

# Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 22nd August, 1928.

	PAGE
Assent to Bill ... ..	350
Question: Parliament House, completion ... ..	350
Address-in-Reply, ninth day, conclusion ... ..	350
Adjournment, special ... ..	350

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read, notifying assent to Supply Bill No. 1 (£1,910,500).

## QUESTION—PARLIAMENT HOUSE, COMPLETION.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM asked the Chief Secretary: What action has been taken by the Government to carry out the mandate of Parliament as expressed in resolutions carried during the 1927 session in both Houses for the completion of the front of Parliament House?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: An estimate for the cost has been obtained, and the matter is receiving consideration.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*Ninth Day—Conclusion.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. J. T. FRANKLIN** (Metropolitan) [4.36]: I had not intended on this occasion to address the House except by way of uttering a few words of congratulation to the Government on having expressed their intention to introduce a Bill for the amendment of the Municipal Corporations Act. During last session the Minister for Works, Mr. McCallum, promised the Perth City Council that if it was at all possible he would introduce such a measure during that session, adding that if this course were found impracticable the Bill would be brought forward during the following session. From the Governor's Speech I observe that the measure is to be introduced, and I am pleased that at last there is to

be a possibility of municipal matters coming up for discussion. The existing Act is obsolete. It was passed a number of years ago, and the time has more than gone by for the inclusion in it of further provisions for the advantage not only of the City of Perth but of all municipalities in Western Australia. When the original Act was passed, the fast traffic that now obtains did not exist. From that aspect alone, the time is more than ripe for further legislation on the subject of municipal government. I know Sir William Lathlain will support me in stressing the necessity for not only a new Municipal Corporations Act, but also for a Bill relative to the City of Perth. The importance of our capital city warrants a separate Act for the conduct of its affairs. Many problems that arise in connection with city government have no application to suburban municipalities, and the Municipal Corporations Act should not be swollen with a number of provisions which would never apply to or be put into operation by suburban municipalities. In the past, legislation relating to road boards has been amended frequently. I am not in any way speaking against the road boards, which are, in my opinion, entitled to various amendments of the legislation applying to them; but I consider that it would be advisable to have an Act dealing with municipalities and road boards conjointly. Such a measure would tend towards working in unison. As to town planning, let me add my meed of praise to the Government for having appointed a Commission. I congratulate the Government especially on the personnel of the Commission. If the whole State had been searched, more capable men to sit on that Commission could not have been found. Let me add, however, that this Commission should not be placed in the same position as the Town Planning Commissions of the Eastern States. Those are good Commissions, and have done wonderful work, but, unfortunately, they cannot have effect given to the recommendations resulting from their work, as the necessary powers have not been conferred on them. I wish to sound a note of warning with regard to the Local Government Association, whose deliberations should not be made public until such time as a town planning measure has been enacted, so that the recommendations can be embodied in legislative form. If reports of the proceedings

are published, opportunity may be given for speculators to come in and make unfair use of the information. We expect that association to do a great deal of good. Certainly they are going the right way to work, as they are obtaining evidence from individuals and business people who consider themselves qualified to give advice. Further, they are guided by the experience of corresponding bodies in the Eastern States. With the information they are gathering, they will be able to bring up an excellent report, which can be utilised in conjunction with the recommendations of the Town Planning Commission to furnish an effective Act. If it is at all possible, I should like a Town Planning Bill to be introduced during the current session. Whether it would go through both Houses of Parliament on this occasion, I do not know, but it would be a commencement, and if we can only get a commencement the measure will be enacted next session, if not during this one. Another matter I would urge upon the Government is the extension of the sewerage system which has been inaugurated in the City of Perth. Experts may say that the Government have gone as far as they possibly can with the existing system, since the septic tanks at East Perth are already carrying more than the capacity for which they were designed. However, I suggest that the Government obtain a report from the responsible officers as to whether it is not possible in the near future to carry the sewage from the filter beds out to the beach, or to Wanneroo, in a locality where there are no inhabitants. Then possibly a sewage farm could be established and the Government would reap some benefit from the outlay. I do not know whether I am correctly informed with regard to the fall, but the man in the street—who generally knows—says that there is a fall of about 8 feet from the East Perth sewage tanks to the ocean. That may be so or not; it is a matter for expert advice. In the event of the fall not being sufficient, the time is more than opportune for the Government to consider the abolition of the receptacle at East Perth and the pumping of the sewage to some distance from the centre of the city. I am of opinion that the sewage could be taken by natural flow to Wanneroo. At the same time, I am not particular as to the destination of the sewage being Wanneroo. I am told that a

previous Government had an idea of pumping the sewage to Canning. Speaking as a layman, I should not like to see that scheme adopted, because it would mean a continuance of the nuisance created by running the effluent into the Swan River. I want to emphatically protest against the continuation of the system of running the effluent into the Swan River. It is time that nuisance was removed and the sewage taken some distance from the city. In Melbourne, I understand, it is pumped 25 miles to a farm that has proved to be a revenue-producing affair. It would be of great benefit to the Government and also to the people of the metropolitan area if we could get that abortion removed from the centre of Perth. I trust the Government will take that into serious consideration. Another matter to which I would draw attention is the deep storm water drainage. A report should be obtained from the responsible officers of the Government as to whether we could not instal a deep storm water drain, so that the local authorities would be able to get rid of the nuisance created by flood waters, with which at the present time it is impossible to cope. We have seen in the newspapers recently illustrations of the water and slush out Inglewood way, where they have had fire engines at work pumping out the water in order to relieve the residents. Although people live in such localities, they are just as much entitled to the convenience of deep drainage as are those living in more favoured areas. The man who lives out in the suburbs should be enabled to get rid of the storm waters. Storm water drainage would not mean any extra cost to the Government, for although the Government would have to find the initial expenditure, it must be remembered that the ratepayers have to pay water rates. I suggest also that the Government, instead of having so many concerns under their control, should consider the appointment of a metropolitan board of works to carry out various undertakings. This would be better both for the Government and for the people. If certain works were placed in the hands of a competent board, that board would be entitled to borrow sufficient money to finance those undertakings and so the Government, instead of working on a deficit, in due course would be able to show a surplus. I hope that

something will be done this session in regard to that suggestion. I am not asking for a commission to go into the matter, because I realise that in our State departments we have men perfectly competent to advise the Government respecting these matters. To revert to the question of deep storm water drainage, I suggest that possibly the Government should consider the advisability of linking up the storm water drains at Mt. Hawthorn and Leederville with the Herdsman's Lake drain. That would mean a big saving to the Government, for we have there a drain capable of coping with boundless storm water, and that drain would be more than sufficient to carry off any extra volume of water diverted to it. I am somewhat diffident about referring to the development of the North, for I see Mr. Holmes and Mr. Miles in their places. Still I would be glad if the Government could by some means assist those representatives of the North in bringing forward a workable scheme of development. Those two gentlemen are thoroughly conversant with the position in the North and could give sound advice, so that instead of having the North vacant as it is, it might be properly developed. This would give a fillip to the whole of the State. Until something of a progressive nature is undertaken in the North, we shall still have the danger of some portion of that territory being taken away from us. I am almost inclined to say I regret that the amount of money spent, I will not say wasted, on the Peel Estate, was not spent on the development of the North. The result would have been more satisfactory, for we would have known that the money expended was expended on a useful purpose. I throw out that as a suggestion, and I hope that some notice will be taken of it. I have not been sufficiently long in the House to go into the question of railways, but I notice the Government are extending their railway system into the backblocks. If it is at all possible, I should like the Government to appoint an honorary committee to take into consideration the advisability of urging the various local authorities to keep back sufficient work to tide the unemployed over the winter months. Then perhaps, we should not have this question of unemployment continually before us. My reasons for making that suggestion are

these: We are all aware that in the metropolitan area it is necessary that roads and footpaths be constructed during the summer months. But in country districts many of the roads to be constructed are water-bound roads. It is more economical to carry out that work in the winter rather than in the summer, for when constructing a water-bound road it is necessary to have plenty of water, so that the road can be properly consolidated. I am sure we have sufficient competent men who would be only too willing to serve on an honorary committee that would advise the various local authorities with a view to keeping back certain work for the winter months, so that the unemployed in that season of the year could be sent into the country to do useful work. What we are doing now for the unemployed is only a makeshift. We are providing work that otherwise might not be required for a number of years to come. If during the winter months we could have sufficient work to occupy all the unemployed, it would be to the advantage not only of those bodies who have work to carry out, but of the whole of the State. Really that could easily be done. Possibly the Government might fall in with that view, and I am sure the local authorities would gladly assist. I will support the Address-in-reply.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West)** [4.55]: First of all may I thank those members who have referred to my recent elevation for their complimentary remarks. I trust they will have no cause to alter their opinion. There are quite a number of matters referred to by various members that I wish to reply to, the first and foremost being the question of unemployment. This is recognised by every member and every responsible person in public life as a most important question. Those who have discussed it in this Chamber have more or less criticised the Government for their attitude towards the question, and it is only fair to say that in some cases they have laid the blame at the door of the Government. It is, however, a much harder question to solve than some people realise. It is not peculiar to Western Australia. Unemployment is prevalent in the other States to a greater degree than it is here, and it is prevalent in the Old Country also. In fact at the present time it is a world-wide problem. Mr. Cornell was, perhaps, correct when he said the problem of unemployment was purely an economical one.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Do you think the Arbitration Court has anything to do with it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Nothing whatever. In this State it does seem strange that, notwithstanding the prosperous period we are supposed to have gone through during the last few years, and the fact that last year several record productions were reached in our primary industries, unemployment has been worse this year than ever previously. This year, unemployment was first noticed in January, whereas usually it is April or even May before there is any appreciable increase in the number out of work. Several reasons can be advanced to account for it, and I suggest the following, always remembering that our population is only 400,000. That is a very important factor in the case.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: The latest figures show that we have just turned the 400,000 mark.

The HONORARY MINISTER: First of all the bad season last year in the Eastern States lead to what almost might be called an invasion from those States of men looking for work in this State, which was being truly represented as prosperous. That statement can be proved to the hilt. I know from records of various union organisations that they have received into their ranks large numbers of men on transfer from branches in the Eastern State. And the Labour Bureau has noticed large numbers of applications for employment from men recently arrived from the Eastern States. We know from the Press that quite a large number of men have come over on the Trans. line, some having paid their fares and others having refused to do so. Some were prosecuted for having travelled without paying their fares and it was afterwards left to the State to find them railway fares from Kalgoorlie to other districts in Western Australia where they might be able to obtain employment. That is one factor that cannot be contradicted, and it is a factor we have not had to experience in former years. This position arises, perhaps, from the fact that Western Australia, to a certain extent, has been boomed in the Eastern States, and I think I would be correct in saying that our prosperity is the chief cause of the unusual unemployment that has been existing in this State during the past few months. We cannot blame these men; on the contrary, I think they should be welcomed here because they have shown that they are prepared to go

out to the work rather than wait until the work comes to them, and, as I have always claimed, a man who is prepared to go into another country to look for work cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be looked upon as a man who is unemployable or one who should not be welcomed in our midst. Secondly, the large number of alien immigrants who have come into this State and have been absorbed in our primary industries is another cause of the unemployment existing here. In many cases these people have been attracted by the experience of their countrymen, and one cannot blame them for that. The fact nevertheless remains that they have supplanted our own workers in far too many cases, and particularly in our agricultural districts. Thirdly, we have the action of the banks in reducing and withdrawing overdrafts and thus preventing farmers and others from going on with further developmental work. It will not be denied that that is the cause of some of the unemployment. In every district in this State I have been in I have heard that complaint from one or another, and even in this Chamber, I think it was Mr. Hamersley who referred to the fact that it was not so easy to obtain employment in the country at the present time, because of the action of the private banks to which I have just referred. Fourthly, there was the fear in the early part of the season that we were going to experience a dry time. That was another reason why there has not been so much work in the country as we might have expected. Fifthly, there is the action of the Federal Government in insisting that all work done by the Main Roads Board should be subject to tender and contract conditions, thus compelling the State Government to reduce by hundreds the men employed on road work and causing considerable delay in the putting in hand of many miles of road work. That statement has been made on several occasions by responsible members of the Government, and I do not think it can be successfully contradicted. Another reason is the fact that the timber industry has experienced a lean period, and that most of our occupations are seasonal in character. Those are facts from which we cannot get away. The position has also been aggravated by the number of men who have left the group settlements, and the fact that men have arrived here from overseas at a times when it was impossible to absorb them. These men have been forced on to an unsympathetic and unskilled labour market. Nobody will deny that that also is

a factor. We have had experience during recent months of a considerable number of young men brought from the Old Country to Western Australia who have been obliged to remain in the immigrants' home at Fremantle for an extended period, whereas only a year or two ago they were seldom there for more than a day. There must be a reason for that and, whatever it is, it is a reason for the unexampled unemployment we have been experiencing. It must be remembered that the number which a small community can successfully absorb annually is strictly limited, and is governed by economic conditions. Anyone who has given consideration to the question will realise that, during the period when migration is strongest, unemployment is at its lowest ebb. Another factor must be taken into consideration and it is the question of the control of migration. So long as responsible authorities have not control over the number arriving at a given period, or during a given year, then the state of affairs we are experiencing must prevail. The moment there is no control, or the control is in the hands of other authorities who have no regard for local circumstances, then are we liable at any time to have the same experience that has been ours during the last few months. Again, I repeat that the position is governed by the economic conditions I have already referred to and also suggested by Mr. Cornell. Mr. Cornell also referred to the craze for motor cars as being, to some extent, the cause of unemployment. With that I agree. Undoubtedly the craze for cars is a factor in two ways. The money spent in the purchase of cars mainly goes out of the State to provide employment elsewhere and, together with the money required for running and maintenance, is not available for other reproductive purposes within the State. It has also had the effect of practically wiping out of existence the horse transport industry, throwing many men on to what I have already called an unsympathetic and unskilled labour market. In view of all these facts, how can it be said that the Government are to be blamed for the existing position? It is known that quite recently responsible citizens of Perth have at last realised the position and have decided that a duty devolves upon the community at large as well as upon the Government. Just here I may refer to Mr. Franklin's remarks made a few moments ago. He suggested that an honorary committee might be appointed for the purpose of co-ordinating the work of the local governing bodies. That comes very well

from the hon. member, who is mayor of Perth, particularly in view of the experience we have had in the city during the last few months. I know he is not to blame for the situation that arose, but all right-thinking individuals will agree with me, that it is not a fair thing to the employees of the council, or to workers generally in the city, that the council should carry out the whole of its programme of work during a period of six months, and then throw on to the labour market at the worst period of the year, perhaps a couple of hundred men. I cannot believe that it is possible for such a state of affairs to occur. Surely it is not necessary for the whole of the municipal councils' work to be done in that period of the year. Therefore I agree that there is some necessity for an alteration in the system that has been adopted in the past. I might say that the Government have given consideration to suggestions of that kind. They have agreed it is necessary that there should be more co-ordination between the local authorities and also between the Government and those authorities on this particular question. But the Government believe that the matter can be better handled by one man, rather than by a committee. Inquiries are now being made as to the manner in which a similar system works in Queensland. A responsible officer of the Government in the person of Mr. Munt, Under Secretary for Labour, was sent a few weeks ago to Queensland to get first-hand information on this question, with a view to adopting it in Western Australia. Mr. Baxter charged the Government with being lax in making provision for unemployment. One would imagine that the Government were quite unmindful of their responsibilities to the workers of the State. Mr. Nicholson suggested that there was plenty of work to be done and that it should be possible to overcome the problem in a new country. Of course there is plenty of work to be done in every corner of the State. It is not very difficult to mention numerous railways, roads, water supply schemes, harbour works, etc., but it is seriously contended that the State undertake all these at the one time. Is there not a well-defined limit beyond which we cannot go? Is it not a fact that the present Government have carried out more work of this

description than any previous Government in power in the state.

Hon. E. H. Harris: But they have had more money with which to carry out those works!

The HONORARY MINISTER: I cannot help that; I am merely stating a fact. The Government have carried out more work of that description than any preceding Administration.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They have spent more money, but have not necessarily done more work.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I realise the distinction, but it has no effect upon my statement, which is that more work has been done by the present Government than any preceding Administration, and I defy any hon. member to prove otherwise.

Hon. E. H. Harris: That does not get you anywhere.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It gets me to this stage, that it is a complete answer to those hon. members who have accused the Government of having done nothing to solve the unemployment problem. For instance, it has been stated that the Government made no effort to provide work until the men demonstrated forcibly at the Premier's office. Mr. Harris made that statement. It was also asserted that some work was provided just before Parliament assembled so that the Premier would not be burnt in effigy opposite Parliament House on the opening day of the present session.

