

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

SECOND SESSION OF THE TENTH PARLIAMENT.

The Parliament was prorogued on the 14th June, 1918, until the 16th July, 1918. It was further prorogued to the 8th August, and finally to the 22nd August, 1918, when it met for the despatch of business; and the Second Session commenced on that day.

Parliament was opened by His Excellency the Governor.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 22nd August, 1918.

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT.

The Legislative Council met at 3 p.m., pursuant to proclamation, which was read by the Clerk of Parliaments (Mr. G. F. Hillman).

The PRESIDENT took the Chair.

THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

His Excellency the Governor entered the Council Chamber at 3.5 p.m., and, the members of the Legislative Assembly having also attended in the Chamber obediently to summons, His Excellency was pleased to deliver the following speech:—

Mr. President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council:—

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly:—

In opening this, the second session of the Tenth Parliament of Western Australia, my Advisers feel justified in conveying to you—and through you to the people of Western Australia—a message of gratitude and confidence. During the first few months of the present year our Empire, and its faithful Allies, passed through dark days of bitter adversity and deep anxiety. The cause of freedom, righteousness, and civilisation trembled in the balance, and was sustained only by the unquenchable valour of the allied arms at sea and on land. Within the past few weeks changes have come, more momentous than any that had previously been recorded during the four long years of war. The great freedom-loving Republic of America, entering upon the campaign with characteristic thoroughness, and throwing into it all her marvellous resources of men and money, has already poured into France an army of such magnitude as to destroy the balance of military power previously held by the

enemy. This, combined with the consolidation of the High Command under the military genius of Marshal Foch, has enabled the Allied troops to secure a series of magnificent victories, wresting from the enemy all his recent gains, threatening the morale of his entire army, and bringing to the world a assurance of the ultimate triumph of the cause of justice.

During the dark days following the collapse of the Russian army, and also in the glorious and successful achievements of the Allies in the past few weeks, the Australian soldier, including those from this State, have been conspicuous for their tireless endurance, their quick resourcefulness and splendid bravery. They have added new laurels to those won by the Anzacs at Gallipoli, and have brought their beloved country fame amongst the nations of the earth.

As the war proceeds, Australian soldiers and sailors in steadily increasing number are returning to our shores, broken in health or incapacitated by wounds from further participation in a struggle in which they have played so heroic a part. The task of restoring these soldiers and sailors to the civil life of the community, and of sustaining them in the interim, has been undertaken by the Commonwealth Government, and in accordance with the Repatriation Act passed by the Federal Parliament, a State Repatriation Board has been established with active committees in all the principal centres of the State. The State Government is in hearty co-operation with the Repatriation Board and is rendering every assistance in the provision of facilities for the vocational training of men incapacitated from following their previous callings.

The settlement of returned soldiers and sailors upon the land is a purely State function, and every effort is being made to provide suitable land, on generous terms, for all those desirous of entering the ranks of the producers. Many of those now returning are unable to immediately undertake the heavy work involved in the development of virgin lands. The repurchased estates of

Yandanooka and Avondale are being cut up for soldier settlement, but it is felt that it will be necessary to acquire further partially improved properties in the near vicinity of railway lines for this purpose—a policy which, if wisely followed, will have the effect of bringing much land now only partially worked into full production. A Bill dealing with the repurchase of estates and the general question of settling returned soldiers and sailors on the land has been prepared and will be presented at the earliest opportunity.

Many returned men have shown a desire to engage in prospecting the mineral wealth of the country, and an arrangement has been made between the Mines Department and the Repatriation Board whereby the former provides equipment and the latter assists with sustenance. The department has also made available facilities for giving the men a short training in the recognition of minerals, to assist them in their expeditions. Up to date 34 applications have been approved by the department, and two of the parties that have been sent out have already reported promising discoveries.

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly,—

The revenue for the year was £4,622,535 12s. 3d., whilst the expenditure was £5,328,278 18s. 9d. The financial year closed with a deficit for the year of £705,743 6s. 6d., being £5,986 10s. 4d. more than that of the previous year, but £229,827 13s. 6d. less than the Treasurer's estimate.

The intentions of the Government arising out of the serious financial position of the Commonwealth and States, due to war expenditure, will, together with Estimates for the current financial year, be laid before you at the earliest opportunity.

