



**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.***Third Day.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. J. NICHOLSON** (Metropolitan) [4.36]: Before speaking to the question before us, I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my personal regret at the loss this House has sustained by the death of Mr. Greig. We all recognise that in our late member we had one who possessed in an outstanding manner the fine qualities of honesty of purpose, and who gave close attention at all times to his duties as a legislator. The House will be the poorer for his demise, and his constituents will suffer a loss that I am sure they will find hard to replace. I am certain, however, that in his successor we shall find one who will seek to follow in the footsteps of the late member, and to emulate him so far as is possible. I would also briefly welcome Mr. Glasheen as a member of this Chamber. The Speech that has been presented to us, as Mr. Ewing said yesterday, contains matter for very many debates. Some of that matter, I am sure, will be welcomed and approved, and some, I have no doubt, will be criticised by various speakers to the motion. The large gathering that was present on the occasion of the opening of Parliament was evidence, I think, of the fact that interest in our Parliament has not altogether lagged. I observe again, however, this year that a certain part of our opening ceremony was omitted, namely, the guard of honour. Some references were made to this matter on a former occasion, if I remember aright, but, at the risk of invoking criticism from any member who favours such an innovation, I venture to call attention to it. I offer this suggestion with perfect sincerity, that the Government might reconsider the matter, and revert to what I regard, and every member will, I think, regard, as an old and time-honoured custom.

**Hon. J. R. Brown:** And an unnecessary expense.

**Hon. J. NICHOLSON:** I hope to win Mr. Brown over to my way of thinking. I admit that arguments may be advanced for and against the retention of the custom. Let us put aside the question of expense for a moment. Many arguments may be advanced in connection with much in our whole system

of democracy. We boast of our democracy and our freedom. It is, I think, wrongly argued by some that the best way of exhibiting our sense of freedom is to advocate the wiping out of those formalities and ceremonies which, if we think for a moment, are really the outcome of the democracy of which we boast. I appeal to the Leader of the House and his colleagues to take the course that has been adopted in the past. I venture to say it is not wise to depart from it. There is great value in preserving and conforming to the traditions associated with our institution of Parliament. These traditions have stood the test of generations. Our forefathers, who won for us as a people our present freedom, must have had good reason for instituting and preserving them; and yet we lightly seek to abolish them. Every reflective man, whether a supporter of the Liberal Party or the Labour Party, would fight sternly against destroying our democratic form of Government, in lieu of some form of autocracy or oligarchy such as we find in Russia. In Western Australia by this innovation we are removing one of the oldest customs associated with our present form of government. I would ask every member whether this apparently small innovation does not tend to destroy the respect in which Parliament should be held. It is not a matter of expense.

**Hon. J. R. Brown:** It is not done for nothing.

**Hon. J. NICHOLSON:** I admit that.

**Hon. F. E. S. Willmott:** The hon. member does not do anything for nothing.

**Hon. J. NICHOLSON:** Does it not help to encourage and support the efforts of extremists in politics, who are desirous of wrecking our free and democratic institutions? That is the point, not the matter of expense. Is the doing of this likely to weaken and destroy our present democracy?

**Hon. J. R. Brown:** It does not prevent industrial unrest.

**The PRESIDENT:** I ask the hon. member not to interrupt so much. He will have an opportunity of speaking later.

**Hon. J. NICHOLSON:** If we pursue the desire for his innovation, we might well carry it into other spheres of life. We might, for example, pass a measure to say that no member, male or female, should appear neatly attired in a tailor-made costume. We might also abolish the use of all uniforms

of officials as well as those holding high office in Parliament. Why not do something, say, in connection with the procedure of our law courts and other institutions? I contend that all such institutions are better respected through the preservation of these customs and ceremonies, and so it is with Parliament. We may contribute towards the downfall or destruction of a building by removing an apparently unimportant section. How much more serious is it when we tamper with the traditions and ceremonies linked up, as they are, with our Parliamentary system. My attention was arrested recently by an interesting paragraph published in "The Scottish Australasian" of 21st May, 1925. I also noticed a paragraph in the "West Australian" of the 3rd August last under the headings "Communism and Religion" and "A Roman Catholic Warning," both of which paragraphs I intend to read to the House. I say at once that I recognise that all thinking and reflective Labour members, equally with thinking and reflective Liberal members, are not tainted with the ideas of the Communism and Bolshevism. Their thoughts have carried them far beyond such things, because they see in Communism and Bolshevism the destruction of our free democracy. If we weaken that democracy, even by the removal of one brick or strut from the roof or foundation, we may bring down the whole structure. That is what I shall fight against. I do not believe in Communism or Bolshevism.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: What would you say is the meaning of Bolshevism?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: You have an indication of the creed in Russia.

Hon. J. R. Brown: But Mr. Kitson wants a definition.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: He will get it there. The article that appeared in the "West Australian" was as follows:—

The business sessions of the annual Conference of Catholic Young Men's Societies of Great Britain opened at Newcastle (England) on May 30, when a number of papers were presented. One by the Rev. Father L. O'Hea, Principal of the Catholic Workers' College, Oxford, dealt with Roman Catholicism and Communism. There was little need, he said, to discuss the question, "Can a Catholic be a Communist?" for Communism was a definite sect, with headquarters in Russia, which made war on religion the first plank of its platform. Communism without Atheism was "Hamlet" without the Prince of Denmark. In the official hand book on Communism they were told that religion and Communism were incompatible, both theo-

retically and practically. Religion was to be banished from the schools and active propaganda against religion was to take its place. Communism, then, with due precaution that the religious prejudices of the masses were not to be too hastily shocked, but slowly undermined, was hostile to religion in any shape or form. Communism was no mere matter of politics. It was not a political party, but a sect, whose chief purpose was to blot out from the world once and for all, the name of God and the observance of his Commandments. Here was the danger to their Catholic folk. They had recent evidence that Catholics had been contaminated with Communism in London, Liverpool, Newcastle, Manchester, Sheffield, Dundee and elsewhere. The sad truth was that, while it nowhere flourished, it made the best progress where poverty abounded. Folk turned in disappointment from the failure of promised hopes built on this party or that, and sought a remedy elsewhere. Communism offered to supply the need, the poison of materialism was judiciously injected, and sooner or later belief and morality were undermined. Class war was class selfishness. Religion was the chief obstacle to discontent. Only the Church could save the world from Communism.

