

Hon. Frank Wilson: There is no occasion to keep members sitting 24 hours or 48 hours at this period.

The PREMIER: I have already explained that members on this side were desirous of speaking, but considering the exceptional circumstances they decided to forego their right on this occasion, so that urgent legislation might be passed and other matters might be discussed.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Why should they forego their right? You have shown the way out of the difficulty.

Mr. SPEAKER: The question before the House is the Address-in-reply.

*Debate resumed.*

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [8.18]: I agree that at this time in the history of Western Australia we cannot do better than follow the example set us in the British House of Commons and allow all party differences to sink, and that each member of this House, and each party in this House should generously assist the Government in the difficult task that lies before them. Expressing those sentiments I therefore regret that the Premier has not seen fit to agree to the reasonable request made to him from this side of the House, and I also desire to say that I deplore, on my first sitting in this Chamber, that I should have had to listen to such remarks as the Premier saw fit to make to-day with reference to two of our leading newspapers. I do not propose to enter upon a defence of those papers; they are capable of taking care of themselves, but I simply want to say, from my point of view, I think it was an unfair attack. The matter was in the knowledge of the Premier, and it came to his knowledge only by reason of the position that he occupies, and he has used it in a threatening way unfairly to private citizens. In His Excellency's Speech no mention whatever is made of the fact which is greatly concerning the whole of the people of Western Australia, and which is probably more discussed in the State than anything else, with the exception of the great war. I refer to the deficit on revenue account and which now stands at the sum of £837,000.

Mr. Heitmann: It is only a fair-sized baby.

Mr. ROBINSON: This deficit has been accumulated in a little over three years and I might add that almost half of the sum has been added since the 1st July of this year. Various reasons have been assigned by responsible Ministers for the deficit. First we were told the bad season in 1911; lately we have been referred to the drought or the bad season that we have just experienced, and lastly we have been told that the tightness of money, caused by the great war, is responsible for it. I submit that a comparison of the figures should at once show us if these are the true and the only reasons. Take the year 1911-12. I find in that year the revenue of the State exceeded not only the revenue of the previous year, but the revenue of any other year that we have ever known in Western Australia. It exceeded that of the previous year by £116,000 and that previous year was a prosperous one. The following year of 1912-13 exceeded the revenue of the year before by over £600,000, whilst that of the year which concluded in June last exceeded the previous year by a further sum of over £600,000. The revenue for that year was approximately £5,200,000, the high-water mark of revenue in this State of Western Australia; so that during the three years we have passed through the Treasurer has had what I would describe as an overflowing treasury, greater by far than that of his predecessor, or that of any other Treasurer. So that the Treasurer in that period had the sum of three millions more revenue than was accorded to the Treasurer in the previous Administration.

The Minister for Works: That is not so.

Mr. ROBINSON: In addition the Treasurer had loan expenditure during the same period of approximately 9½ million pounds. I contend, therefore, that it cannot be said that the deficit was caused through lack of funds; and the extraordinary amount of revenue derived also completely shows that it was not owing to one of the reasons I have previously mentioned, lack of rain or bad



seasons. I am, therefore, driven to the conclusion that the Treasurer knowingly and wilfully spent more money than he received, or, on the other hand, that he spent more money than he received, not knowing how or why. I do not care which way it is taken. During the month of October just past the deficit increased by a sum of £109,000 and in November by a sum of £84,000, or on an average for those two months of over £3,000 per day.

Mr. J. P. Gardiner: You know you are telling lies.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must withdraw that remark.

Mr. J. P. Gardiner: I will withdraw the remark.

Mr. ROBINSON: Again, let us contrast the figures of this year with the figures of last year, when the revenue reached its high-water mark of £5,200,000.

Mr. J. P. Gardiner: Tell the truth.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Roebourne must withdraw and apologise.

Mr. J. P. Gardiner: I think the hon. member should tell the whole truth. I will withdraw.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member will stand up and withdraw and apologise.

Mr. J. P. Gardiner: I withdraw and apologise.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The hon. member should apologise, too.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member has apologised.

Mr. ROBINSON: The figures I have quoted are taken from the published Government returns.

The Minister for Works: The new system of keeping accounts has inflated the revenue.

Hon. Frank Wilson: And a very bad system, too.

