

after the stone has been put down at the mill to be treated, this 1s. 6d. being for further handling of the stone. If you are told you have to pay 10s. a ton to cart the stone from Mt. Stirling to the Leonora battery you generally suppose that all charges are included in that; but there is this further impost of 1s. 6d., because they cannot put the stone into the battery from where it is dumped. Yet it only requires a belt conveyor, or some other device of the sort, to do away with the impost. If the Government wish the men to prosper they should show their gratitude for the prospecting work done by improving the conditions at the State batteries. I daresay that at a later date the conditions of crushing at these batteries will be taken into consideration. This is a question I would recommend every member of the House to study. I hope members, after much boasting of what they have done and intend to do for the prospector, will at last do something for him. It can be done in various ways. At a later date I intend to bring in a measure dealing with mining boards. However, there is no need to go further into this matter at the present time. I hope that the deliberations of the House will result in permanently improving the conditions of Western Australia generally.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE (Toodyay): If there is any part of the policy of the Government which appeals to me, it is that in which they propose to build various agricultural railways. That, I maintain, is the most important part of the policy, because the development of the State depends on the development of its agricultural resources, and I fail to see how those resources are to be developed other than by an extensive construction of agricultural railways. It is the duty of the Government to, as far as possible, carry out the promises of the past Government in so far as these railways are concerned. Those promises were given in good faith, and were largely responsible for the extraordinary settlement of the land in the back districts. The people took up those lands under anything but the best conditions in respect to rainfall, and any member who has a know-

ledge of the difficulties to be contended against in settling the land must realise that these people are entitled to special consideration. To-day they are faced with serious difficulty in respect to the water supply, and undoubtedly it is the duty of the Government to assist those people to the utmost of their ability. At the same time I feel that had the late Government remained in power those people would have received special consideration, probably more than has been extended to them in the circumstances.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): How do you know?

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: With all due respect to the present Government, and I feel that they are in earnest, I maintain that the position is almost identical to-day with what it was a week before the elections. I do not intend to speak in any way ungratefully, because I believe the Government mean to help these people. They are doing their best, and I am hopeful that in the near future the difficulty will have been largely overcome, if only temporarily. Now it is necessary that the question of water supply be taken in hand, and as speedily as possible be overcome by a big permanent scheme. The country fully justifies it. This year we have seen extraordinary crops raised on a very short rainfall. We were told that the crops at Dowerin were a failure, but I am glad to say they are scarcely that. Some crops away east of Dowerin are a failure, but in Dowerin the crops are fairly good. Yet with scarcely a water supply of any sort there is very little complaint from the people in that district. Great consideration is due to them, and I hope it will be extended. There is large settlement going on in the north of the Cowcowing district, and I hope the Government will see their way to take the promised railway through that district. It is due to these people, for they are an able and energetic class, and entitled to every consideration. If there is any matter in the Government policy which does not receive my approval it is the proposed amendment of the land regulations. I give the Minister credit for honesty of intention, and I feel sure that if left

solely to himself he would certainly hesitate and defer the carrying out of these proposed amendments. It is a question of great importance, especially at this stage of the history of the State. It is a most inopportune moment for the introduction of such a proposal. The operation of this proposal will go farther than the Government dream of. It has already discouraged people; numbers of leaseholders have spoken to me in regard to the matter. Many people say they had money to invest in land under the non-residential conditions, and were prepared to honestly carry out those conditions. Further, it is operating against the people in respect to the storekeepers, who hitherto, to my personal knowledge, have been in a sense carrying the small settler; for the storekeepers are not all robbers. Some years ago I was assisting in that line of business, and it is within my knowledge that these people have had credit for four or five years without interest, the storekeeper knowing full well that ultimately the debt would be paid. However, under the new amendment the securities will be unsound, and it is highly unfair to the selector that the proposed amendments should be made at this stage, because those people fully believed that their right of tenure was sound, that they could transfer if sickness or misfortune overtook him. However, under the proposed regulations they will be denied that.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: I sincerely hope the Minister will not go on with his proposed amendments, and will do nothing to prevent these transfers.

The Minister for Lands: We will, if necessary.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: There is one other matter that stands next in importance, namely the cost of living. Although sitting on the Opposition side of the House, I am prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Government in the matter of reducing the cost of living. Much has been said on this question and many promises have been made, but the cost of living is almost wholly controlled by the large importation of our daily necessities. We import daily necessities