Hon. E. H. Harris. Quite right, too.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member knows that that statement is quite wrong, but in order to support his contention Mr. Harris quoted from what he called a newspaper.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What, the "Worker"?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, the "Workless." That was a sheet produced by one or two individuals who, to my way of thinking, have not the best interests of the workers at heart. If they had, they would not advocate the adoption of some methods they outlined. Yet the hon. member was pleased to quote from that rag.

Hon. E. H. Harris: I drew attention to the published statement.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Would the hon. member advise the Government to

follow the advice contained in the extracts he quoted?

Hon. E. H. Harris: It was apropos to quote that at the time.

The HONORARY MINISTER: At the time Mr. Gray interjected very properly, and the hon. member had nothing to say in reply.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The President would not have allowed me to reply.

The HONORARY MINISTER: At any rate, the hon. member did not attempt to reply.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: I think Mr. Harris was stopped by the President—a greater force than Mr. Gray.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Possibly that was so. I merely desire to show that there was absolutely no truth in the statement made by hon. members in this House. As a matter of fact, nothing was further from the truth and any hon. member could have obtained the information I propose to give to the House had he taken the trouble to ask for it. Before hon. members make sweeping charges such as have been made in this Chamber, it would be better for them to make sure that there was at least some truth in them. As far back as January of this year, steps were being taken by the Premier, and by Cabinet as a whole, to make provision for the unemployed. I propose to quote from the actual records so that there shall be no mistaking the facts of the position. On the 9th January the following circular was sent by the Premier to all Ministers and to the chairman of the Main Roads Board:—

With a view to relieving the present unemployment situation, I shall be glad if you will inform me urgently what work it is possible to put in hand at an early date, the number of men each job will employ, and the estimated cost of the work.

Hon. W. J. Mann: What action did Ministers take in response to that circular?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I will give the House the details. The Government have nothing to hide regarding this question. I do not care what Government any hon. member may care to mention, I claim that no Government have endeavoured to do more than the Collier Government to provide work for the unemployed of this State at any time when such a step was necessary.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The Government hid it well until the charges were made against them. It is only now that you inform the House that steps were taken.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have already indicated that instead of making sweeping charges from time to time, hon. members could have made inquiries to ascertain the truth about the matter. Had such inquiries been made, I do not think we would have heard some of the sweeping charges that have been levelled against the Government.

Hon. H. Seddon: At any rate the first step was taken on the 9th January.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. On that date the circular was sent out by the Premier, and on the 25th January, 90 men were picked up as a result of that circular. From the 1st January to 23rd February, according to the figures supplied by the State Labour Bureau, 975 men were employed through that institution. Hon. members will find that represents a considerably larger number of men than have been employed through the State Labour Bureau at any previous period.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Unfortunately, many of them did not stay long on the job.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I cannot help that. I am merely showing that there is no truth whatever in the charges laid against the Government in regard to the way we handled the unemployed situation. On the 24th February, the secretary to the Premier, in reply to representations from the secretary of the Fremantle Trades Hall, sent to that official the following letter:—

I am directed by the Premier to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 9th inst. with regard to unemployed at Fremantle. Mr. Collier has a full knowledge of the position, which has greatly improved since the date of your letter, particularly as a result of men taken up by the Government. The Premier has already made available the sum of £350,000 in excess of the provision on the Loan Estimates. Public works of considerable magnitude are in operation in various parts of the State, and everything of this nature that can possibly be put in hand during the current financial year, is now going on, or will start as soon as preparations are completed.

On the 23rd March the Premier again wrote to the secretary of the Fremantle Trades Hall as follows:—

In reply to your letter of the 22nd March, regarding unemployment in the Fremantle dis-

trict, I have to advise you that the employment difficulty in Fremantle, as well as in Perth, has occupied my attention continuously for many months past, and the Government are doing all that they possibly can in the way of finding work. The matter is principally one of finance, and, while doing everything in my power to alleviate the situation, I regret to say that I have no funds to start additional work at the present juncture.

I quote those letters to show that the Premier has nothing to hide regarding the position. From that period onwards, consideration was given to the question of providing employment for as large a number of men as possible, with the result that on the 4th May the Premier approved of the following works:—

The ballasting of the Tambellup-Ongerup line—

That work was authorised in response to a communication from the Secretary for Railways, who said that it would be possible to put in the ballasting provided a sum of £40,000 was made available, and that that amount would be chargeable to Loan. He also pointed out that the work would occupy from six to seven months, and would absorb a total of 80 men. That amount was provided by the Premier—

—the relaying of the track between Wyalatcheu and Merredin; the down track in Oxford-street, at a cost of £10,158; Nedlands tram track from King's Park gates to the terminus, at a cost of £24,971.

On the 23rd May communications were sent to the chairman of the Main Roads Board, the Secretary for Railways, the Under Secretary for Metropolitan Water Supply, the Under Secretary for Works and Labour, the Under Secretary for Lands, the Conservator of Forests, the Under Secretary of the Chief Secretary's Department, the Director of Education, the Director of Agriculture, the General Manager of the Agricultural Bank and the Under Secretary for Mines. At that time the Premier directed the attention of the heads of the departments mentioned to the policy of the Government regarding married men. He sought their co-operation in forwarding suggestions for suitable work or for putting approved works in hand without delay. On the same day the following works were approved:—

Expanding Northwards railway, feeder roads, £3,000; clearing roads for survey operations south of Southern Cross, £5,000; the widening

of Wanneroo-road, £4,000; Subiaco reticulation area 16, £16,000. Fremantle reticulation area 16, £10,500.

In advising the chairman of the Main Roads Board regarding Cabinet's approval of the road work I have mentioned, the Secretary of the Premier's Department informed him that the Premier would be grateful if the works could be put in hand at the earliest possible moment so as to absorb some of the unemployed. I ask hon. members to bear in mind the date I am quoting—the 23rd May. On the same day work in connection with the down track for the trams in Oxford-street was approved. On the 25th May the president of the State Executive of the Australian Labour Party was written to by the Secretary to the Premier as follows:—

With reference to the unemployment question, I have to advise you that this matter was fully discussed at a recent Cabinet meeting, and approval has now been given to the placing in hand of a considerable amount of Government work. The Ongerup line will be proceeded with, involving an expenditure of £40,000. Approval has been given for road clearing in the Eastern and Great Southern districts, involving £5,000; £4,000 has been allocated for road widening in the Wanneroo district; £3,000 for the Ejangding Northwards railway feeder road; £3,469 for Chidlow-York-road; several other minor works have been approved involving about £2,500. Authority has been given for the reticulation of a further area in the Subiaco district, involving £16,000. The relaying of the tramline along Walcott-street is to be put in hand, and the relaying of the down track in Oxford-street. The practice previously in force of preference to married men will be continued so far as the metropolitan area is concerned.

I would point out that the date of that letter, the 25th May, was two months before the demonstrations that Mr. Harris says were responsible for the Government putting any work in hand. On the 11th July—

Hon. W. J. Mann: You have had nothing to say about the month of June. Are you aware that the Government took a number of men from the Margaret River in June and put them back in July?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No.

Hon. W. J. Mann: If you look it up, you will find it is correct. The men had been there for five years.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I should be glad if the hon. member would supply me with particulars. I know absolutely nothing of it, but I have no doubt that if what the hon. member says is correct, there was very good reason for it.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You can get the particulars from the Public Works Department.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I wish the hon. member would be fair. If he wishes me to read the whole of the file, I shall read it. I am quoting what has actually been approved of. I do not wish to take up the time of the House by reading the whole of the correspondence on the question of putting these works in hand.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It has been pointed out that there is a break of two months.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There is no break at all. I am quoting these documents because they refer to the particular work put in hand. On the 14th July Cabinet approved of £26,000 being advanced from the Traffic Trust Account as a pound for pound subsidy to municipalities. Circulars to local authorities were sent out on the 16th July, and the unemployed demonstration occurred on the 23rd July, again proving that there is no truth in the statement to which I have referred. On the 18th July further circulars and letters were sent out to the Secretary for Railways, Under Secretary for Works and Labour, Chairman of the Main Roads Board and the Under Secretary for Metropolitan Water Supply, couched in the following terms:—

Would you kindly advise me as early as possible, for the information of the Premier, the number of men additional to the present staff you anticipate engaging next month.—L. E. Shapcott, Secretary, Premier's Department.

On the 23rd July the following report was received:—

Clearing south of Southern Cross. Rogers, supervisor Main Roads Board, has gone to Southern Cross to-day to report. He will be back at the end of the week. Subject to water supplies they will be able to pick up 50 men at the beginning of next week, say the 30th, 50 men at the end of the same week, and 50 or more men each week until 400 are absorbed. Fifty-six men are already employed at Mollerin in road clearing, and a further 25 men will be required this week. A hundred and eight men are employed at Newdegate, and 23 more will be put on this week. A sum of £26,000 has been offered to municipalities from the Traffic Trust Account for the provision of work. Smaller metropolitan municipalities and Geraldton and Bunbury have been offered a gift of pound for pound on all moneys they expend immediately to absorb unemployed. Perth, Fremantle, and Subiaco will be similarly notified if the Premier approves.

Those were approved of on the 23rd July, which was the date of the first unemployed demonstration. I have quoted those documents to show that the Government have been fully alive to the situation and that



they went as far as it was possible for them to go in making preparations to meet the unemployed difficulty. It may be as well if I read the report of the Main Roads Board, dated the 25th July. It shows that the number of men employed on the 7th July was 800 and the number employed on the 14th July was 859. It goes on to say that contracts for works involving an estimated cost of £62,712 had been advertised, while the value of proposed works that could be put in hand if State funds were provided was £52,500. Included in those works was the straightening of the Belmont-road. That is the work to which Sir Edward Wittenoom took exception, in view of the state of other roads. The cost was £4,500. That work was approved and is now in course of construction. That was a very dangerous curve at which there had been a series of accidents involving fatalities, and I think it was an essential work. I am very pleased that it has been put in hand.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: What I complained of was the want of supervision after a road is made.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I understood the hon. member complained of the Government putting men on to that road in view of the fact that other roads over which he had recently travelled were in a bad state of repair.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: That is quite correct.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Secretary for Railways notified the Premier under date 1st August as follows:—

Since the date of your memo. (18th July) 93 men have been picked up for relaying, resleepering, etc., for periods ranging from 10 days upwards. A further 177 men are required for ballasting, relaying, resleepering, plate-laying, culvert work, etc., and although the dates on which these works will be put in hand are in some instances uncertain, it is hoped that they will all be commenced within the month. The foregoing includes all the requirements of adult labour that can be foreseen, but in addition we shall probably need another 15 youths as engine cleaners.

In order to summarise the position and make perfectly clear that there was no truth in the reference made by Mr. Harris, I will briefly review the facts from the beginning of June, which includes the month alluded to by Mr. Mann. On the 7th June there was a conference at the Premier's office at which there were present the Premier, the Minister for Lands, Messrs. Bankes Amery, Gepp, Gunn, Robinson, the Under Treasurer,

Engineer-in-Chief, Surveyor General, Chairman of the Main Roads Board, Engineer for Water Supply, and Under Secretaries for Works and Lands. They discussed proposals for clearing roads and land and provision for water supplies in the Forrestania area. The Premier undertook to make funds available for work immediately in anticipation of approval being secured from London and Canberra. The employment of 400 men was discussed. The conference adjourned to the office of the Migration and Development Commission to discuss details. On June 11 a further discussion with Messrs. Bankes Amery and company lasted all day, when the details were discussed. On the 20th June a start was made under instructions from the Premier to pick up men for clearing in the Mollerin area. On the 11th July Surveyor Hall went to Forrestania. On the 12th July the Premier instructed that work should proceed in the Forrestania area as soon as necessary water supplies were assured. On the 23rd July the unemployed demonstration occurred in Perth. Men were picked up for Forrestania as follows: 2nd August, 50; 7th August, 50; 10th August, 50; 14th August, 50. On the 17th August a conference of the Minister for Lands, the Manager of the Agricultural Bank and the Chairman of the Main Roads Board decided to proceed with land clearing in the Forrestania area with a view to the employment of 200 men. On the 21st August the Chairman of the Main Roads Board wrote to the Secretary to the Premier's Department as follows:—

I attach statement showing works put in hand for relief of unemployed. The number of men picked up to date totals 572. We are going ahead with arrangements to pick up an additional 200 for Forrestania land clearing.

Hon. W. J. Mann: The work at Forrestania and Mollerin would have had to be done in any event.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That work would not have been put in hand at the time but for the unemployed difficulty. There would have been no necessity to do the work at this juncture. I think members will realise that the scheme is a big one and that it is necessary to have absolute co-ordination between the several departments concerned. There has been considerable difficulty regarding the provision of water for the men. It is quite a big undertaking to send, say, 400 men into the heart of the country where there are no roads and where there is no provision for transport of any

kind, except what has been made during the last week or two. Those men have been scattered about the country in small gangs; they have to be fed and provided with water. Many are the arrangements that it is necessary to make for them in order that they might do their share of the work in the Forrestania district.

Hon. J. Cornell: I hope they will clear the land a little better than did the unemployed at Newdegate.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not care to make any suggestion as to how the men are likely to clear the land, but let me inform the hon. member that the reports to hand show that the men engaged in clearing land in that district are making a very good job of it, and are clearly disproving the statements made by some members of this House that the average Britisher is not capable of doing that class of work.

Hon. J. Cornell: The trouble at Newdegate was the burning, not the chopping down of the timber.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know much about the Newdegate affair, but I am in close touch with this work, and it is pleasing to have such excellent reports of the manner in which the men are tackling the work. It must be remembered, also, that a majority of the men had had no previous experience of that class of work and that a big proportion of them were married men with families, thus giving the lie to the statement so often repeated in this House that the Britisher will not go out on that work and will not stick it when he gets there. I hope that the reports to be received from time to time will be as favourable as the reports that so far have come to hand.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Honorary Minister surely cannot make a comparison between the present and the past positions. They are not at all comparable.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Of course they are.

Hon. J. Cornell: Not at all.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Those men have only gone out there now because they were starving.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Is that a crime?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: No.

The HONORARY MINISTER: What would the hon. member expect them to do? I thought the growl that had been raised in

this Chamber was to the effect that those men would not undertake that class of work in any circumstances.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: On your own showing they will not, except when they are starving.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member cannot point to any statement of mine that the men will not undertake such work. I have never made a statement to that effect.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You have proved that they have not done it till now.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There has been no necessity for them to do it.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: There is a necessity for it every year.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member knows that is not true. A majority of the men now engaged on that class of work have been following other occupations and, while they were in other employment, there was no need for them to seek that class of work. Regarding the steps taken to provide employment, I may also state that one of the first things I was told when the Labour Bureau was handed over to my care was that Cabinet, at two or three previous meetings, had given quite a lot of consideration to the question of providing work for the unemployed, and that at the next meeting it was expected some schemes would be submitted or at any rate that I would be placed in possession of the facts regarding the amount of work likely to be available.

Hon. J. Cornell: Has the Honorary Minister any assurance that the men who are doing the chopping down intend to return to do the burning off?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not require any such assurance.

Hon. J. Cornell: They cannot burn off until March.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am not concerned about the month in which they can burn off, or about the class of timber they chopped down. I have sufficient confidence in the men to be satisfied on the reports received that there is going to be no mistake about this clearing. If they carry on as they are doing now, the Government will be satisfied with the work they have done.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Is it not a fact that they have not undertaken to burn off, only to ring-bark the trees?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know what inference the hon. member

wishes us to draw from that remark. Does he wish to infer that these men should undertake to burn the timber?

Hon. J. Cornell: If they have not undertaken to burn it, and have not properly sapped the trees, God help the men who get the country?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The reports show that these men are doing the work most satisfactorily.

Hon. J. Cornell: I hope they are.

The HONORARY MINISTER: They show that the men are doing it better than the average clearing work has been done up to the present by alien labour.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That remains to be seen next March.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am speaking from the reports I have had.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The reports are all very fine.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is surely futile to say that the Government have been lax. Is it expected that the Government shall provide work for every man who comes into the country, the moment he arrives? I have preached the gospel of the right to work, and on more than one occasion have said it is necessary that the Government should provide work for the unemployed. I say the same thing now. From my experience of this Government during the last two or three months I maintain that no body of men could have done more than they have.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you not think they are taking the credit for relieving the unemployed situation in connection with the 3,000 farms scheme by starting work which would have been done whether there was unemployment or not?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No. I have documents to show that the Premier agreed to make money available for the purpose in anticipation of getting it, in order that this work might be carried out.