Mr. ROBINSON: In the three months from July to the 30th September, 1913, the revenue amounted to £1,124,000, whilst for the corresponding three months of the current year it had increased to £1,295,000, or an increase this year of £171,000. It is astonishing to me, therefore, to find, as it is astonishing to every man in Western Australia,

who thinks, or who has any business knowledge, that there should be any deficit at all, let alone a deficit for those three months of £196,000 over and above the huge amount of revenue that I have detailed. In the month of October of this year the revenue was £463,226, whilst in the corresponding month of last year the revenue was £402,000, showing an increase in the month of October despite the dry season, despite the war, despite the distress, and may I say, despite the Government, of £60,000 for this very month. Again, we would expect to find with this increased revenue that there would be no deficit. Yet in the two months of October and November the deficit increased by £194,000. It is quite interesting to an observer to read the row of figures commencing with the month of July and ending in the month of November. I was wondering and will leave it at the wonder stage, why in July the deficit increased by £121,000, what was happening in August that it should drop to £68,000, and what further happened in September that it should drop to £6,000, and what happened in October that at the end of that period it should have increased by £109,000, and then continued its merry way along. I submit that I should be lacking in my duty to the country, a country which comprises a population of only 324,000 people, if I did not point out in the plain terms I have done these huge figures, for huge indeed they are for such a small community. At the end of the first year of the Treasurer's administration he attributed his deficit to the bad season, and hoped that he would clear it off in the following 12 months, and I assure you that the hopes of the people of Western Australia went out with the Treasurer. But at the end of the second year, when the deficit had increased, the same pious hope was placed before the public, and as the following year has gone on the Treasurer has become more light-hearted, and we have not heard expressions of regret or any wish to cope with the deficit. I say with all respect in this House that the time has arrived when



this deficit must stop its rolling, must stop its accumulation.

Mr. Heitmann: It is running, not rolling.

Mr. ROBINSON: A new Parliament has been elected, and although the Labour party are still in a majority they are receiving, and have received, and will receive from every member of this House an assurance that if they will cope with the finances in a statesman-like way they will receive the support and assistance of all parties. It would be presumption on my part to offer any suggestions to the gentlemen who occupy the Treasury bench. I cannot suggest to them how to live within their means. I feel sure there is quite sufficient ability on the Treasury bench to devise their own ways and means.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I do not.

Mr. ROBINSON: And when they place propositions before this House they may feel sure that those who listen to them will regard them in a business light and give them the support they require.

The Minister for Lands: Are not you sure you will not regard them from a selfish point of view as to how they will affect your own pocket?

Mr. ROBINSON: In order that the intention I publish to the House to endeavour to assist the Government in their dilemma should be carried out, I join with other members who have already spoken in expressing the hope that the Government will give us that genuine assistance which is necessary to enable us to assist them in overcoming their difficulties. That assistance is, and should be, that this House and the country be placed in full possession of all the facts bearing on the country's finances.

Mr. Taylor: I have heard that before.

Hon. Frank Wilson. You cannot hear it too often.

Mr. ROBINSON: In the year 1910, as reported in Parliamentary debates, volume 38, page 1155, a detailed analytical statement of the various departments was presented by the then Treasurer. In fact this schedule, which I have

before me, supplies what I call a profit and loss account for each department of the public service from which it is easy for me or anyone who has access to the figures, to trace exactly non-productive or wasteful expenditure of money. These departments are grouped in branches numbered from one to 91. The income and expenditure is shown in each so that any member of the public who wishes to overlook the affairs of this country, as he is entitled to do, can run his finger down the list and see where the losses are taking place, and be in a position to tender any advice to this House that his position in the House may justify him in giving. Moreover, it is of usefulness to the general public to be able to know exactly where profit and loss is going on. Every business man knows that without analytical comparisons of his business and accounts it is impossible to successfully manage his business. Show me in Western Australia a business that is profitable and well managed and successful and I will tell you that in that business you will find the accounts methodically kept and analytically dealt with every week so that the man at the head, as the Premier is at the head of this gigantic concern, can by a mere glance or word, locate losses and stop leakages and at the same time give praise or credit where it is due. I trust, therefore, that in the immediate future the Treasurer will resort to this habit, the habit of one of his predecessors, a distinguished Treasurer—I refer to Sir Newton Moore—and publish to the House and the country a statement similar to the one I have described.