to the tune of a little over a million per year. Here is an opportunity for the Minister controlling the Agricultural Department. I claim that there is sufficient work in the agricultural industry and the secondary industries to require a Minister to control them, and it is hardly fair, seeing that these industries are so necessary to the advancement of the State, that one Minister should be burdened with the control of the two or three large departments now in charge of the Minister for Lands. There is sufficient work for one Minister in each one of them. The bulk of this million pounds worth of produce which we import yearly could, I maintain, be produced in the State if sufficient inducement were given to agriculturists. Let us take some of the items:—Butter and cheese total over half a million pounds. I say that with the aid of irrigation and systematic encouragement all that butter could be produced in the State. Here is an opportunity for the Government to devise a system of proper assistance and encouragement to the dairying industry. Practical demonstration is necessary. We hear a lot from time to time about the education of the young, but to my mind the education of the adult is also necessary, and a practical demonstration would go a long way towards overcoming the difficulties in the way of establishing the dairying industry. I saw in South Australia and Victoria in March last men doing well under favourable conditions with a small area. I believe it is the ambition of the present Government to encourage close and intense settlement, and for such settlement Western Australia offers equal opportunities with the other States. It only needs that we should show a bold front in this matter. If our south-western lands were the property of a private individual and money were obtainable I venture to say that individual would launch out to the tune of thousands, and surely if there is sufficient inducement for a private individual there should be sufficient inducement for the Government of a great State such as ours. The high price of potatoes was much talked about during the election

campaign, and it was said that the embargo upon imported potatoes would be removed, or at any rate, that they would be made cheaper. I hope that no tinkering will be attempted in this direction, because if it is possible to prevent that dreadful scourge, the Irish blight, getting hold of our lands, let us sacrifice a little to accomplish that end. We have in the south-west a vast area capable, we are told by the Commissioner, who is competent to speak on the matter, of producing sufficient potatoes for the whole of the Commonwealth, and there is a further prospect of a big industry in the production of good healthy seed potatoes. This year the growing of potatoes was seriously hampered because we could not obtain seed. There are fairly large quantities grown in my district but owing to the scarcity of seed, the areas planted were not as large as they would otherwise have been. A little sacrifice is justified to keep our potato areas clean, but if it is at all possible to allow the eastern potato to come in, provided it is thoroughly disinfected, let it be imported, but not to all districts. The south is entitled to consideration in that respect and should be exempted. Then there is the question of the high price of meat. The member for Beverley said that we do not get our price for the meat, but I feel sure he overlooked the fact that there is such a thing as the cost of retailing. I believe in fair play all round, fair play to the retailer and fair play to the producer. We have had inquiries made from time to time into the supply and cost of meat, and it has been stated in evidence that the cost of distribution is fairly high.

Mr. George: It should not cost 2d. per pound.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: It was argued that they wanted 100 per cent. profit, and if we consider the high rate of wages there is something in the argument. If we give high wages we must expect to pay for them through the product. I have some experience in this business myself, and I know that meat cannot be retailed with any certainty with a 25 per cent. profit. I am not holding any brief

for the butchering trade, but I am pointing out that it is wholly a question of supply and demand, and although the supply may at times be plentiful it is not easy to raise and lower the prices as the supply rises and falls. Then there is the cost of sugar. This is a matter controlled by Federal action, but this high cost of sugar at the present time seems due to the labour troubles in Sydney.

Mr. Carpenter: To the combine.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: I am with the hon. member if a true bill can be made out against the combine, but in this case it is largely a combine in other directions; it is the Union Trust as well as the Sugar Trust. I am not going to say anything against the unions, because I realise that in the past they have done excellent service, but I maintain that to-day they have accomplished their end. The price of sugar is £26 and £27, and even as high as £29 per ton, and if we add to that the bounty, we find the actual price to the people is over £30 per ton. All this adds to the cost of living; the bonus comes out of the pockets of the people and indirectly is an addition to the price of sugar. The member for Fremantle remarked that we should protect the State Parliaments. I maintain that the State Parliament should make itself heard in connection with these high imposts on sugar and other commodities.

Mr. George: The Federal people will not take any notice.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: Now that we have our friends of the Labour party in power perhaps the Federal Parliament will listen to them. Then there are other commodities that are necessary on the breakfast table, and in connection with which the producer should be given encouragement. He needs all the encouragement that can be given him for he has many uphill battles to fight. The fruit industry is one that is very near to my heart. This industry combined with irrigation can be brought to a very high standard indeed, and no industry should have greater encouragement. Export prices are high. It has been said by the member for Swan that a State export department is necessary. I happen to have a knowledge of the export busi-

ness, and though well acquainted with the growers, I have not heard them express any desire for a State export department. I can give figures which show that the cost of sending fruit from the South Australian Government depot to the London wharf was 3s. 1 $\frac{1}{8}$ d. per case, whilst the West Australian cost was 2s. 5 $\frac{5}{8}$ d. per case from Fremantle to London wharves. I am not going to strongly oppose the establishment of a State export department, because if it is proved to be necessary undoubtedly we should have it, but at the present time, as far as my knowledge goes, and I am in daily contact with the fruitgrower, it is not justified. The money necessary for such a venture could be more satisfactorily expended in the encouragement of the industry in other directions.

Mr. Turvey: It is not costing the South Australian Government a penny.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: The balance-sheet issued by the South Australian Government recently for the export depot showed a deficit for last year of £4,300.

