

The CHAIRMAN: Was it built by the Main Roads Board?

Mr. SAMPSON: It is under the second item. I have no desire to make these remarks to-night except with the full approval of yourself, Sir, and the Committee. I would prefer to make them to-morrow.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member will have an opportunity later, on the Loan Estimates.

Mr. SAMPSON: Since I have introduced the subject, let me say that the condition of the Mundaring-road is shocking. That road has been neglected by Governments over a long course of years. As it is a road which leads mostly to Government property, the local authority gets very little revenue from it. Representations with regard to the state of the road have been made from time to time. There is one interesting matter in connection with that road. I refer to the construction by the ex-Minister for Works (Hon. A. McCallum) of a bridge over the Helena River.

The Minister for Works: That is a pleasure resort. Surely that Minister would not construct a bridge to a pleasure resort!

Mr. SAMPSON: The road there is used largely by people travelling to inspect the Mundaring Reservoir and the Weir. The road running from Mundaring to Mundaring Weir is in a shocking state and in not nearly as good condition as the road that encircles the reservoir. I shall deal further with this matter to-morrow.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.22 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 21st October, 1931.

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

QUESTION—STATE IMPLEMENT WORKS.

Order for barrows.

Mr. J. H. SMITH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is it a fact that the department has recently placed an order with the State Implement Works for several hundred navy barrows? 2, Were tenders called for the supply of these barrows? 3, Is there any check on the price that may be charged by the State Implement Works?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, No. 3, Yes.

QUESTIONS (2)—FORESTS DEPARTMENT.

Sleepers Supplied.

Mr. J. H. SMITH asked the Minister for Forests: 1, Is it a fact that the Forests Department supplies to private companies sleepers cut by sustenance workers. 2, In connection with the supply of these sleepers, is it a fact that the Government are shifting sustenance workers from one district to another? 3, Is it not a fact that there are timber workers not on sustenance who could do the work without men having to be transferred from other districts?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS replied: 1, Yes, otherwise the men must be thrown out of employment, as the Government have 1,124,000 sleepers on hand for local government requirements. 2, Yes, to a very limited extent. 3, It is the policy of

the Government to use men on sustenance for the limited amount of work available.

Inspection Fees.

Mr. J. H. SMITH asked the Minister for Forests: 1, What is the reason for the increase in inspection fees on timber from private property? 2, Is there any difference between a sleeper cut from Crown lands and one cut from private property? 3, Is the department aware that the obtaining of sleepers from private property in the South-West has been of great benefit to the settlers? If so, why has the department differentiated between sleepers from private property and those from Crown lands?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS replied: 1, Bad cutting and second class timber, which have led to serious complaints from overseas countries buying our sleepers. 2, Yes, under present conditions. 3, Answered by 1 and 2.

QUESTION—STATE GARDENS BOARD.

Point Walter Road Removal.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Premier: In view of the fact that he has had information supplied him that no road has been removed from the campers' reserve at Point Walter, will he make arrangements to meet me at Point Walter so that I can show him the road in question and produce evidence of men who worked on the road during the removal process.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Premier) replied: My duties as Premier will not permit me to make this arrangement at present.

QUESTION—JAVA MARKET.

Hon. A. McCALLUM asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that the "Nieuw Holland" left Melbourne last Saturday for Java loaded to capacity with Australian produce such as flour, fresh vegetables, boots, tallow, soap, biscuits, cakes, butter, hams and bacon? 2, In view of the fact that Fremantle is approximately a fortnight's sail closer to Java than is Melbourne, and that all these commodities are produced in abundance here, will he take steps to bring this matter un-

der the notice of our commercial men and urge them to endeavour to secure this trade for Western Australia?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Premier) replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes.

QUESTION—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT.