In accordance with the unanimous resolution passed at the Treasurers' conference, instructions have been issued to all departments that the general estimates of expenditure shall not be increased during the currency of the war.

The Government have given careful consideration to many economies in administration, and arrangements for the necessary adjustments are approaching completion. It is hoped that these will be in full effect during the present financial year.

At the Treasurers' conference, the Premier of New South Wales and the Treasurer of Queensland were appointed to frame a proposal for the amalgamation of the Commonwealth and State Taxation offices. This has been formulated and is now being submitted to the State Governments.

The Government are awaiting the disclosure of the Commonwealth taxation proposals before foreshadowing any additional State taxation.

Mr. President and Honourable Members of the Legislative Council,—

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly,—

Notwithstanding the manifold disabilities and embarrassments occasioned by the war, there is much in the position of the industries

of the country to call for satisfaction and confidence. The mining industry is being fostered and encouraged in every possible way, and in view of the large numbers of capable miners who have enlisted for active service, and the enormous increase in the cost of all mining requisites, the present output must be regarded as satisfactory.

The production to the end of June of all minerals reached the value of 141½ million pounds, and the dividends paid to the same date totalled nearly 27 million pounds. For the six months ending June last, the gold output was of a value of £1,885,929; coal, £103,207, and other minerals, £161,055.

It is proposed to erect at an early date two or more plants suitable for the treatment of scheelite, wolfram, etc., and in this connection an officer of the department was despatched to the Eastern States to examine all existing plants, with a view to collecting such data as are necessary to enable a decision to be arrived at as to the plant most suitable for this State. Pending erection of the plant or plants, arrangements have been made to make advances to producers of ore after the same has been delivered to the State battery at Coolgardie and sampled.

The assistance rendered to the copper mining industry at Ravensthorpe by way of advances on ore and carrying out of smelting is being continued, and recently the Minister has been examining the operations at that centre, with a view to effecting economies, and thus increasing the returns to producers. In the case of other base metals, such as lead, advances against ore pending treatment are also made. The system of assistance under the provisions of the Mining Development Act by way of helping in the carrying out of approved development work, or equipping promising mines with plant, is being continued.

The transactions in land selection for the past year have been most encouraging; over half a million acres have been taken up under conditional purchase lease, being over 300,000 acres more than for the previous year. In the same period an area of 20½ million acres has been leased for pastoral purposes, being 10 million acres more than for the previous year. Full advantage is being taken by pastoralists of the provisions of the Land Act Amendment Act, 1917, by which the tenure of their leases may be extended to 1948. From this Act considerably added revenues are accruing to the Crown, whilst the extended tenure given to the pastoralists will enable them to further develop their holdings and to increase their carrying capacity. The pastoral industry was never in a more prosperous condition. On the 31st December, 1917, there were 6,400,000 sheep in Western Australia, an increase of nearly a million for the year. In the same period cattle showed an increase of nearly 100,000, whilst substantial increases of horses, pigs, and other stock are recorded. A gratifying circumstance is the increase of sheep in the farming districts, as the raising of sheep in conjunction with the growing of wheat and other cereals cannot but improve the condition of the farming population. The British Government having

purchased the whole of the wool grown in the Commonwealth until the expiration of one complete season after the war, at a price satisfactory to the grower, the continued prosperity of this industry may be said to be assured. Last year's wool production for this State reached the satisfactory total of 39,000,000lbs.

With the rapid increase in the numbers of stock held in the different parts of the State, the necessity of providing facilities for the export of frozen and canned meats has become urgent. The Government are busily engaged with the completion of the freezing works at Wyndham, which it is hoped will be ready for use early in next year. The provision of freezing and canning facilities at Fremantle has occupied the close attention of the Government for some time past. The best expert advice available has been procured, and an exhaustive report is expected within the next few weeks. The Government propose, on the receipt of this report, to take immediate action towards the provision of facilities the urgent necessity of which is fully recognised. Attention is also being given to the provision of similar facilities at the different outports.

The return from the last wheat harvest proved disappointing, a yield of only 9,303,787 bushels being obtained from 1,249,762 acres. The seasonal prospects for the coming harvest are excellent, but it is expected that owing to the scarcity of labour—due to the splendid enlistments from the country district—the area under crop will show a still further reduction.