In the other article to which I have referred the writer, in quoting from a very fine thesis that had been written by M. Ferrero on "The Perfect State," points out—

There is danger to Australia in the avidity with which the unthinking, led by the designing, are ready to dispense with doctrines and institutions which have in the main given stability and strength to the State. The enthusiasm for political novelties is analogous to that thirst for change of programme on the stage and the screen of the picture theatre. There is an impatience of control and a restlessness under authority which manifests itself in every direction, and the discipline of political parties is threatened by a blatant spirit of egoism which is independence run mad. M. Ferrero applies his keen mind to the understanding of this modern phenomenon, and he comes to the conclusion that we are now-a-days so sure of our power to create the perfect state that we do not hesitate to sacrifice for it that which yesterday we considered of incalculable value—liberty, for example. The happenings in Germany are indicative of an awakening to the danger of losing that which was invaluable to the nation in past times. The election of Hindenburg to the Presidency does not necessarily mean the revival of aggressive militarism, but it does show that the German people recognise that there were certain elements in the old regime which must be preserved if the state is not to become the victim of modern Empiricism of a political character. The ideal state can only be found in some combination of those principles which are rooted in love of liberty and respect for authority. Our choice is limited within the confines of representative government of some kind. If

in course of time the people of any country can be persuaded to deliberately hand the business of the country to the dictatorship of an oligarchy, such as that which misconducted the affairs of Russia, they must stand by and take the consequences. It is in any case the trying out of a political ideal by the practical application of its principles to the concerns and life of a whole nation that either endorses or condemns it. Such an experiment is always contemplated when aggressive political propaganda reaches the testing stage. Whether any nation of to-day can afford to make experiments at the expense of much that is of permanent value to its economic or social life must be left to the people composing that nation. The world is feeling after perfection in human government. As

M. Ferrero reminds us in the article from which we have quoted, "The aspiration to perfection in politics as in morality and in art is one of the noblest aspirations of the human soul; but it can become one of the most dangerous if it is not in proportion to human power and possibility. The ideal of a perfect government which obsessed the ancient world was the cause of the long anarchy in which Europe lived in the Middle Ages. It does not seem likely that our epoch may be threatened by a catastrophe of this importance; but it is certain that an unrestricted pursuit of an ideal would make much longer and more painful the great political crisis created in Europe by the collapse of the Monarchical system if we do not take account of the limits within which this ideal can be realised in our time."

While I offer this criticism in regard to one part of our opening ceremony, I am glad to be able to compliment the Government and the mover of the motion, not only on the form of the motion but also on presenting, through His Excellency, a Speech prepared in a form in keeping with the best traditions of any Government, even a Liberal one. Feeling that, I can safely give my support to the motion subject to some criticism regarding one or two matters.

Hon. J. R. Brown: Don't be too severe.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I have been very mild so far. I did not observe in the Speech any reference to the shipping strike with which the Commonwealth and Western Australia in particular were threatened. At the time the Speech was delivered there was little hope of a solution, but the announcement which was made during the last few days of a settlement, provides us with a happier and more hopeful outlook. The threatened disorganisation of trade and the shortage with which we were confronted regarding lack of supplies has fortunately been obviated. As Western Australia occupies a very isolated position, and as we are so dependent for our

daily requirements upon imported goods, I naturally thought the Speech would have contained some reference to the strike. Take for example the manufacture of confectionery, which is one industry in Western Australia that gives employment to a fair number of men and women. I have been informed that in some instances works had actually closed down or the threat of closing down had had to be made. In other instances notices had been given to the employees that operations could not be continued owing to the lack of sugar supplies, so essential to such operations. Owing to the Federal restrictions we are prevented from importing sugar. We do not grow that commodity and therefore cannot supply our own needs.

Hon. J. Ewing: We ought to be able to do it.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: But we do not. I ask why this State should not attempt some action to remove those restrictions. If that were done our factories could be kept fully supplied, and our people could be maintained in employment. If they were removed we could have imported sugar from, say, Mauritius.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You want black labour sugar.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not care where it comes from so long as we can keep all hands at work. Does it matter where the sugar comes from if we can keep our factories supplied with the commodity they most require?

Hon. J. R. Brown: Of course it matters in view of the White Australia policy.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I cannot follow that line of argument. I may be dense, but I cannot see where such an argument has any force or any application. If we have industries in the State that are starving for certain commodities, does it matter to us where those commodities come from so long as we get them and they enable us to keep our factories going? Deprive us of them and the factories will close down and people will be thrown out of employment. Is it not better to get the articles we require from outside so as to keep everyone fully employed and earning full wages rather than have to close down industries and cause distress? I think the argument is in my favour.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Absolutely, now that three-fourths of the shipping has been declared black.

Hon. J. R. Brown interjected.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I leave the hon. member to ponder over my remarks. I am convinced that the more he reflects over them, the more convinced he will be of the truth of them. Mr. Walsh and those associated with him practically decreed that we were to be held up without shipping facilities. The Government should try to regulate these things in such a way that restrictions that are going to impose a serious hardship on the people may be readily removed. The recent shipping strike should serve to emphasise our isolation and the seriousness of our position. Some time ago one manufacturing confectioner, Mr. Plaistowe, advocated the growing of sugar beet. Very little, if anything, has been done in that direction, and I commend the suggestion to the Government. It may be made one of the commodities capable of being grown by our group settlers with advantage to themselves as well as to the State.

