

MR. THOMAS: I prefer to leave the formation of a party to a man who is competent to lead; but I say the time is rapidly approaching when the country will call for a man who will formulate some go-ahead policy of decentralisation on the lines I have sketched out; and I am sure the country will not find that man in any present occupant of the Treasury bench, for Ministers are hide-bound men—and they have proved it in their policy speech—whose only idea is to centralise everything in Perth and Fremantle. I am glad, however, to find that they have brought into the Cabinet one strain of new blood in the person of the Minister for Lands (Hon. J. M. Hopkins), and that he intends to act on my suggestion. He wrote a letter to each member of the House telling us that he intended sending out an emissary, Mr. Wilbur, to lecture on the advantages of settling on the soil; and I understand that he has now decided to act on the hint I gave him in my reply to his letter, that I was thoroughly in accord with his views, and perfectly satisfied that he would not continue the policy carried out for so many years of deliberately shutting up the land in one section of the country—I am now speaking of that section from Albany to Eucla—and making the people go to other districts, but that he would open it up to settlement. I was thoroughly in accord with the suggestion that Mr. Wilbur should deliver lectures on the advantages which would accrue from settlement on the undeniably good soil between Norseman and Esperance and from Eucla to Albany.

THE PREMIER: Why should not the Minister for Lands be the future leader of your side?

MR. THOMAS: He has given way too much to the Premier. Although that go-ahead policy has not been laid before us in the Governor's Speech, I hope that the Ministry, or at least the Premier, will be able to bring before us ere the Session closes Bills for the construction of important works which will not only sustain gold mining, the main industry of this country, but will reflect prosperity on every section of the community, and leave the people much more prosperous and contented than we now find them.

MR. T. H. BATH (Hannans): Before addressing myself to the Governor's

Speech, I must express regret that at the opening of this the last Session of the present Parliament, we have not had any programme or policy placed before us by the Opposition.

MR. JACOBY: That is not our business.

MR. BATH: That might have led the occupants of this (Labour) bench at least to transfer their allegiance to a party which brought down a more democratic policy than the Government propounded. I have listened attentively to the last speaker, and am glad to hear that he has undertaken a task which the late leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson) found too heavy. I hope that during the hon. member's occupancy of the front Opposition bench he will have a democratic influence on the Opposition which will lead them to take a more advanced view of the possibilities of Western Australia than they take now. Speaking of the motion before us, the first paragraph of the Speech which claims my attention is that which places in the mouth of the Governor these words:—

The recent movement in the mother country towards securing closer trade relations between the various parts of the Empire has been welcomed in this State with feelings of warm sympathy and sincere hopes for its ultimate success.

I do not know what reason induced His Excellency's advisers to include this; whether it was for the sake of mere literary ornamentation, or

The applause of listening senates to command.

But whatever may have actuated them, I cannot compliment them on the wisdom of inserting such a paragraph. I yield to none in this Assembly in my desire for the continuance and the increase of the *prestige* of the British race; but I certainly consider that in Western Australia, in the other States of the Commonwealth, and in the rest of the British dominions, there will be considerable diversity of opinion as to whether this *prestige* will be enhanced by the proposal of Mr. Chamberlain. Not only that, but the proposal is one which is not within the province of this Legislature to deal with; it is solely within the province of the Commonwealth Government; and if we have no desire that the Commonwealth should interfere in matters which are our exclusive concern, we should set the example by not

interfering with those questions which come within their purview. There is also the fact to be remembered that during recent years this State, in common with the others, has obtained an ever-increasing trade with other countries outside of the British dominions; and I ask whether it is advisable for us to introduce any proposal which may not increase our trade with the British dominions, but which, on the contrary, may cause those other countries outside of the British dominions, in a retaliatory spirit, to transfer their trade to other countries which can supply articles they at present obtain from the Australian States. We have also in the Governor's Speech reference made to the Civil Service Commission, and I cannot think that the tone of that reference is a complimentary one. There seems to be an underlying doubt as to the wisdom of the Commission's suggestions, and if such is the case, what was the object of the Government in going to such enormous expense in appointing the Commission, if the recommendations made are to be disregarded, or if only a small portion of them are to be accepted? I hope at least that the work of the Commission on the forests of Western Australia will be of more use, and that their recommendations will be of value in conserving the valuable forests of this country. The next question of importance in the Governor's Speech is that of the mining development of the State; and in dealing with that, we deal with a question which has aroused considerable controversy in this Assembly. The member for Dundas just now resembled