The Commonwealth and State Governments have joined in a guarantee to the wheat-growers of a minimum price of 4s. 4d. per bushel at sidings—less freight to seaboard—to apply to the harvest of 1918-19. Legislation will shortly be presented dealing with the acquiring of the coming season's wheat. The huge accumulation of wheat in this and other States of the Commonwealth, and the continued difficulty in obtaining shipping, have cast upon the Government the difficult task of providing ever-increasing storage accommodation, and a Bill to enable the Government to provide for the storage of wheat will be shortly presented.

The inroads of the rabbits continue to occasion much anxiety throughout the agricultural areas. Active measures have been taken to cope with the rabbit and dingo pests; 29 vermin boards have been formed and over 40,000lbs. of poison have been distributed free to settlers in the infested areas. The Consolidated Rabbit and Vermin Bill, to which partial consideration was given last session, will be re-presented with a view to giving increased powers to vermin boards to contend with these pests.

Increased attention has been given to the production of butter, bacon, eggs, and poultry, and the State is now producing a much larger proportion of its requirements in these directions than previously. It will be the aim of the Government to continue their support and encouragement to these industries in the belief that, with the fertile lands and generous rainfall at our disposal, Western

Australia should be an exporting, instead of an importing, State in all these commodities.

The fruit industry, though suffering severely from restricted markets, on account of lack of shipping facilities, is developing satisfactorily, and when normal conditions return the greatly increased yield of prime fruits will mean much added wealth to the State. Last season's fruit yield reached the fine total of nearly 1,400,000 bushels, being an increase of about 600,000 bushels as compared with the output of four years ago.

A noticeable feature in connection with the development of many of the primary industries of the State is the extent to which the prevailing difficulties have fostered the spirit of co-operation. It will be the aim of the Government to encourage this movement in every legitimate direction, believing that it will be to the great and lasting good of both producer and consumer, and an important factor in contributing to the well-being of the State.

The timber industry remains in a condition of deep depression owing to the lack of freight. A few mills have resumed working, but a large number remain closed. In recognition of the immense value of our forest resources, my Advisers have initiated a forest policy having for its objects the less wasteful utilisation of the major and minor forest products, and the regeneration of the timber on areas that have been already cut over. To secure the continuity of this policy, it will be necessary to strengthen the existing laws relating to the management of our forests, and to this end a Forest Bill has been prepared and will be submitted for your consideration at an early date.

The pearling industry is also suffering because of the difficulty of exporting the product, but the Government are assisting by the guaranteeing of advances to keep the industry alive. A Bill to amend the Pearling Act will be submitted during the session.

The extent to which the war has restricted shipping and the interchange of commerce has further demonstrated the desirableness of establishing secondary industries in the State, in order to render it more self-supporting than before, and to open further avenues of employment for our people. My Advisers, recognising that it is only by the activity of private enterprise that sound and stable industries can be established and maintained, have sought by the constitution of a council of industrial development to lend advice and assistance to those who desire to embark on new industries, or to expand and develop old ones. A ship-building yard is about to be laid down at Fremantle, where, with the assistance of the Government, by the capital and enterprise of private citizens, there will be built six wooden ships to the order of the Commonwealth Government. This will not only assist to make good the losses sustained by the Empire's mercantile marine at the hands of the enemy, but also, it is hoped, lay the foundation of a permanent ship-building industry in the State. Other secondary industries, dependent on the raw material to be found within our own borders, are also receiving close consideration, and it is expected

that several of these will be established in the near future.

As already intimated, financial stringency has necessitated a drastic curtailment in the public works policy of the State. It is felt that in view of the very large railway mileage in proportion to population, railway construction for the immediate future must be confined to such short lines as are necessary for linking up purposes, and that more attention should be devoted to the provision and maintenance of roads to enable settlers to get their produce to rail quickly and cheaply.

The Wagin-Bowelling line was connected up on June 26, and will be handed over to the working railways in November. This will enable a large quantity of wheat from the lines junctioning at Wagin to be conveyed to Bunbury speedily and economically.

The Bunbury breakwater has been extended and has proved successful in mitigating the action of winter gales. The department is now proceeding with the construction of two berths designed to give accommodation for shipping up to a depth of 30 feet.