Hon. J. R. Brown: Can they grow it in wet areas?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I have not studied the question and therefore cannot pose as an authority, but I take it that those who know something about the growing of sugar beet will be able to indicate where the suitable land is situated, and on that land it might be possible to establish a group under the supervision of a qualified person.

Hon. T. Moore: Sugar beet, as an industry, paid in Victoria for many years.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: From what I have heard I believe it will be possible to make it a paying proposition in this State. Care, of course, would have to be taken in connection with this experiment, but it is well worthy of consideration at the hands of the Government. We have had an unpleasant experience as the result of the shipping strike by being placed in a parlous position so far as our daily wants are concerned, and if we can do anything that will be a benefit to the people and will assist to avert inconvenience we shall reap a great advantage. One can give many instances of our dependence on the Eastern States for our daily requirements. In a recent issue of the "West Australian" there were published some figures that were of quite an astonishing character. Probably most members read them, but as they give force to my remarks I will ask liberty to quote them.

The figures were compiled by the Government Statistician and show that the trade of Western Australia with the Eastern States for the year ended June 30th last was valued at £9,359,271, an increase of £213,910 over the previous year's total. The balance of trade was against us to the tune of £6,735,895.

Hon. J. Ewing: It is getting worse.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is possible that the big difference may be due to merchants importing to a greater extent in order to anticipate the wants of the people and so be able to carry on without interruption during the period of the strike. No doubt merchants try to get as much as they can when freight is available. The report in the newspaper shows that compared with the figures of the previous 12 months, imports at £8,047,583 increased by £366,167 and the exports at £1,311,688 declined by £152,257. The principal increases in imports were butter, £33,848, butter substitutes £4,687, bacon and hams £22,052, mutton and lamb—there was a scarcity here—£23,973, frozen beef £91,846, tinned meats £27,341, confectionery £49,184, and so on. There is a tremendous increase and the figures are positively alarming. They certainly show that there are wonderful opportunities here for men who are anxious to settle on the land and produce all those things that I have quoted. If they succeed, in the place of being a debtor State as we are to such a huge extent, we shall have a balance on the credit side and deficits will no longer be known. I should like to interpolate here that the other day I read that the Government had decided that sawmill employees should work not longer than 44 hours. On top of that came a suggestion from the Premier of New South Wales that 44 hours per week should be the prevailing hours throughout the Commonwealth. With that object in view the Premier of that State has invited the other State Premiers to meet him in conference to discuss the matter. Anyone who has had any association with the development of the land will recognise that progress has not been made by working limited hours.

Hon. J. R. Brown: How do you know?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I know perfectly well. We have only to ask any farmer in the State what he thinks of the 44 hours suggestion.

Hon. A. Burvill: A working farmer would never succeed on 44 hours.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Any man who has the interests of his farm at heart, and who desires to develop it as it should be developed, and to succeed, could not possibly do any good were he to carry on operations on the basis of a 44-hour week. If we introduce the 44-hour system in our industrial life generally, and at the same time invite people to come here to settle in group areas or take up land in the wheat country, we invite those people to work laboriously and long hours in the clearing and developing of the land, whilst the industrialist does not do more than 44 hours in a week. How can we expect a settler to remain content on his block of land when, whilst he is working long hours daily, he finds his neighbour on an adjoining sawmill engaged on a 44-hours week? How will the group settler feel when he finds that man getting high wages during the 44 hours? It will create a feeling of dissatisfaction. Merely to say that the group settler has a better future before him is not a sufficient answer. I admit that it is a great thing to be creating an asset. The group settler has the sense of doing something that is worth while, for himself and for the next generation; and no doubt he takes pride in doing it. I admire the men engaged in doing that work, and, if I may use the expression, I take my hat off to them. They are deserving of all honour. But I do ask the Leader of the House to put to his colleagues this view, that the offer of the 44-hours week is a temptation to the group settlers and is opposed to successful settling and to contentment on the land. That is the great thing. If we create discontent in the minds of the group settlers, we cannot hope to get the development that we expect from them.

Hon. J. R. Brown interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. Mr. Brown has now interjected no fewer than ten times since the speaker has been addressing the House. Reasonable interjections can be overlooked, although they are disorderly by Standing Order 398; but I warn the hon. member for the second time that unless he ceases his interjections—senseless, many of them—I shall be forced to deal with him under Standing

Order 413. I hope he will not give me cause to take any action in that direction.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I put those views to the Leader of the House, and I am sure he will give due consideration and weight to them, because they are worth while. We are all interested in the progress and development of the State. We want to see a happy, contented, and progressive community. The more we can do to provide means of contentment, the better for the State at large. The shipping strike, to which I have alluded, shows the seriousness of our position. Obviously it is necessary that our Government should do something to improve the position. Strikes of all kinds are certainly to be deplored; they are things I like to see avoided. We have an Arbitration Court established by law to regulate industry and deal with such disputes; and it seems, as one hon. member interpolated yesterday, that there is only one conclusion to be arrived at, namely, that the Arbitration Court has failed to achieve the desired end. Unfortunately, we find instances, just as in connection with this shipping strike, where the Arbitration tribunal has been openly defied, to the loss and inconvenience of the public. It is generally forgotten by those who embark on strikes that the public are the sufferers. They are the section lying between, that often feel the pinch as severely as anyone. We had a local instance of this in the strike of waitresses and hotel employees which was referred to yesterday by Mr. Ewing. We all know the inconvenience suffered on that occasion by the general public; but what I object to—and I voice my protest against it—is the fact that those persons or firms who were trying to supply the wants of the public were prevented from rendering that service. Picketing of premises was general, and very little if anything, was done to prevent it. There are laws in existence, laws framed and passed by Parliament, for the regulation and conduct of all persons; and those persons who offended should have been proceeded against. It is the duty of every Government, whether Liberal or Labour, to see that our laws are faithfully administered; otherwise how can the Government retain the respect of citizens? I will do justice by saying that I believe certain Labour officials or leaders did their best to bring about a settlement; but their efforts were thwarted by the injudici-

