

ber, 1920, reading as follows:—"That in view of the influx of large numbers of immigrants in the near future and their part absorption on closer settlement lines, the time has arrived when a thorough investigation should be made of the Avon Valley and Avon River to determine whether the fine fruit growing lands along this valley can be utilised for intensive culture"?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM (for the Minister for Works) replied: No.

QUESTION—BREAD, PRICE.

Mr. PANTON asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been drawn to the statement of the secretary of the Master Bakers' Union published in the "West Australian" of the 28th July? 2, If so, will he consider the appointment of a board to investigate the proposed increase in the price of bread?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Inquiries are being made. Upon the result will depend the appointment of a board or other necessary action.

RETURN—TRAIN MILEAGE, ALBANY-KATANNING.

On motion by Mr. A. Wansbrough (Albany) ordered: That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing:—1, The total train mileage run between Albany and Katanning during the winter time table for the year 1922. 2, The total amount of away from home expenses paid during such period. 3, The total train mileage run over the same section during the winter time table for the year 1923. 4, The amount of away from home expenses paid for such period. 5, The saving made, if any.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the 31st July.

Mr. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [4.39]: Being a new member it is not my intention to inflict a long speech on the House on this occasion. I compliment the Government on their intention to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the mining industry. As one who has spent the greatest part of his life on the goldfields, I believe the Government are pursuing a wise course. The mining industry should certainly be shown a little more sympathetic treatment than it has received in the past. Members can see for themselves that it is a declining industry and in a few years will be a thing of the past, unless something is done to foster and revive it. I do not suggest for a minute that this should be done at the expense of the man on the land. We are here to legislate for the whole of the State. The man on the land should receive all possible

assistance, especially the struggler on the land, but in return for the assistance granted him by the State, he has a duty to other parts of the State. Take a settler struggling on the land with assistance from the I.A.B. I consider it the duty of such a man, in return for the assistance he is receiving from the country, to help to foster local industries such as the State Implement Works, where machinery is manufactured for the farmers. I am fairly sure there has been an organised attempt by some people in this State, who have been getting a living from the State Government, to cripple that industry. The I.A.B. people have purposely turned down requests by settlers that implements be supplied from the State works. Although this has not been done straight out, I have information that any fair-minded man would agree points in the direction I have stated. If I had my way the people representing the I.A.B. would be "tramped," just as they have been indirectly responsible for tramping men out of the State Implement Works. Settlers should be allowed to purchase their implements from the State works and, moreover, the I.A.B., being a Government institution, should endeavour to foster the industry and thus keep money within the State. I am pleased that the Government intend to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the group settlements. I had the pleasure of visiting a large number of group settlements with the Minister a little while ago. In my estimation, the land in the South-West is practically the best in the State. Still, I consider that group settlements could have been started in other parts of the State at far less expense than will be entailed in the South-West. If the land along existing lines had been brought into use for this purpose, it would have answered equally well and would have been far less costly. There is plenty of time to take in hand the work of developing the South-West, and the first of our group settlements should have been started on land less heavily timbered. In the next 20 or 30 years I believe the South-West will become the garden of the State. An inquiry should result in the collection of a lot of information that will be valuable to both sides of the House. I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister for Works on having restored the 44-hour week to the men that had lost it. During the debate last week some members were much concerned to obtain an assurance from the Government that the 44-hour week would not be extended to other workers. Personally I am a little concerned, too, and I sincerely hope that the 44-hour principle will not be allowed to stop there, but that in a few years it will be an established condition for all workmen throughout the State. I congratulate the Government on having included in their programme of legislation a Fair Rents Bill. If there is any place in need of such a measure, it is the metropolitan area. When the wages of the