Hon. W. J. Mann: We read every day in the Press that the Government are pushing on with the work.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am quoting from documents which are some weeks old. The whole of my argument goes to show there is no proof in the statements that the Government did not make any move in the matter until the demonstration of unemployed occurred. The statements that nothing was done until after the

demonstration are refuted by the facts I have related from the official documents. No one deprecates the use of the police on that occasion more than I do, or than every member of the Government does. It is rather illuminating to refer to the facts. The Government have never at any time objected to demonstrations by the unemployed. I say that deliberately. It has been said that the Government have objected. The unemployed are subject to the same laws and procedure as any other section of the community. For weeks prior to the 23rd July they had demonstrated by marching from the bureau to the Esplanade by a certain route.

Hon. J. Cornell: And they were fined over the Eight Hours' Day procession.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The HONORARY MINISTER: No exception was taken to that route being followed. The reason why they were fined was not because they demonstrated. It is no use trying to draw a red herring across the trail. I made the definite statement that for weeks prior to July 23rd these men had been marching daily from the bureau to the Esplanade along a certain route, and no exception was taken to it. They held their meetings on the Esplanade, and were not interfered with. When they decided to parade the main streets of the city, during the busiest hours of the day, thus interfering with the traffic, and when they decided to hold a meeting in Barrack-street outside the doors of the Treasury, naturally the police had to take some action.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Quite right, too.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The police only carried out their duty, and yet the Government are blamed for the action of the police.

Hon. J. Cornell: I only contrasted the action of the police and the Government on that occasion with the action taken in connection with the tea rooms strike.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Mr. Fraser was the only member who complained about it in my presence.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member was not here all the time. All the allegations that have been made about the use of batons, etc., are not founded on fact. No instance has been reported of any individual having suffered in any way at the hands of the police. Nevertheless statements are made that the police did use batons and

force without having the occasion to do so. No doubt if force had been used, at least one individual would have felt the effect of it, and some report would have been put in about it.

Hon. J. Cornell: Was the Honorary Minister present when the police rode into them?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No.

Hon. J. Cornell: I was there. Why did the mounted police come out armed with batons and ride into the community as they did?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Will the hon. member deny that batons were not used?

Hon. J. Cornell: Will the Honorary Minister deny that they were not ready for use if wanted?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The police usually carry batons.

Hon. J. Cornell: I have never seen one before.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The HONORARY MINISTER: Why does the hon. member wish to criticise in that way? At no time did the police use batons in the execution of their duty on those occasions.

Hon. E. H. Harris: They are never without their batons.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It must also be remembered that the number of unemployed taking part in the demonstration was nowhere near the number registered at the bureau. The numbers were comparatively small. I do not think that on any occasion the number of genuine unemployed in the ranks of the demonstrators exceeded 150. If they did, there would have been very few over that number. Crowds collected as a result of the efforts of the unemployed to hold a meeting in Barrack-street, and there were possibly 1,000 or more persons congregated there. This rendered the position worse than it would otherwise have been. The unemployed were considerably outnumbered by the onlookers. At no time did the Premier refuse to receive a deputation of representatives of the unemployed. Although statements to the contrary have been made. When the Premier received the deputation the representatives were satisfied with what he had to say to them. They gave him an assurance that the unemployed would carry on as they had done before, and would stick to the old route, and that if

they desired to alter that route to one which would traverse the main streets of the city, they would ask permission as any other section of the community would do. In spite of that undertaking, at the whim of one or two individuals who were not genuinely unemployed, they turned away from the route agreed up, and traversed one of the main thoroughfares of the city.

Hon. J. Cornell: I have heard members of Parliament say worse things about the Labour Government than the unemployed said that day.

The PRESIDENT: I must ask the hon. member not to interject so much.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No one realises more than do I and other members of the Government the misery and the plight of the man who wants work but cannot find it. I have been unemployed, and have also had entrusted to me the duty of handling unemployed, particularly in Fremantle a few years ago. I did not require any demonstration to realise that something had to be done to meet the situation that confronted us. There is no objection to the unemployed demonstrating, but they cannot, at the whim of one or two individuals who are not genuinely unemployed, take charge of the city. That is what it meant, and all that the police did on the occasion was to carry out their duty. They did their duty in a way that I think deserves the compliment paid to them by Mr. Nicholson yesterday. I now come to another very important subject, namely, alien labour. Several members have referred to that labour as against British labour.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: I think my reference was to the absence of British labour.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am somewhat astonished that some members appear so eager to decry their own countrymen, and laud the virtues of the aliens that we receive in this country to the tune of many hundreds per annum. If I remember rightly, some members were in the forefront of the agitation for preference to British goods. They could put up quite a good and interesting speech as to why we should buy British, be British, etc. Apparently that has nothing to do with the employment of British labour. I am surprised at the remarks of one or two members. Here we have the spectacle of hundreds of our

own kith and kin looking for work but unable to find it, while hundreds of aliens, many of whom cannot speak a word of English, are absorbed in our agricultural and pastoral industries almost on the very day when they land. Is that fair? Not only are they taking the place of Britishers, but are sending their money out of the State, which represents a dead loss to the State. I have no objection to any man coming here of his own volition so long as he is prepared to accept the conditions of life as we understand them, and to maintain the standard of living we have reached. I have, however, a very strong objection to preference being given to aliens who are not used to our standard of living, and whose continued employment must eventually result in a reduction of that standard. Much of what has been said outside this House arises from the remarks that Britishers were not prepared to do their work properly. It has been argued that Southern Europeans are more satisfactory workers than the Britishers. In support of this argument cases have been quoted to show that Britishers have not finished their contracts, in other words they have given trouble to the farmers. Granting that these cases may be true, are we to condemn all those of our people who are prepared to follow this class of work? Are we to say, because some men have not been willing to honour their contracts, that no Britisher is willing to honour his contract? Because some Britishers, as suggested by Mr. Hall, are not physically capable of carrying out this class of work, are we to say that all our men are physically incapable of doing it? Not long ago they were physically capable of taking part in a much greater class of work than this particular class. I say it is a libel on the British and a libel on Australians when members of this Chamber make such statements by way of substantiating their argument that the Southern European or alien worker is a better worker than the Britisher or the Australian.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: It is not so much a question whether it is a libel as a question whether it is true.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is not true, although certain cases of the kind I have indicated can be quoted. I have personal knowledge of one case that I could not possibly support. Two or three cases, however, are not to be taken as examples

of the whole of our people who are desirous of doing that class of work. I have done the work myself. I have worked with scores of men at labour of that kind, and from my personal experience I can declare that our men are equal to, if not better than, Southern Europeans or other aliens entering this State. I am afraid we must look for some other reason to explain the preference given to aliens. Possibly the chief reason has been supplied by the remarks of Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Hamersley. Sir Edward quoted rates of pay and contract prices offered for clearing work on a certain large property. He quoted 12s. per day and find themselves, or 31s. 6d. per acre, half to be paid on completion of cutting down. There is nothing to indicate whether the price mentioned is fair, but in view of the fact that Sir Edward stated there were no applications from Britishers I think it fair to assume that the price is not based on ordinary working conditions as to hours and so forth, particularly as Mr. Hamersley said that he knew of many Britishers who had gone into the country looking for that class of work and had not been able to get it. At that time Mr. Hamersley advanced another explanation—the action of the Agricultural Bank. The daily rate quoted by Sir Edward Wittenoom is much below the basic wage for the State. On a six-day week it amounts to £2 12s., as against the basic wage of £4 5s. While it may possibly suit some single men to work for the remuneration quoted, is it to be expected that any married man could possibly do such work for that rate of pay?

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: But suppose the farmer cannot pay more?

The HONORARY MINISTER: We shall have to wait some considerable time to ascertain whether the farmer can or cannot pay the standard rate. It is a risk the farmer must take. The basic wage for this State has been fixed by the Arbitration Court at £4 5s. per week. That amount has been fixed as a reasonable wage. If men are to be employed at a daily rate of 12s. at work which is not continuous, which is not obtainable all the year round, and are to find themselves, one cannot well expect to get a very high class of labour.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: But if people cannot pay the basic wage, what are you going to do?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have argued that if an industry cannot pay the basic wage, it should close down. In my opinion no industry should be utilised for the purpose of lowering our standard of living.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: You believe that no bread is better than half a loaf?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not believe that at all. Mr. Hamersley threw further light on the subject when he said—

I know that many men have gone into the country to look for work, and that it has been exceedingly difficult for them to get it there. In these days farmers are particularly scared to put on additional hands, because they do not know what liability they will incur in addition to the wages they will have to pay. Many of them are quite prepared to find work at perhaps a nominal wage of £2 per week—

Let hon. members mark the rate, £2 per week.

—but they are not willing to pay the rates fixed by the Arbitration Court.

In response to an interjection by Mr. Gray that no rates are fixed by the Arbitration Court for this class of work, Mr. Hamersley said—

No, thank goodness, but the moment rates are fixed the hon. member will find that there will be one big strike, and that strike will be on the part of the farmers.

Taking these remarks and the quotation from Sir Edward Wittenoom's speech in conjunction with the resolution carried at a recent conference of farmers' representatives held in Perth, it does appear that this is the crux of the situation, and that an effort is being made to have developmental work done under conditions and for wages which are not acceptable to the average Britisher.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Britishers are not taking the work.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member has said that, or something to that effect, on several occasions already. I have pointed out that quite a large number of our men are doing that work at present in the Southern Cross area, and are doing it quite as satisfactorily as any other body of men could be expected to do it. It must also be remembered that many cases have been reported where Southern Europeans have been employed for a mere pittance in addition to their keep, while in only too many cases the prices offered for clearing have

been the equivalent of, and even less than, the amount the Agricultural Bank would advance.

Hon. J. Cornell: Men without money cannot pay any more.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is right; I have no quarrel with that statement. But it is not to be expected that the Agricultural Bank would advance the full value of the work done—the bank must have a margin—and it follows that in the cases to which I have just referred a definite effort has been made to reduce the standard of the work. It is well known that, generally speaking, the alien labourer is not particular as to the number of hours he works; neither is he very particular as to the living conditions he has to put up with. Personally I do not blame him for this; I suppose in most cases even these conditions are superior to what the alien has been used to in his own country. I do think, however, that these circumstances supply one reason why the Britisher has made no application for some of the work. We have to remember, moreover, that the majority of the aliens cannot speak English when they arrive here. They are in a strange country, away from their own friends, and they have to take the advice of such of their countrymen as have come here before them. I am afraid that in only too many cases the new arrivals are hoodwinked. It is no wonder that the Britisher is not prepared to apply for clearing work if the farmer is not prepared to pay the proper rate for it. I am not suggesting that in all cases the farmer gets the advantage of the reduced rates to which I have referred. I know of many cases where a contractor has taken a contract at the fair average price ruling in the country in which he was clearing, and where the contractor has engaged alien labour, occasionally at a mere nothing in addition to their keep. Of course the contractor is the man who has reaped the benefit, and not the farmer. One very illuminating case was reported to me within the last few weeks. The owner of a block who required certain clearing work done was informed that the contractor was prepared to do any amount of clearing that might be required with a gang of 16 aliens, and that the contractor would wait until after the harvest for payment; further, that if necessary, in the event of the first harvest not being profitable, the contractor would wait until after the second harvest.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Very accommodating.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Is it to be wondered at that Britishers find difficulty in securing this class of work when the work can be done on such terms by alien labour? My informant in this case is the member for Kimberley (Mr. Coverley), who is the owner of the property referred to. If this kind of thing is going on, if numbers of farmers consider only their own interests, and are prepared to give preference to alien labour over British labour—

Hon. E. H. Harris: In what locality was that offer made?

The HONORARY MINISTER: At Muntadjin. Much has been made of the fact that Australia is 98 per cent. British. If that is so, then I claim that Australia is more British than Britain herself. The figures have been used to show that the small number, comparatively speaking, of aliens who arrive in the Commonwealth cannot affect us seriously. Some members have put up that argument. However, if we delve a little deeper into the subject, we find that the matter is more serious than appears on the surface.

Hon. J. Cornell: The only alternative is to exclude those people.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am not suggesting exclusion at all. The proportion of Southern Europeans coming into Australia when compared with the population of Australia is doubtless small; but when it is compared with the population of Western Australia and regard is paid to the fact that something like 50 per cent. of the Southern Europeans migrating to the Commonwealth come to Western Australia, a different state of affairs is disclosed. As practically the whole of the Southern-European migrants to this State are absorbed in the agricultural community and are engaged in developmental work here, it will be seen that the percentage is particularly high.

Hon. G. W. Miles: But is it correct that 50 per cent. of them come to Western Australia?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I thought Queensland took more of them.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No. About 50 per cent. come to Western Australia. Regarding the matter from that point of view, one must admit that there is a problem with which we have to deal.

I have no objection to any man entering this State of his own volition and doing the best he can for himself; but I do object to preference being given to these men over our own men. If we continue to receive Southern Europeans in the numbers in which we have received them hitherto, the time is not far distant when some other trouble will crop up, a trouble much more serious than the unemployed problem with which we are endeavouring to deal now.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you object to preference to unionists?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, I agree with it; but I do not see that preference to unionists has any bearing whatever on preference to alien labour. If an alien becomes a member of a union, he is entitled to preference in the same way as a Britisher. There is no connection between the two subjects, and it is useless for hon. members to try to get me into an argument on those lines. Another disquieting fact is that alien immigration is not confined to the Italians who have been so often quoted during discussions of the question. Generally speaking, the Italian is a good fellow and, as we have proof in several districts, makes an excellent settler. I am now referring to districts such as Spearwood, where there are quite a number of Italians and Jugo-Slavs, as well as a few Australians. All of them are doing good work, and we have no quarrel with them.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You do not quarrel with them because they are in your province.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Not at all. Other districts could be quoted. I hope the hon. member does not think I am taking a parochial view of the subject. The matter is one affecting the whole State, and any remarks I make on it are not made from a parochial standpoint. I quoted Spearwood as one case proving my point. Notwithstanding my criticism of the alien labour problem, I am still prepared to admit freely that in many cases Italians make excellent settlers. They have made good in more districts than one, and personally I have no quarrel whatever with them.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

The HONORARY MINISTER: Before tea I was remarking that another disquieting feature in respect of alien immigration is that it is not limited to Italians. There are others, however, whose standard of living is in no way commensurate with our own and who, if no check is put upon the numbers arriving here, must necessarily prove a menace to our standard of living. Quite recently a boat arrived at Fremantle with no fewer than 22 nationalities represented amongst the immigrants. My own experience has been that there are some Southern Europeans whose general standard of life is certainly considerably lower than our own. I make no apology for having dealt fairly fully with this subject. It is an important question, difficult of satisfactory solution. In the interests of our own people I think the time has arrived when the Commonwealth, whose responsibility it is, should take some definite steps to deal with the matter. There are several other subjects to which I must refer. Mr. Stephenson alluded to the question of handling cargoes, such as phosphatic rock, sulphur, etc., at Fremantle, and suggested that this should be done by mechanical means. The question of installing mechanical appliances for taking this class of rough dusty cargo out of ships has been considered by the Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners. This class of cargo has recently been handled at Auckland, New Zealand, by means of mechanical grabs. All information regarding this is now in the hands of the Harbour Trust Commissioners, who are dealing with it, and who probably will adopt a suitable system shortly. The hon. member also referred to the necessity for an alteration in the method of fixing a wheat export standard. This matter was passed on to the Minister for Agriculture, who replied as follows:—

In reply to your letter of 9th inst. with reference to Mr. H. A. Stephenson's, M.L.C., remarks regarding the fixing of the wheat export standard when speaking to the Address-in-reply, I have to advise that the Director of Agriculture has for some considerable time advocated a change in the method of our handling and selling wheat according to the f.a.q. standard, and in this connection read a paper, advocating a more modern system, before the agricultural section of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science. The two principal objections to the f.a.q. system are—(1) Unavoidable delay each season before the standard can be fixed, in consequence of which 50 per cent. of our crop is shipped before the standard is fixed, and (2) a tendency to reduce the quality of our wheat

as the result of increasing amounts of foreign matter being mixed with it. The adoption of a method whereby the Government would collect samples instead of the Chamber of Commerce as suggested by Mr. Stephenson, M.L.C., would overcome neither of these objections. As pointed out by the Director of Agriculture, both these objections can be overcome by the fixing of a permanent standard and that such is commercially practical is shown by the fact that a permanent standard has been fixed and adopted in connection with the wheat which is shipped under Government certificate prior to the fixing of the f.a.q. standard. This standard is known as the Western Australian standard, and has been in operation for three years, and concerning it no complaints have been received. This year over 2¼ million bushels were shipped according to this permanent standard during the two months prior to the fixing of the f.a.q. standard. This was about 30 per cent. of the total shipped in that period. An extract from the paper referred to, which may be of interest, is enclosed herewith.