ous actions of some others. The Government, however, should have done their manifest duty. Let us for a moment assume an opposite case, an almost impossible case, one that is certainly most improbable, where two sets of employers are involved. Assume that the owners of catering establishments decided to insist upon new conditions as between them and the wholesalers. They might, for example, say to the wholesalers, "You are charging us too much for our tea, or our sugar, or coffee, or anything else, and we are going to use every effort we possibly can to put a stop to this. We shall insist upon your supplying us on certain other terms and conditions." Assume, further, that the owners of catering establishments proceeded to picket the premises of the wholesalers. They might arrange for pickets to go around and annoy the wholesaling fraternity. In such circumstances would it be right if the Government stood by and took no action against those people? Surely not. There are laws which provide for these things, laws intended to prevent disturbances of that nature. Infractions of the law should be dealt with, and offenders should be punished. All these happenings involve great financial loss not only to the workers but also to the employers, and likewise to the general public. The State also is a sufferer. If one could trace the matter, one would probably find that part of our deficit is accounted for in that way. We all are or should be concerned for the welfare and development of our State, and I submit that every effort should be made by both employers and employees to secure and maintain industrial peace and a happy relationship. Unfortunately, however, a spirit of distrust or suspicion seems to exist. That spirit everyone should try to break down by open and fair dealing. At various times proposals have been made by firms for their employees to share in profits, but those proposals have been rejected. I believe that in the Old Country, where schemes of profit sharing have been inaugurated they have proved beneficial to all parties concerned. Surely something could be done to secure the development and the peaceful working of our industries. I suggest to the leaders of Labour in this State that they consider whether something cannot be done in the direction I have indicated, whether some means cannot be devised whereby employees would share in the profits of the business. If something of that nature were done, it would probably

help towards industrial peace, which would be beneficial to everyone concerned. Unless, however, something is done, how can we expect, in view of the competition of the Eastern States, to induce people to establish industries in Western Australia? We in this State are on the one hand inviting people to come here, but we have not the industries to give them employment when they do come; that is to say, those people who are unfitted for settlement on the land. True, we say that the people we are asking to come here are people capable of taking up land; but we know that in many cases it is found that although people do go on the land, they prove unsuited for that particular avocation, and afterwards seek other walks of life. Therefore we ought to be in a position to establish as many industries as possible and thus increase the avenues of employment. We can absorb all that population, and instead of having unemployment, and the State being called upon to provide special works for the unemployed, we could have an abundance of employment provided and the State saved a great deal of trouble. In Western Australia above all the other States we require more and more industries, and to that end industrial peace is essential. In a celebrated speech delivered recently by the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mr. Baldwin, this matter was dealt with. Mr. Baldwin said—

By all means let us aim at having our conferences abroad for these good ends, but let us not neglect to have our conferences at Home for those good ends which touch us far more closely, and far more nearly, than anything that happens across the Channel. Why must we reserve all our talk of peace and our prayers for peace for the Continent, and forget to have our talk and our prayers for peace at home? It is one of the paradoxes of public life that from the very lips which preach pacifism abroad we hear the cry for war at home. Who was it said of Rousseau that he was a lover of his kind but a hater of his kin? The children of such philosophy can only bring damnation to this country. And, having said that, I want to recognise in the most generous way that I can, that there have been speeches made amongst the leaders of Labour to-day which would endorse every word I have uttered. I recognise the courage of those speeches, because the men who uttered them are trying at the same time to do their duty to those whom they represent, and to that greater community, the country, and that moreover, a man in public life, whether he be a Labour leader or the leader of a Tory party, often enough, if he speaks the truth that is in him and that he burns to tell, will find many who will be ready to deride him for what he has said.

In concluding the Prime Minister said—

Short, too, of any deliberate destruction of our industries, such as we have seen advocated in a few quarters, I dread that subtle poison of hatred which is being preached in some quarters, which weakens the faith of men in their own efficient service, sound workmanship, the very things which have built up the reputation of our great country, on which we still live. You may have one of the finest fleets of liners in this world, and you may have it owned by the State, and you may have it run by the State, but if you have a crew bent on defying all that makes for co-operation and discipline, you will bankrupt the fleet. It has not come to that in this country, and in my belief it never will. The power of managing our own affairs in our own way is the greatest gift of Englishmen. . . . If I have a message to you to-night, and to the people of this country, it is just this: I would say to England, "Steady, look where you are going. Human hands were given us to clasp, and not to be raised against one another in fratricidal strife."

