

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies): In common with other members of this Assembly before speaking on the Address-in-reply, I wish to convey to you, Mr. Speaker, my sincere congratulations upon your election to the high and responsible position which you occupy to-day. I feel sure from my personal knowledge of the present Speaker that he has the necessary ability to carry out the duties pertaining to the high office he holds with credit to himself, and, I feel confident, with satisfaction to hon. members on both sides of the House. I also wish to congratulate my friends in the Ministry upon election to their honourable and onerous positions, and I feel confident in their case also that the interests of Western Australia will be quite safe in their hands. The member for Gasecoyne at the beginning of his address stated that it was a curious fact that all members in speaking to the Address-in-reply had alluded chiefly to their own constituencies and had neglected to make any reference to the North-West. I believe the hon. member must have forgotten himself later on because he confined his remarks almost absolutely to the North-West. I do not intend to touch upon all manner of subjects because I feel there are other members who have spoken on the Address-in-reply who are more capable of dealing with them than I would be, but I do intend to criticise some of the administration of the last Government, more particularly in relation to mining matters. Representing, as I do, a mining constituency, I claim while I am not at all parochial, that I shall be fair in my criticism and will vote in the best interests of both the agricultural or metropolitan areas, just as freely and conscientiously as I shall for the interests of the goldfields. At the same time I claim to have practical mining knowledge and I think I can do more good to the State generally by confining my remarks to mining matters. As the member for Coolgardie pointed out, this great gold mining industry has produced £103,000,000 worth of gold. Undoubtedly at present throughout the Eastern Goldfields there is, unfortunately, a wave of depression, but as a goldfields

resident of 16 years I have sufficient confidence in these fields to feel that they are not yet beaten, but will continue to produce gold in considerable quantities for many years to come. The best legislation we could possibly pass would be devised with a view to keeping a large population on these fields in the interests of the State as a whole, and more particularly of our farmers who, without such a market, might find themselves in difficulties. It is in the interests of the agricultural, as well as of the mining population, that the Government should see if they cannot do something to improve the conditions on the goldfields, just as it is in the interests of the mining community that we should have a prosperous farming and agricultural community in order that we may have cheap and good supplies. I was pleased to hear the member for Kimberley say that there is more fat beef in the North-West than the people down here could consume. This confirms what was said at the recent elections, namely, that it was not from a scarcity of meat that we had to pay so high a price for it. Coming from the member for Kimberley, who knows what he is talking about, the evidence he has given us is most convincing; his statement proves that there is something wrong in the distribution of the meat. Being practical men the present Ministry may be relied upon to see if they cannot do something to bring the consumer and the producer of meat in closer touch. Then there is the State battery system. As hon. members know, this system was initiated 12 years ago, and the late member for Menzies (Mr. Gregory) always claimed credit for its initiation. I am quite prepared to admit that the system has done a great deal of good in the past, but I claim also, and I am speaking from personal knowledge, that the public battery system of Western Australia has not been kept up to date, but has been allowed to drift into a state of chaos. Its administration has been such as would disgrace a small private firm, to say nothing of the Government of a State. I know that public battery managers throughout my electorate cannot get sup-



plies or spare parts for their mills. They write down to the department, and what they mostly get in reply are letters asking if they cannot get on without the stores or parts asked for. Only a few weeks ago there was a parcel of 40 or 50 tons of stone sent to a battery in my electorate, and eight days were occupied in completing that small crushing. It is scarcely to be wondered at when I tell you that the manager was short of supplies, and in his own words, was sick and tired of writing to the department to get them. Among other things he was out of belt laces. He had previously sent to the departmental stores, and in response to his appeal was supplied with half a dozen of these laces, which cost, I believe, one penny each. The belt being no longer in good order, in a very short time these laces were worn out, and the manager was at his wit's end to replace them. Now it chanced that some years before this the manager had discarded an old belt lace, and used it as a throng on which to hang a bell around the neck of the domestic cow. To such ends was the manager driven on the occasion I refer to, that we had the spectacle of the whole of the battery staff chasing this old cow through the bush for the purpose of recovering that belt lace in order that the battery might proceed with its work. This, mind you, occurred in my own electorate, within the last six weeks. One of the greatest grievances we have up there is this : A considerable amount of the gold values is not recovered by amalgamation in the battery, but by subsequent cyanidation. As the residues or sands are put through the battery samples are taken and are assayed. The battery manager takes one sample and the prospector takes another ; they check the results and arrive at an agreement, and the Government eventually pay a percentage to the prospector on the gold remaining in the sands. But instead of the battery manager having the power to pay the prospector immediately on agreement of assay, he has to wait, perhaps, two or three months before the money is forthcoming. I know that sometimes it has been four or five months before a man

