

Perth railway station. The newspaper report states that he was intoxicated. The man had been away and done his best for his country, and had returned, only to become a victim to this foul thing licensed by the Government. Do the Government really believe that the few pounds received from the liquor traffic is reasonable compensation for the lives lost and for the offences against public decency for which the traffic is responsible? Last Monday night on the Perth railway station it was impossible to get along Nos. 1 and 2 platforms without coming into contact with the vomit from drunken men. It is a disgrace to our State, and should be abolished. The publicans at Fremantle have to close their hotels when a troopship comes in, but the returned men are hurried away to Perth, where they can get as much liquor as they choose. If the hotels are to be closed in Fremantle they certainly should be closed in Perth. If they are to be left open in Perth, so too should they be left open in Fremantle. I claim justice for the publicans, just as I would claim justice for anybody else. To reduce the thing to a farce is enough to make one ill.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It would be all right if they did not send special trains down to bring the soldiers to Perth.

Mr. ROCKE: Yes, it shows that the liquor traffic has a pull which is decidedly unfair.

Mr. Underwood: Perhaps it is the liquor that has the pull.

Mr. ROCKE: I hope the Government will take some steps, if only in the direction of impressing upon the Federal authorities, who at present have control of the public-houses, the need for better arrangements when returned soldiers are in port. We cannot afford to lose the lives of our men. Moreover, the traffic is a very grave menace to the coming generation. I want to see things made as easy as possible for the next generation. We of this generation have had it hard enough, and we want things to be a little brighter and easier for those who are to come after us.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton): After the two socialistic speeches to which we have listened, it is scarcely necessary for a member of the Labour party to carry on in the same strain. To-night we have heard members on the other side stressing the importance of nationalising various industries and socialising others. Let me refer to the change of Ministries which has occurred during the past four or five months. A number of members who could not support the Lefroy Government find no difficulty in supporting the present Government. Yet I have never heard from any of those members anything to show that the policy of the present Government is in any way different from that of the Lefroy Government. Of course anything which the Lefroy Government did and which has since turned out disastrously, is now repudiated by the present Government and its supporters, who

at the same time are ever ready to claim credit for the successes of the Lefroy Government. Much has been said about the influence of the "West Australian" on local politics. The "West Australian" never ceased carping and criticising until it managed to get the present Premier into power. I am not ready to believe that everything in the garden is lovely just because the "West Australian" is going to boost the present Government. The Premier has been referred to as an irresponsible optimist. Quite recently I saw in an illustrated paper a picture of a man falling from the roof of an eight or 10-storied building. So optimistic was he that as he passed each storey he waved his hand and said, "I am still all right." I am afraid that when we reach the end of Mr. Mitchell's term of office the State will get just as severe a bump as was coming to that man falling from the high roof. We have heard a good deal about the cost of living. I do not think the Government can take credit for the proposed introduction of a Price Fixing Bill. The credit belongs to the Labour party, because it was the Labour party who woke up the people of the State to the necessity for action and who clamoured until the Government were simply forced to do something. When the Price Fixing Bill was in the Council some three years ago, Mr. Colebatch declared that any interference with the law of supply and demand was bound to end in disaster. That is the gentleman who, presently, will be introducing the Price Fixing Bill promised by the Government. One of the reasons which have conduced greatly to the high cost of living is the difference in the rate of interest charged by the banks. The Commonwealth Government are condoning that offence, for we find that during the past 12 months the Commonwealth Government in floating a couple of loans, notified the financial people of Australia that if they did not contribute to those loans the money would be taken from them by force. See how profiteering in regard to the value of money is carried on by the Commonwealth Government! Before the war the interest paid on any loan floated by the Commonwealth Government was $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., yet when the Government have to threaten to take money by force, they pay a rate of interest two per cent. higher. The world wide custom is for the banks to base their interest charges upon the price of Government stock.

Mr. Underwood: What is the overdraft rate to-day?

Mr. WILLCOCK: About eight per cent. It depends on the value of securities.

Mr. Underwood: It is the same to-day as it was before the war.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The farmers' overdraft rate is seven per cent.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is peculiar that the farmers can get money from any bank at seven per cent. while the State has to pay at least six per cent.