An amalgamation of the Water Supply and Public Works Departments has been carried out, and it has been found possible to largely reduce the staff without impairing its efficiency.

The long standing differences between the orchardists and the Government, in connection with the Harvey Irrigation Scheme, have been settled on a basis equitable to all concerned. An amendment of the Irrigation Act will be necessary to carry out the agreement that has been arrived at, and a Bill for this purpose will be submitted shortly.

In view of the great capital cost of our State railway system, its important bearing upon our financial situation, and its influence upon the development of our industries, my Advisers have given serious attention to the question of its future management. A Bill will be introduced at an early date to amend the Railways Act so as to permit of the appointment of three Commissioners, in the place of one Commissioner as at present.

Notwithstanding the existing financial stringency and the imperative need for economy in all directions, every reasonable effort is being made to meet with the requirements of the people, particularly in the outlying portions of the State, in the matter of educational facilities and the care and treatment of the sick.

A permanent committee, representative of the University, the Education Department, and the Agricultural Department, has been appointed to advise on the important question of agricultural education, with a view to making the educational system of the State of greater value in the development of our primary industries.

In addition to the proposed legislation already referred to, it is intended to present to Parliament a Roads Bill and a Traffic Bill. Bills will also be presented to amend the Constitution Act for the better regulation of the date of general elections; to amend the Criminal Code; the State Children's Act; the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act; and to deal with other matters of minor importance.

Within the next few months the State will be honoured by a visit from the French delegation. Arrangements have been made with the Commonwealth Government whereby the activities of the delegation during its stay in this State will be under the direction of the Western Australian Government, and my Advisers are confident of receiving the very heartiest co-operation of all sections of the community in the welcome and entertainment of the distinguished representatives of a country that has sacrificed so much in the cause of freedom, and from whose people the sons of Australia have received such unstinted hospitality.

I now leave you to your labours, trusting that by the blessing of Divine Providence they may prove of material advantage to the people of Western Australia, the Commonwealth, and the Empire.

[The Governor then retired, and the President resumed the Chair.]

[For "Papers Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

BILL—NAVIGATION ACT AMENDMENT.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [3.29]: In order to assert and maintain the undoubted rights and privileges of this House to initiate legislation, I move, without notice, for leave to introduce a Bill entitled "An Act to amend the Navigation Act, 1904."

Leave given; Bill introduced, and read a first time.

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

The PRESIDENT: His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to deliver a Speech, and for the sake of accuracy a copy will be placed in the hands of every member.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

First Day.

Hon. J. MILLS (Central) [3.31]: In reply to the Speech which His Excellency has been pleased to deliver, I desire to move that the following Address be presented to His Excellency:—

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir William Grey Ellison-Macartney, Privy Councillor, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, Governor in and over the State of Western Australia and its Dependencies, in the Commonwealth of Australia.

May it please Your Excellency, We, the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank your Excellency for the Speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

In moving the motion I desire to refer to the intention of the Government to repurchase estates adjacent to railways for the repatriation of our soldiers, and I am in agreement with

