

expenditure of money. We have not many more avenues open for taxation. Of course the Government can impose a land tax and also an income tax; but when they have imposed an income tax, I hope they will realise that it is practically the last tax they can impose. It is the last tax, that should always be held in reserve to meet any extraordinary demand for public requirements. There is also another matter I should like to bring before the Ministry, and that is the question of the control of our civil service. We have had an interim report from the Public Service Commissioner in which he has made various recommendations. The Government, so far I believe, have not considered that report sufficiently to enable them to come to a decision on it, and I should like to warn them that there should be no attempt made to alter the Act or to dispense with the services of the Commissioner. The Ministers, I take it, owing to the various changes we have had, are not competent to deal properly and in an adequate manner with the civil service. The duties of their departments do not give them sufficient time or opportunity to come into contact with the public servants in the departments. A Minister, as a rule, only comes into contact with two or three leading members of his staff. He knows very little of the men who hold perhaps humble positions in his department; the result is, Ministers do not know what officers are worthy of promotion and what officers are unworthy of it. I therefore strongly impress on the Ministry that they should do all they can to uphold the influence and position of our Public Service Commissioner. I have, like other members, read the Commissioner's report; and I dare say it contains many mistakes in regard to the recommendations he has made; but adequate provision has been made for our public servants, and also for Ministers, to appeal against any recommendations made by the Commissioner; and I believe that if our present Commissioner has the time, and receives fair treatment at the hands of the Government, it is only a question of time when our public service will be placed in a proper position. I do not wish to take up the time of the House unduly. We have discussed this Address-in-Reply at

an extraordinary length. I believe all parties in the House are quite sincere, whether on this side or on the Opposition side of the House, in their desire to help the Government to carry out their duties, not only to the House, but also to every interest in the State.

MR. P. COLLIER (Boulder): I have listened carefully to the speeches delivered in this House during the past two or three weeks; and notwithstanding the opinions expressed by various members who have preceded me, I should like to say that the time taken up in a discussion of this sort serves no practical utility. The speeches delivered during the past three weeks will be delivered again several times over when the different measures come before the House for discussion. We have had an endless flow of talk and, I submit, a considerable waste of time. I confess to considerable disappointment since I entered this Chamber. I came to this House, I may say, with a desire to do something, and with a desire to right some of the wrongs which, in my opinion, exist in this State; and my short experience leads me to believe that it is not altogether a place where reforms are to be achieved—at any rate, not very rapidly. One cannot help being struck with the insincerity of the whole proceeding throughout the debate. The benches, particularly on the Government side, but also on both sides of the House, have been invariably empty. My experience leads me to believe that the laws are made in the corridors or lobbies and not in the Chamber. I was particularly struck on Tuesday evening during the speech of the member for Ivanhoe when he was dealing with some very serious grievances which the miners on the goldfields are suffering under, and I counted the members sitting on the Government side; there were seven present. The member for Ivanhoe was dealing with matters that concern the welfare, the very life of six or seven thousands of our citizens, and yet we found members who presumably came to the House to legislate in the best interests of the country paying no attention whatever; in fact they were not listening, they knew nothing about it. When the particular measures that the member for Ivanhoe was discussing come before the House, members on the Gov-



ernment side will be guided by the opinions of the Minister for Mines. I would like to point out to members sitting on the Government side, who represent mostly agricultural and metropolitan constituencies, that nearly all the members on the Opposition side represent mining constituencies; and notwithstanding the fact that the ten or twelve goldfields representatives on the Opposition side differ, and very materially, from the opinions held by the Minister for Mines, when the division bell rings on any matter affecting the mining industry members will troop in on the Government side and vote with the Minister without having heard the debate at all. I would suggest to the Premier, as he is rather short of money at present and as he is casting his eyes round to see where he can derive a little revenue from, it would not be a bad thing to alter to a very great extent the whole of the procedure of this House. He could first of all abolish the Address-in-Reply and get to work at once. In my opinion there is a great opportunity for anyone on the Opposition side to take hold of things and do things. We were sent here to do things and not to talk—the inevitable talk. I hope it will not be regarded as presumption on my part, as a new member, to express these opinions. With regard to the policy of the Government some of the proposals I agree with, most of them I disagree with. As one sitting on the Opposition side, when the time arrives that I find myself in thorough accord with the opinions of the Government, as the member for Forest does, I shall consider it my duty to take my seat on the Government side. We have had the usual meaningless platitudes with regard to the immense wealth and great prosperity of the State. I submit the prosperity of a nation does not depend on its total wealth production at all. The Treasurer last night, and the Minister for Mines last week, informed us of the great progress made in the mining, pastoral, agricultural, and other industries. I contend the prosperity of any nation depends on the distribution of its wealth, not on the total production whatever. It matters little to the tens of thousands of working miners on the goldfields whether the dividends paid are two millions or ten millions. If these dividends were increased 10 per cent., 50