This is the extract referred to by the Minister—

The advantages of permanent trading standards in connection with the wheat trade are summed up very concisely in the report of the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture for 1924, who, after several years' experience with it in the United States of America wrote: "Federal grain standardisation by establishing a uniform basis for Interstate trading lessens the chances of misunderstandings and disputes, gives confidence to buyers and sellers, and facilitates business at every stage in the movement of grain from the farm to consuming centres. It thus tends to reduce distribution costs, and reduction of distribution costs is of practical value to the farmer at any time. It is especially useful to him in times of low prices, when inefficient distribution may saddle him with an intolerable burden of expense."

In addition I am advised by the Minister for Agriculture that the matter was dealt with at the recent conference of Ministers of Agriculture in Perth, when the following resolution was passed:—

It is undesirable to lower established standards of export products to meet temporary or seasonal conditions.

The Minister for Agriculture continues—

The Director of Agriculture advises me that when discussing this question at the Premiers' Conference, the Minister for Agriculture in New South Wales elaborated the matter and stated that we should fix a standard grade for every product exported, no matter what it is, but the grade should be standard throughout the Commonwealth, and should be permanent, irrespective of whether we can export any of that particular grade that year or not. It was recognised that having standard grades for all products, would lead to a better market for same, and it was desired that provision



should be made to ensure that the first-grade of any particular commodity would be always the same, so as to automatically build up a uniform standard for the world's markets, and further to ensure that when our product for any particular reason is not first-grade, then second-grade will be exported. The Director further states that the time seems to have arrived when we should adopt the sound business principle of selling our products according to uniform standards of a permanent character, and not according to standards that vary from year to year as in the case of our f.a.q. wheat, and standards the fixing of which may be influenced according to the desires of interested persons. You will be interested to learn that this year the department, at the request of the produce merchants, fixed after consultation with those merchants, a standard of oats for export purposes. This was done voluntarily and without the need for any Act of Parliament, and if the merchants so desire they can, when making sales, insist that a condition in the contract shall be that the certificate of the West Australian Government inspectors regarding weight and quality shall be final.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: Do you say they made a standard for oats?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, I am so advised by the Minister for Agriculture. Another very important matter referred to by Mr. Stephenson was the bulk handling of wheat. The question whether bulk handling should be introduced is one of economics, and depends particularly upon whether the volume of wheat to be handled is sufficient to warrant the overhead costs involved in the installation of buildings and other equipment necessary for the purpose. The Government have appointed a committee to ascertain whether it would be more economical to instal a terminal bulk handling plant at Fremantle, or to provide additional facilities for loading wheat in bags. This committee consists of the Engineer-in-Chief, the Secretary of the Fremantle Harbour Trust and the Director of Agriculture. Mr. Cornell referred to the harbour disabilities at Hopetoun. A conference was held on the 13th July, at which there were present the Commissioner of Railways, the Chief Mechanical Engineer, the Chief Engineer Ways and Works, the Chief Traffic Manager, the Engineer-in-Chief, the Chief Harbour Master, and the Manager of the State Shipping Service. The report, dated 5th May, 1928, of the master of the m.v. "Kybra" was considered, together with the tonnage of wheat shipped at the jetty in

recent years. For the last four years the figures are as follows:—

Season.	Wheat shipped.
1925 .. .. .	312 tons
1926 .. .. .	473 "
1927 .. .. .	1,030 "
1928 .. .. .	1,500 "

(to 30th June only)

Mr. Glyde stated that the State Shipping Service had this year carried superphosphate sufficient for approximately 10,000 acres of land which suggested a wheat crop next year of almost 40,000 bags. Allowing 10 per cent. for seed, this meant that there would be some 3,000 tons of wheat to ship. He also stated that it would be possible to lift 9,000 bags (750 tons) per month on the present steamer service if arrangements could be made to enable the "Kybra" to remain alongside the jetty for longer hours than were at present possible.

Hon. J. Cornell: Is the making of a reasonable harbour at Hopetoun practicable? That is all the people want to know.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know that I can answer that question off-hand. I will endeavour to get the information for the hon. member.

Hon. J. Cornell: Thank you.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Hamersley commented upon the hospital administration by the State. I think his statements may be summarised as follows:— (a) That the amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act made it easier for hospitals to finance their operations. (b) That he regretted the Entertainments Tax had not enabled the hospitals to finance. (c) That Perth hospital was not attempting to collect fees from patients. (d) That ex-patients of the Perth Hospital have remarked that although wanting to pay, obstacles were placed in their way. (e) Suggesting that the police follow up ex-patients and collect fees from them, as is done in the case of persons who receive railway fare tickets from the Labour Bureau. (f) Stating generally that many people who can afford to pay for hospital treatment fail to do so. I submitted those remarks to the Minister for Health, and he has been good enough to supply me with some information, which I propose to read—

(a) Workers' Compensation Act: Undoubtedly the fact that the amendment Act has placed the onus on the employer to pay hospital and medical accounts up to a maximum payment of £100, has helped the hospitals in

general, but this has not assisted the Perth Hospital or the Children's Hospital. In the former case, workers' compensation cases are not dealt with. The professional work is done by an honorary staff, who naturally object to performing services gratis in respect of cases for whom adequate financial provision is made through the provisions of the Act. In the case of the Children's Hospital, of course, none of the patients are of an age to be employees.

**Entertainments Tax:** Except for a small percentage, being the cost of collection by the Commissioner of Taxation, the whole of the proceeds of the tax are paid into a trust fund and every penny utilised for the benefit of hospitals. During the last three years the following nett amounts have been paid into this trust fund:—

1925-26 (8 months)	..	£19,160
1926-27	..	£29,238
1927-28	..	£32,886

**Hon. Sir William Lathlain:** Is that for the upkeep of the hospitals or the building of new hospitals?

**The HONORARY MINISTER:** I cannot say how it is allocated. It is additional assistance over and above what has been provided. I am not quite sure whether there is any reference later on to what the hon. member desires to know. It is a long document and because it is particularly interesting I would like to read it right through—

All hospitals in the State have benefited by the administration of this trust fund at the hands of the Minister of Public Health, as will be seen from detailed statements that have been laid on the Table of the House, as required by the Entertainments Tax Act. The reason why these funds have proved inadequate to meet the situation is that the demands for hospital service are extending over a wider field and the use of hospitals by the population is increasing. The following figures of the patient cost per day prove that the hospitals are economically managed and that all the money available is carefully spent—

Perth Hospital, 9s. 3d. per patient per day.

Children's Hospital, 7s. 11d. per patient per day.

Fremantle Hospital, 9s. 10d. per patient per day.

30 departmental hospitals, including many small and expensive ones such as those in the North-West, average 10s. 4d. per patient per day.

48 committee hospitals, all of them small and therefore relatively expensive, 16s. 1d. per patient per day.

The large hospitals in this State compared with similar sized hospitals in the Eastern States show expenditure figures per patient per day of from 25 to 40 and up to 50 per cent. less.

It is gratifying to think we are carrying on our hospitals at so much less cost than that of the Eastern States.

**Hon. G. W. Miles:** By overworking the nurses.

**The HONORARY MINISTER:** The report goes on—

With regard to the alleged failure of the Perth Hospital to collect fees, this is quite incorrect. Whereas in 1900 Perth Hospital collected only £901 in fees, in 1910 it collected £2,491 in 1915 £1,644; in 1920 it collected £7,461. and for last year, 1926-27, a total of £20,789 was collected.

For the eight years from 1912 to 1920 the collections averaged £1 6s. 6d. per patient.

For the past eight years the average has been £3 3s. 6d. per patient.

Out of the average beds occupied, pensioners and other people who are not able to pay occupy 91 beds, nearly 25 per cent. of the total accommodation. Against all other cases debits are raised at 8s. per day, and of these debits nearly 50 per cent. is collected, generally by small instalments.

The experience of the Medical Department in collecting fees in respect of patients dealt with in departmental hospitals is referred to in paragraph (f).

(d) It is very hard to imagine, knowing the keenness of the officials to collect all that they can reasonably secure from patients, and in view of the figures above quoted showing the actual results of their efforts, that Mr. Hamersley's statement is correct.

(e) The police already have multifarious duties to perform. On occasions their services are utilised to trace the whereabouts of unknown hospital debtors, but the Police declare emphatically and rightly that the statement that they already collect debts in respect of railway fares advanced by the Labour Bureau is incorrect. Occasionally it may have been done, but not with the approval of the Police Department. The attitude of the Commissioner is that the efficiency of a police force depends upon the goodwill of the law-abiding community. Owing money is not a breach of the law, and probably is indulged in more or less by a large number of the community. To turn the police into a debt-collecting agency would antagonise a large proportion of the population, and therefore undermine the efficiency of the force.

(f) The experience of the Medical Department in fee collection has been that the amount collected, both in the aggregate and in proportion to the beds occupied, has largely increased.

In 1918-19 the department collected £16,158, or an average of £36 per bed occupied, and in 1927-28 the collections amounted to £37,255, with an average revenue of £75 10s. per bed, an increase of over 100 per cent.

These figures embrace the Wooroloo Sanatorium, where the collections are naturally on a lower scale. If Wooroloo Sanatorium be omitted, the department succeeded in collecting no less than £92 12s. in respect of every

bed occupied, and when it is realised that quite a considerable proportion of the beds are occupied by pensioners, by aborigines, by State children, or other poor persons, and that the total debit raised only amounts to £135 per bed per annum, it will be seen that a very high proportion indeed of the charges made are actually collected.

In this matter of fee collection, Mr. Hamersley's remarks may have been true 12 or 15 years ago, but they do not apply in the faintest degree at the present time.

For the year 1927, for instance, all the hospitals in the State succeeded in collecting no less than £81,148 from patients' fees.

Mr. Hamersley was somewhat critical of the port of Fremantle. He said—

Fremantle unfortunately has the discredit of being the most expensive port in Western Australia. I am assured that in the outside world Fremantle has already been mentioned as one of the places that ships do not care to visit. From a shipowner's point of view it is regarded with disfavour.

When asked where he got his information, Mr. Hamersley replied that he had got it from several magazines and in correspondence that he had received from people overseas. The information, he said, had come from outside the State entirely. That is a serious reflection on the port, and I referred his remarks to the Fremantle Harbour Trust.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Did he not say that it was the most expensive port in Australia?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I would not be sure. In any event it is quite clear that he made the statement that Fremantle was much worse than any other port in Western Australia.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What is the answer to that?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I considered his remarks were a serious reflection on the port, and I referred them to the Harbour Trust. It may be as well if I give the House the benefit of the Trust's reply in full. Statements of this kind if disseminated without contradiction are apt to have a serious effect, not only on the port, but on the State.

Hon. J. Cornell: You would have to go to "Hansard" to find out what had been said; you would not find it anywhere else.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That may be so, but my experience is that these things have a nasty habit of slipping out and being used when least expected. Consequently it is wise to take notice of what

is said in the Chamber. The Fremantle Harbour Trust's reply is as follows:—

To suggest that Fremantle is a port which is not visited by ships owing to its costs is, I fear, like drawing a red herring across the trail. One would imagine from Mr. Hamersley's remarks that ships tramped round the world and called in at selected ports to compete for freight so that a large number of ships attracted to a port meant quick and cheap transport to and from that port, and so those of the community who deal with ships would benefit in cheaper freights owing to that competition. In practice of course it is not so.

Shipping owners have either their regular itinerary runs to and from and past certain ports on the world's routes or accept contracts to or from certain ports. Mr. Hamersley evidently desired to tickle the ears of the wheat producers, but he did not (at any rate in the extract forwarded) mention that Australian grown wheat is lifted mostly under the Australian Grain Charter Pty. settled between charterers and shipowners, which sets out the rates of transport from each port or combination of ports in each State of the Commonwealth to certain ports or combination of ports in Europe or at any rate at the delivery end.

The rates of grain freight from Fremantle and other Western Australian ports are less than from ports of South Australia, Victoria, or New South Wales, obviously due to the shorter run to Europe rendered possible no doubt by the geographical situation of Western Australia.

The fact is, too, that ships chartered to load in Western Australian ports prefer Fremantle, which is no doubt attributable to the fact that Fremantle offers better despatch for ships than can the other ports, so that the economically idle stay of the ship in port is lessened and the ship is therefore the sooner away again on her strictly earning stage of steaming to the delivery end of her voyage.

It should also be noticed that the stevedoring rates for wheat cargoes in Fremantle (payable by the shipowner) are cheaper than at the other ports in Western Australia and compare quite favourably with other main ports in the Commonwealth, so that this important outgoing to be paid by the ship is in favour of Fremantle.

At Fremantle again the ship can get the whole of her supplies as well as ordinary repairs to hull and machinery carried out, which is not always possible at the outports in Western Australia.

The grain charter party under which the ships load cargoes of grain allows very liberal "lay" days in the loading port, and invariably Fremantle can load ships in many less days than the shipowner allows to the shipper to get his cargoes to the ship, so that it is not the fault of the port or its administration that ships are sometimes held in the loading berth for days pottering on at a slow rate when the trust possesses the machinery and general working power to load the ship and send her off in probably half the time she in fact takes to complete her load, and as she is paying port dues calculated on the

length of her stay in port she often has a heavier port bill to pay than she would have had had advantage been taken by the shippers to work as fast as provision has been made at the port to do. This important fact, which adds to the ship's cost in port and involves her loss of earning power, creating an economic waste, is obviously no fault of the port or its administration.

Taking the matter all round, if a comparison of actual money cost is made over given periods, Fremantle might be found to be somewhat dearer in port dues than other main ports in Australia, but provision has been made at Fremantle (all of which has cost much money) to, by quick work, enable a ship to save more than the difference if those who are responsible for handling the cargo to the Trust for shipment made the saving of time their main object, which they at present do not appear to do.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The railways.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is pointed out here, the ships themselves.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Why the ships?

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: You have drawn a red herring across the trail there; you have not given the actual port charges. That was what Mr. Hamersley referred to.

The HONORARY MINISTER: He stated they were exceedingly high and on that account ships did not care to come to Fremantle. The Fremantle Harbour Trust point out that the charges at the port compare favourably with those of any other port.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: Taken all round, the charges at Fremantle are higher.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am giving the House the facts as they are given to me by the Harbour Trust in reply to Mr. Hamersley's statement. The report continues—

It is not an uncommon experience to see a ship capable of working five to seven gangs pottering on with one gang while wheat slowly comes in from the country, notwithstanding that the same firm of shippers has several shiploads stacked in the berth, but desires in order to save handling costs not to touch the stack so long as grain can be got straight from railway trucks direct from the country into the ship within the lay days or days of loading grace allowed by the charter party contract, so saving costs in what the shipper considers unnecessary handlings, but for the strung out stay in port the ship is paying.

The subject is a wide one, and one side of the story should not be told without all the other sides being also weighed in the balance. Fremantle is an exceptionally well-equipped port for the handling of cargo, and the cost of providing machinery, etc., has to be paid, and obviously if that machinery is not allowed to work to its full economic limit there must

be a loss, which, in the present scheme of things, falls on the ship. However, the shipowner with the full knowledge of the many intricacies of the question as a whole, accepts the rates fixed in the charter party to which he has agreed, and any amount of grumbling afterwards cannot affect the position. As to the saving of costs to the shipper and through him, no doubt, to the producer or grower, it should be remembered that it is the policy of the administration in this State to charge nothing whatever in the shape of wharfage dues or tolls upon products of the soil or locally manufactured goods, so that the only charge paid at Fremantle by wheat shipped is a handling charge which, by the way, is cut so fine that the receipts do not meet the outgoings in wages and upkeep of machinery.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: What about the surcharges imposed during the war?

The HONORARY MINISTER: That has nothing to do with the wheat shipments at Fremantle. The statement continues—

The effect of this, it should be remembered, is that the inwards traffic which does not exceed the volume of the outwards traffic has to stand the upkeep of wharves, etc., which are so largely used in the shipment of local products. In New South Wales the shipper, and through him the grower, has to pay  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per bag as outwards wharfage, and in South Australia the outwards wharfage is 1d. per bag. Up to a few days ago there had been shipped, of the last season's wheat alone, over  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million bags, which, at the South Australian rate of outwards wharfage, would have paid to the Trust, as the Government, a sum of no less than approximately £23,000, all of which has, of course, been saved to the grower. I suggest that were the whole subject investigated, the growers would be well content to let matters alone.