this, subject to certain safeguards against over-valuing and a repetition of mistakes made in the Avondale, Yandanooka, and Bowes estates. We cannot do too much for our soldiers, but I would like to see our own Crown lands made more attractive. We have a great amount of good wheat land, but there is not much encouragement to go on it. The values are too high, coupled with taxes of all kinds, and men are not disposed to go and waste their lives trying to overcome difficulties which are impossible. As far as the soldiers are concerned, I think they are entitled to extra consideration, and I would like to see the Government prepared to grant to any returned soldier who is a farmer a freehold of, say 1,000 acres, in the Wheat Belt, subject of course to certain conditions, that is conditions of residence and improvements, and so forth. The Government intend to erect freezers at Fremantle. About two years ago fat stock were sold in the open market here at famine prices. Since then freezers have been erected at Wyndham, and at Carnarvon they are almost assured. Private enterprise is going to erect them there. At Geraldton £30,000 has been promised to assist in erecting freezers, and a large number of shares has lately been taken up, so that it is almost certain that works will eventually be erected. The cattle in East Kimberley will be diverted to the freezers there, and the stock on the Gascoyne river and probably on some of the rivers further north will naturally be brought to Carnarvon to be frozen. In the case of Geraldton, the Murchison stock will filter through in great numbers, and be frozen there, therefore I cannot see any justification for freezers being erected at the present time at Fremantle. In all probability, in the near future, they will be necessary, but the eastern districts and south-western districts of the State are called on to supply the metropolitan market, and in order to justify freezers there must be some 300,000 to 400,000 sheep frozen there to give a fighting chance to provide working expenses and interest. It is a trading concern which the Government and their immediate predecessors denounced everywhere. Why, therefore, perpetuate another injury on the public by creating another trading concern? It is interesting to see that the Bunbury breakwater has been extended so as to provide two berths being made 30 feet deep, so that sea-going vessels may be accommodated. Some two years ago a harbour scheme was started at Geraldton at a cost of something like £30,000, but for some reason, of which I am not aware, unless on the ground of shortness of finance, the work was discontinued. Yet in the same breath we see that £150,000 is to be tilted into Bunbury. The Government should be just to Geraldton before being generous to Bunbury. During last session the land regulations were amended, and the maximum price of first class land was reduced to 15s. This was a splendid step in the right direction, had it gone far enough. But there has been no alteration in the price of second and third class lands. Personally I think the Government would be well advised if they charged only for their first class land and gave their second and third class lands to the

soldiers, conditionally on certain improvements, and residence. In my opinion the minimum of 3s. 9d. per acre for third class land is ridiculously high. There are tens of thousands of acres which are not worth a penny until dealt with by the hand of man. They are only a harbour for dingoes and rabbits, which are a menace to the farmers and the agricultural industry. I shall have an opportunity of speaking again, and as I am indisposed I beg to move the motion.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [3.39]: I rise to second the motion proposed to the House, and I feel sure the Address, couched as it is in the terms in which it has been read by the hon. member who had moved it, will be most readily accepted by the House. Whilst I support and endorse every sentiment and expression which is contained in that Address, I reserve to myself the right to offer suggestion and criticism where I think these may be justified in connection with matters that have been referred to in the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor. These reservations are in keeping with a time-honoured custom, which permits members, I believe, on an occasion such as this, to ventilate their grievances, and at the same time to enable them to express their concurrence or dissent in connection with the deeds or misdeeds of the Government. I submit, therefore, that one may, with every sense of propriety and relevancy, support much which has been set forth in the Speech, without necessarily concurring in all. In the opening paragraph of the Speech, a copy of which has been handed to every member, reference has been made by His Excellency to the present war. We welcome indeed that message of confidence and hope of victory which has been uttered by him. The war has now waged for over four years, but it is now being waged with brighter and better prospects than during any portion of the past period. Our hearts thrill with pride and joy at the achievements of our brave Australian soldiers, but we must not forget that those achievements are accomplished only with many and severe losses. They make many hearts sad by the loss of those near and dear to them, and it also means depleted ranks. It means that great gaps are occurring in the ranks, gaps which it is our duty as loyal citizens to do all we possibly can to fill. It is for us as citizens to say whether we have done our duty. I know members of the House at all times have sought to use their best efforts in this direction. It is our duty, therefore, I say, to continue to fill the gaps until victory has been secured, and until that freedom for which we are fighting rests on a sure and firm foundation. Whilst we honour our soldiers for their bravery, we must not forget the duty we owe to them and their dependants. I believe a certain limited amount of good work has been done by the Government in seeking to make arrangements for the settlement of soldiers on the land. His Excellency has referred in the Speech to the fact that the settlement of the soldiers is a State matter. That is quite correct. It is sometimes overlooked by many that this work in connection with the soldiers is a Federal matter, and sometimes others think