per cent., or 100 per cent. to-morrow the men engaged in the industry would not be a shilling better off; therefore I submit it is mere claptrap to read out a list of figures about the progress, telling us by how many heads our cattle, our horses, or our goats—principally goats I should think—have increased. With regard to the Government policy, the Government's one little ewe lamb, as it seems, is the land tax proposal; but strange to say I think the Government will have to depend for the support they will receive on this side to carry that proposition through this Chamber. Various members have spoken on the Government side of the House, and have almost all opposed the proposal in some shape or other. The member for Katanning will not have a land tax at any price. The member for Perth is also totally opposed to a land tax, and the hon. member with a conscience from North Perth is also opposed to a land tax. I was particularly struck by the fact that the Honorary Minister in another place in his speech on the Address-in-Reply made no reference, notwithstanding the fact that a majority of those in another place expressed themselves as opposed to the land tax, and no defence of that proposal; he never referred to it throughout his speech; therefore I think members on the Opposition side are warranted in their charge of insincerity in this matter. Speaking for myself I am very pleased indeed to think the Government have seen fit to include this proposal for the taxation of unimproved land values. Personally I do not care who brings it forward, whether it be the Treasurer, although we know he has no sympathy with the matter, or whether it is brought forward by the party to which I belong. What we desire, and what we shall strive to accomplish, is to have the measure placed on the statute-book irrespective of who fathers the proposal. A good deal has been said by the members on the Government side as to the justice of a tax of this kind. I submit if there is any property the character of which points to a legitimate source of taxation, something that can be taxed with greater reason and justice, it is that of the land in the State. All other wealth is the product of man's industry, the product of toil, but the economic value attaching to land is the



product of the whole community. We need not go farther than our own State. What was the value of land in Perth 10 or 12 years ago previous to the outbreak of the goldfields? Land was worth only shillings at that time where it is worth hundreds of pounds to-day. That increased value has not been the result of any effort or work done by the individuals who own the land: it is the result of the common activities, the common necessities of the people. The unimproved land values have been created by the expenditure of public funds in the construction of railroads, and tramroads, and other facilities where people congregate. If there is any wealth which justice demands should be taxed, it is land. Another very important proposal of the Government is their loan policy, and I hope in this respect that the Government will not pursue the course which was adopted by their predecessors. Last session we had the Rason Government bringing down what I consider an absolutely dishonest proposal in so far as they were expending loan funds on the construction of roads and bridges. While I approve of the borrowing policy so far as the money is expended on reproductive works, I altogether object to the expenditure of loan funds on such matters as roads and bridges, which in the course of 10 or 12 years will have rotted away, requiring renewing. There will be nothing left, only the interest bill to pay. I remember last session the member for Kalgoorlie, the Attorney General, expressed himself pretty emphatically in connection with this question of roads and bridges. I only hope that the hon. gentleman will live up to some of his professions, particularly the principles he professed to hold when he was on the hustings. One of the principal charges brought against us when the Attorney General was standing for election was that the Labour Government had expended large sums of loan money in the construction of the rabbit-proof fence. He regarded that as almost a criminal offence. I would like to know what steps the present Government, of which he is a member, have taken to discontinue that practice. The Attorney General, when standing for election at Kalgoorlie, delivered himself