That is what Mr. Stevens has reported, on behalf of the Harbour Trust Commissioners, regarding the statements that have been made during the course of the debate. The views expressed by Mr. Williams relative to lump sum settlements for miners' phthisis, under the Third Schedule of the Workers' Compensation Act, have been referred to the responsible Minister, Hon. J. Cunningham, for his earnest consideration. The complaint made by Mr. Mann that the Government had neglected the improvement of the more important outports was referred to the Acting Minister for Works, and I have been advised, through the Engineer-in-Chief, as follows—

It is questionable whether the cost of a bridge over the Swan River to provide for road and rail traffic should be debited to Fremantle harbour. The increased cargo traffic at other ports, as well as at Fremantle, is being closely watched and necessary improve-

ments, whether at Bunbury, Esperance or elsewhere, have been and will be carried out to meet essential immediate needs. The ultimate requirement for harbour extensions at the outports meantime is being fully considered and proposals for the development of each will follow in due course.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What about speeding up work in connection with the Geraldton harbour?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Engineer-in-Chief does not say anything about that. The hon. member will probably have some information on that matter before the close of the session. Mr. Mann also referred to the accommodation at Cave House. His comments were fair and accurate. It is evident that no matter what expedient is resorted to, the accommodation available there will fall short of the demands made by the public during at least eight months of the year. Mr. Mann's statement in regard to the housing of the male staff was also correct. These matters received the consideration of the previous Government, but owing to the fact that there was not any possibility of money being found for work of that description at the time, nothing was done. The position is now receiving my earnest consideration, but on account of money being required for urgent developmental work, it is hard to see that much money is likely to be available for expenditure upon resorts of this description. Mr. Harris complained that the Speech of His Excellency the Governor did not indicate the full programme of the Government. In my opinion, the programme outlined will meet with the satisfaction of most hon. members.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Yes, if the Government stop at that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There will probably be additional Bills of a minor description. Naturally the Government could not bind themselves down to introduce only the legislation referred to in the Governor's Speech. I do not know that any previous Government ever did so.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It used to be the custom to include every legislative proposal in the Governor's Speech.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That must have been a great many years ago.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Governments have been gradually departing from that practice.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know that the present Government have made any departure from what has been the usual custom. It would be impossible to include the whole of the legislation, major and minor, that the Government will bring forward during a session. I have noted the prophecy made by Mr. Harris regarding two of the Bills, namely, the Redistribution Bill and the Anti-Profiteering Bill. He suggested that failure to secure the passage of those Bills through the Legislative Council would furnish an excuse for securing a dissolution.

Hon. J. Cornell: "Expedient" would be the better word to use.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Either word would serve the purpose Mr. Harris had in view. However I accept his remarks more in the nature of a lesson in political strategy.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The Premier does not need any lessons in that!

The HONORARY MINISTER: I was referring to myself, not to the Premier.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The hon. member may be a little unsophisticated, but he is an apt pupil.

The HONORARY MINISTER: While I can assure the hon. member that the Government have given no consideration to that idea, nevertheless I thank him for his suggestion. It may at some time or other, receive consideration at the hands of the Government. I do not desire to say any more except to thank hon. members for the patient way they have listened to my remarks. From my short experience as an Honorary Minister, I believe the Government are seized with the necessity for doing everything that will secure the rapid development of the State. It can truthfully be said that we recognise our responsibilities in that direction and that we are making every effort to carry those responsibilities to a successful conclusion.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [8.10]: It is pleasing for me to be able to say that while there has been an absence of anything like severe criticism of the Ministry during the debate on the Address-in-reply, there has been a very welcome tendency to offer suggestions that may be helpful to the Government in carrying out the work of administration. I have listened with attention to the views of hon. members on different political problems, and as those expressions of opinion

were undoubtedly sincere, they are entitled to respectful consideration. There was much in the discussions of an instructive character, and even if one in a responsible position has already formed opinions on a certain subject, it is well to hear the arguments on the other side, so as to be in a position to weigh those arguments carefully and assess them correctly, should the time arrive, when it is necessary to decide on the merits or demerits of the particular question discussed. There was a period of my life when I felt I was qualified to pose as an instructor of mankind generally—

Hon. J. Cornell: We all go through that stage!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. I felt I was qualified to pose as that in regard to everything that appertains to the government of a country. But now I find that rarely do I listen to a common-sense speech on matters of public concern, without learning something that I was not acquainted with before. That must also be the experience of those other members of the House who, like myself, have reached that stage of life when they are not too proud to learn. My task to-night is not to deal with the phases of hon. members' speeches that are agreeable to the Ministry and to myself. My duty is to correct any misconceptions that may have arisen in the minds of hon. members, and to supply them with information which they have sought, and which it is in my power to give. Mr. Holmes is generally critical, but at the same time he is always prepared to give credit where he conceives it to be due. Mr. Holmes was drawn into a discussion on the State Implement Works by Mr. Fraser's appeal for a Royal Commission to investigate the question of the great reduction in the number of hands employed since the works were first established. He was fair enough to pay a high compliment to the manager in his introduction of the subject. Mr. Holmes said that the officials at the Peel Estate told a Royal Commission that State implements were practically forced on settlers as the machinery was better in use on a farm, even if it was not used there, than it would be lying idle at the Implement Works. The manager of the works denies that any such discreditable policy has been pursued.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Of course, he would deny it. It is the management of the Agricultural Bank that deals with that aspect.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member made that statement after he had

paid a eulogy to the management of the Works! Whilst before the Commission, Mr. Abernethy, who was the supervisor of the Peel Estate and who could be taken to voice the official viewpoint, was examined and cross-examined on the quality of the machinery turned out by the State Works, and although, throughout, he maintained that the State implements were not equal to others, yet when the question (3399) was put to him direct:—

Do you say definitely that the State Implement Works machinery is not successful?

He replied—

The foremen do not like it. We have been reducing the cost of ploughing by using bigger teams and bigger ploughs. At the start we used 2-furrow ploughs and 4 horses; now we use 4-furrow ploughs and six horses.

It will be seen that when Mr. Abernethy was pressed with a direct and pointed question his complaints were found to be not with the quality of the implements, but with the size.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Mr. Gray, who was a member of the committee, used to lie awake at night trying to find out why our farmers used other than State implements.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Holmes further said—

This highly technical agricultural machinery has been designed and built up as a result of years of experience, and the State Implement Works have been trying to infringe the rights and patents of other people.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Quite right, too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: As regards the highly technical knowledge, this is possessed by the men at the works, but there is a strong prejudice in various parts of the State against the enterprise, which it is difficult to overcome, and which is in no small measure due to the sweeping condemnation of the works from the public platform for electioneering purposes some years ago. There has never been any attempt to infringe the patent rights of other people so far as I have been able to discover. If anything like that was attempted the State would soon be called upon to pay heavy damages. I am informed that there are many useful devices on the other people's implements which are undoubtedly good, and which are not patented or patentable, but the spirit of fairness that guides the manager of the works forbids him from copying them. He

could do so if he wished, without violating the law, but he has not done so.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Hence the inferior machines.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Holmes went on to say—

They have tried to infringe the patent rights of other people, but they were prevented from doing so.

It is denied that there has been even one instance in which the concern has been stopped from using any device, patented or otherwise, on the ordinary agricultural implements.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Are you quite certain I made that statement?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, I made a note of it at the time.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I do not think you will find it in "Hansard."

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It may not be word for word with what the hon. member said.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It is certainly twisted.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Anyhow, it affords me an opportunity to give an explanation of the calumny that for years has been directed against the State Implement Works.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I know what I said and I tell you I did not say that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Years ago, the works designed a device for exuding poison baits from rabbit carts. The idea came from a small sausage machine, and after it had been developed and had just been put into operation it was discovered that someone in the Eastern States had used a similar machine previously; and had patented it. When this became known to the manager, he immediately arranged to use the machine on a royalty basis, satisfactory to both parties. It will be observed that I mentioned "ordinary implements." I had this exception in my mind at the time. Beyond this, the management has no knowledge of any restraint from any source and I shall be glad if Mr. Holmes will give any specific instance other than this in support of his statement.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I did not make that statement.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I accept that; it is very probable that I made an error in noting down the hon. member's remarks. Perhaps also the other hon.

member who interjected—"They ought to be in gaol" will take the first opportunity of explaining the nature of the criminal acts which justify their incarceration.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Who said that?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The case may fit some hon. member at present in the Chamber. The agricultural implements turned out at the works have stood a lengthy test, and are admitted by many unprejudiced persons to be equal to some and superior to most sold.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Then our farmers do not know their job.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But it has been found difficult to sell in competition with the imported article owing to the unfair propaganda which has been used against the works for several years past. The enterprise has been of real advantage to the State. Its activities are not confined to manufacturing agricultural implements. It has done much important work for the Government, and kept in the State money which would otherwise have gone out. The manager tendered for and obtained a contract to build for Victoria Quay, Fremantle, four luffing cranes. The result was a first-class job. Mr. F. Stevens, the Secretary of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, recently referred to the matter, and a report of what he said appeared in the "Daily News" of the 8th instant. Let me quote it:—

The latest additions to the crane power are four Babcock and Wilcox fully portal three-ton electric level luffing cranes, and three two-ton petrol-electric mobile cranes. The former are magnificent machines capable of taking cargo out of or replacing it in the highest built and widest steamer that comes to Australia. The height of the crane hook when at its highest hoist is 90 feet above rail level and it can be lowered into a ship's hatch to a depth of 40 feet below wharf level. The radius is 65 feet, and from the face of the quay 41 feet, so that the hook can reach the centre of a ship with a beam of 30 feet. These cranes were built under license from the patentees by the State Implement and Engineering Works. The price was over 30 per cent. less than that at which the makers themselves erected a somewhat similar but less efficient crane in another Australian port. The State works are now constructing a 20-ton capacity crane to be installed at the west end of Victoria Quay. These cranes in general measurements and capacity are practically a replica of those installed in London's latest dock King George V.

Members will have noticed that the machines were practically similar to some

recently installed in London's latest dock. They will have noted also that according to Mr. Stevens, the machines were magnificent ones. This fact alone should be sufficient to disprove the allegations of inefficiency which are frequently made against the Works, as a result of the efforts which I have previously described.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Will you not tell us something about the 200 men for whom the manager of the implement works said he could find no employment?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That question was not raised during the course of the debate; it was merely mentioned by Mr. Fraser. I believe it happened 13 or 14 years ago, and my time can be more usefully occupied in the interests of members by affording them information of more urgent need.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The letter appeared in the newspaper after Mr. Fraser had made his speech on the Address-in-reply.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The manager said there had been increased production with fewer men.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Holmes asked for information regarding the question of building a bridge over the Ashburton River. I have already supplied that information.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I should like you to be more definite about it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This proposal is included in the Federal aid programme of the Main Roads Board for the year 1928-29. Surveys have been carried out and the testing for foundations for the proposed bridge is nearing completion. A design has been considered and drawings, etc., for the work are in course of preparation. With regard to the proposed jetty to serve the Roebourne district, Mr. Holmes desired to know what has been done. He raised the question in this House last November and I brought the matter before the Public Works Department. I am now in a position to say that the Works Department has given consideration to the question and has recommended that the jetty should be erected at Point Phillip in King Bay, which is 30 miles due west of Point Samson. Some progress has been made with preliminary operations. The survey of the proposed port has been completed, and the lay-out and design of the jetty and its approaches have

been gone into. Provision is to be made for a berth 400 feet in length on each side of the jetty head. The whole of the work is to be in timber, the piles sheathed in muntz metal. The estimated cost of the jetty, tramline and goods shed is £74,000, and of this sum, £37,000 has been noted for consideration on this year's Estimates. This figure does not, however, include any allowance for the navigation lights, rolling stock or water supply. Leading lights will be necessary, and perhaps it may be advisable to instal a light on Courtney Heads at a cost of about £2,000.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Will you call for tenders for the work?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am convinced that the departmental officers recognise the great resources of that district. I saw on the file figures relating to the production of wealth that astounded me. I trust that the proposal will receive recognition when the Estimates are being framed.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Will you build the jetty by day labour or contract?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot say. It is wise first to capture one's hare.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Get it on the Estimates first.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Holmes pointed out that pastoral rents in the north had been fixed on the basis of proximity to ports, etc., but owing to the destruction of Point Samson jetty some pastoralists were paying for facilities which did not exist. I have approached the Lands Department on this matter. I find the pastoral leases in question were appraised with effect from April, 1918. The Point Samson jetty was destroyed in the early part of 1925, and since then no facility has been provided in its place. I am informed that no representations have previously been made to the Department for a reduction of rent. It might well be argued that if the leases in question were to be re-appraised because of the temporary disability arising from the destruction of the jetty, then the converse might be equally held to apply by the State, namely, that if, a year or two after appraisal, new railway or port facilities were provided in any particular locality, the pastoral leases affected should be re-appraised and rentals increased. Existing legislation makes no provision for any alteration in either case.



Hon. J. J. Holmes: I did not say they should be reappraised. I did not ask for a reduction; I asked for a jetty.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Did not the hon. member refer to the pastoral lessees?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I pointed out that you were collecting rents on facilities that did not exist. All we ask is to have those facilities restored. We did not ask for a reduction.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am pleased to hear that. I am giving the case against a reduction. If we are provided with the necessary machinery to effect a reduction owing to a temporary disadvantage—

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We want a jetty.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If we build the jetty and provide up to date facilities for the shipment of stock, the pastoralists should also afford us facilities whereby we may increase their rentals.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I have never known you to be unfair before.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not accusing the hon. member of putting this up—

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You are putting up something to knock it down again.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In the course of his argument in favour of the urgent construction of the jetty the hon. member made reference to pastoral rents.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You had better leave it at that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Hamersley referred to the Government policy of insisting that settlers who obtain loans from the Agricultural Bank shall employ only British labour in the utilisation of the money. He stated that the Government were not practising what they preached; that when they desired to clear land at Dampawah they employed Italians. Mr. Hamersley is not acquainted with the circumstances of the case, otherwise, I am certain, he would not have made such a statement. The Government have not employed Italians for clearing at the Dampawah or any other experimental farm, but no doubt Italians have been employed in connection with that work. The first contract for the clearing at the Dampawah Farm was let in June, 1927, to Messrs. Gilders and Thomas, both of whom are British subjects. The contract price was £2 per acre. During the progress of

the work it was found that these contractors were employing foreigners. The contract could not be cancelled, as there was nothing in the agreement to prevent the employment of such labour. All subsequent contracts however will contain a clause which will ensure that only British subjects, natural born or naturalised, shall be employed in connection with any Government work.

Hon. G. W. Miles: If they are members of the union, you cannot refuse them employment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Hamersley pursues the subject further. He says that, before the Italians arrived in this country to take up clearing the work was done by the farmer himself or by the employment of British and Australian labour. That is a fact. The farmer himself either did the work formerly, or he employed British or Australian labour with which to do it. The rapid development of the wheat belt up till the last year or so was due alone to this class of labour. What most people will want to know is that if the Australian or Britisher could do it then, and do it satisfactorily, why he cannot do it now?

Hon. G. W. Miles: On account of the go-slow policy.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Has the race deteriorated in the interval? Is not the Australian and Britisher as good to-day as he was five, or ten, or fifteen years ago? There can be no answer to that question. He is as good.

Hon. G. W. Miles: To do as little work as possible. That is the policy of unionists.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Hamersley states that in his opinion it is a waste of time for the Australian or Britisher to fool about clearing land when he is capable of doing something better. There would be no need to quarrel with that statement if something better were offering, but to many it is not offering at present.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You are short of Government jobs just now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Many Australians and Britishers are accustomed to clearing land and following up the occupation. This is a matter which has come under my personal notice from time to time. Unless this class of work is available, there is no hope of absorbing the British migrant, for absorption depends almost entirely upon the primary industries.