workers are in dispute certain sections of the people immediately call for arbitration, but when the worker asks for arbitration in a matter of the landlord's wages, those people raise their hands in holy horror and say we are interfering with the liberty of the subject. The landlord's wages can be regulated just the same as the worker's wages are regulated in the Arbitration Court. The measure for State insurance will also be welcomed by the people of this State. Then there are amendments of the Workers' Compensation Act and the Arbitration Act, which are long overdue. As to unemployment, it has been stated pretty freely both inside and outside Parliament, and in the Press, that unemployment is not existent in Western Australia. One of our evening papers recently published a leading article asserting that unemployment was non-existent here except amongst the unemployable. I would like the editor of that journal to come to Fremantle one morning and tell the crowd of people waiting there for work that they are unemployable. He would not get home very quickly after doing so. When the Collier Government assumed office, unemployment was rampant in this State; and it is still bad, although the present Government have done a great deal to remedy the evil. The position must be described as still acute. This morning at Fremantle there were 300 men in one room and the corridor outside it clamouring for employment. The Government would do well to push on with all possible public works so that the men now unemployed may have the right to obtain the wherewithal to live. The high price of bread is another crucial point with the workers. Within the last few days bread has risen in price.

Mr. Marshall: But that is not due to the 44-hour week, is it?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Not at all. For the life of me I cannot see why bread should now be at the same price as it was during the worst period of the war. A select committee or a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire what is keeping the price of bread so high. Personally I believe that the solution of the difficulty is another State industry. A State flour mill would overcome the worst part of the evil. I do not for one moment believe that the baker is profiteering. In my opinion the profiteering happens before the flour reaches the baker. Again, there is the exorbitant price of meat. Meat and bread are the two chief articles of food in the household of the worker. Although I am quite satisfied that the Minister controlling the Wyndham Meat Works has done everything possible in regard to obtaining supplies of frozen meat for the metropolitan area from Wyndham, nevertheless I express the hope that this season he will start early and make sure that a plentiful supply of frozen meat comes down. I acknowledge that there are many obstacles in the way of getting frozen meat from Wyndham to the metropolitan area during the season

of shortage; that is why I throw out the suggestion. I represent the Fremantle electorate, to which all the undesirable characters are sent from every part of the State. Hon. members will know that I refer to "the House on the Hill." I trust the time is not far distant when 80 per cent. of the inmates will be removed from the Fremantle gaol. At least 80 per cent. of the inmates are not real criminals, and I consider they should not be there under lock and key. We are progressing, and we should shortly have something in the nature of a farm prison, or prison farm, where all except dangerous criminals could be sent for reformation. I have been through Fremantle Gaol quite recently, and desire to testify that in my opinion it is a well conducted institution. I fully recognise that dangerous criminals should be kept under lock and key, and I may add that any prisoner placed on the suggested farm and not prepared to stay there and do his best should also be kept under lock and key. Certain newspapers of the State, which up to a little while ago were anti-Labour, have latterly been shedding crocodile tears of sympathy with the Government because of the amounts of money members of Parliament are asking Ministers to spend. The development is quite a new one in the Press.

Mr. Thomson: They are realising their responsibility.

Mr. SLEEMAN: No party followed by the hon. member interjecting ever realised its responsibility. These expressions of sympathy in the Press are really an attempt to get the Treasurer to view the legitimate requests of members in the same way as those papers view them, so that the requests may be refused. I would be lacking in my duty to my constituency if I did not bring forward here the requirements of Fremantle, which town has been neglected for many years—in fact, ever since the railway workshops were removed. Since then the town has not had a fair deal, even from Labour Governments. The railway bridge at North Fremantle has been a burning question for a long time. I must bring that matter forward, because I value human life more than anything else in the world. The existing bridge should be removed, and a new bridge constructed. If that is not done, there will be an accident with consequences horrible to contemplate. Many valuable lives will be lost, and a new bridge will then be constructed. It is my duty to bring the matter before the House, and then, if nothing is done, I am free of responsibility. Let me quote a paragraph from the report of the Commissioner of Railways—

In my report of the 30th June, 1923, special mention was made of the North Fremantle railway bridge, and the exceptionally heavy cost of upkeep. During the period under review a considerable amount of renewals have been car-

ried out, included in which was the relaying of the down line with 80-lb. rails. Unfortunately, the renewals to the bridge can only be termed temporary, as owing to the inroads of teredo borers further repairs will have to be undertaken during the ensuing year. The necessity of constructing a new steel bridge is more apparent than ever, and will have to be seriously considered in the near future, especially in view of the very heavy expenditure which is entailed in keeping the present structure in safe condition.