Mr. Johnston: The Commonwealth Bank does not charge any Western Australian customer more than six per cent.

Mr. WILLCOCK: People have to pay considerably more for their money now than they paid two or three years ago. I have been looking up the value of land and improvements in the Commonwealth. I find the total value is £1,125,000,000; and it is estimated that 60 per cent. of the land and improvements of Australia are mortgaged, and that the rate of interest has gone up one per cent. That would make a difference of over six million pounds paid by the people on their overdrafts to get the same amount of profit as in former years. Last night the member for Mt. Magnet illustrated the greatly increased profits of large companies. During the course of the debate we have heard a great deal about the profiteer. I have heard all sorts and conditions of men, of different political brands, denounce the profiteer. It is always, however, the other fellow who is spoken of. No one ever pleads guilty himself. Not long ago a man I met denounced a profiteer in unmeasured terms. He did not go as far as the member for Fremantle, but he did believe in putting the profiteer up against the wall. This particular individual bought chaff some time ago at £4 10s. a ton, and within a few months sold it for £8 10s. a ton. If he does not feel that it is time for him to get up against the wall he is not a very good judge of what should happen to a profiteer. The Government say they intend to bring down a price-fixing measure. Price-fixing has not worked out advantageously to the people. Prices have been fixed not by the Government but by different firms. The price of sugar has been fixed in that way, as well as the price of kerosene and other articles. It is impossible to get a quote for these things. The price also has not been fixed at a fair rate. The price of butter has been fixed at 189s. 8d. per cwt. or 1s. 8½d. per lb. I have seen the correspondence and invoices in connection with a firm in South Australia which was prepared to supply butter to Western Australia free on rails Adelaide at 1s. 7½d. per lb. The merchant in question was prepared to do business on these lines but was prevented by the price-fixing board of the Commonwealth, which said he would have to pay the price fixed. To buy this butter he would also have had to pay the freight between Melbourne and Adelaide. I have also seen where the merchant in South Australia has done business before on these lines and offered to do so again, but the merchant in Western Australia has been compelled to pay the price fixed. If this is the result of price-fixing it is not much good. Because the maximum price has been fixed for a certain commodity it is not to say that this price is that which has to be charged. If a man could sell a commodity at a reasonable profit he should not be restricted by a price-fixing board. The

member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) referred to the anomalous position of the manager of Dalgetys, who is also chairman of the Fremantle Harbour Trust. I do not suggest that he uses his position there as some unscrupulous individual might do, if similarly placed. It is, however, the duty of the Government not to allow any man to occupy a Government position which he can turn to the advantage either of himself or of the firm he represents. It is a shame that such a state of affairs should be allowed. The Government should remedy the position in the interests of the purity of the commercial life of the State.

Mr. Underwood interjected.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I would take away the management of the steamship service from the Harbour Trust. I stand for nationalisation and think the Government should have direct control of everything. The more direct control they have the more likely are we to get better results.

The Attorney General: The manager of Dalgetys has nothing to do with the management of the ships.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The manager is the chairman of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, and as such exercises a control over the secretary of the Harbour Trust. The secretary of the Harbour Trust and the manager of the State Steamship Service are one and the same individual. It is peculiar that the steamship company represented by Dalgetys here is in competition with the State Steamship Service.

The Attorney General: That steamship company has its own manager apart altogether from Dalgetys.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, they have their agents, but whatever benefit comes to this steamship company Dalgetys, as their agents, take a share of it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Dalgetys' share holders reap the benefit.

