

DR. ELLIS : That might be the best way to govern.

MR. HARPER : I do not say whether it is good or bad ; I simply say that the people should not adopt that course without knowing something about the result. With regard to Parliament itself, I should like to say something as to its conduct. I believe I am the oldest member in this House, having been something like 17 years in it ; and I may say that it gives me great pain indeed to see the degradation that has gradually developed in the conduct of the House. I very much regret to say that two of our Premiers have contributed very largely to it. Sir John Forrest was one of those who was constantly interjecting and interrupting debate in a way which I know, from a communication, was a very sore trouble to our late revered Speaker, Sir James Lee Steere, who on more than one occasion spoke to me about it and said that he did not find that support which he should expect from the Premier of the State. I very much regret to say that there is no greater offender in this respect than our present Premier. It is a habit which is becoming irrepressible with him, and he encourages the same thing in others. There are several other members of the House who indulge in this habit. There are two members who sit behind me who have been very good students of the Premier indeed, and the member for Mt. Margaret is also very good in this respect. I want to point out that the Premier, who has been trained in a court of law where decisions are arrived at after deep and careful consideration, must surely recollect that this House is the maker of the machinery which is worked in the courts, and surely where the machinery is made there should be as much order as where it is worked. If this system continues, the feeling of the country, which is strong against the habits of Parliament, will grow so strong that it will have a very dire effect upon the representation as it exists at present. Imagine for a moment the Premier in the Supreme Court allowing anyone else to make an interjection, or making an interjection such as is made in this House. It is a careless and frivolous habit altogether, and is injurious. I hope the new members who have come into the

House will bear in mind what I have said and not follow in the footsteps of the Premier, for they will be doing harm to the institution they have come in to assist. I hope the Premier will in the future control his impetuosity. I know how hard it is to do that, but it can be controlled. If it can be controlled in a court of law why not in Parliament ? That is all I desire to say. I intend to cast my vote against the present Government remaining in office, because I think it is in the interests of the State to do so.

MR. HARRY BROWN (Perth) : I intend saying only a few words, for I am suffering from a severe cold, and possibly during the last few years I have not been able to give to general politics—being engaged in the smaller sphere of municipal government—the time I ought to have given as a politician. I am surprised, since I have been in the House, to find by the speeches of members of the Opposition what a disreputable, unprincipled lot the present Ministry are. Throughout the whole of the debate I have not heard one word of credit given for a single thing which the Ministry have done. What rights the political Labour party have obtained in the past they have received from the present Premier. I say advisedly, I have not heard a word of thanks from the political Labour party for all they have received. This debate has been an absolute waste of time. There are 22 members in Opposition, and their minds are made up. I think the Premier did a wise thing, the only possible thing that could be done, when he submitted a vote of confidence in himself, so that if the country required to be ruled by the political Labour party and the Independents, who may take one side or the other, let the political Labour party rule. I am sure it was pitiable to hear the plea of the leader of the Labour party that he did not require office, and I must say that I was delighted to hear the outspoken remarks of the member for Hannans (Mr. Wallace Nelson). I think the Premier was really glad of such a worthy opponent as the member for Hannans, who told the Premier plainly that if there were the best Premier and the best Government in the world here, the Opposition had done with them, that the political Labour party were in a majority and were going to rule. If