The Premier: That is pretty rough on your leader. That is the distinguished Treasurer who extinguished your leader.

Mr. ROBINSON: May I say that this statement if properly rendered today, would cover all trading concerns, as well as the ordinary departments of the Government, and it would show the expenditure and revenue received from those trading concerns, the balance sheets of which are admittedly required by statutory authority. I repeat that, quite apart from statutory authority, until the members of this House are fully seized



of the details of the financial position and the accounts of the Government, it will be impossible for them, however wishful they may be, to offer the Government any advice or assistance, or give them the benefit of any experience they may possess, or which they may wish to offer to the House. So late as September last the Premier said through the public Press—

The Government Trading Concerns Act makes provision, of course, for financial statements. The instructions are to present them as soon as possible after the close of the financial year, but the departments affected cannot throw aside and dislocate all their other work for this purpose. It is impossible to say at present (September) whether the particulars will be available before the elections or afterwards. Obviously, however, they cannot show the exact position because in connection with the implement works, for instance, there are machinery sold on bills, money paid out by way of wages and for raw material. The same thing applies to some extent to the other State concerns—there is always some money outstanding for services rendered.

In fulfilment of the promise I have made I have no wish to harass the Premier, but if I were wishful I could make no statement more damaging to his business ability than the words he himself made use of in September. I assure the House, and the House will not need my assurance, that every business man on 21st September over his breakfast smiled as he read the Premier's explanation. Surely every business man or business concern in Western Australia that buys or sells goods on bills. Surely every such concern pays money out by way of wages and for raw material, and yet such business concerns are able to make up weekly and monthly balance sheets, showing their positions. Then why, if that can be done in a well regulated business, should it not be done in the great business of this country? Even the draftsman of that famous measure named the Income Tax (War Emer-

gency) Bill provided that all business men in the State of Western Australia should prepare monthly balances of their trading accounts and their personal affairs and be taxed on the profits. I can only assume that the Treasurer in his haste in presenting that Bill to Parliament did not notice the clause I refer to. I submit that if it is a fair thing to demand from the taxpayer a monthly statement of his accounts, and I admit it is a fair thing and one that can be readily done, then surely it is a fair thing for the country to demand from the Government, which should be a model of all that is right and proper, particularly in the matter of accounts, that they should deliver to the community, to the shareholders in this great business and trading concern of which the Treasurer is the managing director, a properly audited monthly statement of accounts.

The Premier: We do that; we present on the first of the month a complete statement.

Mr. ROBINSON: I am afraid the Premier does not appreciate what I said. Take the Perth trams, of which some politicians speak glibly of having made a profit of £20,000 or so during the past year. A separate balance sheet should be presented to the public in respect of this undertaking. If it were produced—but it is not produced—we should at once see whether in the computation of this profit of £20,000 which it is stated has been paid into the Treasury, any allowance has been made for such funds as are known by the name of obsolescence fund, depreciation fund, and fund for renewals, in respect of which no less a sum than five per cent., or as others maintain ten per cent., should be allowed on the plant value.

The Premier: Do you say that is not allowed?

Mr. ROBINSON: I do not know. I have not seen the balance sheet. I say it should be produced. The reason for that allowance for obsolescence, depreciation, and renewals is obvious. The life of electrical machinery is known to be about fifteen years. Similarly, the life of tram rails is estimated at fifteen years



—a shorter period than railway rails for the reason of the special wear caused by the electrical current. I have not seen any of these balance sheets, and I do not know that anybody else has seen them. I am, therefore, not able to say whether there are any such allowances; but they should be there.

The Premier: Hear, hear.

Mr. ROBINSON: If there are any capital moneys or any revenue moneys available for expenditure during the coming year, I should like to see that expenditure confined as far as possible to what have been described—and I accept the phrase—as reproductive works. Amongst such works I would certainly class the reservoir in the Canning hills, to which work I have so frequently referred. I would similarly class extension of main roads in respect of settlement already effected, and I would class—

The Premier: You will notice that. You will find all you are looking for in that paper.

Mr. ROBINSON: Further I would class as a reproductive work the payment of subsidies to local authorities.