Mr. WILLCOCK: They are interested, I believe, in the shipping side of the firm. It is hard to say where Dalgetys start and the shipping companies begin. I hope the Government will take notice of what has been said by the member for Pilbara. Men who have anything to do with the shipping on the North-West coast will also be able to supply reasons why this state of affairs should not be continued. The position of Commissioner of Railways has been vacant for about 15 months, although the Government at that time said they were going to appoint a new Commissioner. They introduced a Bill providing for the appointment of three Commissioners. One of these three would have been the chairman of the Commissioners. It was, therefore, the duty of the Government to see that the position was filled immediately. No one outside Cabinet is in a position to state who the next Railway Commissioner will be, and how long a time will elapse before the position is filled. We have seen in the Press that there is an official here from New South Wales, and it is said that he

came here in connection with the position of Railway Commissioner. I do not think it is necessary for the Government to go outside the State in selecting a man for this position. We have just as good railway men here as there are in the other States. I am sure that suitable men are to be found in our own railway service—perhaps not the official who is at present at the head of that service, or those directly under him—and there are sufficient experienced men to take over the position and run the service with benefit to the State and credit to themselves. If we go outside the State to find a man we are destroying the ambition of those at present on the staff. All should have an opportunity of rising in their profession to the highest position available for them.

Mr. Hickmott: They will not be debarred from applying.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If an imported man gets the position they will be debarred from obtaining it.

Hon. P. Collier: They will have the satisfaction of knowing that they applied.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is a very poor satisfaction to a man who has lost the position.

Mr. Green: Whom would you suggest?

Mr. WILLCOCK: The financial position occupied by our railways is a bad one. That is one of the reasons why this appointment should be made as soon as possible. The finances of the State are also in a bad condition. We did not require to go to New South Wales to get a Premier for this State, for we have men here capable of running the State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We had to go to the Legislative Council for one.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We did not get on very well there, and had to come back to the Legislative Assembly. There are men in the service possessing considerable local knowledge, who would not take 18 months of study to be able to run the railways to advantage. There is no necessity to go to either New South Wales, Victoria or America to get a man for this position. The railways are going to the bad to the extent of about £300,000 a year. The Minister in charge said the other day that the coal consumption would cost another £32,000 a year. It is expected that the award which will be delivered in connection with the amendment to the agreement with the railway service will mean an additional expenditure of not less than £100,000. There are many matters in connection with railway administration to which I could draw attention, but I will have an opportunity of doing so when the Estimates come before us. I have referred before to the question of coal transport. Colliery coal deteriorates rapidly in quality if exposed to the air. The railway service was in such a somnolent condition that it did not wake up to the fact that there was a woodline strike at Kalgoorlie and likely to be a decrease in the traffic

for a few weeks, but continued to send coal up there according to the normal requirements of Kalgoorlie, and within a few weeks there were hundreds of tons of coal stacked in the yards going to waste.

Hon. P. Collier: Is it from these men that you propose to select a Railway Commissioner?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I did not propose to select the present head of the Railway Department for that position. Railway organisations have asked that men should be specially picked out to watch the railway transport of the State and have nothing else to do but that. This is necessary in order that the coal may be sent where it is wanted, and sent to its destination with the utmost expedition, and, further, that it should reach its destination as clean and in as efficient condition as possible. There should not be a dozen different individuals dealing with coal transport in a dozen different parts of the State. The Railway Department is losing £20,000 annually on that item alone. The present Commissioner of Railways has landed the State in an industrial dispute with the railway organisations which will cost the Government and the country a considerable amount of money. If the Government had hurried on the appointment of the new Commissioner, he might have been able to make some agreement with the men which would have saved a reference to the expensive machinery of the Arbitration Court. Even when the award is given it may not prove satisfactory. So far as the union, of which I have been a member for some 18 years, is concerned, we always obtained a more satisfactory agreement with the Commissioner who was controlling the railways than we could get from the Arbitration Court. We had a painful experience with the Arbitration Court which gave us conditions that even now we have not been able to get rid of, and which have acted to the detriment of every man in the industry concerned for the last 20 years.

Mr. Underwood: Are you in favour of abolishing the Arbitration Court?

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, but I am prepared to alter several of the provisions of the Arbitration Act, and alter considerably the manner in which the arbitration laws have worked out. So far as the court is concerned, it was not established for the purpose of rectifying anomalies or talking over industrial conditions with the employers and the employees. At the present time if a union requires an alteration in the industrial conditions, or any improvements, the employer will say, "Go to the court." The court is not established for that purpose. When two people were unable to agree they would go to the court to settle their differences. At the present time the parties do not try to agree. The employer adopts a stand and deliver attitude and says "Go to the court, and if the court awards you anything, I will pay it." The union to which I belong has got on very well without the aid of the court

for a period of 18 years and many other unions could do likewise if the employers were disposed to meet them and talk over the conditions and come to an amicable understanding. That could be done in 90 per cent. of the industrial troubles which exist at present.