Mr. RAPHAEL asked the Minister for Railways: Replying to a deputation representative of the railway and tramway workers in September last, the Minister said he would recommend to Cabinet that the retrospective deduction under the Financial Emergency Act should be extended to the end of March next. Will he state what action, if any, has been taken by Cabinet in this respect?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: Cabinet decided on the 6th October to confirm a previous decision that the collection of payments under the Financial Emergency Act be spread over several pays, including the last pay in December, but in the case of the Railway Department December repayments might be deferred until the following month in instances in which the amounts involved in relation to the amounts of salaries or wages warranted such a course.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Salvation Army (Western Australia) Property Trust.

2, Transfer of Land Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Attorney General.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1931-32.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Richardson in the Chair.

Department of the Minister for Public Works and Labour (Hon. J. Lindsay):

Vote—Public Works and Buildings
£21,655 (partly considered).

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [4.41]: We have to realise that the activities of the Public Works Department are very much restricted at present, mainly owing to the fact that loan moneys

are not available. When loan moneys are plentiful the Works Department is busy and active, but when loan moneys are scarce, slackness prevails in the department. But we have to appreciate that what work is going to-day is practically confined to the main roads, and so I want to join with those members who have declared that we can never pass the Public Works Estimates without some indication of the Government's policy in regard to main road construction. It is possible, of course, that the Minister is going to give us that indication on the Loan Estimates. Generally, the custom is for the Minister to outline the activities of the department, especially as to the more important branches from an expenditure point of view, during the passage of the Revenue Estimates. In this regard the Minister has given us no information whatever. It would be quite wrong to pass the Revenue Estimates without any information as to what is to-day the most important activity of the Public Works Department, unless the Minister can assure the Committee that an opportunity will be given for discussion of the full particulars when the Loan Estimates are brought down. I do not know that I wish to say any more at this juncture. The position of the Works Department is to be deplored. We are all sorry that work should be so slack and employment so scarce. The position of the department is reflected in the unemployment figures. When we had loan funds, works were progressing throughout the country and employment was proportionately brisk, but to-day it has slackened off and we have under our gaze every hour of the day huge numbers of men, who have never before experienced unemployment, walking the streets with no prospects of securing work. One deplores that, but we realise that we have to see to it that the administrative costs of the restricted department are reflected in the Estimates. The Minister has said that really the Estimates never convey the exact position. He has also declared that the 76 per cent. reduction shown here cannot be taken as an actual reduction of the expenditure in regard to the administrative costs, that it is purely a transfer of activities, and to an extent includes certain deductions in administration. I impress upon the Minister the need for realising that the department has ceased to function in many respects and that the necessities of State demand that

officers of the department be utilised in other ways until we return to a sounder position. The putting-off of men is to be deplored. Men whose work in the Works Department is slack should be utilised in other departments so that we may be able to retain the services of capable men and keep them busy, at the same time maintain whatever activity is necessary in the Works Department. I hope the Minister will take us into his confidence regarding main roads expenditure, because that is the chief activity of the Works Department.

HON. S. W. MUNSIE (Hannans) [4.46]: I wish to speak on the chief activity of one of the most important branches of the department, namely, that presided over by the Director or Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Tindale, in regard to works being put in hand for the relief of unemployed. I am really surprised to find the Government adopting such a scheme for the expenditure of loan money to relieve the unemployed. During the six years of the Collier regime the complaint individually and collectively was that the then Government were interfering in too many activities that should be left to private enterprise. It was also claimed that private enterprise could do the work better than could the Government. Now the Government have adopted a scheme for the relief of unemployment. I do not know where the money will come from. Some will come from the loan granted through the Commonwealth Government, and some, I take it, will come from the money at present being paid for sustenance. Where that money will be obtained, I do not know. I suppose it will be loan funds.