In view of that report I was very disappointed to hear the reply of the Minister for Railways to the effect that it was not the Government's intention to proceed with the erection of a new railway bridge at present. Having regard to the fact that during the last 12 months £3,855 was spent on the upkeep of the bridge, and the further fact that the upkeep has required £10,381 during the last five years, it is apparent that we should build a new bridge and not go on wasting money in repairs and renewals to the old structure. We are only tinkering with the question, and running the risk of a terrible accident. Having regard to all the circumstances, I say that the expenditure of £625,000, which the Minister stated would be the cost of a bridge across the river at North Fremantle is justifiable.

The Minister for Lands: Tell us first where we are to have the bridge.

Mr. SLEEMAN: It does not matter to me so much where we have the bridge. I have my views as to where it should go, and the member for North-East Fremantle may have different views. When the building of a bridge has been decided upon, the hon. gentleman and myself can debate the question where it should be built. The sum of £625,000 does seem large, but I claim that I am justified in asking for the expenditure of that amount in view of the human lives which are at stake, and which are more valuable than all the money in this country. Fremantle, being the chief seaport of Western Australia, is entitled to a dock.

Mr. Richardson: What about Bunbury and Geraldton?

Mr. SLEEMAN: I do not mind Bunbury getting a dock. I am perfectly fair. But Fremantle is the chief seaport of this State, and until it has a dock it cannot be regarded as an up-to-date port. I understand that there is at present in the Old Country a floating dock unused, a dock which was built for the Admiralty in 1919 at a cost of about £300,000. The dock has, in fact, never been used, and we can rest assured that in 1919 the British Admiralty would not construct anything that was not up-to-date. I am given to understand that the dock could be purchased for £55,000, and landed here at a cost of less than £100,000. In this respect the duty does not rest entirely on the State Government, but the Federal Government should also be

approached in the matter. The State Government should get into communication with the Commonwealth Ministry and see what they are prepared to do.

The Minister for Lands: Do you suggest a basis of fifty-fifty?

Mr. SLEEMAN: A floating dock is essential to Fremantle, which will never be anything like the port it should be, until it has a dock. Then there is the question of steamers trading along our North-West coast with black crews. Older members of this House will recall how Mr. Colebatch, as Acting Premier during Sir James Mitchell's absence in England, was approached with a request that he should recommend to the Federal Government exemption in favour of the steamer "Gascoyne" carrying a black crew. Mr. Colebatch refused to do so. But shortly after Sir James Mitchell's return the Federal Government was recommended, and strongly recommended, by the Mitchell Administration to grant the request of the shipowners for exemption of the "Gascoyne" with regard to trading on our coast. Let me give a few facts bearing on the question. The "Charon" employs 88 niggers, the "Gorgon" 85 niggers, and the "Minderoo" 87. These blackfellows get £2 10s. a month, or less than 2s. per day. The "Bambra" employs 65 white men at £12 10s. per month, representing with food and accommodation, over 10s. per day. The boats carrying black crews are no good to Western Australia, and I cannot understand why any of the business men of this country should support those boats.

Mr. Marshall: There is no war on now, and so there is no occasion to be patriotic at present.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Perhaps that is so. However, the State steamers pay £18,000 annually in wages, and those wages are spent in this country. About £8,000 annually is spent in wages at Fremantle in repairs to the State steamers. Further, the "Bambra" alone spends £100,000 annually in Western Australia for coal and stores. Compare those figures with the corresponding figures for the steamers carrying black crews, who spend practically nothing in Western Australia. Again, the wives and families of the white crews on the State ships live in Fremantle. I know that in some quarters this is regarded as a Federal question; but, as I pointed out previously, it was on the strong recommendation of the Mitchell Government that the "Gascoyne" was granted exemption. I trust that it will be on the strong recommendation of the Collier Government that the Federal Ministry will cancel the exemption to boats carrying black crews.