Ocean into tempest wrought,

To waft a feather or to drown a fly,

by the manner in which he spoke of the occupants of the Labour benches for what he is pleased to term their attack on the mining industry. What we have stated is that the position of the mining industry at the present time does not justify the pessimistic views taken by many of the leading employers, views which have been re-echoed by the Premier, and which also appear in the report of the Mines Department. It appears to me that the Chamber of Mines, as stated by the member for Kanowna, has not only hypnotised the newspapers of Perth, but also the Premier and the Under Secretary for Mines. In contra-

diction to this, we have the report of the Mines Department itself, which shows that the progress has been steady and that the industry was never in a more flourishing condition. That report altogether gives the lie to the assertions made as to the rates of wages having had such a deleterious influence on the mining industry. The member for Dundas has stated that the return for 1902 does not show such a great increase in the number of men employed as the progress of the industry should warrant. I would point out to hon. members that before 1902 there was a large amount of work going on upon the fields, especially in the East Coolgardie District, in the erection of mining plants, which created employment for a large number of surface men; but the erection of these plants being now completed, the result is that many of these men are out of employment. I undertake to say that if the number of men employed under-ground in the gold-mining industry were compared with the number employed in 1901, a marked increase would be shown, commensurate with the strides which the industry undoubtedly has made. We have also particulars of the dividends which have been paid in connection with W.A. mines, to guide us in our estimate as to whether the mining industry is flourishing or not. We find that during 1902 the sum of £1,423,000 was paid, giving an average for the half-year of £711,000. For the first six months of the present year the amount paid in dividends was £911,000, which for the half-year shows an increase of £200,000. This will show that the capitalist, at least, is not losing by the awards of the Arbitration Court. Reference has been made to the fact that Labour members have conducted cases before the Arbitration Court; and it has been stated that it is wrong for members of this House to represent one class against another or one man against another. At present we have members in this House who are lawyers, and who every day of their life possibly represent one class of the community against another or one man against another; and is that taken as a reason why they cannot sit in this House and act judicially and impartially on matters that come before us? I would also point out that those members who have represented the workers before

the Arbitration Court have been there for the purpose of protecting the workers rather than attempting to deal harshly with the other side, because we know that up to date every case brought before the Arbitration Court by the workers has been in protest against a reduction of wages, and not asking for an increase of wages. Not only is that true, but I desire also to say that we strongly protest against the mining industry being degraded by misrepresentations of the real state of affairs. I have before me a comparative statement of the Chamber of Mines showing the rates of wages ruling before and after the awards of the Arbitration Court. That is in a note in the very smallest of print at the foot of a page, and is as follows:—

Owing to the divergence in the rates paid by the several mines on the Kalgoorlie field prior to the arbitration award, the minimum of such rates has been inserted in the above table.