of this speech. He said, referring to the Labour Government:—

They proceeded with the construction of the rabbit fence with loan moneys, and not only this, but they actually credited revenue out of loan moneys with the past expenditure for some considerable time on the fence, which had been defrayed out of the revenue. By this means they were able to present a wholly false surplus of revenue, and to mislead and deceive Parliament and the country as to the true financial position of the State. Now there is one consideration in regard to this expenditure which I would like to call your attention to, and it is this. The rabbit-proof fence is really a substitute on a large scale for the fencing which otherwise the individual owners of grazing and pastoral areas would have to construct at their own expense for their own protection. These owners have been making an enormous profit out of Western Australia for the past 10 years; so much so that very many of them who 10 years ago were not worth a stiver are rich men to-day. Surely under these circumstances, if the burden of constructing the fence was too much for the revenue of the State to bear, the proper course was to obtain any proportion of the cost necessary from the people who would be directly benefited by the fence, and who were in a position well able to bear such burden. I say, without hesitation, that no member of a Ministry guilty of the financial juggle which this transaction illustrates, as also no member of a Ministry which so failed in its duty in regard to placing the cost of the work on the right shoulders, should ever be asked to sit again as a legislator in the Parliament of the State.

That was the opinion of the Attorney General when seeking the suffrages of the electors. The hon. gentleman became very indignant to-night because he had been charged with a change of front. He submitted that it was a childish thing to charge any man with a change of opinions unless it could be proved that he changed those opinions for some material advantage. That is just the position we take up. It is a strange thing that the Attorney General seems to have changed his opinions immediately a portfolio became vacant. That is just the charge that has been levelled against the hon. gentleman from this side of the House, and which I think has been justified. In my opinion, the hon. gentleman has, since he has been in this House, shown a wonderful capacity to accommodate himself to political exigencies. He has changed front on several occasions. Although he has attempted to wriggle out of it to-night, he most emphatically,



when in Kalgoorlie, declared himself as opposed to the construction of the Fremantle dock, and when he went down to support his hon. colleague, the Minister for Works, he stated that if he were asked to support the construction of a dock out of public funds he would distinctly say, "No," but he said, "If there is anybody in this country who can convince me of the necessity for this dock, it is my hon. friend the Minister for Works." What does a statement like that mean? I submit there can be only one construction placed upon a statement of that kind. It means this: "If you return my colleague, the Minister for Works, it is possible I may vote for your dock; but if you reject my friend, then certainly it will be a difficult matter to convince me of the necessity for it at all."

MR. BATH: What about his letter of explanation, too?

MR. COLLIER: Yes; I am reminded that when a report of his speech was wired down to the fields he rushed into print with letters of explanation, trying to qualify his speech of the previous evening, and stating that he did not altogether mean what was reported. I happened to be at the meeting at Kalgoorlie, and when the hon. gentleman was asked a question whether he was in favour of the construction of the Fremantle dock, so emphatic was he on the point that he leaned forward in his seat and said "No," without any comment whatever. Therefore notwithstanding the indignation of the hon. gentleman to-night, I think members on this side of the House are fully justified in the criticism which has been levelled at him. I was also rather amused at the hon. gentleman's remarks concerning the personal aspect of this debate. He charged the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) and other members on this side of the House with indulging in personalities. I submit that no personalities whatever were indulged in. The matters which the hon. gentleman calls personalities are of public importance. It was impossible to refer to the action of the Government at the Fremantle election without mentioning the names of the gentlemen who took part in it. If any of the hon. gentlemen occupying the Treasury benches take action which we deem unworthy, or which we consider ought to be made

public to the citizens of this State, members ought not to be charged with personalities because they make these charges on the floor of the House. It was impossible, as I say, to dwell upon the action of the Government in connection with the Fremantle election without dragging in to a certain extent the personal element. The Attorney General also lectured the member for Mt. Margaret as an old member of this House for not setting an example. He might very well have turned round to his left and delivered that lecture to his colleague, the Minister for Mines. I submit there is no member of this House who has offended to a greater extent than the hon. gentleman controlling the Mines Department. The member for Mt. Margaret the other night, during the course of his speech, charged the Minister for Mines with lack of duty, or some other matter, and reference was made to smelters. The hon. gentleman interjected that the hon. member had a warped intellect. When the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) was criticising the Minister for Mines the Minister interjected that the hon. member had gout. What piercing repartee that is! What brilliant logic, and how absolutely unconvincing! I suppose we shall next have the Minister for Mines commenting on the colour of our hair, our complexion, our general personal appearance. Yet the Attorney General has lectured Opposition members to-night because of their personalities. He might as well have turned round and lectured his colleague. No member of this House has been a greater offender than the Minister for Mines. I wish to make a few remarks on a subject dealt with by the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Troy); and I hope I shall not be charged with indulging in personalities. The hon. member charged the Minister for Mines with discourtesy, with lack of common civility. My experience of the Minister has been rather brief; but I entirely indorse the complaint of the member for Mt. Magnet. Once, when I had occasion to interview the Minister for Mines in the presence of a deputation, he almost told me that I was a liar. Not only that, but when Opposition members have cause to interview the Minister, he turns round in his seat and answers them in a disdainful fashion, over his shoulder. It is not