Hon. J. Cornell: The old clearers are like the Spartans; they are nearly all dead.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY:** The farmers should share this country's responsibility under the Migration Agreement. Numerous settlers are getting opportunities to provide homes for themselves and their families, and, in addition, railways, water supplies and roads, as a result of the financial assistance to the State under the Migration Agreement, to which the British Government substantially contributes. This assistance carries with it the responsibility of bringing into the State every year a large number of immigrants, and if preference is given to foreigners in the work which is offering, the obligation to the Imperial authorities cannot be maintained and the facilities cannot be provided for the farmers of Western Australia. The Minister for Lands has discovered that a number of farmers are exploiting the Southern Europeans. He has in his possession evidence that whereas the Bank has advanced 25s. per acre for clearing, the farmer has paid the Southern European £1 per acre. Quite recently—so the Minister also tells me—a constituent of Mr. Hamersley waited upon him requesting that he be allowed to utilise the Agricultural Bank advance in the employment of Europeans in clearing a large area of land. He assured the Minister he could not get British or Australian clearers. He had hardly left Mr. Troy's office before a letter came from a body of British clearers at Bruce Rock asking whether they could get clearing contracts. This was their usual occupation and they had a complete plant. Mr. Troy immediately got in touch with the farmer and when the clearers' letter was given to the settler, he showed every evidence of sour disappointment. At the Minister's suggestion the clearers went along to his farm, but were informed he did not require clearers at all and they found he had a large body of Southern Europeans, who for some months previously had been actually engaged in clearing the country which the farmer had said he could not get labour to clear.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I suppose that is how Mr. McCallum got his land cleared.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY:** There is no doubt this farmer did not want British labour. He attempted to deceive the Minister, and there is every reason to believe that the Southern Europeans are being paid less than the Agricultural Bank advance in this case. The same farmer informed Mr. Troy that his neighbours who were not Agricultural Bank clients were getting their

clearing done by Southern Europeans at 17s. per acre, on contract. In the circumstances it is not to be wondered at that British labour is not available as the Agricultural Bank advance for clearing timber country is from 25s. to 30s. per acre.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What would be the position if a foreigner joined the union, and the Englishman would not? Who would get the job?

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY:** The Minister assures me he has no personal objection to the Southern Europeans, but he realises that if the Government are to honour the Migration Agreement, it is not possible to absorb our quota of migrants and also 3,000 foreigners in one year. In the administration of the Closer Settlement Act, we are not travelling fast enough for Mr. Hamersley. I am pleased indeed that he takes that view because for a long time he was a strong opponent of this class of legislation. "It would be interesting," he says, "to know how many estates have been purchased under the Act that was recently passed." When that measure was before the House, it was the impression of one or two members of the House that there would be wholesale resumptions and that a man who had four or five thousand acres of good land would have half of it taken away from him—in fact that Mr. Lovekin's block in Colin-street would be resumed for agricultural purposes at a moment's notice.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That could have been done under the original Act.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY:** I do not know who was responsible for the statement, but it was impressed upon my mind, and I believe it was accepted seriously by some members of the House. I assured hon. members that the Bill, when it became an Act, would be administered with caution and common sense, and that policy has been pursued. Pressure has been applied to us from various sources to acquire compulsorily certain properties, but the Government satisfied themselves that there would be no real advantage to the State in taking such a step. Although the legislation providing for the compulsory acquisition of land has not been to date availed of, Parliamentary endorsement of the principle has been having and is likely to continue to have a good effect. Up to date the Government have been able to buy, at a reasonable and fair figure without compulsion, and there are still opportunities for repurchase at a figure mutually to be agreed upon. We

have no difficulty in getting land offered at a fair price. We have no desire to force people to sell at what may be regarded as a sacrifice. All land that has been offered for some years past has been offered at a fair and reasonable figure. There is no necessity in the circumstances to put the Closer Settlement Act in operation. It was not the proper course for Mr. Hamersley to pursue, in view of his past antagonism to the measure, to criticise the Government for going too slow in the administration of the Act.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: He did not do that, surely!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Hamersley dealt with certain phases of the Land Act. The Minister for Lands is inclined to agree with him that the present system of land selection is far too liberal. The Minister thinks that the five years' rent free concession might well be reduced to two or three, and in addition the improvement conditions made more onerous. It must be remembered that a man who secures under existing law a block of good agricultural land which is served, or will later on be served, by railway communication, gets a gift of something like a thousand pounds from the State. That is the exact position. It must be admitted that there has been quite a large amount of illegitimate land dealing. Large numbers of persons have secured land, and many have sold and secured transfers before complying with either the residence or improvement conditions. The Minister has tightened up matters very considerably since coming into office. Every week dozens of forfeitures take place, and he proposes having a more rigid inspection made. Mr. Stewart discussed the question of the Main Roads Act and its administration, and Mr. Kempton had something special to say under the same head. The discussion reminds me that during the last Legislative Council elections a campaign of vilification of the Government was inaugurated in reference to this measure. It was not stated by any of the propagandists that the legislation was not the legislation which the Government introduced, nor was the public informed that the Bill as submitted by the Government was re-drafted by a select committee of this House and its main principles altered. Mr. Stewart was chairman of that select committee, and no doubt he was influenced by resolu-

tions passed by a conference of local authorities that the Victorian Act should be adopted with modifications. The select committee followed the Victorian Act. The select committee gave the authorities what they had asked for. It gave them the Victorian Act with modifications. Now I wish to state that when I introduced the measure to the House I clearly pointed out what, in my opinion, would be the acceptance of the main principle embodied in the Victorian legislation. In the course of my second reading speech I said—

The Victorian Act has been carefully considered by the Government, and it is felt that it would be unsuitable to Western Australia. In Victoria, under its legislation, all money for road construction is borrowed, and the local authorities have to find the interest and sinking fund on half the amount. While this might be all right for wealthy Victoria, it would impose on our struggling settlers financial burdens which they would find it difficult to bear.

But apparently the local authorities, who were supposed to know their own business, considered they were able to bear the financial burden which the Victorian Act imposed; and, that being accepted as correct, there could be no objection to the Bill, which was fair in principle, providing for a distribution of main road expenditure on the basis of benefits derived. Assuming that the local authorities could finance it—and Mr. Stewart must have been assured that they were satisfied they could finance it—it would provide the means by which the Government could carry out a main roads construction policy on an extensive scale and on sound lines. At the same time the Government repudiate the suggestion which is spread broadcast, that they are in any way responsible for the legislation which has created such a stir in the country districts, and which is agitating Mr. Kempton's mind.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Will you amend the Act?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Will the Legislative Council amend it? That is the question.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Council might, if you give it the opportunity.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Will the measure be referred to another select committee?

Hon. J. Cornell: Give us a try.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Will the president of the Road Boards Association be called upon to give evidence before the select committee, and will he give evidence similar to that which he gave previously?

Hon. J. Cornell: We will not let Mr. Stewart have the next select committee.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is the Legislative Council responsible for the cost of the road from Canning Bridge to South Fremantle?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is not the point I am now discussing. I shall give the hon. member quite sufficient information on that subject in refutation of statements he made the other evening. Let the hon. member make his charges specifically, and I shall probably be in a position to reply to them.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I am too late.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Astounding to relate, we now have these very same local authorities, who clamoured for the Victorian Act—who insisted upon it, and who succeeded in their efforts—we have them denouncing it in the strongest language and throwing blame on the Government for the results of their own action. If they had stopped at denunciation, there would be nothing to complain about; but the impression had been created that it was a Government device to grind down and extort money from the different road boards and local authorities. In this connection, the provision for apportioning a proportion of the expenditure on main roads among the local authorities has come in for vigorous condemnation. Let me say here there was no such provision in the measure as proposed by the Government.

Hon. J. Ewing: But you were ready to take all the fees.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In the Government Bill the cost of construction and maintenance of main roads was a financial responsibility of the Government and of no one else. Traffic fees were all the Government asked in return. Apart from these fees the local authorities would not be asked to contribute a single sixpence towards interest and sinking fund on the money expended. But the select committee, of which Mr. Stewart was chairman, included in their amendment a clause which now stands as Section 30 of the Act. I

will read that portion of the section which has a bearing on my argument—

(1) The board shall, before the thirtieth day of June in each year, apportion half the amount expended on permanent works and maintenance of main roads during the preceding year between the various districts benefited thereby in the following manner:—It shall, before the thirty-first day of January in each year, determine—(a) the permanent works and maintenance from which each of the districts respectively has benefited; (b) the proportion of the amount as aforesaid to be apportioned which is allocated to each such district having regard to the benefits it has obtained from the expenditure; (c) the amount of the contribution which each local authority of each such district shall pay in respect of the proportion so allocated. The contributions from the local authorities need not be at a uniform rate, but may be varied in the case of each local authority according to the benefits from the respective works: Provided that the total amount of the contributions from all local authorities concerned shall equal the amount as aforesaid to be apportioned. A district may be benefited by expenditure on permanent works and maintenance, although such permanent works and the roads maintained are not situated within the district, if substantial traffic to or from the district passes over, or in the case of new roads will in the opinion of the board pass over, a road on which such expenditure has been made.

Under this section, which was inserted by the select committee, power was given to the Main Roads Board to compel all local authorities who derived any benefit from a main road to contribute a proportion of the cost on the basis of the extent of the benefit they enjoyed by reason of the provision of the utility. The Main Roads Board were given this power by the amendment of the select committee; and in exercising that power the board have only been obedient to the will of Parliament—they have only been doing what Parliament required them to do and something which the Government had never contemplated. Yet throughout Western Australia for months the Government have been lampooned by the Press and held up to ridicule on the public platform for drafting legislation on the lines of this Section 30, for which the select committee were primarily responsible.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Are not the Government responsible for accepting what the select committee put up?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It was forced on the Government. They had either to accept the amendment or to abandon the Bill. If the local authorities wanted that

provision, if, in accordance with the evidence given by their president, they were prepared to bear that burden, why should the Government raise any objection?

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Government should take their share of the responsibility of accepting the amendment. The Government ought to resign. Select committees are running this country now.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But the select committee of this House went further in their determination to copy the Victorian Act. They deprived the Minister of all important powers of administration under the Bill, and gave it to a board. They provided that this board should be a corporate body with a five years' lease of life and removal only on grounds which would justify the dismissal of the Auditor General. So that, as the select committee desired, the board is beyond the control of the Minister or the Government in matters of administration.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Did not the Minister control the board before the last elections?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. There was money made available to be spent in October, something like £600,000. Men were put on the roads throughout the south-western districts of the State in order that the money so made available should be expended.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: Did they have their tools with them?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The other night we heard Mr. Nicholson waxing indignant because a member had made statements which Mr. Nicholson said he had not attempted to justify. Yet here we have all sorts of innuendoes and even charges of corruption made against the Government, without any attempt to prove their correctness. There were clamours from the conference of local authorities for Government interference, and at this important gathering at which several members of Parliament were present, including Mr. Kempton, not one of these legislators thought it necessary to inform the conference that the Legislature had effectively deprived even the Governor-in-Council from interfering with the administration of the board. Nor was it regarded by these members of Parliament as advisable to tell the conference that under the Government Bill two members of a board of five would be appointed on the nomination of the local authorities, while under the Bill as re-drafted by the select committee, the

local authorities had no representation at all.

Hon. J. Cornell: I think that is a blessing in disguise.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have no objection to it. For the life of me I cannot understand why the select committee deleted the provision the Government inserted in the Bill for the nomination by the local authorities of two representatives on the board. If the desires of the Government had been carried into effect—if what they had inserted in the Bill had not been excised—we would have had the advice and assistance of the two representatives of the local authorities, and this would have been very helpful to the administration. No reason, so far as I know, was given for depriving the different road boards of the State of the right—which the Government proposed to give them—of having on the Main Roads Board two men to look after their interests. It was decided, on the report of the select committee, that the board should consist of two engineers and one administrative officer; and Messrs. Tindale, Anketell and Dibdin were appointed. Mr. Stewart speaks highly of the qualifications of Mr. Tindale, and says there was no occasion for him to go to America to discover what was modern practice in road construction. He forgets that one of the qualifications necessary in the engineers is training and experience in modern road-making. While Mr. Tindale had had much experience in that direction, it was necessary to bring his knowledge up to date and convey it to the other members of the board. Hence it was decided to send him to the United States. Mr. Anketell was a tried and trusted engineer of the Public Works Department over a period of many years, and he had had a varied experience in all matters appertaining to the construction of public works. No better men could be found in Australia, and there was no criticism either in Parliament or in the Press of their appointment. The third officer, Mr. Dibdin, was a skilled administrative officer, selected on his merits and on these alone. Mr. Stewart, in his speech said—

This Chamber, I may point out, endeavoured to frame the Bill so that the members of the Main Roads Board would be free from political influence and ministerial control. We succeeded, so far as the Minister was concerned, until the measure went to a conference of managers, but when the Bill came back from

the Assembly, the Chief Secretary asked with regard to Clause 21, in which we had struck out "Minister" and inserted "board" in reference to construction of developmental roads, that we should insert the following words:—"The Minister may require the board to declare any road to be a developmental road for the purposes of this Act, and authorise and empower the board to lay out and provide such developmental road." Had those words been inserted, the Minister would have been able to do as suggested. The Chief Secretary put up a most reasonable argument, saying that with all the developmental work that was going on, the Government wanted power to make roads in connection with new settlements, since a road might be necessary and yet the Main Roads Board might decline to make it, as being unnecessary. The Chief Secretary said the Government would not accept such a position. Thereupon I raised a point of order, and the Chairman of Committees ruled that the amendment could not be moved. After that the Bill went to managers, and in order to get it enacted a compromise was made by which, instead of the Minister authorising and empowering the board to construct a developmental road, the Governor might on his own initiative, or on the recommendation of the board, authorise the work. Therefore the Minister for Works, who is being blamed, is not blameworthy.

Hon. V. Hamersley: It was Cabinet all the time.

Hon. H. Stewart: According to the Act it would be Cabinet . . . .

Let me inform Mr. Stewart that I never made any such statement or gave any such reason. What I did say when moving the amendment to Clause 21 was as follows—as will be seen at page 2916 of "Hansard" No. 2 of 1925—

The Chief Secretary: The Legislative Assembly's amendment is rendered necessary by amendments made in the Bill by the select committee. The whole tenor of the Bill has been altered. Originally, the measure was to be operated by a board under the control of the Minister. As amended here, it is to be operated by a corporate body not under the control of the Minister. In view of that new situation it is necessary that this amendment should be made. The power to declare developmental roads should be in the hands of the Governor alone, because such roads are financed out of the Federal grant. The whole responsibility for declaring developmental roads and submitting them to the Federal Government for their concurrence rests not with any private board or corporate body but with the State Government.

Mr. Stewart says the Main Roads Board was brought under political influence by this amendment. There is no warrant for such a statement. The amendment merely gave the Minister power to declare any road a developmental road for the purposes of the Act, and to authorise and empower

the Board to lay out any developmental road. The work of administration then came automatically under the Main Roads Board and the Government had nothing to do with the business. Furthermore, the protests in regard to the apportionment of expenditure among the local authorities have not been, and could not be, directed against the developmental roads, for these roads are handed over free of cost to the local authorities, who are then responsible for maintenance. It is very unfair therefore for Mr. Stewart, by stating that Cabinet was blameworthy, to lead Mr. Hamersley, in this House, and the public outside, to believe that the protests which have been raised by local authorities have to do with developmental roads, whereas for the construction of these roads the local authorities have not to find even a penny under the Act. It is an extraordinary statement for one to make who was chairman of the select committee on the Bill, and who, it could be thought, had a knowledge of the contents of the Act, Mr. Stewart, in dealing with education, said he would not be satisfied until a teacher is supplied wherever there are four children of school age, and the building should be provided by the Government. I do not know whether Mr. Stewart would be prepared to submit to the increased taxation which would be involved in carrying out his proposal. That such increased taxation would be necessary, no hon. member would doubt. If the regulations were amended in the direction Mr. Stewart desires, we would have to provide a school teacher and school every three miles in every district where an average attendance of four children could be secured—a school teacher and a school in many instances for a settler's own family. It would mean an enormous increase in expenditure in schools, teachers, inspectors, and administrative staff generally. Under the present conditions, while we require a minimum of 10 before we build a school, we are prepared to send a teacher and the necessary furniture if an average attendance of eight can be secured. Besides that, we establish motor van services, where the population is scattered, and as many as 30 children are brought in by one contractor from miles around. There are eighteen of these services.

Then there are the correspondence classes, which are now educating something like 1,500 children in this State. With all these facilities in operation, it cannot be that very many children are without education in Western Australia. Mr. Harris referred to Mr. Nangle, who made an inquiry into our technical school system and who recommended that the Kalgoorlie School of Mines should be brought under the Education Act. The hon. member expressed a hope that the recommendation would not be carried out. I may say that the papers in reference to the question were recently forwarded to the Minister for Mines, and that the matter will no doubt come up for decision in Cabinet in due course. Dr. Saw again brings up the question of pasteurisation of milk, and this time he has the Commissioner of Public Health on his side. Personally, I know nothing about pasteurisation, and in the views I previously expressed, I was acting on the advice given me by the Health Department during Dr. Atkinson's absence.