The Minister for Works: No, revenue.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Commonwealth Bank is practically carrying that liability. Members comprising the present Government criticised us frequently for interfering with private enterprise, but I say that no firm, company or private employer in Australia would attempt to employ men under the conditions proposed by the Government. I wish to make some suggestions that will help the Government in a way that the present scheme will not help them. When a private employer engages men, he strives to get the best value for the money expended. Does the Minister for Works or the Deputy Premier think that the Government will get value for the money expended under this

scheme? How is the money to be expended? I have worked out the figures for myself and I think they are accurate. A deputation waited on the Minister and so far as I can gather, a promise was given that no married man would be sent from the city to work in the country unless he was guaranteed at least a fortnight's continuous work. Wherever possible he was to be given a month's continuous work. The single men are to be sent to work in the country, and will be allowed to earn not more than 25s. 2d. per week. They will be paid for two days' work at 11s. 10d. a day, plus 1s. 6d. camp allowance. Do the Government think they will get value from men employed for two days and then compelled to stand down and loaf around for four days? It is not possible to get value from the men. It is not fair to the men themselves. Some of the work is estimated to last 30 months.

The Minister for Works: Thirty weeks.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: No, 30 months. What will be the condition of those single men if they remain the whole 30 months earning not more than 25s. 2d. a week?

Hon. P. Collier: They will not remain there because they will have neither clothes nor boots.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Quite so; not one of them will be able to remain the 30 months because men must have clothes and boots, and it will not be possible to provide them out of their earnings.

Mr. Kenneally: They will have to go bush.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Or, like the niggers, wear only a loin-cloth. The Government will certainly not get value for the money expended. I admit that the married man with four or five children will be the best off under the scheme. Consider a married man without children. He and his wife are permitted to draw 14s. a week sustenance. If the man undertakes this relief work, he will be able to earn £1 a week, making a total of 34s. a week. The Government claim that they are paying the basic wage, but that a man's earnings must be limited to £3 a week. In my opinion it is a deliberate attempt by the Government to reduce the basic wage to £3 a week. That is my firm conviction. The Government have tried to attain that end in various ways. They amended the Arbitration Act to reduce the basic wage and then introduced the financial emergency legislation empowering the

court to make further reductions. With both those measures in operation, the Government have not succeeded in getting the court to reduce the basic wage to £3 a week. The court holds that, despite the financial emergency, the basic wage is still £3 11s. 4d. a week. The Government have decided to cut off the 11s. 4d., making it £3 a week.

The Minister for Lands: Is it not a question of what money you can get?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I shall deal with that presently. The Government are spending £1,200,000 of loan money, £500,000 of which will go to the Agricultural Bank. The balance is to be spent on this scheme.

The Minister for Works: For the relief of the unemployed.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes. In my opinion it will afford no relief, but will be detrimental to the State and to the men who work under the scheme.

Hon. P. Collier: It will afford relief for the revenue and the Treasurer.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: It will afford no relief to the unfortunates who undertake the work. A married man without children will be permitted to earn 34s. a week. He will be allowed to work until he has earned sufficient, over and above the 34s. that he will draw, to spend one or more weeks at home. What chance would such a man have of providing clothes for himself or his wife or to pay rent? He would have to leave his wife in Perth.

The Minister for Works: Not necessarily.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The wife could accompany him if she so desired.

The Minister for Lands: Look what they did on the goldfields.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Scores of married men will not be in a position to take their wives to the country.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a different thing taking your family to live in a tent for a few months and going to the goldfields to permanent employment.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes. Some of the women will remain in Perth. What is the least amount on which, in the opinion of the Minister, a married man can live? I am given to understand that negotiations are being conducted by some of the officers under the scheme to provide a boarding-house or meals for men engaged on the work. It is estimated that three good meals can be provided for 14s. or 15s. a week. If a man

took his wife to the country and lived in a tent, they could not batch on that amount.

The Minister for Lands: Not on 14s. a week?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: No.

The Minister for Lands: They would not have to buy firewood.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: On some of the jobs it will be difficult to get firewood.