Mr. Marshall: The recommendation will need to be as strong as the smell of the boats that carry black crews.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Now I come to one of the most important factors in the life of the community—education. Albany, Bunbury, and Geraldton all have their high schools;

but Fremantle, a considerably larger centre, has no high school. The children of Fremantle who wish to attend a high school must proceed to Perth. That requires them to leave home very early in the morning and to return home late in the evening. The size and importance of Fremantle should justify the provision of a high school there. A block of land has been reserved for high school purposes, and in fact everything is ready for the Government to proceed with the work of erecting the building. Let us take the attendances at the high schools in the other parts of the State and see whether or not Fremantle by reason of its importance is entitled to such an institution. The average attendances are as follows:—Albany 100, Bunbury 150, and Geraldton 71. I trust it will be possible for the Treasurer to provide the money to permit the Minister for Education proceeding with the work of erecting the school. I shall not detain the House any longer because I shall have many other opportunities of speaking in this House before the session closes. I consider that I have placed a sufficient number of requests before the Treasurer, and also provided food for the papers to talk about. Doubtless they will refer to the parochial views of the members of the various constituencies. Personally it does not matter to me what they say, and in spite of whatever comment they may make I shall go on with the job just the same. I am here to do my duty not only to Fremantle, but to the whole of the State, and I intend to carry out that duty to the best of my ability and without the fear of newspapers.

Mr. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [5.3]: It is not my intention to occupy much of the valuable time of the House by repeating what we, of the North, are sick and tired of hearing about—the vast empty spaces and the wonderful potentialities and the hidden wealth of that part of the State. What we want is greater activity and more Government sympathy than the people of the North have had, so that others may be encouraged to make their homes in the tropical parts of the State. At the present time we are suffering from a decreasing population in the Kimberleys. This is due mainly to the excessive cost of living, high wharfage rates, seasonal employment and that to which I have already referred, unsympathetic administration on the part of past Governments. The improvement in health facilities should become of the first concerns of the Government. There is a medical practitioner in each district, but the hospital methods are crude. If the Government were to interest themselves and force the Federal authorities to do what has been done for Northern Queensland, namely, the supplying of a tropical laboratory and an X-ray plant, the people of the Kimberleys would be saved the enormous expense they are subjected to at the present time by having to travel south to seek proper medical attention. The people who live in the far North are not able to afford this cost. If

there were an X-ray plant and a research laboratory in at least one Kimberley centre, perhaps one-tenth of the existing trouble might be obviated. Another matter of considerable importance to the North, and which I intend to stress, is that of providing cheap excursion fares to the cooler latitudes. In this respect previous Governments have already recognised their obligations to the residents of what are in the southern parts termed the backblocks. Why should there be any distinction between the people living in the north and those living in the south? Those who live in the southern parts, places like Albany, Busselton and Bunbury, get the benefit of cheap excursion fares at Easter, Christmas, during the summer months and at holiday time, but the people of the north are never permitted to avail themselves of such a privilege. I feel confident the Government will interest themselves in this regard and provide for the people of whom I have been speaking, and also give them a long-awaited improved shipping service. There should be consideration shown for the pastoral, as well as the other industries that I have heard so much about, industries such as farming, mining and timber, all of which are more favourably situated in the southern part of the State and about which so much has been said since I have been in the House. The pastoral industry is of considerable value to Western Australia and should receive attention at the hands of the Government at once, as the stocking and the improvement regulations have been sadly neglected. On many large holdings not as much as a shilling has been spent in improvements for years past. The stock are all scattered about the natural water frontages, and the result is that the feed about there is eaten out. Then too, the stock have to travel such distances to and from water, that they become poor and often die in thousands. This tends to the breeding of miserable-looking and undersized stock, and members will agree with me that if the industry is to be maintained, we must grow quality as well as quantity. If the leaseholders were forced to improve their holdings, in the direction provided by the Act, they would be able to carry more stock and get better results. The recent appraisements were very unfair in many cases. I know of small holders, as far as 240 miles from a port of shipment and without a yard of river frontage to their leases, having to pay the same rental as the big absentee holders that are only 16 miles from a port of shipment, and who, in addition, have miles of river frontages on their properties. This is very unfair to the small holders. I suggest that the Government should appoint a board in the pastoral districts with instructions to see that matters of this kind are attended to. Another question to which I desire to refer is the administration of the Hut Accommodation Act. Under the Lands Act—that section applying to pastoral leases—stockmen are to have provided for them certain accommodation, but we