was able to get the money for his gold. I say this is not giving encouragement to the prospectors. Further than that, a little time ago I, as president of the Menzies branch of the Prospectors' and Leaseholders' Association, was directed to wait on the late Minister for Mines and point out these matters to him. He stated that the reason why he could not pay on agreement of assay was that there was no capital account set aside from which to carry on this battery business. I believe that is correct, but I feel confident that the present Government will make an endeavour to establish a fund in order that the prospector may get his money immediately on agreement of assay. We have tried repeatedly to have this done, and some six months ago a regulation was brought into force giving a so-called concession to the customers of public batteries. The concession amounted to this : if the prospector desires he can, upon paying two per cent. to the associated banks, get his money in about one week's time. He has to get his voucher from the battery manager, and this is sent to the department, and checked as correct, whereupon it is sent back, and then the man can obtain his money by paying the two per cent. That is not fair treatment. The department have to pay the bank in two months' time, so the banks can turn their money over six times in the year ; therefore the prospector is paying 12 per cent. per annum for the use of his own money. Just contrast these conditions with those of the settler in the agricultural areas. I have no wish to say or do anything to hamper the settlement of agricultural areas, but whereas in the case of a settler going on the land we make great efforts to lend him cheap money, under this regulation the prospectors are asked to pay 12 per cent. per annum for the use of their own money. I also find that although the public battery system was initiated to break down extortionate profits private enterprise was said to have made out of crushing on the goldfields, the position in Menzies to-day is that you can get stone treated at a private mill at the same price as at the public battery. Further than



that, immediately on agreement of assay you can get your cheque from the private battery, and cash it without trouble. Unfortunately, the grade of ore in the district is not as high as it has been, and in many cases all the margin the prospector gets is in the sands or the residues; the whole of the gold recovered by amalgamation is swallowed up in expenses of breaking out, carting and crushing, and in many instances the unfortunate customer of the public battery has to wait three months, always two months, before he can get the slightest return for his labour. It is our duty to keep the population on these fields, yet this is one of the conditions which are fast driving the people away. I believe that as a result of the mining experience he has had Mr. Collier will remedy this particular grievance on the goldfields, and see that a sum of money is provided to place the battery system on a better footing than it has been in the past. The member for Coolgardie referred to the goldfields' water scheme. I agree with him that it should be used strictly as a goldfields scheme. If it can be shown that we can spare the water from the goldfields, let the surplus go to the agricultural districts. But, as everyone knows, the goldfields are absolutely dependent on the water supply, and it must not be interfered with if there be any danger whatever of a possible shortage. The member for Coolgardie also referred to Ora Banda. That district almost adjoins my own electorate, in fact until quite recently it was part of it, and I can bear out what the hon. member has said, namely, that this is a district fully deserving of better treatment than it has had in the past. There have been good shows there, and there will be good payable propositions in the future, but all enterprise is hampered by the lack of water. I trust an endeavour will be made to supply these shows with this necessary commodity.

