it is called into existence.

In the light of the experience that has been gained since the Act came into operation, and the board was appointed, I feel that a Royal Commission or Royal Commissioner, absolutely independent and non-political, would gain some valuable information that would be a useful guide, and would fully warrant any expenditure incurred in connection with such an appointment.

Hon. J. Cornell: Has not the hon. member been accused of being the chief factor in the weaknesses of the Act?

Hon. H. STEWART: I presume that my reply to the Premier on the subject was eminently satisfactory, because the subject has now been dropped. My name has at times been mentioned in connection with the matter, but not in any way that I could take exception to. Such excellent testimonials were forthcoming at the time when we were considering the matter, and so many bouquets were thrown at us, that the indications were that not much adverse criticism was forthcoming from the result of the work of the select committee. With regard to the system of allocation, some figures were given recently in the Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Lands. At the time the select committee was inquiring it was anticipated, by representatives of the Government who were giving evidence, that £200,000 a year would be available for disbursement by the Main Roads Board. It was thought at the time there would be sufficient expenditure to

justify the appointment of the board. Apparently the board was wanted by the Government and the people to deal with roads. The people wanted a board free from political interference, but they did not get it. Instead of having a bare £200,000, we know that the board had a very much larger sum to handle. Parliament did not take the traffic fees from the local authorities. They are estimated to have been something like £75,000. It seemed that no undue burden could, in the circumstances, be put upon the local governing bodies. The select committee, in their recommendations for financing half the cost of main road construction and half the cost of maintenance, had in mind the legislation which had been in existence for a good many years in Victoria and Queensland, which was considered to be the best in the Commonwealth. Mr. Burvill, writing recently to the "Albany Advertiser" made the statement that in Victoria the State paid half the cost of constructing main roads, and the councils the other half, and that the State paid two-thirds of the cost of maintenance and the councils one-third. The position, when the select committee was inquiring, was that in Victoria the councils, that is the local authorities, and the Government each paid half the cost of construction, and half the cost of maintenance. Only this week I have had looked up for me all the legislation that has been passed since that date, and I find it has not been amended as regards the moieties, and that Mr. Burvill must have been incorrect in making the statement he did. I can find no legislative enactment to that effect. It may not be generally known, except to those who have read the evidence and the report of the select committee, what the proposals were for financing the Main Roads Board. The Premier, when writing at election time, said that the Government were going to provide the roads. The evidence of the Under Secretary for Works before the select committee, was that the Government were going to raise the money to pay for the roads, and were going to raise £60,000 from the people who owned the land. The select committee did not like that, and thought it would interfere with the development of the State. If we pass a higher tax on them and look to the Commissioner of Taxation to collect the money, what opportunity has the individual of making a protest, if the burden becomes too great for him to bear? If the local authorities have a burden they

cannot bear, they are so well organised, and their value is so well recognised, as it was by the select committee, for their administrative work in this State, that they can go together to the Government and get redress through an amendment to the Act which will impose such contributions as they can bear. That is the sound and proper method of dealing with the matter. At the time, this Chamber and another place had to arrive at a workable measure. Experience has shown that the measure is necessary as well as desirable. But as regards this impossible burden, let me draw an illustration from figures given by the Minister for Lands elsewhere in reply to a question asked by Mr. E. B. Johnston during the session of a few weeks ago. Referring to the amount of money debited against road boards for works carried out to the 30th June, 1927, the Minister said that £114,000 had been spent on the Perth-Albany road. Over 20 road boards and two municipalities were asked to contribute in return for benefits derived from the expenditure of that sum of £114,000. They were asked to bear £16,000 of the capital cost, being given 30 years to repay that proportion with interest. From an administrative point of view the burden does not seem a heavy one to place on those authorities, especially having regard to the large amount of capital expenditure.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It depends on how the money has been spent.

Hon. H. STEWART: I shall come to that if time permits. However, if the money had been economically and efficiently spent, the local authorities in question might have been able to bear the contribution of 6½ per cent. interest on three-fourteenths of the capital cost. On the other hand, if this Chamber, in its then state of knowledge, was responsible for placing an undue burden on those local authorities, whose value is fully recognised by us, we will take it off again. I believe I may without egotism say that had the Main Roads Board read the report of the select committee and acted on the recommendations contained therein, using the machinery suggested by the select committee, they would have utilised the local governing bodies in having work done on contract by them, and would have built roads in accordance with illustrations given in the report as the result of evidence taken by the committee—sand, clay, and gravel roads, which would have been less expensive and proved more efficient.

Such roads, the select committee were informed by technical witnesses, had been built in other parts of Australia. The select committee obtained expert evidence from engineers of this State and other States, and had before them a treatise composed by the Chief Engineer of the Victorian Main Roads Board, who had been in charge of road construction in Victoria for years and had visited the United States on a tour of investigation. That officer's report was hot from the Press when it came to our hands, and accordingly there was no occasion to send any Western Australian engineer to America to discover what was modern practice in road construction. The information was available here in Western Australia. In the engineering profession, if one has up to date information obtained by a professional man it is available for any other professional man. The Chairman of the Western Australian Main Roads Board has been as well trained in engineering as it is possible for a man to be trained anywhere in the world. So there was no necessity for that engineer to visit the United States at the time referred to. Moreover, his absence from Western Australia afforded opportunities for the doing of many unwise things and for spending money lavishly. Indeed, that was the very time when the chairman's services should have been available here. The Minister for Works has been blamed for much of the lavish expenditure which took place then. This Chamber, I may point out, endeavoured to frame the Bill so that the members of the Main Roads Board would be free from political influence and ministerial control. We succeeded, so far as the Minister was concerned, until the measure went to a conference of managers. When the Bill came back from the Assembly, the Chief Secretary asked with regard to Clause 21, in which we had struck out "Minister" and inserted "board" in reference to construction of developmental roads, that we should insert the following words:—"The Minister may require the board to declare any road to be a developmental road for the purposes of this Act, and authorise and empower the board to lay out and provide such developmental road." Had those words been inserted, the Minister would have been able to do as suggested. The Chief Secretary put up a most reasonable argument, saying that with all