that the work of repatriation is a State matter. Confusion does exist, and the more it is made clear the better will the public understand the position. The settlement of soldiers on the land is therefore a State matter, and whilst I acknowledge that the Government have done a certain amount of good work we hear, on the other hand, murmurs of discontent. Men are returning in increased numbers, and it is the duty, I submit, of the Government to do more than they have done and make it more apparent to us that sufficient work is being done to enable the soldiers who are desirous of settling on the land to once more become repatriated and rehabilitated in civil life. I would therefore suggest to the Government that it would be desirable that a Minister should be appointed for this task. I believe I am right in saying that Mr. Ewing some time ago moved a motion in this direction, and I hope the Leader of the House will take this matter into consideration and discuss it fully, and its effect, with his colleagues. I congratulate the Government on the decision to re-purchase estates. Presumably the decision to re-purchase these estates is in connection with those in settled areas and connected, I take it, with the railway system. We heard some time ago about the idea of establishing a soldiers' settlement in the Nornalup district, where the men would be banished from those facilities which would keep them in touch with the centres of civilisation. I take it, therefore, we may conclude that the Nornalup scheme is abandoned. The only comment I have to make on this wise decision of the Government is that it has taken apparently three years for them to see what others saw three years ago. The question of financing the soldiers in connection with their settlement on the land is a matter which, I believe, has been arranged between the State Government and the Federal authorities, so that we may have no apprehension with regard to funds being found for the purpose of establishing our soldiers on the land. That in itself is a very welcome position, and a very wise arrangement indeed. It will give an assurance to soldiers who are desirous of taking up their occupation on the land, that they will be able to get installed there and receive all that help which is necessary to establish them there. The Government should take every care that these funds which are given for this particular purpose are earmarked, and not applied to any other purpose. Allusion has been made in the Speech to the serious financial position of the State. This question to my mind is of supreme importance. It is in fact the one supreme question affecting us as a State, and one which transcends into all other questions. Our capacity to carry out our various works and projects will depend upon our financial strength. I do not wish to enter into any discussion to-day with regard to the finances, but I am sure I may be permitted to allude to certain figures which have been mentioned in the Speech. We are told that there was a deficit of £705,743 for the last financial year. In June, the month's accounts showed that there was a surplus of £93,700, but to our amazement we found that in July there was a deficit of £131,000. I heard many good people

and citizens welcoming the accounts which were delivered as at the end of June. Indeed, they rejoiced in the fact that we had reached the stage when we actually had a surplus, and they hoped it was going to be repeated in July. To their dismay, however, they found that in place of that brilliant achievement on the part of the Government being repeated, the deficit had gone back practically to its old numbers again. I would ask the members to bear in mind that our accumulated deficit is now nearly £3,000,000. These are figures which, I say, are sufficiently alarming without going any further into figures at all. I agree with the Colonial Treasurer in the statement he made to the Press a few days ago, when he said that we were, so far as our finances were concerned, right up against it. That is the true position in regard to the finances of our State. The Colonial Treasurer has expressed the fervent hope that every care would be taken and economy practised to enable the Government to keep their expenditure within the bounds of the State's revenue. That is what we have been expressing here for years past. We are desirous that the Government should keep their expenditure within the bounds of their revenue, because only by this means is it possible for us to get a sound financial position. There is no use in prayers or hopes of this sort, unless we actually do something towards attaining that very object which is prayed for. Let us put our shoulders to the wheel in some way so that we may stop the drift, and save what would be a calamitous situation for the State. It must be borne in mind that the well-spring from which this accumulated deficit has been drawn is bound to dry up soon, and the sooner we awake to the responsibilities that are upon us the sooner will the public of Western Australia appreciate what the Government are doing. Much talk has taken place and suggestions been made that a remedy will be found by retrenchment in our Civil Service. I submit that, whilst certain retrenchments may be possible, a great deal of retrenchment has already taken place, but that this great fact has been overlooked by many who make these comments, namely, that the Civil Service has paid its debt to the nation by as large a number having enlisted from its ranks as from any other organisation in the State. There has been retrenchment, and retrenchment of a strong character indeed, so far as our Civil Service is concerned, and it has been mainly retrenchment of a voluntary character. Men have gone from that service voluntarily in defence of their country. I commend to the Government and to members the consideration of various matters which we might retrench upon in our own House. Usually when a firm or even an individual suffers adversity, we find that they seek to make retrenchment and saving in their own business. Are we doing so here? I submit that we are not. I have already mentioned from my place in the House my intention to move in this direction, and I suggest to the members of the Government the consideration of the reduction of salaries of members of Parliament, and also that many of those privileges which have been enjoyed by members of Parliament shall, for the time of