Member: No, there was a big profit; about £8,000.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: I am informed that there was a deficit, but I am open to correction. At any rate, I say that the industry can be better encouraged by more liberal assistance to the growers. The export of table grapes alone should appeal to the Ministry. In that branch of the industry alone there is more than comfort; there is even a little fortune if only the industry is given a little encouragement. It is difficult for the grower to produce the plants, and here lies an opportunity for the Government to establish a State nursery which would give the grower a chance of getting plants of export varieties. I maintain that an export department is scarcely justified at the present time, and if a proposal for its establishment is brought forward I shall move that a select committee be appointed to deal with the question. The question of irrigation is one that appeals to me very much. It offers splendid opportunities to the producer, and it would encourage many to take up the fruit in-

dustry who otherwise would not venture upon it.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE: There is one matter that seems to me should very much occupy the attention of the Administration, and that is the question of irrigation. Irrigation has proved itself to be very profitable if properly carried out in this State, and I maintain that the soils of this State, given proper treatment, with the aid of irrigation, should produce from the first day of January to the 31st day of December each year. That is sufficient inducement to my mind to warrant the expenditure of a large sum of money in that direction. I am with the member for Bunbury who pointed out in his speech that it is the duty of the Government to give attention to this matter, and I submit that in the South-West districts, particularly at Brunswick at the State farm, sufficient proof has been given of the profitable nature of such a venture. This is an opening for the small man, and I believe it is the contention particularly of the party now in power, and has been for many years, that closer settlement is more desirable than the large holdings that now exist throughout the State. From my own knowledge of the agricultural industry we could not have better proof of the large carrying capabilities of a country under irrigation than Mildura. There they have an area under plantation of 300 or 400 acres, carrying a population of 4,000 or 5,000 people. This appeals to me, and it is a matter which is an avenue that would relieve the population of the goldfields, those who are inclined towards agriculture. There we have miners with growing families who do not know what to do with their families; here is an opening for them. If the land is placed under irrigation a small area would suit them. Then we should want agricultural education. An agricultural college is justified on the goldfields. It is claimed that the University should be free. I maintain an agricultural college should also be free to the sons of miners where they are eager and anxious to learn agriculture in all its branches and thus render themselves

useful and fitted to take up the work when opportunity offers. I have received repeated letters from people who have friends and sons fitted for training, asking if I could not take them in hand and impart to them some knowledge in the way of agriculture, particularly fruit. Here, to my mind, lies the opportunity for the Government of the day to prove themselves the friend of the worker in more ways than one, affording every opportunity and facility for the sons of the workers acquiring an agricultural training. It should not be confined to the gold-fields, but colleges could be established in the different agricultural districts of the State. There is sufficient justification for them, and I feel if the Government started in that direction it would quickly bear good fruit. I have not much more to say. I sincerely hope that any shortcomings that may have resulted from my efforts this afternoon will be borne with in a friendly spirit. I am no hard and fast party man. I would readily assist the Government in any measure that they may bring forward which has for its object the advancement of the State and not one class in particular, but I say my interests are more with the agricultural producer because I realise their difficulties. I have had a knowledge of the pioneering difficulties of the State. Although for many years I was in the civil service I have had considerable experience in agriculture, and therefore claim to have a knowledge of the wants of agriculturists. In the back districts of the State that are suffering somewhat from the short rainfall, the people are anxiously awaiting some definite announcement from the Government of the day as to the proposed amendment of the land regulations. I have nothing further to say than to thank members for the consideration they have extended to me.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. T. H. Bath): There have been some references to-night by hon. members on the Opposition side of the House as to the proposals which the Government anticipate introducing at the earliest possible juncture with due consideration of those proposals, and the hope has been

expressed by more than one member on the Opposition side that we, as a Government representing the Labour party, will see our way in the future to modify our proposals and alter our intentions as expressed at the general elections. I think it is just as well to be clear on this point. We are in the position of a Government and a party who have contested the recent elections upon these principles. We have thoroughly explained them to the electors and, speaking personally, I can say I had to fight most determinedly and against considerable opposition in order to convince the electors that these principles were right. Is it likely or is it reasonable to expect that having been successful in winning the elections we are going to modify these proposals? The electors of the State have pronounced a verdict in their favour, and so far as my opinion goes, and I think the opinion of other members of our party, we have a clear duty to go forward as far as circumstances and opportunities will permit, to carry into effect the policy endorsed by a majority of the electors of the State. During this debate and previous to the assembling of Parliament, a considerable amount of criticism has been indulged in as to certain, I will not call them regulations, but certain instructions which have been issued by me as Minister for Lands in regard to the future exercise of my discriminating power in the matter of the approval of transfers. These instructions will necessarily involve a certain amount of increased work, I may say a good deal of increased work for the Minister and the department, and I have not lightly undertaken that work or entered upon it without due thought, and without consultation with the officers and my colleagues in issuing those instructions and setting out the course which I propose to pursue. Those members who have taken exception have been pleased to state that the amount of speculation or trafficking which is taking place in land is only a small amount compared to the genuine settlement, but I have indubitable evidence that that trafficking has been conducted on a very considerable scale. I felt sure of it before the election, before entering the