pleasant to refer in the House to matters of this kind; but when the Minister persists in this attitude towards members of this party, there is no alternative but to bring his conduct before the House, in the hope of finding some remedy. It is a pleasure to interview any of the other Ministers. It is a pleasure indeed to interview the Premier on any public business; and so it is with the rest of his colleagues. But it is extraordinary that one cannot obtain common courtesy from the Minister for Mines. I would suggest to the Premier that when next he is receiving a deputation he should take the Minister for Mines to his office and compel him to sit there to get a practical lesson in courtesy and civility. The reply by the Minister for Mines to the charge of the member for Mt. Magnet absolutely convicts the Minister of discourtesy.

MR. HOLMAN called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

[THE SPEAKER took the Chair.]

MR. COLLIER: I regret that hon. members have been called from their slumbers. The Minister, replying the other evening to the charge of the member for Mount Magnet, stated that, "When the member for Mount Magnet asked me to send instructions to the manager, ordering him to give preference to Mr. Schuman in having his stone crushed, I declined in such strong language that it made Mr. Troy go out with a scowl." I submit that the Minister stands convicted out of his own mouth. He says that because the hon. member, in the course of his public duty, introduced a constituent who had a request to make to the Minister, the Minister refused in such strong language that the hon. member went out with a scowl. Why should the Minister deem it incumbent on him to reply in strong language when a courteous request is made to him regarding any particular business? If the Minister could not see his way to comply with the request, surely he could decline with ordinary courtesy and civility. I submit that the Minister, like the rest of his colleagues, is a paid public servant. It is part of the duty of Ministers to receive deputations, and not to form

deputations. Shortly we shall have to submit to the Minister for Mines the names of our deputations, before he will consent to receive them. Because the Minister does not agree with the requests made to him, he feels quite justified in practically insulting a deputation. I say it is scandalous that a member cannot introduce a deputation of his constituents to the Minister without being insulted because the Minister disapproves of the request. This the Minister has absolutely proved in his reply to the charge by the member for Mt. Magnet. We cannot have a better illustration of the Minister's attitude than his treatment a few weeks ago of Mr. McCallum, president of the Trades and Labour Council of this city. When Mr. McCallum attended with a deputation before the Minister, and rose to speak, he was asked whether he was a public servant. He replied that he was, and the Minister said, "Sit down; I cannot hear you." I should like to know whether that is the principle to be adopted by the Government. If so, the sooner the country knows it the better. It will be well for the Government to make a definite pronouncement on the matter, and let us know whether, because a man happens to earn his living by working for the Government, he is to be deprived of the ordinary rights of citizenship. It is scandalous that, because a man is in Government employment, he should be deprived of his freedom of speech. The Minister has to some extent backed down since that occasion, and now states that he does not object to Government servants on deputations if they approach him out of working hours. I submit that it has nothing at all to do with the Government whether the deputation come in or out of working hours, so long as the public servant is not being paid by the Government while he is on the deputation; and every hour that Mr. McCallum, or any other public servant, spends on matters of that kind is docked from his wages. I submit that the Government has taken up an attitude which would be worthy only of a Russian grand duke. The Minister, in his peregrinations round the country, always makes the same speech whenever he happens to address an audience. It appears to me that since he became Minister for Mines he has learned



a speech by heart; and every time he gets on his feet he delivers it. I could at any time sit down and write out almost *verbatim* the speech that the Minister will deliver, if he speaks at all.

MR. BATH: He is a sort of venomous phonograph.