Mr. Underwood: You happen to belong to a sensible union.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We happen to have a sensible employer. In many cases agreements could be arrived at between employer and employees without the aid of the court. I have heard it stated that the union to which I belong is regarded as the aristocrat of labour and that we enjoy the best industrial conditions of any union.

Hon. P. Collier: They are the key union to the service.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No class of men in the State have had their industrial conditions kept down so much as the timber workers. They have been trying for two years to get to the court and they are not there yet, and it has cost them about £2,000 and they do not seem to get any further. If that is the kind of thing that is going to happen, it means that only those unions with big banking accounts will be able to approach the court at all.

Mr. Hudson: You cannot blame the court.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We could make the court more easy to approach than it is at the present time. It really amounts to this, that any crowd of industrialists who want to get there must first go on strike. We have heard also that the policy of the Government is to produce, produce produce, or in the classical language of the member for Pilbara "get work." The member for Greenough this afternoon referred to the lead mining industry. I can assure the House, that this industry is of considerable importance to the constituency I represent, and I do say that the Government should have some constructive policy in view so as to get that industry on its feet again. With Mr. Hickey, a member of another place, I interviewed the member for Yilgarn when that gentleman was Minister for Mines, and the member for Canning when Minister for Mines was also interviewed, and we urged that the lead mining industry should at least be placed on a footing similar to that on which the farming industry is at the present time. If it is good business for the State to have the Industries Assistance Board to foster an industry like agriculture, which has not been a paying proposition during the last four or five years, it is just as good a business to foster the lead mining industry, which we know will eventually be of some direct benefit to the State. Every ton of lead that is produced is produced at a profit. I do not ask the Government to bolster up a mine that will not pay, but with lead at a certain price, the Government should treat the industry in the same way as they have been treating the agricultural industry, namely, to make ad-

vances to keep it going. We have in Geraldine and Northampton mines which are capable of employing a thousand men next week if the Government will go to their assistance either by providing a certain amount of sustenance for the men working the mines, or providing a certain amount of money as an advance on the product. I heard the leader of the Opposition suggest that the State Government should allow the companies to make a shipment of the lead outside the State and see what the Federal Government would do. That is the kind of direct action I am in favour of. The only way to draw attention to the conditions those people are suffering at present is by direct action of that description. Notice will then be taken of us. There is another matter in connection with production to which I desire to refer, and that is coal. There are coal deposits at Irwin, and these have been awaiting the advent of capital for exploitation. There is just as good coal at Irwin as there is at Collie, and the Government should do something to exploit it. The member for Greenough also mentioned the freezing works at Geraldton. The people there are prepared to subscribe the necessary capital, and in fact have almost done so without any assistance from the Government. There have been already 54,000 or 55,000 shares applied for within a few months and sufficient capital would have been raised to place those works on a sound financial footing. When canvassing for shares I have been asked, "What are you going to do for a water supply in connection with the works?" and I have been unable to give a satisfactory reply. I should be able to do so if the Government were only alive to their duty and kept the promises made during the past two years. The late Premier, when he was in Geraldton in August last, said that the Government were prepared to go on almost immediately with the work, and he added that if the freezing works were established a water supply would be made available. But no move whatever has been made in connection with the provision of a water supply. The Government have during the past two years done absolutely nothing except to spend, I think, about £800, during the past five or six months on one scheme, and now they have turned up that scheme altogether without any explanation from the Minister. The Government promised to spend between £5,000 and £7,000 on a water supply, but that apparently has been abandoned and no reason assigned for it. We hear that money is being spent in the direction of providing accommodation for pleasure seekers at Rottnest. We also hear that workers are to have the tramway extended so that they shall not have to walk more than 100 or 200 yards. Yet we have a town of between 3,000 and 4,000 people crying out for water. It is a wonder there has not been an epidemic of serious dimensions in that town. There have, however, been a number of typhoid cases recently and most of those have been directly attributable to the absence of an adequate water supply.