the leader of the Opposition had made that statement, the country would know it, and he would not get into office by a subterfuge, by telling the public he did not want office but was forced to take it. Let the leader of the Opposition follow the outspoken manner of the member for Hannans, who said the party wanted office and were going to get it. I am pleased indeed that the Coolgardie Water Scheme has been completed, and I think the goldfields members should try and assist the coastal people by allowing the coastal towns to obtain some portion of the water which is now practically running to waste. I understand that upon the Coolgardie Water Scheme, with its large capital, the country is losing at the present time between £50,000 and £60,000 per annum. One only requires to go to the valleys of the Helena to see the huge quantities of water that could be conserved in the catchment area. By the construction of a dam below the weir, sufficient water could be conserved which would not only be sufficient for Perth, but for the whole of the towns between Midland Junction and Fremantle. Members are aware that Perth has not only to support its own water scheme at present, but has indirectly to support the national work, the Coolgardie Water Scheme. I am sure the goldfields members will not be so narrow-minded as to object to pipes being connected with the scheme to supply water to the coastal towns. It is pleasing to me to find that the Government, for the benefit of Perth at least, have found a more congenial occupation for the Engineer-in-Chief in London; for so long as the Engineer-in-Chief had the control of the engineering department here it would be many years before there would be a departure from the artesian water supplies for Perth. That gentleman was pledged to artesian water supply, and it was almost criminal, with the large quantity of water in the Mundaring dam, to farther continue the abortive artesian supply. With reference to the water and sewerage scheme, I trust that either the present Government or the Labour party, if they come into power, will give some attention to this matter for the benefit of the city of Perth. At present the absence of a scheme is a standing disgrace, and if the Government are not prepared to carry out a scheme, if they will pass the

necessary legislation, the Perth City Council are prepared to undertake the work on their own account. If the figures as supplied by Mr. Davies in his report are correct, it would only take the sum of £112,000, and for this sum a portion of North Perth and Leederville would come under the scheme. If the work could be done for that sum it would be a saving to Perth of £5,000 a year on the present unsatisfactory system. At the present time we are paying interest on a loan of £200,000. I can assure members that if the Government are not prepared to undertake the scheme, but will pass the necessary legislation, the Perth Council will rise to a sense of their responsibility and carry the work out themselves. Several references have been made here to the question of postal votes, and I may say at once that I am absolutely against postal voting altogether. This matter has been threshed out repeatedly at municipal conferences, and I believe a Bill will be brought forward this session abolishing proxy voting altogether. It will be a good thing if this is done. For my part, I would only appoint Resident Magistrates for the purpose of taking postal votes, for I am sure the system can be abused very much indeed. We have heard from the Opposition that it has been abused, but I do not know of any case myself. I know of one anomaly that did occur which is far worse than any trouble about postal voting. I believe that one of the members of this House, within a month of his election, was practically an electoral officer of the State. I do not say that he used his position to farther his election, but it is an anomaly that should not exist. In reference to land settlement, I say advisedly that in the present Minister for Lands we have one of the best administrators who has been connected with that department that we have had for a considerable time; and I think if the work that has been undertaken by him is only continued by his successor, we shall not have such criticisms as were levelled at the Minister last night by the member for Northam. I think that the Minister's success has depended to a great extent upon an officer who is above suspicion. I refer to Mr. W. Paterson, who without doubt is one of the best

civil servants the State has ever had. I was surprised indeed, and I believe other members of the House were surprised, to hear the member for Northam express his disgust that before an advance was made to a settler the matter had to be investigated, and an inquiry had to be made as to the applicant's financial position. If a loss had occurred in the running of the Agricultural Bank without these safeguards and inquiries being made, the member for Northam would be one of the very first to throw mud at the Government for allowing it. With reference to the Collie coal question, we have been told that a huge deficit has been caused by the purchase of Collie coal. But I say that much of the loss has been caused by the political Labour party, who have repeatedly urged in the Press that the local industry should be carried on at any cost, and almost at any loss. In various institutions with which I have been connected—waterworks, hospitals, and others—in every case we have found it absolutely impossible to use Collie coal. It cannot be compared for price with the Newcastle, or even with jarrah; and in almost every case the wood has had to be used, and is giving better results than the Collie coal. I think the sooner we drop the Collie industry the better, if that industry is to be carried on at a loss to the country. The price of Newcastle coal can be always kept in check by using the vast quantities of timber practically being burnt daily as waste in the mills, provided we have a little more rolling-stock to bring that timber into the city and the towns. With reference to a University to which I see the Speech refers, I have not heard the Premier or any other member pay a tribute to the Perth Council for giving up the magnificent piece of land which is to be the nucleus of the university funds. I think the establishment of a university is a question which may be shelved for a considerable time. This State is doing its utmost, and in fact more than its fair share, to educate its children. The primary education we are giving here is practically the best in the British dominions; and if technical education could be farther extended, that provision would for some time to come stand us in very good stead. If we wish to educate our children beyond that standard, then