MR. COLLIER: A sort of venomous phonograph. Last evening, the Minister hurled at this side of the House all those choice gems from that vocabulary of abusive words which, during many years of travelling he has gathered in the back country. They were hurled with such venom and vindictiveness that only the hon. gentleman himself possesses, at this side of the House. One can understand a member making heated personal remarks in the course of a speech, but when he comes down to the House with his epithets typewritten, as the Minister for Mines did last week, it is a fair indication of the member's character. While the Minister is continually harping on the one proposal he intends bringing in under the Mines Regulation Bill, that is the language test—and one would imagine from the frequency with which the hon. gentleman attacks this question that it was a burning question on the goldfields with the men employed on the mines, though that is not the case at all, for I do not suppose there are 50 men in the State who would be affected by the proposal in any shape or form—and while he endeavours to obtain considerable kudos in this matter, we hear nothing at all from him in regard to matters of vital importance, nothing at all about the height of stopes. We know that on the goldfields scarcely a week passes without some individual, forced by circumstances to go into dust-laden, deadly atmosphere to provide food for his wife and family, is killed. The hon. member tells us nothing about this. We have not heard, throughout any of his electioneering speeches, any reference to the question of Sunday labour on mines. I asked the Minister last week a question in connection with this matter, and the reply elicited information sufficient to show the manner in which his department is administered. On Sunday, the 6th May, several mines in the Golden Belt desired to work their employees so that the latter could have a day off on the following Wednesday, which was Eight Hours

Day; and they communicated with the Minister for Mines, I believe on the Thursday, requesting permission to work their employees on the Sunday. The Minister states that he always grants these requests, provided the men have no objection. This is how it works out. Although the request asking for permission was received by the Minister for Mines on the Thursday, he did not consult the men interested, the miners' union, until the Saturday afternoon at 4:30 o'clock, when an urgent wire was sent to the secretary of the miners' union asking them if they had any objection to working on the following Sunday. It is a supremely ridiculous thing to wire to a body of men at 4:30 o'clock on Saturday afternoon asking them if they have any objection to working on the Sunday; and one is justified in the charge hurled by members on this side of the House that the Government particularly represent the Chamber of Mines, when we see matters of this kind occurring. Not only has it happened once, but several times. It occurred last Christmas in the same way. The Minister said he gave permission to the mines to work on the Sunday previous to Christmas on condition that the men themselves had no objection; but the men were never consulted. When I raised a protest, the Minister did go through a form of consulting the men, and on the last occasion he did it at 4:30 o'clock on the previous day. We are told this is going to be sound and stable administration. During the course of his speech the Premier the other night hurled a taunt at the member for Kanowna and other members in this House, that they were political agitators at street corners. I wonder what he means. What was the object of such a taunt? I was almost going to name some of the great men in history, great reformers, who have been agitators at street corners, and compare them with some of the members occupying seats on the Government benches; but out of respect to the memory of those dead giants I shall refrain from doing so. During the last short session, the late Premier (Mr. Rason) gave it as one of his reasons why the House should adjourn for Christmas, that Ministers were anxious to get to the departments, and that the country was lan-



guishing for want of sound administration. Members on this side of the House agreed that the session should close before Christmas in order to give the Government an opportunity of letting the country have some of this sound and stable administration that we were told on so many platforms was so urgently necessary. I have a matter here which will serve to show in what manner some of this sound administration works out. Last November I asked the Minister if it was his intention to frame regulations for the carrying of firewood over the wood line from Lakeside out south into the bush, and the hon. gentleman informed me that it was his intention to do so. That is about nine months ago. No attempt has been made to frame these regulations since. I believe it was the infant act of the Rason Government to grant permission for the construction of that line, but the company have been enabled to practically rob the woodcutters during the past seven or eight months because of the neglect of the Government to frame adequate regulations. Not only that, but the company have been making a charge of 1s. per ton royalty for all wood carried over that line since the beginning of the year, and it now amounts to some hundreds of pounds. One of these cutters interviewed a lawyer on the matter, and the lawyer advised him to sue the company for the amount which he had paid as royalty. He did so, issuing a writ for fraud against the company. The endorsement on the writ reads as follows:—"Plaintiff's claim is for £64 11s. 3d. for a return of money obtained from the plaintiff by fraud." Considerable correspondence took place between the company and this woodcutter for many months. The company declined to pay the amount, but finally they did so. I will just read some of the correspondence that took place between the company and that gentleman. On the 8th June the company wrote as follows:—