The Minister for Lands: I daresay the Government could overcome that difficulty.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Some of the officers have told me that there will be considerable difficulty in getting firewood at Harvey, where it is rather scarce. However, I want to ask whether the Government believe that anyone can live on less than 14s. a week? I maintain that nobody can. If anyone undertakes the task of providing meals for 14s. a week, his only chance of making money will be from the large number for whom he caters. With 14s. gone out of the £1, there will be left 6s. How could a man meet his obligations in Perth on 6s. a week? Immediately he accepts work under the scheme the landlord will expect the rent to be paid. It is only natural that a landlord should expect any man in work to pay his rent. These men will be classified as being in employment, and the landlord will naturally expect his rent. How will they be able to pay rent on 6s. a week? Where is the house that can be secured for 6s. a week? Very few rooms in Perth are available at that figure.

Mr. Parker: There is one about three doors from the Trades Hall.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The man's wife will either have to beg for her clothing or go on with makeshifts. Some of these men will, no doubt, work for four weeks and then stand down for four weeks. Married men will work for a fortnight and will then return to Perth and stay off for a fortnight.

The Minister for Works: Not necessarily.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: They can stay on the spot if they like. If the Government's theory is put into practice, men will receive two week's work and then be two weeks off, or if they receive four weeks they will have four weeks off. Numbers of these unfortunate men have been out of work for as long as 12 months. If they got a job tomorrow at ordinary labouring work, to which many are not accustomed, they could not be expected to do a fair day's work during the

first eight or ten days. It would take them fully eight or ten days to do justice to the job or themselves. It is proposed to let a man work for four weeks and then to stand down for four weeks, after which he would go through the same business over again. These men will be absolutely unfit for work at the end of a month of idleness. No employer would expect to get good results from men worked under such conditions.

The Minister for Works: They would have £1 a week more to live on during the time they were off.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes. A man and his wife are to-day receiving 14s. a week. If they are under the protection of the Court they will not have to pay any rent, but they are certainly living under very hard conditions. As soon as a man is classified as being in employment, he ceases to get the same protection, and his landlord wants the rent paid. The man with one child will be permitted to earn £2 1s. a week. He will have to work four weeks before he is entitled to go off for three weeks. He will be long enough off to become unfit to resume manual labour for several days after he goes back to work. The man with two children will work four weeks to get two weeks off. The man with three children, before being entitled to two weeks off, will have to work for seven weeks. The man with four children will be entitled to six weeks' work before getting one week off. The same thing applies to a man with five or more children. These men work for six weeks with one week off. In the expenditure of public money the Government should try to get value for it, in the interests of the State. They are not getting value under this scheme. Anyone who has had experience of manual labour knows that a man who has worked for two days and stood down for four, then worked for two more days and stood down for four, cannot give a fair return for his wages when he is working. I plead with the Government to consider these things. What chance have these men, even those who have four or six children, of getting on in the future?

The Minister for Works: This is relief work, you know.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I know that perfectly well. The Government have indicated that in about six weeks' time they hope to be able to employ, under this scheme, 10,000 men.

Mr. Kenneally: Then they will wake up.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Suppose at the end of six weeks they have picked up 10,000 men. They will then have 10,000 discontented and unfit men in their employ. It would be a thousand times better, in the interests of the State, both for the men and for the job, if, instead of the Government employing 10,000 men, who will be no good either to the Government or themselves, they employed a lesser number and put in the other £1 1s. 4d.

The Minister for Lands: If we had it.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Government have the loan money.

The Minister for Lands: We have not got it.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Government have got it. The Commonwealth have definitely agreed to lend the money, and have not placed any obstacles in the way of its expenditure, nor have they said it must be spent over a given period or paid out at a given rate of wage. At any rate, no Minister of the Crown has ever said so.