secondary education, instead of being provided in a large and costly fashion by the State, could be facilitated by a system of scholarships and bursaries in those private secondary schools already established. I say that it was never intended that our population should be taxed to give a secondary education to the children of those parents who can well afford to pay for it. As to the taxation of unimproved land values, even the Premier and several Opposition members seem to be unaware that there is already a machinery for imposing such a tax; and I may add that a great many roads boards in the State have taken advantage of the section in the Roads Act which permits of the impost. I can assure members that if such a local tax is imposed, there is no room whatever, in this State at all events, for a national land tax. An estate within five or six miles from Perth is already rated at 1d. in the £, and is contributing over £500 a year to the local roads board. I hope municipalities will be given the same power to tax unimproved land values. I have thought over that for years, and am absolutely in favour of it; but my contention is that if the unimproved land tax is imposed municipally, there is no room for a national land tax in addition. I am quite sure that the burden to be paid to the local authorities in the shape of land tax would be sufficient to burst up any estate that is now lying idle.

MR. BATH: Is the estate which is paying £500 a year being burst up?

MR. H. BROWN: Yes; it is now being sold. To show how that land tax is working now, I may remind members that a minimum rate of 2s. 6d. is charged on every block; and there are blocks within eight or nine miles of Perth worth not more than £2 or £3 a block. The land when bought cost the owner about £1 12s.; the half-crown rate has now been levied for four or five years; and in several of those cases the owner, in addition to the cost of his transfer and deeds, has paid the rates; and the rates have practically already exceeded the value of his land. That alone should set members thinking whether it is worth while to impose a national land tax, if the tax already provided is enforced by the local authorities. I may add that in the Roads Act taxing on the unimproved values

is optional; but I should like to see it made compulsory, and I would ask the House this session to give such power to the municipalities. The proposition has been brought up time and again, and thrown out. Last year similar power was given under the Metropolitan Water and Sewerage Act; and if it be good enough for the Government under the water and sewerage scheme, it should be equally good for municipalities. If the amended Municipalities Bill is brought in, I will do my best and fight my hardest to see that municipalities get the power they desire to rate on the unimproved value. As to the alienation of Crown lands, I have heard the Opposition say during the recent campaign that they are absolutely against it. I intend, just to demonstrate their inconsistency, to call this session for a return showing all lands granted for trades halls during the last few years. "Oh," say the Labour party, "alienation of Crown lands is not good enough for other people, but it is good enough for us." I notice that in the last two or three years land in Fremantle, I believe to the value of £2,000 or £3,000, has been alienated; and in addition grants of £2,000 have been made to build trades halls. If it is good enough for the political Labour party to have those concessions, to have Crown lands alienated, surely it is good enough for other political parties to get similar consideration. I am told that all over the goldfields similar grants of land have been made.

MR. BATH: Whoever told you that was wrong.

MR. H. BROWN: In Perth a piece of land was granted on the outskirts of Thomas Street, for which the fee simple was given. The land, however, was too far away for the members of the political Labour party. Other land was purchased in Wellington Street by the Government, at a cost of £900, and the deeds of the land in Thomas Street were returned to the Government for the money they provided for the new site.

MR. ANGIN: Do you know that the political Labour party has no land?

MR. H. BROWN: Not content with rating unimproved land values, our friends the Opposition say, "Rate everybody else, but do not rate us." In the proposed new Municipalities Bill brought

before the Municipal Conference, grants for similar purposes were exempted from rating. I am pleased to state that at the conference this exemption was struck out, and I hope it will not be reinserted by Parliament when the Bill comes before us. There are enough exemptions now. One of the exemptions was "all trades halls." Now why should trades halls be exempted more than any other buildings?

MR. TAYLOR: You say nothing about grants to municipalities.