The Premier: It is on that list.

Mr. ROBINSON: That was placed in our hands only last night.

The Premier: You are speaking tonight; that was yesterday.

Mr. ROBINSON: I should prefer to be speaking to-morrow night. That information should have been in the hands of the public weeks ago. I class those three works, the reservoir, the extension of main roads, and the payment of some subsidy—I do not say how much—to local authorities—which subsidy, as we all know, is spent solely on road construction—as reproductive works. I know of nothing which would contribute more largely to the distribution of sums spent in wages and in deserving work. Now, referring for the moment to the metropolitan water supply: the original source of this was the Canning reservoir. The supply has been augmented from year to year by bore water, and by a pipe which now leads from the Mundaring reservoir. In an ordinary season,

at this time the Canning reservoir is overflowing. It is now practically dry, and has been dry since the early part of October. For years past the local authorities in the metropolitan area have by deputation and by every conceivable form of words pressed on the various administrations of the successive Governments the necessity for conserving a larger supply of water in the hills, in order that the citizens of Perth might have an adequate supply of potable water. Government after Government have talked about it, but nobody has yet done anything. In October last I ventured to prophesy that we would soon experience a shortage in the water supply of the metropolitan area.

Member: That was during the elections.

Mr. ROBINSON: I was told in a whole column by the then Minister for Works (Hon. W. D. Johnson) that I was talking nonsense, that there was enough water for everybody, and that there would be no shortage; but the elections have gone by; and, barely a month after, my prediction is verified. I believe in honour to whom honour is due. If I made in October a correct forecast and I am now proved to be right, I object to being told by a Minister that I am talking that which is nonsense. I say the present Government have had three years to do this work, and in the charge of neglect I join with them the Government who preceded them. I say the Governments of this country have not made adequate provision for the water supply of Perth. I heard one of the Ministers this afternoon make reference to the statement that a season of this description could not be foretold. I give him the answer, at once, that when the Mundaring weir was established it was publicly stated in the legislative halls of the State by the then Premier, Sir John Forrest, that he was providing against dry seasons by maintaining in that reservoir a three-years supply. Sir John Forrest knew. Notice has been given in this House, and I charge Ministers with neglecting the metropolitan area. I know of no work which will be more appreciated by the

people of the metropolitan area than will the early completion of that Canning water supply. We are tired of drinking water that comes from the Leederville bores. I know I am tired of it, and I hope my friends opposite are, too. I wish also to deal with one other question, a question which I think affects the whole of Western Australia, and on which possibly the Bill I have heard the Premier speak of may have some effect. I refer to the high prices of bran and pollard. I say those high prices in this country are entirely due to want of foresight on the part of the people of this country in exporting the whole of our wheat, instead of exporting flour.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: We ought to have State flour mills; that is what we want.

Mr. ROBINSON: If we had State flour mills and produced flour at the same rate as the State produces bricks, I am afraid we should have to wait a good many years before our people were supplied.

The Premier: That is a serious charge you are making.

Mr. ROBINSON: Last year approximately 200,000 tons of wheat, valued at £1,300,000, and approximately 20,000 tons of flour, valued at only £175,000, were exported from this country.

The Premier: Get the figures for 1911, when your people were in power.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You strangle every industry.

Mr. ROBINSON: I am not accusing anybody. I am not making any accusations whatever against the Government. I am merely drawing attention to a matter of public concern from a public standpoint, and in the public assembly of the country; and I repeat that last year, as against 200,000 tons of wheat, only 20,000 tons of flour were sent out of the country. I want to follow that up by giving these figures: one bushel of wheat equals 60lbs., and produces 42lbs. of flour, 9lbs. of bran, and 9lbs. of pollard. Therefore, in sending away from the country 200,000 tons of wheat we at the same time sent out of Western Australia 60,000 tons of bran and pollard, much of which, I contend, should

have been left in this State. Now let us look at the other side of it. During the first nine months of this year we imported practically 3,500 tons of bran from the Eastern States, at a cost there of £17,000. That is at a cost in the Eastern States of approximately only £5 per ton. To-day the cost there is £9 5s. or £9 10s. per ton; and I contend that that value during nine months in the Eastern States must mean something like £50,000 or £60,000 to the people of Western Australia, because to the charges paid in the Eastern States must be added freight and insurance, and merchants' handling in this country. Now, what is the remedy? I suggest that the remedy is to keep the residues in the country as feed for stock of all kinds. The first thing to do is to represent these facts publicly, broadcast throughout the country, so that everybody may know them. I originally referred to this in September and October last. I have not previously known anybody to refer publicly to this matter in the way that I did. Following that, publications were issued by the former Minister for Lands, Mr. Bath, giving details of flour, wheat, and so forth.