The Minister for Lands: They have not fixed the wage, but they have not given us the money.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: They have loaned us the money to carry out certain reproductive works. They have to be satisfied that the work the Government submit is reproductive before they pay over the money. I am not saying whether this is reproductive work or not, but I do maintain that no works the Government carry out under this scheme can possibly be reproductive. They cannot get the work done by the men under the proposed conditions. Instead of employing the men in the way they indicate, it would be very much better to give them the extra £1 a week. The married men will be no better off than they are now under the scheme, because the extra money they will draw will be required by their landlords. Immediately they begin work under this scheme they will be compelled to pay rent, and that will absorb the additional money. A family man will be in exactly the same position at the end of the term as he is to-day, that is to say, he will be begging for food and clothing for his children. To-day I received two letters from men in the country begging me to do something to secure clothing and boots for their children. One man says that while he has been on sustenance his children have

been clothed in bags. At the end of this proposed relief scheme they will still be clothed in bags. This scheme—leaving out the single men—will cost the Government an average of £2 10s. per week per married man employed.

The Minister for Works: It is £2 6s. 2d.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: I have worked out the cost to £2 10s. That would leave £1 1s. 4d. to make up the basic wage. If the Government can employ 10,000 under this scheme, they can employ 7,000 under basic wage conditions and work the men full time. The work would not last as long, but a man would be earning sufficient to enable him to provide something beyond a bare existence for himself and family. Under the Government scheme that is not possible. In years to come, if the cost of these works is made up I am sure it will be found it has not come anywhere near the estimate. The conditions mean that a man has his hands and muscles trained for the work he has to do, and when he is in fit condition at the end of four weeks, he is stood down and told to come back and go through all the business of hardening-up over again.

Hon. P. Collier: The cost will be 50 per cent. over the estimate.

Mr. Kenneally: And the Government are allowing 3 per cent.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Government should reconsider the whole scheme. I am not saying they have not given consideration to the unemployed. They have, however, thought out the idea of spreading the money over as wide an area as possible on the basis of giving a bare existence to everyone, and so save the money they are paying out for sustenance.

The Minister for Works: That is right.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: To that extent I agree that the Government are endeavouring to do something, but they are doing it in the wrong way.

Hon. P. Collier: The bare existence policy is a bad one.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: It is bad in the interests of the State as well as of the men. No private individual would attempt to employ men on manual work under such conditions, because the cost of the work would be too great. I appeal to the Government to give the men an opportunity to do something for themselves. Their intention, however, is to save the costs of sustenance. They can still do that and give the men a chance

to help themselves. Under the scheme itself a man has not a possible hope. To earn the highest pay, £3 per week, a man must have four or five children. And he must go into the country to get the pay. It means that he must either maintain two homes—one in the city and one in the country—or take his wife and children with him to the job. Why not give the man a chance by employing him for a few weeks on the basic wage? That would be not only in the interests of the unemployed but to the great advantage of the State as a whole. As regards loan moneys the State is limited, and the Government constantly complain of the falling revenue. Under the scheme it is not possible for the Government to obtain one penny piece more revenue, whereas if they reduce the number of men to be employed and give those actually employed a chance, there will be some additional revenue for the State. In my opinion 7,000 men could be employed at the basic wage, and their employment would mean that in a short time the other 3,000 men would be in private employment. That, however, is impossible of accomplishment under the Government's scheme. If what is suggested to the Government were carried out, the business community would realise that there were 7,000 men on a job, whereas under the Government's plan there would be 10,000 men partly employed, only to find themselves presently out of employment and as badly off as ever.

MR. KENNEALLY (East Perth) [5.19]: I hope the Minister will take note of the remarks of the member for Hannans (Hon. S. W. Munsie). Some other aspects also require the Minister's attention. At the interview members of this party had with the Minister for Works and the Minister in charge of Unemployment Relief, the former remarked that he desired to observe award conditions applying to the work. Apparently, however, there are instances in which he does not propose to do so, according to information given. There is no reference to holiday pay, which ordinarily accrues in connection with such work. The Minister proposes to cut out that condition from the Government's plan. Again, as regards camp allowance he proposes to give it to single men only for the two days per week they will be working. The men in question will be on the job for the full period, and it will not be their fault if they work only two days