Those words are pregnant with wisdom, and I commend them to all hon. members. I notice that certain Bills are promised in the Speech, and amongst them I welcome the intimation of the Main Roads Bill. I hope that Bill will provide for an independent board; because the success of the Bill will be largely dependent on the creation of such a board. I regret that there is no reference to an amendment of the Municipalities Act, or of a new Municipalities Act. The city of Perth has grown beyond the provisions of the existing Act and there is very great need for a measure that will provide the necessary legislation to successfully cope with the needs of the expanding city. I am glad to read in the Speech that the Government hope to overcome the difficulties that many of my constituents have suffered in respect of water supply, and I trust that nothing will be done to interrupt the progress of that work, and that no further complaints will require to be made in that respect. Another Bill I had hoped to see included was a town planning measure. I wish to applaud the good work carried out by Mr. W. Saw and the committee with which he is associated. Although they have hammered at the doors of successive Governments to get a suitable measure introduced, it has not been their good fortune so far to secure their objective. I hope, therefore, if the Government can see their way clear to include that Bill for consideration this session, they will do so. We have a city and many towns in the making, and unless they are developed on scientific lines and laid out to the best ad-

vantage, we shall be storing up very serious encumbrances for future generations. Another matter respecting the city is the traffic problem. I recognise that the police are trying to do their best with the means at their command, but there is much that remains to be done. The numerous accidents taking place give one grave cause for alarm, and I think it is our duty to call attention to them. I therefore ask the Minister to look into this question and see what can be done to minimise the number of accidents and try to avert, if possible, the resultant loss of life. Now a word or two in respect of the financial position. I regret that we have not yet reached that stage when our expenditure and revenue shall balance. One must continue to live in hope that the Government will reach that stage not later than the end of the current financial year. I confess to some little feeling of despair on noticing that the deficit for July was increased by £12,000 over and above the deficit for July of last year. If it had been £12,000 less it would have given one greater cause for hope that we would reach the balancing stage before long. Probably the Minister will have some explanation of that excess of deficit last month, and may be able to give us some new hope for better days to come. In conclusion, I think the people of the State should be deeply grateful to the State committee and the large body of witnesses who presented so strong and convincing a case before the Federal Disabilities Commission. I can only hope that good will result from that Commission with great benefit to the finances of Western Australia.

**HON. H. STEWART** (South-East) [5.40]: I wish to congratulate Mr. Glasheen on his election to this Chamber. At the same time I deplore the loss of Mr. Greig. From my knowledge of Mr. Glasheen, I feel that he will be not only an acquisition to the House, but a very useful representative of the province. The small poll recorded at the election was to a large extent accounted for by the restricted time provided for the election. The funeral of the late hon. member took place on the 23rd June, and on the 25th June the announcement was made that nominations would be returnable on the 3rd July. Surely the time allowed was unprecedented in its shortness! The notice came out at the week end, and many centres could not possibly have received it in time to permit of their nominat-



ing a candidate. Desirable as it is that we should have a full House at the assembling of Parliament, it should not be secured at the expense of affording the electors opportunity for nominating candidates for the vacant seat and allowing the constituents to become acquainted with the respective candidates. Only two weeks separated nomination day and election day. When it is remembered that many of the centres in the province have but two mails in a week, with perhaps only one train, it will be seen that it was impossible for the greater part of the electors to get into touch with the candidates. That is not at all a desirable position of affairs. Listening to the Speech, I was struck by the omission of Albany under the heading of harbour improvements. Reference was made to the harbours at Fremantle, at Bunbury, and at Geraldton, but there was no mention of the Albany harbour. According to the public accounts for the year 1918 there had been spent on the Albany harbour to that date £126,000, on the Bunbury harbour £278,000—

Hon. J. Ewing: That was for the breakwater.

Hon. H. STEWART: I am speaking of the harbour. To that date there had been expended on the Fremantle dock and slip £222,000, on the Fremantle harbour £1,961,000, and on the Geraldton harbour £67,000. The public accounts for 1924 show that there had been expended on the Albany harbour works £163,677, Bunbury £419,998, Fremantle £2,240,000, and Geraldton £74,000. Thus in the intervening period an additional amount of £37,000 was spent on the Albany harbour works, £241,000 at Bunbury, £288,000 at Fremantle, and £10,000 at Geraldton. It is quite right that additional money should be spent at Geraldton.

Hon. E. H. Gray: We want more at Fremantle, too.

Hon. H. STEWART: Fremantle is always wanting more, and apparently its people overlook the fact that probably much more money than was necessary has been expended to meet requirements there. I do not believe in all the traffic of the State being concentrated at one port. In the Eastern States there are three capital cities with ports for the dispatch of produce. In Western Australia there is a great danger of all the business being concentrated at one main port instead of suitably developing other harbours

to deal with the produce for overseas markets. Difficulties have been experienced in the Eastern States because traffic that should never have gone to the main ports has been diverted there to the disadvantage of the producing interests of the back country. The position in this State is fraught with grave danger because the development at Fremantle threatens to be out of all proportion to its relative and equitable claims. I was struck by the omission from the Speech of reference to the extension of the authorised railway from Albany to Denmark. That, and the extension of the Jarnadup line, were authorised by Parliament because of the needs of group settlements. Some of the group settlements are located 20 miles from the railway termini.

Hon. A. Burvill: Thirty odd miles.

Hon. H. STEWART: I always like to be on the safe side. Yet the work of extending those lines has not been commenced, and has not even been foreshadowed except in the general statement that the Government intend to proceed with the construction of the lines already authorised.

Hon. J. Duffell: Those lines were considered so important that we had a special session of Parliament to deal with them.

Hon. H. STEWART: That is so. I should like to have an assurance from the Leader of the House that this work will be proceeded with, not in sections by paltry votes of £5,000, £10,000, or £20,000, but as a continuous policy.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Put your railways out before you put the people there. You will never develop the country otherwise.