the war, at least, cease. I refer to such privileges as passes which are given over our railways and tramways, and other such privileges. Why should we at a time of dire distress such as this, be enjoying these privileges when we ought to be helping to make up the losses? We are practically like partners in a business who are living on capital, and the sooner these privileges cease the better. If I am not considered revolutionary I might even suggest that much time is wasted in Parliament even over such a debate, which is established by such long and time-honoured custom, as that on the Address-in-reply. Much time and much saving could be effected to the country if we were to wipe out many of the formalities which take place. We would be saving not only the time of members of the House, but the time of *Hansard*, and the time of the printers, and even the use of lighting and other things on which we spend money. No good result, as a rule, takes place from prolonging the debates to which we are accustomed on the Address-in-reply. If there are any momentous questions, these will be brought up in due time, and ample opportunity given for their discussion. I submit, therefore, that these are matters which might well be taken into consideration by the Government, and unless the financial position has improved it is bound to react on the community. I urge, however, that in addition to considering the question of these reductions the Government should also consider the advisability of appointing a board of financial experts to go into the whole financial situation, and see what can be done to avert the apparent disaster which is impending. If we are guided in this matter by the assistance of sound financial experts, we may hope to evolve some schemes which will be of undoubted benefit, and result in some profit to ourselves. A bad financial position, whether in the affairs of a company or in the affairs of the Government, creates only one feeling, namely, the feeling of want of confidence. It therefore devolves upon the Government, if they wish to maintain the confidence of the people, to do everything they possibly can to improve the financial position, and restore that confidence which is essential. It has been said that one way in which we could get over our difficulties is by bringing population here. Others have urged production, and say, "Produce, produce, produce." Might I ask if our affairs are in such an embarrassed condition, as they undoubtedly are, how can we hope to get population into the country? If we improve our financial position then I say we can hope for, and will get, population here. The Government must, therefore, see how much our prosperity, and how much the securing of population depends upon their making every effort possible to rectify our finances. Population means increased production, and increased production means, apart from any academic discussion of economics, increased wealth and prosperity to the State. The subject is, therefore, one of vital and crucial importance to Western Australia. We are largely dependent, as it would appear from the Speech, on the development of the primary industries of our State. But the Government have

no money with which to develop these industries. Where must we look for it except from outside; we have to invite capital to come in and help us develop our resources. Capital, however, has been frightened away by the intrusion of our Government into the fields of industry. State enterprises in Western Australia have done more harm than almost anything else, and in a large measure are responsible for our present position. State enterprises are an absolute menace to the people. They are in direct competition with the taxpayers, taking all the advantages and really contributing nothing to the burdens, and if a loss is made in a State enterprise, who suffers the loss but the poor humble taxpayer? The sooner therefore State enterprises are abandoned, the sooner will a measure of confidence be restored so far as the investing public are concerned. The Government might well confine themselves to the functions of government and nothing else. Although I have made these observations with regard to our financial position, I do not wish it to go forth that I am anything of a pessimist or a croaker, so far as the State is concerned. I believe in the State; I believe in its resources and that ultimately we will rise to a successful financial position. It is for the Government to steer the ship of State into a safe harbour, but if they do not take the advice which has been offered, if they are not guided by financial experts in regard to our affairs, and if they do not follow the course which is undoubtedly the only one which should be followed, disaster is bound to come. I note with satisfaction that assistance has been given by the Government to various schemes of co-operation. There is no doubt that assistance in such a direction is merited and wise, and so long as we are guided by sound business instincts good results will follow. Whatever the schemes are they should be closely and carefully examined, and when once the Government are assured that they are for the benefit of the State, and will be carried on on proper business lines, by all means, then, we should assist them as much as it is in our power to do. It is also gratifying to see what has been done in connection with the proposed establishment of a bureau for the purpose of applying science to the work of research in and the development of our resources and industries. That is a thing which I am sure everyone will appreciate, and must result in unbounded advantage to a State such as ours, which has many resources. The timber industry, I observe, has been alluded to as being in a depressed condition. I have had a close and intimate knowledge of that trade for the past 20 years and I can admit that it has never experienced such an extreme depression as that which has overtaken it since the commencement of the war. No industry has suffered more than that. Many of the mills which were busily engaged prior to the war have been compelled to close down and that closing down has meant that those engaged in that industry in the country districts were compelled, in a large measure, to abandon their homes and in turn it affected the revenue of the railways, etc. The reason for all this is that freight was not available to carry the timber overseas. There