The Premier: We have discussed it here again and again.

Mr. Foley: Those very questions were asked by the Australian Labour Federation.

Mr. ROBINSON: That was after I had drawn public attention to the facts.

Mr. Foley: Not at all.

Mr. ROBINSON: The facts speak for themselves; and in addressing you, Mr. Speaker, I hope I shall ever confine myself to facts that are easily provable and to arguments which are logical and which must appeal to anyone who chooses to exercise his mental faculties. I say that the remedy is, first of all to represent this matter publicly, and that the next step is to encourage the establishment of flour mills throughout Western Australia. Then the Government of the country should assist our millers by seeking in countries beyond the sea, such as Egypt for instance, markets for our flour, rather than markets for our wheat. I thank hon. members of this House for having listened



to me without so many interruptions as they have accorded to some of the previous speakers. I trust that when I address this House I shall be able to place, as occasion arises, such facts and such arguments before hon. members as will interest them and appeal to their intellects.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [9.0]: First let me congratulate you, Sir, on your re-election to the post which you have so fittingly occupied during the last three years. I should like also to congratulate my old friend, the Hon. W. C. Augwin, on his appointment as Minister for Works. It must be gratifying to the North-West also to have as Honorary Minister the Hon. R. H. Underwood, who, no doubt, will grace that position as he graced the one he previously occupied. May I say a word in regard to the election. The reply given to a question asked the other day demands that something should be said. The Minister in charge of the Electoral Department was asked about the enrolment prior to the last general election. He gave an answer that was altogether wrong. He said the enrolment had been made under the Act. If hon. members will turn to the Act they will see that the enrolment was illegally made, because in the amending Act of 1911 claim cards were provided for and had to be signed. The enrolment of names such as was undertaken by the Electoral Department on this occasion is a very serious matter, serious because it aims at the freedom of the people. The Government made a canvass in many of the electorates, particularly Geraldton, and having ascertained exactly those names which ought to be on the roll, they immediately set to work to add the names of the people on the Federal roll, knowing that such names had no right to appear on our roll. By a costly canvass they had satisfied themselves in respect to every name that should be on our roll, after which they turned to the Federal roll and from it added to our roll many names which had no right to appear thereon. If this matter were allowed to go without protest we would be failing in our duty. Nothing more serious in connection with the administra-

tion of the affairs of this country has ever been perpetrated. The Government claim the right to assassinate any member of this House, when they claim the right to manufacture names and stick them on the rolls in any district where such names will be useful. Where shall we find ourselves—on what does our freedom rest if Ministers can do just as they please without regard to the law of the land? Also I am surprised at the attitude the Premier has taken up to-day. He says that because he wants to put through some special legislation to-morrow, we must finish this debate to-night. In fact he is anxious that the newspapers shall not publish the speeches of hon. members, an anxiety which he has felt for the last three years. During that time it has ever been his object to stifle discussion and the publication of discussion.

The Premier: They did not publish your speeches, but only something that was written for you.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: As I have remarked before, I should be sorry indeed if a decent man were to say of me what the Premier has said of me; but I have no objection whatever to the Premier saying anything at all of me. This action of the Premier is an unheard of thing and it will set up a bad precedent. I do not believe the Premier will give us an opportunity of discussing the Estimates, if it does not suit him to do so. His idea is to hide all that is possible, to get the session over and get back to office, and to his comfortable motor car, and probably on to the steamer to take him to Victoria, there to meet his friends at the round table.

Mr. Munsie: Sour grapes.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: In the meantime the country must suffer because it has such a Premier. It is scandalous that the House should be treated as it is. Several new members who desire to speak are not prepared to go on to-night. The Premier in his speech has certainly shown conclusively that he is not a statesman, that he has no appreciation of the seriousness of the position in which we are placed. In that