Hon. H. STEWART: The Minister for Lands has enlightened the public as to the area of second and third class land considered non-cultivable and still held by the Crown within 12½ miles of existing lines. The area is 9,000,000 acres, and the land is referred to as light land. The light land in the wheat belt north and south of the gold-fields line is different in character from the light land east of the Great Southern line beyond Narrogin, Lake Grace, and Pingrup. Wherever settlement has taken place the better quality of land has been first selected, and the light land has been neglected. The Premier has realised that if the light land could be utilised for nothing better than grazing, the traffic it would provide would

be of material assistance to the railways. There would be not only the produce raised to be carried, but the requirements of the people occupying such areas. Some of this land is not worth the minimum price of 1s. per acre, and I say that advisedly, after having travelled over a good deal of it. The Minister was quite right in stating that people who would acquire such land and bring it under production deserved the most generous terms. Twenty-five miles east of the Great Southern line only about 30 per cent. of the land is occupied. Two-thirds of the land comes within the category of non-cultivable, the blocks ranging from 5,000 to 10,000, 20,000 and 60,000 acres, and there is no record of anyone having taken up such land for purely grazing purposes in rabbit and dingo-infested country. I include in the non-cultivable land areas in the vermin-infested parts and land covered with poison and situated within 12½ miles of a railway. I have lithographs prepared by the Lands Department showing that my estimate of the area is quite within the mark. The blocks marked yellow on the lithographs are vacant, and men of courage, capital and initiative are required to take them in hand. The Minister appointed Mr. Bostock to report on the light lands. The present price of wool should be an incentive to undertake their development and bring them under production. If inducements were offered to people to take up such land, they would be able to show of what production it was capable. It is possible that after 10 or 15 years, and sheep have been carried on the land, it may be suitable for subdivision and for the growing of fodder crops. At the outset it would be necessary to go to the expense of a vermin-proof boundary fence, and at the same time eradicate the indigenous poison. The task would be a stupendous one. Only the man who had sufficient experience and capital to feel that he could undertake the task would dream of attempting it. Such a man would require a reasonable security of tenure before making the attempt. The Minister for Lands would be well advised to endeavour to induce people to take up one which actively concerned him, that there land carrying indigenous poison, if it is poor country, is 1s. an acre. The maximum area anyone can take up under the Land Act is 5,000 acres. The fact that such land would have to be enclosed with vermin-

proof fences which would cost £100 a mile, and that a considerable sum would have to be spent in eradicating the poison, would have to be taken into consideration by the officers of the department in arriving at the value of such land, considerable patches of which it would not be fair to value at 1s. per acre. When speaking at Katanning in April last, according to the "Great Southern Herald," the Minister for Lands said that the light land problem was one which actively concerned him, that there were 9,000,000 acres of such land within 12½ miles of existing railways, and that he would be prepared to give it away in order to induce its successful occupation. He considered that the Minister for Lands should be given full discretionary power with regard to the maximum area to be granted to any person who took up such land for much of this country could not be settled unless large areas were granted in single holdings. I am given to understand that a considerable amount of what is termed light land in the wheat belt is nearly equal to some of our first-class lands in the wheat farming areas of the Great Southern. I know of one block of 60,000 acres between two spur lines on the Great Southern railway, where these spur lines are roughly 30 miles apart. If experiments were carried on there and people were encouraged to take it up, I think it could be turned to profitable use for sheep grazing, but possibly the holding would have to amount to nearly 20,000 acres. If that country were taken up the development of the land to the east would probably follow, and it might subsequently be found that it would be suitable for wheat growing. It might even be proved that the country all the way to Esperance was capable of great expansion and development. In any event we should not sit idly by for 20 years while people are proving that the land is capable of producing. We should not hold up this inferior land if it is suitable in the first place for grazing. Before the ideals of the Minister for Lands are realised some of our existing legislation may have to be amended. Under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act a serious disability exists. Under the Land Act a person can hold 1,000 acres of first-class land, or 5,000 of non-cultivable land. Under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act the holder of 1,000 acres is exempt from taxation for the first five years. After that there used

to be exemption up to £250 on the unimproved value but that was done away with last year against the judgment of this House. If a person owns a grazing area of 2,500 acres he is also exempt for the first five years. The Lands Department are prepared to make grants up to 5,000 acres of this light land, but as the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act and the Land Tax Act stand to-day, if anyone is venture some enough to take up 5,000 acres of grazing land, he is liable to a tax of 2d. in the pound, whereas the man who takes up 2,500 acres is exempt for five years.

Hon. J. Nicholson: In face of the recommendation of the officer you mention that the area should be increased to 5,000 acres.

Hon. H. STEWART: Yes, that is an anomaly in the Act, which I had not noticed until to-day. This tax of 2d. in the pound on the 5,000 acres was not intended by Parliament. Mr. Bostock recommends that up to 10,000 acres should be allowed to a settler, and the Minister for Lands holds that it should be within his discretion to give what area he likes. It would not be fair to tax from the beginning only the person who took up more than the 2,500 acres, and exempt the man who took up less. Anyone who is utilising agricultural land, and has improved it within the meaning of the Act, has to pay only half the land tax, but any one taking up 5,000 acres of non-cultivable land could not be expected to effect the necessary improvements immediately. The position should, therefore, be modified by an amendment of the Act. In to-day's "West Australian" appears a statement made by Mr. Bostock, the concluding portion of which is as follows:—

The question of increasing an area to more than 5,000 acres resolved itself into the following:—With 5,000 acres of cultivable land and 1,000 acres cropped with oats, producing, say, 15 bushels, sufficient oats could be harvested to feed 2,500 sheep for eight months. The stubble would carry them for a further two months, and 3,300 acres would be available for the remaining two months. To fence with dog-proof, subdivide into five 1,000 acre paddocks, put down two wells, house, shed, working plant, clear 1,000 acres of scrub land, seed same and provide seed oats, super, and 1,500 sheep to start with would cost about £7,000, exclusive of cost of land, equivalent to nearly £500 a year interest, at 7 per cent. But, as he had put the cost high and the yield low, there should be a fair margin of profit in the suggestion.

I refer to this statement to show that if we want this class of land occupied quickly and made productive, we should allow intending settlers to come into it on liberal terms.

Hon. J. Duffell: Is that a reasonable estimate as to the cost?