Hon. J. Cornell: Dr. Mitchell was sold a big pup over that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In justice to the Minister for Health, I must say that he in no way influenced his advisers in regard to the attitude that was taken up. Such a question was primarily one for experts to decide. There would appear to have been room for even doctors differing on the question, although in this case I do not think the difference was very wide. Nevertheless it created a vigorous controversy at the time. Mr. Glasheen points out that a settler having a net income of £440 had been refused a driving allowance. The man, having six children, was under the impression that we should have made a deduction from his net income of £50 for each of his children. That is done by the Commissioner of Taxation, but "net income" is the deciding factor with the Education Department, and that means a deduction from the gross income of all expenses incurred in producing the income. Statutory deductions under the Income Tax Act are not taken into account. The only reason for bringing the Commissioner of Taxation into the matter is to enable the parent who applies for a driving allowance to show by a certificate from that official that his "net income" does not exceed £400. There was a good reason for the action taken by the Education Department. Originally the driv-

ing allowance was granted so that parents, not too well off, could be assisted to purchase chaff for the horse which conveyed their children to school. That was the genesis of the allowance. But the system had been grossly abused, and wealthy people, for whom it was never intended, had been taking advantage of the concession. I know men who were worth from £10,000 to £20,000, or more, who had been receiving the driving allowance. These rich individuals took advantage of the dole and at the cost of the taxpayers of the State. Only a small amount, it may be said. Well, the total under the head of driving allowance had reached £14,000, and something had to be done. Even now it is over £12,000. The case referred to by Mr. Glasheen is one which is calculated to excite our sympathy, but the line had to be drawn somewhere, and wherever it was drawn, there would be dissatisfaction. Surely a parent who enjoys a salary or makes a clear profit of over £400 in business can afford to have his children driven to school without the necessity of collecting 2s. 6d. a week for each of them from the Treasury. Even now, with this limit, I am informed that there are many cases in which those who receive the allowance are sufficiently comfortable to drive their children to school in motor cars. The certificate of the Commissioner of Taxation, however, satisfied us that the net income of the parents is not more than £400, and it is immaterial to us what is the mode of conveyance, as if there is no expense for chaff, there is expense for petrol, and a motor car has come to be regarded as a necessity for people engaged in business in the country, especially for the farmer. Mr. Mann's speech had reference principally to group settlement. To attempt to deal with the points he has raised would involve a lengthy review of the whole question, the production of masses of figures, and the reports of the Advisory Board. The Minister for Lands will, at an early date, be publishing a complete statement on the subject. Members of Parliament will be supplied with a copy of the statement and if Mr. Mann disagrees with it, he may table a motion which will permit of the question being exhaustively debated in this House if such a course is considered desirable. Even then the Government will be at a disadvantage in having their case stated by a Minister who has no acquaintance with the details of the

Group Administration. However, there is one point raised by Mr. Mann which requires elucidation. He referred to what he termed the excessive capitalisation of a group location, and in this regard he mentioned overhead charges which amounted to £308 14s. 1d. The hon. member evidently concludes that this is the cost of supervision. Let me dissect the overhead charges for the information of the hon. member. The items are:—

	£	s.	d.
Fodder .. ..	96	1	8
Freights .. ..	10	13	4
General wages ..	51	15	4
Horse hire .. ..	17	11	0
Tools, plant .. ..	22	6	5
Sundries .. ..	19	18	4
Supervision .. ..	56	1	5
Insurance .. ..	13	16	0
Potato crop .. ..	9	5	2
Oats crop .. ..	0	14	2
Maize crop .. ..	0	6	5
Pigs .. ..	0	4	9
Cows .. ..	2	12	3
Temporary camps ..	7	7	10
<b>Total .. ..</b>	<b>£308</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>

It will be seen that the cost of supervision amounted to only £56 1s. 5d. The interest accurately represents the one-twenty-first part of the interest on the whole group.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Are these particulars given to the settlers?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot say. Mr. Kempton referred to the hardships that the settlers in the Dartmoor, Balla and Binnu districts have to endure, and he urges me to take an interest in their welfare. I do not think I need any spurring on in this direction. I am acquainted with the disabilities of those settlers, and I have been the means of obtaining them considerable relief from their disabilities in the past, and my efforts were publicly and generously acknowledged through the Press a few weeks ago by Mr. A. W. Banks, the manager of Messrs. Burns, Philp & Co. of Geraldton, who is interested in agricultural development in those districts. With regard to the suggested railway, the country north of these areas is, at the present time, being classified by a staff of officers from the Lands Department, and, if it proves to be what men who are acquainted with it, and who are qualified to judge, declare it to be, it must be opened up, and it can only be opened up by railway communication. Mr. Kempton says the claims of the district should be urged on the Migration Commis-

sion at the earliest possible date. Hon. members will recognise that this can only be done when the classification of the land proves that it is—what I believe it is—worthy of settlement. Then the Migration Commission will automatically, and, without any pressing, visit the district and see for themselves. Mr. Kempton states nearly 16 years have elapsed since the Geraldton district has had a railway. I am not aware that there has been any request for a railway except for one from Yuna to Mullewa, and an Advisory Board appointed by the Mitehe'l Government could not recommend its construction. Another board appointed by the present Ministry confirmed the opinion of the previous board. The hon. member also overlooks the fact that this Government secured Parliamentary authority for the first section of the Ejangding Northward railway which is now completed, and that that section, with the consent of the Legislature, will connect up with some point of the existing system in the northern district, resulting in an immense area of the agricultural lands which the line will tap being served by the port of Geraldton. Mr. Kempton in further reference to the Balla and Dartmoor settlers points out the necessity of creating big wheat dumps from which six-wheeled motor wagons, run by the Government, should take the wheat from the nearest siding, a proposition to which Sir William Lathlain will offer the strongest objection as another State enterprise. The matter has already had my attention as member for the Central Province. Some time ago, Mr. A. C. Henville, the secretary of the Balla-Dartmoor Progress Association, interviewed me and sought information as to how to proceed in the matter. I made thorough inquiries in official circles, and was informed that the creation of wheat dumps was not considered to be a function of the Government. I ascertained that some years ago the Government had guaranteed the wheat pool against loss in the creation of a dump in the Newdegate district. In that case it appears that a railway to serve the settlers had been authorised and was under construction. As a delay in the construction of the line was likely to inconvenience seriously the farmers, the wheat pool agreed to establish a dump at Newdegate, and to use the wheat for local consumption when the railway reached the dump, which it did some months afterwards. When the wheat was raised, the Government had to meet a slight deficiency upon adjustment of the



accounts, in accordance with their guarantee against loss to those concerned in the marketing of the wheat. In order to assist the Balla-Dartmoor people, I made inquiries of outside organisations; and I was informed by the wheat pool that the Kalgarin farmers were at one time in similar difficulties to those being experienced by the farmers at Balla-Dartmoor. In the case of the Kalgarin growers, the wheat pool contracted with the farmers to lift their wheat to rail from a dump convenient to all. That arrangement prevailed for one season, and in the following season the Kalgarin people were able to do their own transporting. I explained the position of the Balla-Dartmoor growers to the secretary of the pool, Mr. Braine, and he very willingly stated that his organisation was prepared to negotiate a similar arrangement with the Balla-Dartmoor farmers. I gave these particulars to Mr. Henville, and when he left me I was under the impression that he would continue the conversations with Mr. Braine. Speaking of the Geraldton harbour works, Mr. Kempton says no progress is being made. This is incorrect, as the rate of expenditure is much greater than it ever was. It has almost doubled. It is unfair, and not in accordance with fact, to state that the working of the manganese deposits is being held up because the harbour is not ready. I do not know whether Mr. Kempton conferred with the directors of the company before making this statement; if he did, I am surprised that they did not place the true position before him. It is a fact that, apart from the harbour, considerable preliminary expenditure will be necessary before it will be possible to ship the ore away. A large number of suitable trucks will have to be built, and other special facilities provided. The Government are anxious to know where they stand before embarking on this expenditure. The Chairman of directors of the manganese company has been met several times, and efforts have been made to get from him an undertaking as to the quantity of ore which will be exported, and when the company will be ready to commence. Nothing definite is obtainable, and no provision involving a great cost is likely to be made until some guarantee is given that a wharfage rate sufficient to pay interest and sinking fund on the capital invested in those facilities will be obtained. So far no progress has been made with these negotiations,

and when they are finalised, it will take some months to supply the equipment which will be necessary. It is inaccurate to say that the company have everything ready to commence shipping operations. So far as is known, no arrangements for quarrying and loading the ore at Horseshoe exist, and, if they do exist, the company have made no satisfactory arrangements in connection with trucks and harbour equipment to enable the ore to be exported. Mr. Kempton has asked me to cause inquiry into this and other matters, and to use my influence with the Government here and there. But Mr. Kempton, as one of the representatives of the Central Province, should not rest satisfied with placing before me, in this House, matters with which I am already acquainted, and which have already received my attention. I trust he will make direct representations to the various Ministers concerned, and so co-operate with me in the most effective way in securing recognition of the just claims of the district which he and I and Mr. Hall have the honour to represent in the Legislative Council.

Hon. J. Ewing: The railway is completed, is it not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, but the company will not come to finality with the Government.

Hon. J. Ewing: You have to build special trucks, have you not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, and provide special facilities in connection with the harbour.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Were not the Government to transport the ore for 18s. per ton?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, but we wanted a guarantee of a market for this ore. There is every indication that everything is all right, but still we want to be in a safe position. Before embarking on heavy expenditure, we want to be assured that we are on safe ground. We cannot get the parties to come to the scratch.

Hon. J. Nicholson: You want to practice that good old Scottish habit of caution.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I thought the hon. member was going to say, confidence in humanity.

Hon. J. Cornell: I hope the Minister will not put up the defence of the dismal Dean.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Kempton indulged in criticism of the Main Roads Board, but before he did so he replied to some remarks made by the Premier in the course of a debate in another place during the present session. If the Standing Orders permitted it, and the Leader of the Government in this House was required to justify or explain the comments of Ministers in the course of discussions in the other Chamber, there would be enough to do for two or three more Ministers here. I will simply confine myself to Mr. Kempton's criticism of the Main Roads Board, basing my statements on information which has been supplied me by the board. Mr. Kempton says the Chairman and members and staff of the Main Roads Board have always shown him the greatest courtesy and have always been ready to discuss any project placed before them. It is admitted that Mr. Kempton has, on many occasions, called upon the board, but I am informed that he has always religiously kept off the subjects which he dealt with in the speech now under review. The board no doubt appreciated Mr. Kempton's recognition of their courtesy, but it seems to me that he might have returned the courtesy he speaks about by drawing their attention to those matters on which he has spoken, if only for the purpose of ascertaining the facts. Mr. Kempton, as is natural, confines himself to the work done by the board in the northern districts. It is admitted that the board's experience in the northern districts was unfortunate, as they were represented by an engineer, taken over from the old Roads and Bridges Branch of the Public Works Department, who was dismissed for the inefficient and generally unsatisfactory character of his work. Mr. Kempton states that an allocation circular issued by the Main Roads Board set down the cost of 209 chains of metalling, forming and gravelling at £6,272, 5s. 8d., or £30 per chain. I have a copy of the circular here, and it says nothing of the sort, but clearly indicates that the amount apportioned is one half of the State's expenditure on the particular work. This is not the only misleading statement made by Mr. Kempton, as will be shown as we go on. By a process of calculation, the hon. members seeks to prove that the cost of the 209 chains was £14,636 6s. 7d. or £70

per chain. As a matter of fact the actual cost, including surveys and all overhead expenditure, was £12,285, or £59 a chain—information which Mr. Kempton could have obtained before raising the matter in this House. We are told by Mr. Kempton that the engineer of the Mingenew Road Board is a man who has gone through an engineering course and knows what he is talking about, and that his board tendered for 30 chains of metal road for £665, or £22 per chain. I do not wish to refer to the qualifications of this particular engineer. I will omit such references. Mr. Kempton goes on to state that the tender was accepted, and that the engineer said that Main Roads Board work of a similar character on the Moora-Geraldton main road worked out at £70 per chain. It will be noted that Mr. Kempton stated, on the authority of this engineer, that the works with which he makes comparison were similar in character. They were nothing of the kind. The Moora-Geraldton road, which passes, through the Greenough district, is a main road, while the road for which the Mingenew board tendered was a developmental road. The main road was 16 feet in width, with 12 inches of metal, and built generally to a higher standard, and in some instances the material had to be carted long distances in drays. The developmental roads were only 12 feet in width, with 9 inches of metal, and built generally to a much weaker standard. The specifications for the two jobs were entirely different. What is the use of Mr. Kempton making a comparison between a developmental road to connect Mingenew with Yarragadi—a small pastoral station—and a main road connecting Perth with Geraldton and intended to deal with heavy and constant traffic from numerous road board districts? One is a mere track and the other a great channel of communication. And yet the hon. member compares the two roads as if they were on equal terms! Mr. Kempton alludes to the Georgina-road at Greenough, and says the Main Roads Board gave the following particulars—127 chains costing £956, or £7 10s. per chain. He tells us that when it was measured, the length of the road was found to be only 78 chains. The length of road treated was, as stated by the Main Roads Board, 127 chains, and not as stated by Mr. Kempton, only 78 chains; and although 78 chains of it were gravelled, embankments had to be made, a culvert constructed, and clearing done over the balance.

In reference to McCartney-road at Greenough, Mr. Kempton says the Main Roads Board stated that they had done 74 chains costing £1,027, equal to £13 17s. 6d. a chain, and that the distance, on being measured, was found to be 55½ chains, making the cost £18 7s. per chain. These allegations are tantamount to a charge of fraud against the Main Roads Board. As a matter of fact, 74 chains were treated. The distance referred to by Mr. Kempton was metalled, but other work was done outside that, bringing the total length treated up to 74 chains as set forth in the Main Roads Board's statement. The hon. member further states—

Because of floods in March, 1927, the Greenough Road Board asked for a grant for repairs. A grant of £500 was offered. Tenders were called, and 22 typewritten pages of specifications for maintenance were sent up.

It is true that a grant of £510 was made, but it is not true that tenders were called for the work. The local authority was simply asked to submit a price. It is admitted that for such a small work detailed specifications should not have been submitted, and it is not the rule. The normal procedure is for the district engineer to confer with the local authority, decide what should be done, and get it done. Mistakes will occur, and the Chairman of the Main Roads Board agrees that an unduly elaborate specification was put in for a comparatively minor piece of work. Mr. Kempton goes on to say £640 was subsequently allocated to the Greenough Board on account of damage by flood. That is quite correct. He adds—"That amount was afterwards re-allocated by the Main Roads Board engineer—£340 for flood damage and £300 for maintenance." This is not correct. The Main Roads Board made no such partition of the £640. The facts are these:—The Greenough Board asked for £500 only. They got £640 under certain conditions. The district engineer conferred with them, and they agreed not only to repair the flood damage with the money, but also to effect sundry repairs to the main road over a distance of 17 miles. It stands to reason that, if the Greenough Road Board thought they were likely to lose anything by the contract, they would not have taken it on. What Mr. Kempton's grievance is in this connection. I am at a loss to discover. In Yalgoo, Mr. Kempton states, the Main Roads Board cleared 2,080 chains, 22 feet wide, at a cost of £16 6s. a mile, whereas the Yalgoo Road Board cleared a similar

road a width of 3½ feet for £8 per mile. We have no information of the class of country cleared in connection with these roads. Mr. Kempton does not tell us—and he could have told us if he had fully investigated the matter—that the Main Roads Board called for tenders for this work; that there were eight tenders received, and that the lowest tender was accepted. The Main Roads Board asked the Dalwallinu and Yalgoo Road Boards to tender for the job, but they did not do so. Of what value are Mr. Kempton's criticisms in these circumstances? I would very much like to know this: What would he have done had he been in a similar position? Surely the Board did all it could do when it called for tenders and accepted the lowest out of eight. Is it just to cite an instance like that as proof of the culpability of the Main Roads Board, or of any body of men charged with similar responsibilities. Mr. Kempton says that the road from Gibberding to Ninghan, in the Mt Magnet district, had something like £2,581 spent on it, and it was still unfit for traffic. The reply is that the Main Roads Board had nothing whatever to do with the construction of this road! The work was done before they came into existence. How can they be saddled with the responsibility? Mr. Kempton quotes the Yalgoo-road and states that the £5,000 recently expended was a waste of money, and that the board protests against having to pay interest on money which could have been expended to a much greater advantage. It is regrettable to hear that it is considered a waste of money, but the work was carried out with State funds, and the local authority is not asked to contribute towards the cost!

Hon. J. Cornell: Then there is no debt at all.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The local authority will not be asked to contribute a sixpence. Mr. Kempton refers to the cost of the bridge over the Upper Swan, for which the local authorities have been assessed. He says it amounts to £43,246. No wonder Mr. Hamersley expressed surprise. The correct figures are £10,035, including survey and all overhead charges, or £33,211 less than the sum stated by the hon. member!