It would be as justifiable for me, in drawing up a table, to take the maximum rates as it is for the chamber to place a report in that way before the public. I say it is misleading; and we were perfectly justified, not only for protecting the mining industry but for the protection of the whole community, in publishing a contradiction of inaccuracies made in that statement by leading mine owners. If comparison is made between the average rates ruling before and after the awards were given, any disinterested observer will find that there has been no increase in wages except in one or two isolated instances where special circumstances justified increases. The only thing done was that, perhaps there was a levelling up in some instances and a levelling down in others, to obtain a more uniform rate. One feature in regard to the 1902 report of the Mines Department, which will be gratifying to members and those who have the interests of Western Australia at heart, is the large number of State batteries established, and the fact that they have induced a large number of what we may call working proprietors to embark in the mining industry, to the advantage of the State even more perhaps than would result from the introduction of many more times the amount of working capital from outside, because whatever profits are made by these men

will be spent in the State. I am glad to learn from the Speech that during the Session we shall have a Mining Bill and a Machinery Bill introduced, and I hope that when the Mining Bill is introduced we will be able to insert provisions which will encourage the working prospector, and so encourage the whole industry. Reference has been made to the increase in the population; and members, in criticising the remarks of the member for Kanowna, have stated that evidently the hon. member (Mr. Hastie) did not desire an increase in our population, and that he and the Labour members seemed to regard an increase in population as a bad thing for the community. As far as the occupants of this bench are concerned, nothing is farther from our thoughts. We are of opinion that the progress of the State should be gradual and steady. We hold the opinion that feverish bursts of prosperity are often followed by periods of depression in which the State receives a great blow. What we desire is that with the growth and development of the mining, agricultural, and other resources of the State, the population should increase accordingly; and we think if that is so we shall avoid those periods in which we have so many unemployed, and when consequent depression is felt very keenly. Comparison has been made between the positions of Canada and Australia in this respect; but I venture to say that if the rate of increase in population throughout the other States of Australia were the same as the rate of increase in Western Australia, the total increase would compare very favourably with Canada, taking into consideration the position of the two Commonwealths in regard to their natural resources and the quantity of good land available for settlement. Reference is made in the Speech, in rather a brief form, to constitutional and electoral reform; and I regret to see there are members in this House who have so little consideration for the Assembly to which they belong, and for the constituencies which sent them here, that they practically hint to the Legislative Council that the Council should place obstacles in the way of this Assembly securing a measure of constitutional and electoral reform. If our solicitude for the Upper House goes to such extent as that, we

should forego many of the privileges we enjoy. I would rather see those members to whom I refer translated to the Upper House, than that their opinions should be a bar to those measures which the country desires. A question not touched on by other members is that of railway administration. We find the Colonial Treasurer has been congratulating himself and the State upon the splendid financial position. I am one of those who believe that the State should raise sufficient taxation to pay its way in a legitimate manner, provide a sinking fund for its loans, and avoid as much as possible continually going to the home market to borrow money for carrying on our public works policy. If we do raise a large revenue, it necessitates extra care and vigilance on the part of those charged with the administration of that revenue. In regard to the administration of the railways, I cannot join with the member for West Kimberley (Mr. Pigott) in congratulating the Commissioner for Railways upon his conduct of that system. During the past year, reckless extravagance has been indulged in. The Chief Mechanical Engineer, by discarding engines which have proved of good service to the Western Australian railways, and which at the present time if properly looked after would be in still good working order, is acting in a manner which is placing the railway revenue on a very unsatisfactory basis. In my opinion, he seems to be a faddist of the worst description, and in that way is involving the country in great expense by introducing new engines which are not proved to possess the advantage he claims for them. I presume he is amenable to the Commissioner for Railways in regard to the portion of the department which he controls. If so, the Commissioner is not doing his duty in not seeing that that portion of the department is more wisely administered. If we turn to the statistics for the June month in regard to the cost of construction and the financial results of the railways of Western Australia, it will be found that the net financial result for the year, taking the interest on cost and working traffic conjointly, shows that the percentage on the cost of construction is '16, compared with '92 in 1901, and compared with 2'36 in 1900. Not only that, but the profit on working the traffic shows a considerable decrease. I regret