In confirmation of the intimation given you verbally by our managing director, we hereby beg to inform you that on and after the 16th inst. we shall cease leaving trucks on our main line for you for the purpose of being loaded, but shall place all trucks required by you for loading only on sidings which will be put in for the purpose from time to time at different points on the main line at intervals

of not more than two miles. The costs of putting in the siding (exclusive of the cost of material which is provided by us and remains our property), must be borne by you together with an additional 10 per cent. on net costs for supervision on the putting in, and you will be charged a rental for the use of the siding of £15 per annum payable quarterly in advance. The costs of putting in the siding and supervision as above must be paid by you in advance before the siding is commenced. Pending the issue of the new regulations which we understand are being drafted by the Minister for Railways in connection with the Timber Tramway, we are, however, prepared to allow you to load trucks on our sidings, and the sum of 1s. per ton will be charged to cover the use of the siding and shunting charges, etc., while the rate for haulage will remain as before.—Yours truly, KALGOORLIE AND BOULDER FIREWOOD CO., LTD.

This company has been charging 6d. per ton above the Government rates for the haulage of firewood over its line, and in addition to the 6d. per ton it has been charging one shilling per ton royalty. It is an absolute fraud—one shilling per ton royalty on firewood cut on Crown lands. I laid the matter before the Premier at the beginning of the year and told him what had occurred; but since then no action has been taken. After considerable correspondence the company forwarded this letter, which proves absolutely that the money has been obtained by fraud. The letter says:—

In this matter the defendant (that is the company) has decided to pay the amount claimed by you in your letter of April 18th—£65 11s. 3d. This course was decided on some little time ago, and the delay has been occasioned by an endeavour to check the amount of firewood derived from the Crown lands and Hampton Plains properties, but it was ultimately decided to pay the full amount of your claim. We shall be glad if you will give your Perth agents notice to discontinue proceedings. We will undertake to pay you the amount of the claim and taxed costs to date.

That letter proves absolutely that this company has been obtaining money by absolute fraud during the last eight months, and no attempt has been made on the part of the Government to check it.

MR. LYNCH: That does not sound like sound administration.

MR. COLLIER: If this is sound administration it is a very good thing for some of the Government's friends. I do not wish to weary the House at great length, for I believe the Government



intend closing the debate to-night; but there is another matter I wish to deal with before I sit down, a matter of considerable importance. I admit that the Government are making very great efforts to settle the people on our lands; while that is a very laudable effort indeed it is of far greater importance that the Government should see that the lands already taken from the Crown are put to their best use. It is not sufficient to just register a certain area of land in any man's name and come down to the House later on and publish the figures showing the progress made in land settlement. A large area of land in the State to-day is held by speculators, men who have no desire to settle on the land, who do not take up the land with the intention of settling on it. I am going to make a serious charge of absolute dummyming carried on in the State, and I shall prove it, and before I sit down I shall ask the Government to appoint a select committee to inquire into the charges I am about to make. There is a portion of the State well known, no doubt, to the member for Kaitiaki (Hon. F. H. Piessé), for it is in his electorate. There has been a reserve there; it was reserved for many years and is known as the Quindanning Common. Early in 1904, when Mr. Hopkins was Minister for Lands, it was decided by the department that this land should be made available for selection. After some time it was done; it was made available for selection under Section 55 of the Land Act of 1898. I will read that section, although most members know what it is; still I will read it so that there shall be no mistake. Section 55 reads as follows:—

The lessee shall, within six months from the date of his lease, take in his own person possession of the land, and shall reside upon it and make it his usual home without any other habitual residence, during at least six months in each year for the first five years from the date of the commencement of his lease, and if possession be not taken as aforesaid the land shall be forfeited.

That is pretty definite. This land was made available under Section 55 of the Land Act 1899, and it is a remarkable thing there were only eight or nine blocks in the whole reserve, but it is remarkable that residents of Boulder were the successful applicants for nearly the

whole of the blocks. The Minister for Lands for the time being, Mr. Hopkins, wrote a letter to one of the gentlemen who was subsequently successful in obtaining a large portion of the land. On the 29th February, 1904, Mr. Hopkins had this letter forwarded to Boulder:—

The Quindanning reserve has been subdivided and will shortly be made available for selection under residential terms. This is a splendid area of country, and should you determine to make an application for some I think you would have no reason to regret it.