is a certain amount of satisfaction in regard to the proposal to introduce legislation in connection with forestry, but here again I say that whatever legislation is introduced, it should be wisely considered before being presented to Parliament. Restrictions may be imposed upon the industry which will have a serious effect, not only on the industry itself but on the companies operating, restrictions which may also affect other departments of the State. I refer particularly to the Railway Department which in past years has derived, probably, the greater part of its revenue from the traffic supplied by the timber industry. If too great restrictions are placed upon it, the effect must be reactionary on the railways as well as other departments of the State. Then, in view of the large amount of capital which has been invested in the industry, every consideration should be extended to the companies which have suffered, owing to the depression, a most serious loss in capital and revenue. With regard to gold mining, I am pleased to observe that the Government have been seeking to do all that was possible for it, but I am more pleased to notice that the principle of self-help, to a certain extent, has made itself evident amongst the men who are engaged in it. The Mining Association, I noticed the other day, have made representations to the Imperial Government for the payment of a bonus of £1 per ounce. No industry has probably done more for Western Australia than gold mining, and the Government have done no more than they should have done, in the way of rendering help, and the application which has been made by the mining community for a bonus is nothing more than the industry is entitled to receive. It is desirable that the Government should support the mining industry in every way in that request. The fact is sometimes overlooked that gold is one of those metals the purchase price of which has never varied. For currency reasons, it has a standard value and the purchase price is £3 17s. 10½d. per ounce. I have often thought that the members of our arbitration court, when deciding on questions of wages, etc., have overlooked the important fact that it is impossible for the mining companies to get more than £3 17s. 10½d. per ounce for the gold. They are not like other businesses which can pass on the extra cost of production. The result has been that many of our low grade mines have closed down because of the extra expense and cost of working. The payment of the bonus of £1 per ounce may enable those mines which we here look upon as low grade to again start operations, and it will be a welcome thing to the mining community if the Imperial authorities can see their way to accede to the request for the payment of the bonus. With regard to agriculture, our farmers, amongst others, have suffered, and apparently they are experiencing additional hard times on account of the incursion of rabbits. It is for the Government to see that the pest is exterminated without further delay, and that every assistance is given to the farmers. I do not intend to enter on a discussion in connection with the question of wheat marketing, or with regard to the Grain Elevator Bill, which I see is to be reintroduced to Parliament. A Royal Commission is at pre-

sent investigating the question of wheat marketing and when their report is presented to Parliament, hon. members will be able to form a better idea as to the course that should be adopted. I still say, however, that whatever assistance can be given to the farmers should be given. I think I have dealt with most of the matters of importance referred to in the Speech and I will conclude by expressing the hope that before another year has passed we shall have attained a crowning victory and that there will be a speedy restoration to normal and successful conditions.

On motion by Hon. W. Kingsmill, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 4.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 22nd August, 1918.

MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The Legislative Assembly, met at 3 p.m., pursuant to proclamation by His Excellency the Governor, which proclamation was read by the Clerk (Mr. A. R. Grant).

The Speaker took the Chair.

SUMMONS FROM THE GOVERNOR.

The Speaker and hon. members, in response to summons, proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber, and, having heard His Excellency deliver the opening Speech (vide Council report ante), they returned to the Assembly Chamber. The Speaker resumed the Chair.

MILITARY—VICTORIA CROSS RECIPIENTS.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [3.35]: I have a motion which I will ask the House to agree to. In the early stages of the war the House placed on record an expression of its pleasure at the honour of the Victoria Cross having been conferred on Lieut. Hugo Throssell. Nearly two years ago the House again expressed its pleasure at the fact that Private O'Meara, of Collie, had also been awarded the Victoria Cross. Since we last met two other Soldiers of Western Australia who went forth to fight the battles of Empire have been awarded this distinguished recognition. There is, perhaps, nothing a Briton more covets than the Victoria Cross. Its simplicity appeals to us in the fact that it has no great intrinsic value; it is merely a little copper cross bearing the words "For valour." What greater honour could a man have than the honour attached to this award? I feel that