we have not the full report of the Commissioner for Railways before us, so that we may see which lines are providing the profit and which are being worked at a loss. I have no hesitation in saying that the profit from working the goldfields lines has to make up the loss on the lines in agricultural districts. In the past the people on the goldfields have not grown to any great extent because this profit is being devoted to this purpose, for they are of opinion that the country must, in the long run, rely on its agricultural resources therefore they are doing all they can to see that the agricultural resources are developed while the country is in a state of prosperity. But it is too much to expect that when the agricultural industry has received an impetus, the agricultural lines should continue to be worked at a loss at the expense of the goldfields railways. There is one thing I wish to impress upon the Premier, and it is that, hand in hand with settlement on the agricultural lands of the State, there should be some more scientific mode of bringing the producer into more direct touch with the consumer. A great deal of money has been expended in providing facilities for the agricultural producer, but we find that the people on the goldfields do not benefit thereby, although they pay a considerable amount to the revenue which is received through the customs to provide the money for giving facilities to the agriculturists. I think the Premier might go into the question and see if the producer cannot be brought into closer touch with the consumer without the middleman taking a share of the profit as he does to-day. [MR. JACOBY: How would you do it?] If I were inclined to remain here for an hour or two I might instruct the hon. member somewhat on that question; but at present I am not prepared to do that. With regard to public education, I do not think there is anything to criticise in the proposals of the Premier as contained in the Speech, because I think he is sincere in his desire that a higher education should be provided for those who are not in a position to pay a large amount of money for it. But my experience of the position of the higher grade education in the Eastern States has been that in the long run, notwithstanding the safeguards which

have been provided, ultimately the higher grade education is exclusively monopolised by the wealthy classes. We cannot be expected in this community to tax ourselves to provide a higher class of education for people who can provide it for themselves, having sufficient wealth to do so, while others are practically precluded from the benefits of this education. During the discussions on the proposed industrial legislation contained in the Speech, we had a diatribe from the member for West Kimberley as to the evil results of so-called socialistic legislation. One would have imagined the hon. member was addressing a House of men who were in their second childhood, when he uttered the old-time arguments about the disadvantages of social legislation. He also stated that he would have liked a little touch of "Irvineism" in the programme of the Premier. I hope we shall never see the day in Western Australia when we have a Ministry which includes a Minister for Lands who takes advantage of the necessities of his State to aggrandise himself at the expense of a drought-stricken community. I hope in Western Australia we shall never have a Ministry which includes a Minister who defrauds the public revenue. I hope we shall never have in Western Australia a Minister who utters sentiments, and utters them in such a vulgar way as were uttered in Victoria by the Minister for Railways during recent events there. If we have that kind of thing transplanted in Western Australia, it will be a bad day for this community. It does not seem as if this anti-socialistic policy of the Premier of Victoria is one that is going to be so productive of good for Australia—for it has not been productive of good for Victoria—when we find that during the first quarter of the year the Government Statist estimates that Victoria lost by sea and land 1,172 persons to other portions of the Commonwealth, and 1,767 persons to other countries; and even in the daily newspapers which support the policy of the Premier of Victoria, there are accounts written in a very gloomy strain as to the class of men leaving the shores of Victoria. Contrast the position of Victoria in this respect with the position of the Colony of New Zealand, which is far and away ahead of any country in the world

as far as so-called socialistic legislation is concerned. There they have prosperity on every hand. On the other side, in Victoria we have persons taking the first opportunity to get out of the country, and we have the Government closing up lines through what are considered good agricultural lands because those lines will not pay. Victoria wants some of the statesmen who have made New Zealand what it is to-day. The Government of Victoria should either make the lands available to the public or place a tax on them in such a manner that those who own them will make them available to the public. When they have close settlement on these lands we shall soon find if the railways make a profit or a loss. I hope, as far as Western Australia is concerned, we shall avoid a policy of that description. What we want in the country is that the best land, that which enjoys a good rainfall and has market facilities, shall be occupied by a large closely-settled population; then we shall find the railways which provide facilities for conveying the produce to market will pay. We shall find that industries will be established to supply their wants, and we shall find Western Australia, in the same way as New Zealand, will profit by the experience. The member for West Kimberley (Mr. Pigott), in referring to factories legislation as socialistic legislation, knew very little of the subject with which he was dealing. If he had studied the question of factory legislation in the Australian States, in New Zealand, or in the older lands, he would have seen things in a very different light. It is accepted by the chief political economists of the day that England has the best and most complete system of factory laws in the world at the present time; and if anyone in the old country uttered the sentiments which were uttered by the member for West Kimberley as to the evil effects of factory legislation, he would have been laughed at. Show me the country that safeguards the interests of the workers and attempts to place them on a high plane, and I will show you the country that is progressing and that is in a highly civilised state. On the other hand, show me the land where the working population is in a state of degradation and misery, and I will show you a country which is low down in the