MR. H. BROWN: We hold our grants in trust for the people, but you hold yours in trust for a particular sect. Another matter. The Conciliation and Arbitration Bill was, I believe, fought for by both Opposition and Government. To me it seems pitiable to note the criticisms levelled at those gentlemen who have administered the Act. In any part of the world, has a litigant power to practically appoint one of his own judges? We have heard members of the Opposition criticise the work of that Arbitration Court. If men want advice, they generally go to their solicitors; but the Opposition profess to pit their opinions against those of the Judges of our Supreme Court.

MR. WATTS: Can you or anyone else justify their decisions?

MR. H. BROWN: Can you or anyone else say that the judgments are wrong?

LABOUR MEMBER: We prove them wrong by higher authorities.

MR. H. BROWN: One of the best Judges we had in this State was the late Justice Moorhead; and I say that his end was practically expedited by the scathing remarks passed on him for his administration of the Arbitration Act.

MR. DAGLISH: Are you speaking as a medical authority on the Judge's illness?

MR. H. BROWN: I say that those scathing criticisms expedited that man's death.

MR. DAGLISH: Are you a medical authority?

MR. H. BROWN: I make the assertion anyhow. Only a few weeks ago a decision of Mr. Justice Parker was given, and a writer to the daily Press stated that Mr. Justice Parker had practically stultified himself in a judgment that he gave, in order to save himself £2 or £3 a year. I refer to the case of temporary waiters employed at night, at 10s. for two or three hours' work. The

appellants required 15s. Mr. Justice Parker, I think from the bench, said that he usually paid 10s., which seems a fair remuneration for two or three hours' work. When that award was given, the gentlemen interested absolutely said publicly that Mr. Justice Parker was biased because he, probably two or three times a year, engaged an extra waiter and did not wish to pay him 15s.

MR. HENSHAW: Do you know that in the award there was a provision of a minimum wage for waiters of £1 per week?

MR. H. BROWN: One of your chief men said of Mr. Justice Parker that rather than increase the pay of a waiter from 10s. to 15s., he delivered a biased judgment. Now would a Judge, for the sake of a few paltry pounds a year, thus prejudice himself in the eyes of the public? Again, with reference to preference to unionists, that is the only objection I have to the political Labour party. I, as well as the political Labour party, am here to represent the workers of Perth; and I say that the nonunionist should require and get the same protection as a member of that party. The occupations of many men preclude their joining unions. If it were attempted by legislation to give preference to nonunionists, Labour members would naturally object; and if non-preference is good for one it is good for another. With reference to population and immigration, no doubt stronger efforts should be made to put the unemployed on the land, if they will go. The members of the Opposition say practically "Our wealth is our labour." Well, if it is, we are told by the member for Coolgardie (Dr. Ellis) that there is plenty of such wealth about the country—the unemployed. But the Opposition are altogether against the introduction of capital.

LABOUR MEMBERS: We never said so.

MR. H. BROWN: You are against borrowing, and I cannot realise the why or the wherefore. This State must have capital. Why cannot we drop this warfare, and try to curry favour with the capitalists, try to bring them into the country instead of fighting them at every possible opportunity? We know well that the labour of any of us is absolutely useless without capital; and the truth of

that is exemplified when you yourselves say that your labour is your capital. If it is true that labour is capital and you have plenty of men unemployed, as one member has said, then you have plenty of wealth; but when it comes to putting men on the land and expecting them to get a living by cultivating it, we must recognise it is useless to do so unless the men have some capital to start with.