Hon. H. STEWART: Mr. Bostock is referring to a portion of the State of which I have no particular knowledge. The great factor is rabbit and dog-proof fencing, which costs £100 a mile, and the outlay on the 20,000 acres blocks would be £2,000. To eradicate the poison would cost £1,000, and to put down dams for the conservation of water would cost another £200.

Hon. T. Moore: Cannot well water be obtained?

Hon. H. STEWART: No. It must be catchment water. I should say that the initial outlay necessary on a 20,000 acre block, to fit it to carry stock, would be between £3,000 and £3,500. Subsequently, further water conservation, subdivisinal fences, buildings and other improvements would entail additional expenditure.

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

Hon. H. STEWART: In pursuance of our desire to secure the utilisation of the light lands east of the Great Southern, I, in conjunction with other members of the Country Party, waited upon the Prime Minister, Mr. Bruce, the Treasurer, Dr. Earle Page, and the Minister for Works, Mr. Hill, as well as others we were able to meet when they were in Western Australia, and drew their attention to the fact that nine million acres of our light lands should be utilised for sheep growing. We stressed the necessity for Western Australia being able to obtain wire netting and fencing material at less cost, and we protested against the dumping duties imposed under the Federal Customs tariff. When the Minister for Lands (Hon. W. C. Angwin) was in Katanning in April last, he expressed his views regarding light lands and also the new migration agreement which we have been told is to be signed. I will read the Minister's remarks so that they will be on record in "Hansard" for the information of hon. members. It will be seen that his views were practically on all-fours with the statements in the Governor's Speech regarding migration. He held that migration must be gone on with, without necessarily concurring in the policy regarding the group settlements, as ex-

pressed by Mr. Ewing yesterday. That is a view that will appeal to most of the Parliamentary representatives in this House. He claimed that we have not got as much assistance in the development of our great State as we should have. This is what Mr. Angwin said—

The Government had first to satisfy themselves that the new agreement was in the best interests of the State before it was entered into. The financial clauses were certainly better, but there were too many conditions in regard to employment of migrants. He considered that neither the British Government nor the Commonwealth were bearing their share of the burden of settlement. The British Government spent annually huge sums in doles, which had the effect of pauperising the people, yet appeared to hesitate to put an end to such a pernicious system by whole-hearted assistance towards establishing settlements in Australia. The Commonwealth Government gained material benefit by every migrant to Australia, and yet undertook none of the obligations of settlement, this burden being left to the States. Personally, he thought that the agreement would have to be accepted, for unless the Government took this step they would not be able to carry on the group settlements. The new agreement permitted settlement in any portion of the State which might be considered suitable, and had other provisions which were helpful, and he could promise that the Government would give it every consideration.

Most hon. members will agree with those views and will support Mr. Angwin's contention that the conditions we have obtained, both in the original agreement and in the later one, are not, in view of the conditions in Great Britain, as good as we could expect to have secured. The position of our forests should be stressed not only to the Government but to all those interested in the welfare of the State. The accepted forests policy has not been put into operation here. At a conference of foresters in 1920 an arrangement, which was confirmed a month later at a Premiers' Conference, was arrived at setting out—I quote from the February issue of the "Australian Forestry Journal," that "a national forest area of 24,500,000 acres of indigenous forest was necessary to supply the timber needs of the Commonwealth. Both conferences endorsed the desirability of aiming at the reservation of this area; its distribution among the States to be as follows: Queensland 6,000,000 acres, New South Wales 8,000,000, Victoria 5,500,000, South Australia 500,000, Western Australia 3,000,000, Tasmania 1,500,000." Nearly five years have elapsed since that con-

ference took place, and certain alienations have been made. In Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania nearly three-quarters of the area agreed upon has been set aside permanently for forestry purposes. In Western Australia 917,000 acres have been set aside, but of that total 54,000 acres only have been dedicated as permanent State forests, while 863,426 acres of timber reserves, consisting almost entirely of large areas in the Eastern Goldfields districts, have been reserved for the supply of mining timber. The departmental officers concerned have agreed upon the areas to be set aside, but so far various Governments have not taken the necessary steps to definitely set aside the areas agreed upon. The necessary forests survey having taken place, hon. members will agree that the areas should be permanently dedicated. There should be no further delay in giving effect to the forests policy, and we should alienate the three million acres of land as agreed upon at the Premiers' Conference. Recently I received a copy, in pamphlet form, of a letter by Mr. W. N. Hedges, that appeared in the "West Australian." That pamphlet deals with his proposal for agricultural railways in Western Australia, utilising natural gradients. With the aid of a map he points out that there is an old salt river bed running from beyond Lake Barlee towards Leonora and passing in a south-westerly direction until it comes down through the Merredin and Goomalling loop to south of Kununoppin. It passes thence between Merredin and Northam and, following the natural river bed all the way, runs down towards Brookton, where there is an elevation of 700 feet. From that point there is a gradual fall with a natural grade all the way. At Brookton it reaches the head of the Avon Valley. The river bed also passes along east of Corrigin and west of Kondinin running thence south towards Lake Grace, the altitude there being about 900 feet. The contention is that from Lake Grace or north of the goldfields line, there is a natural grade that falls on the one hand towards the north and on the other towards the south. A line has already been authorised from Brookton to the Dale River District, and thus it would be possible to get a more satisfactory route from Brookton to Armadale, shortening the distance to Fremantle considerably. The saving would represent about four hours' travelling for passengers and about 41 miles

of railway haulage. If Mr. Hedges' contentions be correct—

Hon. E. H. Gray: They have not been denied.