per week. Setting out on a scheme such as this with a dissatisfied body of men, assuming that the men accept the work, will not result in any advantage to the State. There will be inefficiency on account of stoppages, as mentioned by the member for Hannans; and there will be disaffection which, permeating a large number of men, will mean great expense in connection with such a job. It is admitted by the Government and by ourselves that the times are abnormal. However, they are abnormal not only for the Government but also for men who have been for many months, and in some cases for years, out of employment, with the result that their reserve supplies have dwindled and vanished. Reserve supplies of clothing, boots and furniture are now non-existent. When obtaining employment, the men expect to be able to replenish in those respects; but how is that possible in the case of married men with £1 14s. per week to keep two homes going? It is utterly impossible. Cannot we devise some means by which this money shall be made available on basic wage conditions for the period during which the men will be employed? If after this money has been expended there is not more money forthcoming, that cannot be helped; but for the period the men are employed let us give them conditions which will render them somewhat contented and enable them to replenish those reserve stocks which through no fault of the men themselves have disappeared. It is not only the sustenance man on 14s. per week who is detrimentally affected. Take the case of the man on £2 9s. per week sustenance at present. He is placed in the position of having to work the full week for less than 11s., because when his receipts rise from £2 9s. to £3, they are subject to deductions bringing them down to approximately £2 18s. 6d. Thus the man now receiving £2 9s. per week by way of sustenance is asked to work the full week for an additional 9s. 6d. Moreover there would be deductions in respect of hospital tax and tent allowance, so that in many cases the difference would be less than 9s. 6d. The Minister said the man would be able to take his family down to the work; but it will not invariably be possible or politic to adopt that course. Thus the man would have to keep two homes going. My experience with regard to men who have been long out of work is that the average landlord is not prone to demand his rental when he knows

that the tenant is on sustenance. It is true that in the courts we meet with exceptional cases in which we have to prevent the landlord from demanding his pound of flesh like "Hylock of old. To the credit of many landlords in this State, however, be it said that they accept the inevitable and refrain from pushing tenants who are unemployed. I speak from experience gained in the courts when dealing with cases under the legislation for protection of tenants. However, the average landlord, when a tenant gets into work, expects not only the current rental but something on account of arrears. What possible chance has any man of reducing arrears if his earnings are limited as proposed under the Government's plan. The great difficulty I have observed in connection with sustenance is that the average man is desirous of paying his way, and so, instead of first ensuring that his wife and children are properly cared for out of the sustenance payments, small though they be, he pays the landlord a few shillings out of the sustenance, with the result that in many cases the children are kept on lower diet, even to the point of suffering. The same thing will operate under the Government's plan. The married man sent to an outlying district will have to keep two homes going, and will be compelled to spend a considerable portion of his earnings on the job. He will send home as much as he can out of his pittance, and the landlord will be waiting on the doorstep of the home in order to get first pull out of the money remitted by the husband. Under those conditions contentment is inconceivable. Seeing that under the financial emergency legislation which has been passed the basic wage is already reduced, the least the Government can do is to refrain from any additional cuts in connection with this relief work. In many cases the wage will be cut by 11s. 4d., but in some cases by the difference between £1 14s. and £3 11s. 4d. Those interested in maintaining a reasonable standard of living here should have something to say as to the further reduction proposed. If the position is accepted as it stands, then undoubtedly, when the cost of the work comes to be computed, the 3 per cent. allowance for lack of efficiency on account of the conditions under which the work is to be done will be found woefully inadequate.

The Minister for Works: Who said that?

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Minister himself told a deputation that 3 per cent. would be allowed for inefficiency.

The Minister for Works: I did not say that.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I thought the Minister did, but, at any rate, I think he will agree that if 3 per cent. is being allowed on account of inefficiency, that margin will be altogether insufficient.