scale. To paraphrase the well-known lines by Tennyson,

Better fifty sons of Briton than a thousand of Cathay.

Too much stress has been laid on the quantity of the population rather than the quality. What we want is good citizens; not too many citizens. There are many States sparse in population which stand head and shoulders above States that number their citizens by thousands while other States only number them by tens. What we want to do in Western Australia is not to wait until the house is on fire before we insure, but to profit by the experience of other states, and place safeguards against evils occurring, and allowing them to go on unrestricted. This House will be well advised if when factory legislation comes before it members will not be led away by shibboleths. If members will profit by the experience of others, they will agree that we in Western Australia find it necessary to have this factory legislation to protect the lives of children, of women, and of men; to safeguard the interests of the community, and prevent a great portion of the population sinking into the depths of degradation and misery which are such a blot on our present-day civilisation.

MR. H. TEESDALE SMITH (Wellington): I take this opportunity with other members of congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your return to the Chair; and I trust during this session you will be restored completely to your former health. I think the Premier is to be congratulated on his reference to the closer relations with the old country. I believe the step the Secretary of State has taken in giving this big question farther consideration is one that will meet with the general approval of Australia and the rest of the British possessions. I noticed particularly, when in England three years ago, that numbers of factories had been closed up and were not working: the reason I was told was, the business had been removed to other countries where industries are protected and looked after; and it appealed to me that if France and Germany could and did protect these industries to such extent so as to draw them from the old country, surely it was time for England to retaliate to some extent. And although the member for Dundas

takes the Premier to task for publishing this as the opinion of the State, I consider that every man who has an opportunity of expressing his views should say distinctly whether he is for or against the proposal. Another matter of great importance to this State is the Trans-Australian Railway. How South Australia can be opposed to this line is past my comprehension; for as far as I can see, she will for many years to come derive more benefit from it than us. All the produce and the live-stock from her northern areas can be brought to our goldfields markets by this line more cheaply and more advantageously than by water carriage; and it will be proved that, given a first-class line built on up-to-date principles, the passenger traffic and goods traffic will warrant its construction. Passengers travelling from the Eastern States to catch the boat at Fremantle will, in my opinion, break the journey in Adelaide; whereas now, coming from Melbourne, Sydney, or Brisbane, they go from the Adelaide railway station straight to the boat; therefore South Australia will in that respect be a gainer. I have made some brief calculations, and believe that produce can be delivered on our goldfields from the northern areas of South Australia at about 30s. a ton, and that live stock can be brought thence at not much more than half the cost of bringing it by boat, with the attendant risks. This railway should be built with easy grades. I notice that the engineers recommend 1 in 80. In my opinion it should be built on grades not steeper than 1 in 100, with a 4ft. 8½ in. gauge. No doubt if South Australia is of opinion that we may block the introduction of her live stock and produce, we can conciliate her by stipulating that, for say five years, certain rates shall not be exceeded. I think that proposal would meet with the approval of this State and the Federal Parliament. I have made a rough estimate of the cost of this line, and believe that a first-class railway can be built for about £4,000 per mile. The working expenses also, which I have roughly calculated, run out at about £120,000 per annum and the takings at £228,000, thus leaving about £100,000 towards interest and sinking fund. As a measure of defence there is no doubt the