Subsequent events proved he did not have cause to regret it. The letter goes on to say—

At the same time you will, of course, understand that in the event of there being two or more applications the land board will require to deal with same.

This Mr. Millen was successful afterwards in securing one of these blocks; not only Mr. Millen himself, but both of his sons hold blocks of the reserve to-day. Another gentleman who holds one of these blocks is Mr. Le Mercier, the proprietor and editor of the *Boulder Star*. It was a great loss that Mr. Le Mercier did not happen to be on the land on the 27th October last, election night, because he shed sufficient tears in Boulder to have watered 50 acres of that land. Mr. Le Mercier has never taken possession of that land to this day. He has held the land for two years, but has never been out of Boulder for three successive days.

MR. COWCHER: I must contradict the hon. member there. He has been down to his property; it is fenced, and he has some of it cleared.

MR. COLLIER: I know he has been to his property, and it is fenced and cleared; but that is not complying with the residential conditions. This gentleman has never been on the block for six consecutive days. He is the proprietor and editor of the *Boulder Evening Star*; he has never been on the land, and has no intention of going on. Not only this gentleman, but another gentleman who owns one of these blocks is Mr. Millen's son, who is employed in the Water Office at Northam, and he has been there for eight months of last year. This is the way in which the conditions are complied with. Another successful applicant was Mr. William Brook, an aged man over 60 years. Although the man and his wife



are over 60 years, they have no family, and how on earth any land board, any sensible body of men sitting as a land board, would agree to give a block of land to a man of that age passes my understanding. Mr. Brook, to my knowledge, has never been out of Boulder. As the hon. member states, he paid a visit to the land; he was six days absent from Boulder altogether; there were the journey down, also the day on the land, and the journey back. That is the only time he has been on the block. Another gentleman who owns one of the blocks is Mr. Bisset, a reporter in the office of the *Boulder Evening Star*, a particular friend of Mr. Le Mercier. He has never been near his block, has never seen it.

MR. COWCHER: Mr. Bisset has been there also; he was once down there.

MR. COLLIER: He may have been down on a flying visit and had a look at the land, but he has never lived there. I assert, and I challenge the Government to contradict it, that not one of those men I have mentioned is complying with the conditions of the Act.

MR. COWCHER: Mr. Millen, the one at Northam you spoke of, has been on the land some months working it.

MR. COLLIER: I know Mr. Millen. What I contend is that these other men are only dummies for Mr. Millen. Mr. Millen himself is living on the block. He took up his residence immediately it was granted to him; but he is the only one of the successful applicants who did go to reside on the land. He has two sons. Mr. D. R. Millen has 197 acres; Mr. R. L. Millen, that is the son employed in the Water Office at Northam, has 334 acres; Mr. R. W. Millen, 383 acres; Mr. Le Mercier, 303 acres; Mr. Brook, 100 acres; Mr. Bisset, 153 acres; and Miss McEwan, 632 acres. Miss McEwan has never lived on the block. I believe she is the *fiancee* of one of the Messrs. Millen. What I state is an absolute fact. This land is being dummied, and it is well known that it is being dummied. The late member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins) knew that Mr. Bisset, Mr. Le Mercier, and these other gentlemen had never been out of it. Legitimate settlers are driven to out-of-the-way places where there are no such facilities. If this is the sort of thing that comes under my notice, who is to say that it has not

obtained in other portions of the State? It is the duty of the Government to inquire into this matter. For two whole years these men have been allowed to dummy land. It is common talk in the streets of Boulder that they are only dummies for Mr. Millen. How is it that they have been able to evade one of the provisions of the Act? There is no answer. I suppose it is included in the sound administration. I trust that the Premier will make inquiries into the statements I have made, and see if they are not correct.

THE PREMIER: You know perfectly well inquiries are made. You had every opportunity of inspecting the file.

MR. COLLIER: How is it that this thing could obtain for two years, until I bring it under your notice?

THE PREMIER: In nine cases out of ten, unless notice that the conditions are not complied with is brought under the attention of the office, there is no opportunity of gaining any knowledge.