Hon. H. STEWART: That is so, but often contentions are put forward with insufficient data and additional examination with the aid of theodolite and level shows that important factors have not been considered. Mr. Hedges suggests that when the State has reached the stage of producing fifty millions of wheat instead of twenty-five millions, which he considers will be in the very near future, this proposal would mean not only reduced railway haulage but a considerable saving regarding train loads. Instead of taking train loads of 250 tons as at present, with the aid of these gradients he refers to, trains could take 1,600 or 2,000 ton loads. That would reduce working cost, freight charges and increase train loads. The present railway system would act as feeders. Looking through the grades there are certain points that raise a query in my mind. To convey to those members who have not seen Mr. Hedges' letter, I will read a paragraph from it which will illustrate the position. Mr. Hedges writes—

At present the bulk of the wheat is run through Northam, rail level 490. Merredin is now being made a big centre and all the wheat is grown below the level of Merredin. The rail level at Merredin is 1,046. Then take its run to Perth, in the first 20 miles it drops 200ft. to Baaudee, but in the next 19 miles from Baaudee to the 128-mile it rises again 265ft., then in the next 40 miles to Meekering it falls 431ft., then in the next 28 miles it rises 177ft., and then falls into Northam 323ft. But before it arrives in Perth it has to rise 551ft. to Beechina. Therefore, to say the least, it is expensive haulage and it is there to stay.

It is contended that on the Armadale line flying surveys have been put through and that the grade is one in 80, as against one in 45 on the Spencer's Brook route. The position is clear so far as Mr. Hedges' contention is concerned, that on the main line there are the rises and falls to which he has referred. In the first place, in connection with railway construction, the train load is limited to that which can be carried on the maximum grade. There is a second phase, and it is that once you start to run over a long distance your wear and tear and working costs are greater when you have a series of rises and falls in grades than if the grades were comparatively even. If the contention of Mr. Hedges is correct, he is

to be commended for having put it before the public. His concluding remarks are worth repeating—

It is for others to take this matter up in the interests of the State and the settlement of the Empire. I have started the ball rolling; keep it going.

This is a matter that is well worthy of investigation at the hands of the department. Anyone looking at Mr. Hedges' map must see that the altitude of Lake Grace is 900ft. and that the fall then is towards the Avon River. But my knowledge of Lake Grace, and further east at Newdegate and south towards Magenta and Ravensthorpe, makes this query rise in my mind: Is there not a lower point than Lake Grace further east and further south, and the Salt River running south in a direction which would relieve traffic from being a one-way route to Fremantle? I think the country to the south of Lake Grace should be investigated in connection with the grades, and I believe it would be found possible to get a down grade there past the Stirling Ranges to Albany and give an alternative route to the port. We should avoid getting into the position of sending everything that we have for export through a bottle neck. It is in that way that harm is done. We know that east of Newdegate, that part known as Damnosa is suitable for wheat growing, and further east to Forrestania there are 1½ million acres of first class land. The distance from Forrestania to Albany is less than from Forrestania via Kondinin, Corrigin, Brookton and Armadale to Fremantle. Investigations would probably reveal a natural down grade to the port of Albany and passing through country which will grow high class merino wool and which is unsuitable for wheat production. We are aware of the natural advantages of the port of Albany and we know the artificial advantages that have had to be provided at Fremantle. At Bunbury a good deal of money has been spent to provide harbour accommodation. In railway extensions all Governments should avoid a policy which will lead to future congestion and further centralisation, and should not be influenced by political considerations. They should be influenced by the way in which traffic can best be handled without risk of the trade being hauled unduly long distances. Several active ports are essential to the State's economic development.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Which line is it you are advocating? Is it the Southern line in preference to that from Brookton to Armadale?

Hon. H. STEWART: The Brookton-Armadale line will probably be needed to handle all the production that will take place in the existing wheat belt. Further east towards Forrestania it will be possible to construct lines that will shorten the distance to Albany. Before I conclude my remarks I wish to refer to what took place at the close of the last session when I, because of domestic reasons, was unable to attend the final sitting. When I read the report of what had transpired in connection with the taxation measures that had come before us, I was greatly disappointed. This House had made certain amendments and had adhered to those amendments. Then the matter resulted in a conference, and I was sorry to see that not one member of the Country Party from either House was invited to become one of the managers at the conference. Everything that this House had proposed was sacrificed in order to arrive at a compromise, and it was a bitter disappointment to me to find that the managers of this House got so little after giving everything. I am sorry that the managers from this House at that conference are not now present in the Chamber, but doubtless they will read my remarks. If it had been a matter about which this House had any doubt one would not have felt so keenly about it. What this House proposed was in the best interests of the State, and our proposals were agreed to by a strong majority. The position since the passing of that measure is that whereas before there was an exemption of £250 that exemption has been wiped out. On that question this House stood firm. It was also regarded as just that if taxation was levied in respect of land, the payment made could be deducted from income tax. When the managers consented to that rebate being reduced to 50 per cent.—in place of its being wiped out altogether—they were not adhering to a principle, but simply taking half a loaf. That, in particular, seems to me an amendment which the managers were not justified in agreeing to. I trust that when negotiations of a similar description are again pending, and when what I may term country interests are so much concerned in the results of the conference, some courtesy will be shown, at least in one Chamber if not in both, and that a

representative of the country interests will be amongst the managers.

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

*House adjourned at 5.2 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Wednesday, 5th August, 1925.*

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

### QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAY RATES.

#### *Geographical Trade.*

MR. A. WANSBROUGH asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Do the Government intend to review the differential rate system now applying over our State railways on primary products grown within the State for overseas? 2, If so, will each seaport receive its geographical trade?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No differential rate system of any sort is in existence on the Government railways, but if the hon. member refers to the carriage of primary products for overseas to other than the nearest port, the reply is that this question has been under consideration with a view to applying higher freight charges to such traffic than those applying when consigned to the nearest port. 2, Further consideration will be given this matter when the next revision of rates is being dealt with.