Hon. J. Cornell: Mr. Kempton must have been seeking information.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Kempton has added on to the cost of the bridge the cost of some miles of main road con-

struction along the route served by the bridge.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Is that necessary to get to the bridge?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. He also complains about different local authorities being assessed for the bridge, but the Main Roads Board contends that the people residing in these districts use the bridge for motor traffic, and could not reach Perth by road unless they did so, and hence, the Board contends, they should be asked to pay a portion of the cost. If there is anything wrong with this, the Act, and not the board, is to blame, and neither the board nor the Government are responsible for this part of the Act. There is not the slightest doubt that whatever assessments they made under the law as it stands would provoke outbursts of protest.

Hon. J. Ewing: The Act should be amended.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And the Government should be blamed for accepting the Act.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In the circumstances, how can the board be blamed for what is embodied in the Act?

Hon. J. Ewing: Will you amend the Act?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Kempton next quotes from some specifications sent out, in which it was stated that it would not be imperative for the Main Roads Board to proceed with the work unless the money was voted by Parliament, and that the board would be at liberty to suspend the works at any time either temporarily or permanently. What has been quoted by Mr. Kempton is not taken from the specifications, but from the conditions of contract. The Chairman of the Main Roads Board agrees that these stipulations cannot be defended. When the Main Roads Board commenced to function, it adopted, with certain necessary modifications, the conditions of contract that had been in use for 30 years by the Public Works Department, and which had stood the test of time, without any recourse to law on the part of the contractors.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That would be a bad job for a lawyer.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Main Roads Board wanted an engineer. They advertised, and from many applications got one from Victoria. His service with the board has since terminated. This gentleman, without any reference to the board, substituted the Victorian conditions of contract holus-bolus. It was a most ridiculous action, as many of the conditions are

founded on statute law, and the statute law of Victoria may be different from that of Western Australia; but no consideration was given to this point!

Hon. J. Nicholson: At any rate, they would not apply.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But that did not influence this particular gentleman at all! Anyhow the conditions imposed by the engineer from Victoria were totally unsuited to this State, and as soon as it came to the knowledge of the chairman that the old-time conditions had been scrapped, he immediately ordered the re-instatement of the conditions that had stood the test of time, and they have been in use for months past.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Have you a reply to Mr. Kempton's statements regarding the road from Midland Junction to Meekatharra respecting which the Geraldton people were expected to pay?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have already dealt with that point. I do not think the hon. member quite understood the position. Mr. Kempton voices the complaints of various local authorities in regard to the apportionment of the 3/14ths of the expenditure on main roads. As I have already said, there would be no levy made at all on the local authorities if the Act had not been amended by this House to make provision in that direction. It is owing to the stringency and far-reaching character of the amendments that the Main Roads Board has been obliged to request these local authorities to contribute towards the cost of the work. The Bill, as amended, set out that a district might be benefited by expenditure on permanent works and maintenance, although such were not situated within the district, or if substantial traffic from the district passed over them. Mr. Kempton quotes Subsection 2 of Section 30 of the Main Roads Act to prove that in exercising its authority to make assessments in connection with main roads, the board shall take into account the revenue, valuation and rating of the local authority. Unfortunately, the subsection does nothing of the kind insofar as the cost of construction of main roads is concerned. The provision extends only to the cost of the maintenance of a road. This is the subsection—

Notwithstanding anything in this section, the Board, with the approval of the Governor, may in the case of any local authority reduce the amount of the contribution of such local authority determined as aforesaid in respect

of the maintenance of any road where it is proved to the satisfaction of the Board that the cost of maintenance is excessive, and that such cost is due to motor traffic not of local origin or to timber traffic. In exercising this authority the Board shall take into account the revenue, valuation, and rating of the local authority, and also its financial obligations on account of liability for loan expenditure incurred in respect of permanent works under this Act.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It has nothing to do with construction.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No! Here again it is the Act that is to blame and not the Main Roads Board. The board realised from the first that a difficult problem had been forced of them by this part of the Act, and they expected criticism in regard to the assessments, but in view of the fact that the local authorities had power of objection under the Act, the board thought that there would be constructive criticism from the local authorities that would help to evolve a formula which would be good and workable during future years. That form of assistance, the board states, has not been forthcoming, and even Mr. Kempton, who has had considerable experience as the head of an important local authority, has nothing to offer in the way of suggestion, but he has any quantity of criticism of the destructive type, and most of it is not based on a solid foundation, according to what has been represented to me by the board. Mr. Hall's complaints about large areas of conditional purchase land being held without any attempt being made to carry out improvement conditions are not without foundation, and, as I have already stated, the Minister for Lands intends to enforce the provisions of the Act. In connection with the settlement of a repurchased estate, Mr. Hall castigates the Land Board for awarding two blocks to men who, he says, are well-known to be comparatively wealthy. He contends that these men should acquire some of the innumerable properties held for sale by land agents. I have been unable to locate the identity of these two comparatively wealthy gentlemen, but I do not think the fact that a man has money should be a bar to his getting a block of agricultural land under the Act, provided of course that he has not already acquired sufficient for one individual. Nor can I recognise the justice of forcing a man with money into the hands of the land agents. In my opinion a Government, charged with the duty

of administering the law impartially, should be prepared to do business with a comparatively wealthy man on exactly the same lines as any one else. But whether he be poor or rich, if he is a person who has already had a reasonable serving of land, his application should not prevail over the claims of others who have no land at all and who are likely to make successful agricultural settlers. Mr. Hall said—

It is amazing to me that various members of Parliament should so frequently have travelled along the railway through Gutha and not observed the wonderful country adjacent to the railway on both sides that has been lying idle for years past.

An explanation is necessary. The greater portion of the country between Gutha and Mullewa was made available by previous Governments in 5,000-acre lots under grazing lease conditions, which are easy of fulfilment compared with the conditions attaching to ordinary conditional purchase. At the same time it cannot be said that those settlers are not complying with the conditions under which they took up the land. The policy of allowing the selection of 5,000 acre blocks within 12½ miles of the railway (except on sandplain country) no longer operates. The whole of the country is being classified and the area of cultivable land allowed to one selector will not exceed 1,000 acres. Of course, on the extreme edge of the South-West division, where the soil becomes shallower, a larger acreage will have to be provided, the basis of settlement being grazing and agriculture. Mr. Hall relates the cases of men who took up land on a pastoral lease, and who had had claims made against them for compensation for improvements affected by their selection. He said he accompanied the men to the Minister for Lands, with a request that Mr. Troy should resume the whole of the pastoral lease in order, as was suggested, to relieve them of the obligation of paying compensation to the pastoralist. It seems to me to be a roundabout process to adopt. But such a resumption would not be of any help to the selectors. Their obligation to the pastoral lessee would still continue, as their blocks could not be included in the land taken. Of course they could abandon their holdings and apply again after the land had been resumed, but in that case they would have to take their chance with other applicants. Mr. Troy is not satisfied with the way in which Mr. Hall has described this

interview, and so he has written to me on the subject as follows:—

I attach the Under Secretary's minute with respect to the position of selectors on the Kadji Kadji pastoral leases. I am astonished that Mr. Hall should so misrepresent the position as to state in the Legislative Council that the Minister, from his chair, stated "he would take care that the pastoral lessees' rights were not infringed." I did not make any such statement. What I did do was to point out to the deputation the fact that the pastoral lessee had certain rights under the Act, and he would naturally insist upon such rights. I further pointed out that the selectors were advised of the position before they applied for the locations. The deputation desired that the Government should resume and arrange for the payment of compensation to the lessee over a number of years. It is now too late to pursue such a course. If the Government resumed the areas they would have to be made available for selection again, and the present holders would have to take their chance with other applicants. Moreover, it is not the policy of the Government to resume in this manner, for the reason that the Government would be resuming a considerable area unsuitable for agricultural settlement. I am surprised that Mr. Hall should urge the Chief Secretary to direct the attention of the Government to the matter, inasmuch as he knows the facts and he effusively thanked me for the information conveyed.

The lessees have undoubted rights under the Land Act to claim compensation, and if Mr. Hall will read section 148 of that measure he will be satisfied on that point. Mr. Hall says it should not be a difficult matter for the Agricultural Bank to take over the payments to the pastoral lessee and spread the total over a number of years. May I say that it is more than difficult; it cannot be done. The Agricultural Bank has no power to advance money for such a purpose. Mr. Hall recommends that the Greenough Flats be repurchased for the purpose of establishing the dairying industry, and adds that cows should be provided for the people who select the land. Seeing that £13,000 was spent on a butter factory at Geraldton and it was obliged to close down owing to failure to supply cream, the proposal carries a very heavy handicap. And how could the property be acquired? There are 40 or 50 settlers on the Greenough Flats, mostly the descendants of the pioneers. Obviously the purchase could not be made secretly, and once it was known that the Government were out to buy, prices would soar to prohibitive figures, and perhaps in some cases the owners would not sell at all. "Resume under the Closer Settlement Act" someone will say. Could the Govern-

ment honestly resume this land on the ground that the owners were growing wheat when they should be going in for dairying? And if we tried to resume and there was an appeal to a Supreme Court Judge, what would he say in the circumstances? If the Greenough Flats were one big estate, there would be something sound in Mr. Hall's advocacy, apart from the failure of the Geraldton Butter Factory, but it would be impossible to reach satisfactory finality with 40 or 50 owners to negotiate with and convince them that it was desirable for them to part with their properties. Mr. Williams in referring to the men from the mines who have been settled on land near Southern Cross, said they were making a living by clearing at 30s. a day. That was evidently a slip, but it is necessary to correct it, as the men were not paid at all for preparing their land for cultivation. They received advances from the Agricultural Bank for clearing on the basis of 30s. an acre, which is quite a different thing.

Hon. E. H. Harris: I thought he suggested they were earning at the rate of 30s. per day for clearing.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: That is what he intended. He said the men have no complaint except in regard to water supply. He stated that they have to cart water for distances up to nine miles and pay £3 a hundred gallons for it. The facts are these—Ten miles of 1½-inch pipes and five standpipes were provided to serve about fifty ex-miners who were placed on a sub-division of 50,000 acres made available by the Lands Department. The settlers obtained the water at the standpipes free of charge, and this arrangement will probably continue until a permanent water supply is established. It was understood at the time the standpipe supply was provided that settlement would not extend further south until investigations were made and a report was submitted to the Migration Commission, when, it was expected, arrangements could be made for money under the migration agreement. However, a second lot of fifty ex-miners were put on blocks south of the standpipes, and I take it Mr. Williams refers to cartage of water to those settlers. Now with regard to the cartage of the water to that section, the maximum distance may be nine miles and the average three to five miles. It may be stated that in some parts of the wheat areas

—sad to relate—settlers had to cart 20 and 30 miles during last summer. From investigations made in reference to Mr. Williams' complaint, it appears that the cartage cost of 100 gallons runs from half-a-crown to 17s. 6d. The maximum of 35s. was paid in one instance for a special and an urgent trip. I have no information as regards £3 having been paid in any circumstances. As soon as the contemplated iron rooled camps are erected, and 1,000-gallon tanks installed, very little money will be spent in this way. Until a report on all works required for the new settlement scheme is submitted to the Migration Commission and arrangements are made for money, no large works, including water supplies, can be undertaken. The intention is to connect all the ex-miners with the Coolgardie Water Scheme when financial arrangements have been effected. Mr. Williams disapproves of the assistance rendered by the Government to the Sons of Gwalia Mine. This mine has not been singled out for preferential treatment as he implied, but was rendered assistance in the hope that further development would discover a continuation of payable ore to support the population of a substantial township. Gwalia is a one mine town. The mine management had done good work in the installation of a most up-to-date plant to reduce working costs and treat low-grade ore. The point of profit disappeared and there were no funds for development. The mine management has been eulogised by our own officers and outside experts for its earnest attempts to keep the mine going. The repayment of the whole of the moneys advanced begins in the fourth year and is covered by ten annual payments. With regard to Kalgoorlie mines, Mr. Williams overlooks the fact that £55,000 was advanced to assist to keep the Horse-shoe Mine open, the money being made available in one year. He further forgets that the Mines Department spends £40,000 annually to supply cheap water to the mines from Southern Cross eastwards to Kalgoorlie, and that the Kalgoorlie mines are the greatest beneficiaries. Another £37,000 was paid in premiums on employees under the Workers' Compensation Act, in order to relieve the mines for one year, and Kalgoorlie derives the greatest benefits from this assistance also. Regarding the question of tributing, raised by Mr. Williams, the Minister for Mines is

arranging a conference to take place this month, when the subject of tributing will be discussed with the Chamber of Mines, employees' representatives and officers of the department, with the Minister himself as chairman. The hon. member dealt with the question of foreigners in mines. In March last the Minister obtained returns of foreigners employed upon the Kalgoorlie and Sons of Gwalia Mines, and ascertained that the average of foreigners employed was 19.08 per cent. At the Sons of Gwalia foreigners do predominate, but inquiries elicited the fact that practically no British labour was offering for underground work, and the whole of the surface employees, excepting sand shovellers and open cut workers, were British.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I suppose they are receiving the union rate and are not cutting wages?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I presume so; there has been no complaint on that score. We are assured that the policy of the mines is to give preference to British labour and we cannot do more. With regard to foreigners employed who can barely speak the English language our inspectors have just recently completed an exhaustive examination of the mines, and have instructions at all times to be particular in this part of their duty.

Hon. E. H. Harris: There are workmen's inspectors to see to that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, there are workmen's inspectors elected by the union, and paid, I think, by the Department of Mines.

Hon. E. H. Harris: That is correct.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I believe all these men do their duty, and it is impossible for the Government to take greater precautions than they now do to ensure the safety of the miners under the language test. As recently as July last, the Minister had a letter of appreciation from the Boulder branch of the R.S.L. thanking him for personal attention given to the matter of the employment in mines of foreigners who could not speak English readily and intelligibly. That is proof of a recognition of the fact that the Minister is doing his duty in this respect. I listened very carefully to the speeches of Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Nicholson, and I cannot find anything except advice to the Government, offered in a sincere manner, and with this I

have no ground for complaint. Mr. Seddon stated that the Government had failed to cope with the unemployed problem, but he did so in order to offer suggestions with a view to remedying the evil. As regards one of these suggestions—the establishment of a permanent committee to investigate and handle unemployment—the Government have already considered favourably a similar proposal. Another, with regard to the provision of means for drafting youths, who have just left school, into suitable avenues of employment, has not been taken in hand, but it is one which I regard as a necessity. Since I have been in office, scores of fathers and mothers have come to me, after their sons have left school—both primary and High Schools—asking my advice as to what trade or profession it would be wise for the boys to follow, and in most cases I have not felt qualified to direct them in such a matter. What is wanted in my opinion is the appointment of a man thoroughly fitted for the position, to make the question his special study. He should be a well-balanced enthusiast, and should avail himself of all possible sources of information, including the boy's school career, so that he could help parents in deciding a suitable vocation for the lad to follow in life. Temporary vacancies in different departments due to long service leave are, I understand, now filled by the unemployed, but the suggestions of Mr. Seddon, in reference to a special winter campaign to repair rolling stock in order to provide for unemployment, and also that the people should be urged to give preference to Western Australian goods, are worthy of every consideration. All this constructive criticism from Mr. Seddon, as well as all that which has come from other members (and there has been a good deal this session) will be submitted to the Department best able to deal with the different matters. The tone and practical character of Mr. Wittenoom's speech, and his advocacy of the claims of Albany pleased me very much. He has already given abundant and tangible proof of his faith in that district, and his name is closely associated with its recent progress. In his present position he may be able to do more to assist its prosperity, and, judging from his maiden speech in this House, I feel sure that he will give close and careful consideration to any question upon which he is called to form an opinion.

Hon. J. Nicholson: A very nice compliment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Baxter's remarks on the question of frozen meat show the benefit of a long period of Ministerial experience. He has a thorough grip of the question and deals with it intelligently. It has not been so with some of the critics whose comments have appeared in the Press. They seem to think that frozen meat can be sold in enormous quantities to the consumer, and furthermore that the holds of the ships can be filled to the top with the product, whereas we are limited by the insulated space. A few years ago, since the present Government assumed office, there was a shortage, when we brought down a little more than we are bringing down this year. For a time it found a ready sale. Most of the people were not aware that it was frozen meat, but soon afterwards they discovered the true position. On top of this a large number of sheep and bullocks came from the Murchison and the country districts, and we found we could not sell our frozen meat. It was, therefore, left on our hands and we had to pay, during the period we held it, no less than £3,700 for storage, and had to dispose of it in the end at a rate lower than the normal price. That was a lesson which could not be soon forgotten.

Question put and passed; the Address-in-Reply adopted.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [10.28]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 10.29 p.m.*