MR. COLLIER: But you have an inspector who furnishes a report from time to time. I have seen a report from Inspector May stating that not one of these men was living on the block. That report came into the office. How is it that no action was taken? That report is 12 months old. I asked to be allowed to see the latest report, which came in only a month or two ago, and it was denied me. I had not the opportunity of perusing the latest report.

THE PREMIER: Were you not given every opportunity by me to go through the file you asked me for?

MR. COLLIER: I was.

THE PREMIER: Did you not spend an hour on it?

MR. COLLIER: I spent two hours. I asked Mr. Gilbert, the secretary, for the latest report. He said it was private and confidential, and I could not see it. The only file I did see related to when the blocks were first thrown open and made available for selection. I could understand, if it were six or nine months, that the officers of the department might be lenient, to allow these men an opportunity of going on to the land; but it must be known to the office that the proprietor of a newspaper in Boulder and these men were not settled on the land. If this thing can obtain and the depart-



ment does not know anything about it, what is likely to be happening in other parts of the State? It is no wonder that out of 11 million acres of land—

THE PREMIER: But are the conditions of improvement complied with?

MR. COLLIER: The conditions of improvement are no good. The crux of the thing lies in residence.

THE PREMIER: That was the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, who, by the way, was speaking out of his place.

MR. COLLIER: If they are going to be allowed to evade the residential conditions, we open the door to land speculation at once. I understood it was the desire of the hon. gentleman and the Government to settle people on the land.

THE PREMIER: We allow men on the goldfields to improve their land so that in a few years they can take it and go there for a home.

MR. COLLIER: That is all very well. But a state of affairs in which the proprietor of a newspaper and his reporter and other men on the goldfields have never lived on the land, and have not built a house on the block, though they have held the land for two years, is a scandalous evasion of the Land Act. It is most remarkable that, of the applicants for nine of these blocks that were made available, seven successful applicants were warm personal friends of the late member for Boulder. They obtained those blocks during the time he was Minister for Lands. They were, I say, intimate, warm, personal friends of his.

THE PREMIER: But were not the blocks obtained through the medium of the Land Board?

MR. COLLIER: Yes; they were obtained through the medium of the Land Board, but I am only saying it is a remarkable coincidence that the whole of these successful applicants should happen to be residents of Boulder, and it is a remarkable coincidence to my mind, in view of a letter written by Mr. Hopkins to Mr. Millen, asking him to make an application for one of these blocks, and saying he could assure him he would not regret it. Evidently he has not regretted it, because this letter was written to obtain a block, and both of his sons obtained a block. Those others have been simply dummying the land for Mr.

Millen. I hope that the Premier will make inquiries and see if the statements I have made are correct. I do not intend to delay the House at greater length. I simply thought it was my duty to call attention to an important matter of this kind which came under my notice, and a matter in which the land laws of the State are being evaded, and dummying is obtaining at the present time.

MR. C. H. LAYMAN (Nelson): I intend to take up very few minutes of the time of the House in speaking on this very much debated subject, or perhaps I should describe it as a conglomeration of subjects, introduced by members in speaking to the Address-in-Reply, because I recognise that it is a useless, worthless waste of time. Some members appear to think that it is their one opportunity, and worse than that they appear to think it their duty to embrace the opportunity, of indulging in personal abuse. We hear members accusing Ministers and other members of being political criminals, of bribery and corruption, and, in fact, calling them everything except honest politicians. I would like to say that I consider this should not be tolerated. It is not tolerated in any other sphere of life—in commercial, in professional, or in social circles; and why should it be tolerated in politics? We hear charges made against Ministers, and we hear these charges echoed and re-echoed by other members; and I think it is time we put a stop to such extraordinary and extravagant language in the House. It must be very painful to you, sir, to have to sit listening to such expressions. Of course I do not object to fair criticism; I do not object to any member criticising the policy or the want of policy of any other member; but I certainly have a strong objection to personal abuse. I should like to ask you what is the difference between saying that a man is making misstatements, well knowing them to be misstatements, and accusing him of telling a deliberate lie. The only difference I can see is in the phraseology. One charge is couched in what we may term parliamentary language, and the other is not; but the meaning is the same. And I regret to say that the principal offenders, if I may be permitted to style them offenders, seem to me to be the older parliamentarians; and I feel I am