Mr. Money: Is that the Geraldton municipality?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes.

Mr. Money: Why do not they do it?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Apparently they have depended on a rotten reed in the Government, who have not carried out their promise. When the Government promise to do a thing, we expect them to carry it out.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Some Governments; this lot would not.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No. Whenever I approached the Minister for Works on the subject, he said "Do not think because you are on that side of the House, I treat you in any way differently."

Mr. O'Loughlen: Patronising dad!

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am not prepared to be patronised by dad any longer. I do not want his patronage; I want consideration for the just claims of my district. When a town with a population of 3,000 people has been promised a water supply for 10 or 15 years, some effort should be made to fulfil the promise.

Mr. Pickering: Busselton went into debt to get a water supply.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If the Government said definitely they would not carry out the work, the municipality would attempt to do it; but when the Government have promised to do it, it is up to them to keep their promise. The Labour Government did provide a dam at the Buller River and a good supply of water was obtained, but, through the incompetency of the staff of the Public Works Department, the reservoir overflowed, and the works were washed away. Since then nothing has been done to rectify the blunder of the engineering staff. We have heard nothing of the inquiry which was promised, though we were told that those responsible for the rotten construction of that work would be brought to book. We do not know who was responsible, or what has happened to the man responsible for such faulty work. While on the public works policy, I would like to know what the Government intend to do about the harbour works at Geraldton. The member for East Perth (Mr. Hardwick) might be interested to know that the Labour Government had a definite policy. They spent £30,000 to make an aqueduct for the construction of a breakwater to render the harbour safe, but since they went out of power, we cannot get so much as a promise of harbour facilities at Geraldton. If the Government have any scheme it is time they said so and gave effect to it. We shall not be like the Bunbury people, who quarrelled with the scheme that was offered them. Any good scheme will do for Geraldton.

Mr. Money: Any scheme will not do for us.

Hon. P. Collier: The Minister quickly went to Bunbury to rectify it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: He went on his knees and said, "Very well, it will be rectified."

Hon. P. Collier: A sort of "Don't shoot; I will come down."

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, "I will do whatever you wish." In view of what has happened in connection with the Geraldton water scheme, I have not much faith in the Minister's officers; but he has officers to advise him and their advice should be good enough to enable him to form an opinion, and when he has formed an opinion he should stick to it. I hope the present Government will not continue their one-eyed policy for the South-West. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) referred to the pastoral areas in the Murchison district, and I was glad to hear that he approves of the subdivision of large areas. I know half a dozen men who have areas of less than 50,000 acres in the Murchison and who are making a good living. It is often said that if land is not held in large areas, it is impossible to make a success of a holding, because when the drought comes, the pastoralists must "go bung."

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): If the area of land held is too small, that is a big difference.

Mr. WILLCOCK: In dry seasons the owner of, say, 50,000 acres with 1,000 or 2,000 sheep out of which he could make a reasonably good living, would find it easier to place them than a man who had to place 60,000 sheep to reduce his flock.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): As long as you keep to the 50,000 acres, you are right.

Mr. WILLCOCK: A lot of holdings should be cut up in the interests of closer settlement and repatriation, and in the interests of the district and the State itself. The Government should devise means of cutting them up. But it is not their policy to cut up these holdings and they do not intend to do it. If they desire to improve the State and to bring about successful repatriation and closer settlement in those areas, they will make up their minds about a policy and give effect to it.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. HARDWICK (East Perth): I approach this debate with a certain amount of timidity and nervousness, because I am rather loth to take up the time of the House at this stage of the debate. I realise how necessary it is to do something to ameliorate the conditions caused by the high cost of the necessities of life. It is always difficult to speak at the tail end of the debate on the Address-in-reply, after 20 or 25 members have spoken and dealt with most of the important problems, because very little new ground is left to cover. It is a bright spot in our Constitution that, during the debate on the Address-in-reply, we can deal with almost any question which, apart from this opportunity, must be treated by a direct motion. I hope members opposite will not think I am referring to direct action.

Mr. O'Loughlen: If Ministers do not take any notice, what is the use?