With reference to land settlement, I do think the new system of field-work which is being tried in the South-West is very good; and I can go farther, as I have said on a public platform before, that from my experience as a magistrate sitting occasionally in a police court I do think it is absolutely criminal to send men, when sentenced on charges of drunkenness, to serve a term among criminals in a gaol. I do not regard it as a very great crime when a man is brought up on a charge of drunkenness; but I do think we are breeding up a class of criminals by having no means of keeping such men, when sentenced for a short term, from suffering by contamination with criminals in our prisons. If an attempt is to be made to clear the lands of the colony, one practical way would be to give these men who are convicted for slight offences an opportunity of some proper employment by putting them to work on the land, say by some system of payment by wages or reward, and this would enable them while undergoing sentence to earn something for their families. If you get the value of their work, that will be something in return for the wages given. Men coming from the goldfields to the coast would readily settle on the land as cultivators if some system of clearing could be devised by which they could earn something while clearing the land. As I have said, a system of putting men on the land as cultivators without some money to start with is useless; and I think it would be almost criminal to bring men from outside the State into this country with their expectation of settling on land, but starting without means to carry them on. By the system I have suggested in regard to persons under sentence, you could take the better class of criminals from the gaols and set them to clearing the land, and by some payment or reward you would enable such men, and would

attract other men, to go on the land and reap the reward of their exertions.

MR. MORAN: That is advanced socialism.

MR. H. BROWN: It may be socialism, but it is a work that will well repay the State. It would be far better to keep these men in occupation than waste their time in doing nothing while under sentence. In conclusion, I have to thank hon. members for the hearing they have given me.

MR. HENSHAW: You have not referred to the back slums of the city.

MR. H. BROWN: With regard to the remark of the member for Collie, I have given as much time if not more time to the work of the city in municipal matters as any mayor during the last few years; and I may say I was surprised to find the back parts of the city in the state they are. I hope that, with the assistance of the Central Board of Health, the City Council will be able to make Perth a city fit to live in. I am going through with the work now, and although I know it is a nauseous job and one that will bring me bad feeling from a number of land owners in this State and particularly in Perth, yet during the short period I have to serve as mayor of Perth I am going, without fear or favour, to carry out that action in its entirety, and I intend to back up my officers every time, and will not be approached by any land owner. In every case where owners of property have approached me since this matter came up I have told them that I will not go behind my officers. Those officers have full instructions to carry out the demolition of buildings that are not fit for habitation. I hope that in the Health Bill which is to come before the House this session, Parliament will give the health boards greater powers; not only in regard to health matters in the city of Perth, but in reference to all municipalities in the State. A building is condemned as unfit for human occupation, and while it remains standing is a menace to the public health. An amendment in regard to that will be found in the new Bill, and I regret that the workers living in Perth have had to live and sleep in the dens that they have had in the middle of the city, and I hope this will soon become a thing of the past. With regard to health matters my friend

the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Daglish) knows the opposition and the difficulties with which local boards of health and the Central Board have to deal. It would be almost better if the supervision of health was taken out of the hands of the municipal bodies; but it will be for this House to say during the present session what provisions shall be made for improving the present condition, particularly to provide that a district medical officer who is disconnected with any locality should be given entire charge of the inspection, and so do away with the present dual control.

MR. ANGWIN: All local boards do not clash with the Central Board of Health.

MR. H. BROWN: The Central Board of Health have supreme control over the local boards, and can come in whenever they like and supersede a local board. Every member of the Central Board is an old employee; every one of the officials, the inspectors at all events, have been old servants; and it is their fault that Perth is in the present condition in regard to health. Whilst I am mayor of Perth, I have neither the time nor have I the inclination to go behind my officials. I am sure the hon. member would not have me or any councillor to go round acting the part of inspectors in Perth. If you have inspectors, trust them; and when you find them not doing their work, get rid of them. (General applause.)

MR. P. J. LYNCH (Mt. Leonora): I rise to take part in the discussion, although if I were allowed to express the opinion of an individual neophyte, I should not offer any excuse for the prolongation of this debate. Still, noticing the unwillingness of members of the Government to force a conclusion, the time must be spent, uselessly perhaps, in going over ground that has already been touched on more or less by other members. I fear I can add but little evidence to that given already by members on this (Labour cross-bench) side of the House, in support of the stand they have taken; but representing a constituency which is far removed from here, and which on that account may have special reasons for looking upon the proposal now before the House, I feel that I may endeavour to offer some reasons that have hitherto not been touched on. It has been contended to-day by one of the morning