the developmental work that was going on the Government wanted power to make roads in connection with new settlements, since a road might be necessary and yet the Main Roads Board might decline to make it, as being unnecessary. The Chief Secretary said the Government would not accept such a position. Thereupon I raised a point of order, and the Chairman of Committees ruled that the amendment could not be moved. After that the Bill went to managers, and in order to get it enacted a compromise was made by which, instead of the Minister authorising and empowering the board to construct a developmental road, the Governor might of his own initiative, or on the recommendation of the board, authorise the work. Therefore the Minister for Works, who is being blamed, is not blame-worthy.

Hon. V. Hamersley: It was Cabinet all the time.

Hon. H. STEWART: According to the Act, it would be Cabinet. Perhaps in the circumstances it is difficult, though highly desirable, to get a Royal Commission of inquiry. In conclusion, let me draw attention to a detail in the select committee's report. In regard to the making of main roads in sparsely settled districts we expressly directed attention to such instances as the southern 16 miles of the Perth-Albany road. On page 5 of the report the following appears:—

Much of the mileage of main trunk roads which need special attention, such as Armadale-Albany, Armadale-Bunbury, Perth-York, and Perth-Northam, is not used by the producer in his business of production. The main road mileage of many country boards is but a small proportion of their mileage of cleared roads, but the cost of maintenance is heavy, while the revenue derived from the property holders on the route is altogether paltry in comparison with the expenditure required. The southern 16 miles of the Perth-Albany road yields a revenue of only £20.

This shows that the select committee realised the difficulties of the road boards. If there is anything to be rectified, presumably it will be rectified. The local governing bodies must remember what this Chamber provided for in the Bill. Some people say the Legislative Council should be abolished because of what it did in connection with that measure, but I say the Act stands as a monument of efficient legislative work. We recognised the very valuable work done by the local governing bodies, and this is shown by the whole trend of the legislation concerned.

The select committee almost pleaded with the Main Roads Board to utilise the services of the local governing bodies instead of appointing large staffs of officials who did not know the work. This Chamber has heard me on more than one occasion refer to the need for technically trained scientific men; but I say in this connection that men of practical knowledge—men who have spent a lifetime on road work—are also needed. A man from the University who is without practical experience has to acquire that kind of knowledge, but he will acquire it more quickly than an untrained man. Perhaps there have been too many engineers on these roads, and not enough road board foremen and road menders. I believe the result of the outcry which has been raised will be that the Main Roads Board will use the services of the local governing authorities, and that the Federal Government will show themselves more reasonable in regard to specifications and conditions. I trust, too, that the Main Roads Board will benefit by the experience of the past and value more highly the independence which this House, supported by another place, was responsible for giving them. The members of that board have been placed in a position where, if they have sufficient stamina and backbone, they should be able to keep themselves entirely independent of political control.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 9th August, 1928.

Questions	Wheat, bulk handling facilities	...	...	Page
	State advertising in Britain	...	...	85
	Address-in-reply, fourth day	...	...	86

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

QUESTION—WHEAT, BULK HANDLING FACILITIES.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Acting Minister for Works: 1, Has any consideration been given in the plans for harbour extension at Fremantle, to the question of bulk handling of grain that is being forced upon this State, and to the consequent need for less wharf frontage for handling of wheat in bulk than in bags? 2, Is he aware that the Director of Agriculture has stated repeatedly: "When we have to handle 50,000,000 bushels of wheat, bulk handling will be forced upon this country, as it will be impossible to handle it otherwise? 3, As indications point to the centennial objective of a 50,000,000-bushel crop being attained, before any further action is taken regarding the Fremantle harbour extension, will he go into this matter with the Engineer-in-Chief, with a view to altering the plans to provide for bulk handling, if necessary?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. On the 9th July, Cabinet instructed that the Director of Agriculture, the Secretary, Fremantle Harbour Trust, and the Engineer-in-Chief jointly should consider and report on the question of bulk-handling of wheat. That committee are now investigating all aspects of the question. The possibility of future bulk handling of wheat on the north side of Fremantle Harbour was in view when the recent scheme for future harbour extensions at Fremantle was put up and the general scheme was designed accordingly. 2, No. 3, There is no need to alter plans which were originally based on the necessity of making provision for possible future bulk handling.

QUESTION—STATE ADVERTISING IN BRITAIN.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Premier: 1, Is it correct as stated by returned travellers from Great Britain, that "the system of advertising Western Australia in the Homeland in conjunction with the combined States is not at all effective from a Western Australian point of view"? 2, If so, cannot steps be taken to advertise Western Australia independently of the other States?

The PREMIER replied: In the absence of advice as to the number and status of the returned travellers who made the statement alleged in question 1, I cannot determine