*[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]*

Mr. MULLANY: Another thing which I trust the present Ministry will continue is the system which was initiated last year by the Minister for Railways, by which reduced railway fares are granted

to women and children on the goldfields who are desirous of having a change on the coast during the summer months. Those hon. members who have ever put in a summer on the goldfields will admit that the conditions there in the summer are trying indeed, not only to the women and children but also to the men; but the men have the advantage that they are not confined to the house, but can go about their occupations, which women trying to rear a family cannot take advantage of. There are hundreds of children on those goldfields of from eight to ten years of age who have never yet seen the sea. The railway fares are too high in many instances to allow of the parents bringing them down to the coast. If the Government have been justified in the past in spending large sums of money in bringing immigrants to the State—and I do not say that they have not been justified—it would be a much better policy to my mind to spend a sum of money in doing something to conserve the health of the best immigrants we can possibly get, namely, the native-born white Australians, for, although for eight or nine months in the year the goldfields climate cannot be beaten probably in the world, it is essential that young women and children should get away from those parts at least every two or three years. They cannot possibly grow up to be healthy men and women if they do not get an opportunity of coming to the coast during the summer months. I am pleased indeed to see that it is proposed to introduce a Bill to amend the Arbitration and Workers' Compensation Acts, and I quite agree with one of the previous speakers that this will be a better way of dealing with this matter than was proposed by the late Government, viz., the abolition of the present Arbitration Act and the substitution of wages boards such as exist in the Eastern States. However, this matter has been dealt with exhaustively by other members, and there is no necessity for me to go over the ground again; but it is not my intention to sit down without expressing my appreciation of the intention of the Government to go on with the amendment of these two Acts. I trust that our labours in this new Par-



liament will result in the production of legislation which will be in the best interests of Western Australia in the future, and, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, I have every confidence in the members of the present Ministry, and believe that they are sincere, that they have the ability, and that they will put forth their best endeavours to carry through good and honest legislation for this State of Western Australia.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara): I desire, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to congratulate you on your election, and also to congratulate the new members who have been elected to this House. If permissible, I would also like to express my lively satisfaction that the electors of Pilbara were content to go on with the old member. I would further like to congratulate the leader of the Opposition on his assumption of that position. I am of opinion that he is competent to fill it. I have done my best to put him there, and it seems to me that I can take credit for something achieved. There are just one or two small matters that I would like to mention. The first one is in regard to the electoral system in the North-West. In my opinion it is desirable that all elections should take place on the one day, and I am sure that in this connection I have the support of the other three representatives of the northern portion of the State. The matter can easily be arranged. It is only a question of giving us some longer time between nomination and election day, and it will be necessary to abolish that system of preferential voting, and allow postal voters to record their votes after the issue of the writ. I trust that before the next election comes round the Government will have introduced and carried through another electoral Bill, and in that Bill they will provide that the whole of the elections shall take place on one day.

Mr. Male: Hear, hear.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: In regard to the few remarks that have been made during this debate, I am sure that the present Government are very thankful to the member for Kimberley for his good advice, but one almost regrets that he did not endeavour to give effect to it when

he was a Minister himself. However, we will bear it in mind, and I can assure that hon. member that the people of the North-West have a long way better chance of being attended to now than when the previous Government were in office. The hon. member for Kimberley made some statements in regard to pastoral lands in the North-West, with which I agree to an extent. He made the assertion that there are millions of acres of land up there unleased; I agree that there is a good deal of land, particularly south of Wallal, but the difficulty is that so far they have been unable to find water. I agree with the hon. member that it is the duty of the Government to send out a boring or well-sinking party into that portion of the State, and, if water can be found in that belt of country there are undoubtedly millions of acres of good sheep country which will then be leased. So far, however, private enterprise has failed to find water south of Wallal. It is not my intention to deal at any great length with the question of the imprisonment of aborigines, but I would like to point out to the member for Kimberley that some years ago the State expended some thousands or tens of thousands of pounds in arresting natives and imprisoning them, and cattle-killing did not decrease. The hon. member points out now that we have ceased to imprison the natives and they still kill cattle, but the fact remains that they killed them when we did imprison them, and it is a matter for consideration whether imprisonment was worth what it cost the State. I have every sympathy with the cattle men of the Kimberleys, but at the same time I am of opinion that the imprisonment of natives indiscriminately, as they were imprisoned in the past, was not an effective remedy. We may possibly find out some better remedy in future. There is just one word I would like to say with regard to the remarks made by members representing the eastern goldfields constituencies as to the desirability of having special railway fares to bring people from those goldfields down to the coast. My experience of the eastern goldfields climate is that we should have special trains to take people from Perth to that portion of the