The Minister for Works: I agree.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Then I suggest to the Minister that the margin will be considerably in excess of that figure. I think we must add to the cost of works undertaken, not only the margin for inefficiency, but also the cost of taking men to and from their jobs. On top of that, after those men have been away from the work for a considerable period and are given the opportunity to resume operations, there must be additional cost incurred before those men can settle down to the job. Does it not occur to the Minister that, in view of these additional costs, it would be of advantage, not only to the men themselves, but to the department from the standpoint of efficiency, if the men were paid the basic wage. There would be little additional cost to the country involved in the increased payments. I suggest that the Government should consider the possibility of employing the men on full time at the full basic rate of wages. I realise that unless more money can be made available, the employment of men on full time at the full basic rate would mean that the men would not be employed for such long periods, but that would apply anywhere and to any work. I appreciate the fact that the less the Government pay, the longer they can afford to keep men at work.

The Minister for Works: We could employ more men too.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Yes, for longer periods. But that argument reminds me of the story of the man who found that his horse could keep going with less food than he had been accustomed to give it. He experimented by cutting down the quantity of fodder until he had reduced it to a very large extent. A friend asked him how he had got on with the experiment, and the man replied, "It went very well: the trouble was that just when I got accustomed to living on a very little indeed, the horse died." We do

not want the men to suffer as a result of the meagre provision made for their remuneration. I can quite understand men straining every effort, to their own detriment, in order to make better provision for those at home, and, at the same time, I can imagine their wives, to their own detriment, scraping and pinching so that the children may have food and the family debts be paid, including those of the landlords. Seeing that there is so little margin between the reduced basic wage and the amount the Government are offering, the Government might well consider stretching a point and paying the basic wage. If they considered the comfort that the additional money would bring to the men and their families, and that those people have such financial leeway to make up, the Government might see their way clear to provide men with full-time work at full basic-wage rates in order to give a large section of the community an opportunity to make good. I do not desire to make this a party matter. Without that object in view, I remind the Minister that a definite promise was given by his leader that work would be available for all. Now that an attempt is being made to provide work, let us have that work offered under the basic wage conditions ruling throughout the country.

HON. J. C. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [5.35]: There is another aspect of the problem I wish to deal with. Apparently the policy of the Government, as indicated in the operations of the Public Works Department, is to deliberately pauperise a large section of the community who have procured a living in past years by securing engagements on public works. Apparently the policy is that if a man has been thrifty and has saved up a few pounds and has been, in every sense of the word, a good citizen, seeing that he has accepted his domestic responsibilities and has endeavoured to make himself independent, he is to be denied the opportunity of securing employment on any public works that are undertaken. It is true that, as a result of negotiations with the department, it has been arranged that men formerly employed on some works that were closed down, are to be eligible for re-employment when the work is put in hand again. The past policy has been such that unless men were absolutely indigent, they found it impossible to get Government employment in any shape or form. From the standpoint of national

ethics, the progress of the country must depend on the collective conduct of our citizens. If our people adopt what the vast majority of people would regard as the proper attitude, and have lived thrifty, frugal lives, thereby making provision for a rainy day, it is not right that the very fact that they have saved their money should debar them from securing employment when the rainy day dawned. Such people should not be debarred from the possibility of securing employment in order to sustain themselves and their families unless they showed themselves to be absolutely indigent. Such a policy would be absolutely wrong. Many men are saying, "If I have been wasteful in the past and have not cared what happened to-morrow but have spent every shilling I got in silly, wasteful ways, not conducive to the progress and welfare of the nation, the State will now look after me, and provide me with work." There are others who have said, "Because I have not been wasteful in the past and spent every shilling I earned in stupid, silly ways, I am penalised now because I am not allowed to participate in any work that is offering. I must show that I have spent all the money I have saved." Such a policy must undermine the character of the whole nation. It is ridiculous to penalise people who have acted in the way that most people would regard as in accord with the best traditions of citizenship. I have received a letter from a man who protests very clearly against the policy that has been adopted. He puts the case in such a way that I consider the letter is worthy of placing before the Committee. This man was employed on public works in the past and had saved a few pounds and bought a house. He was in a position of being able to live for, perhaps, 12 months before requiring sustenance. That meant that he would not be able to get a job for a year or more, until he had spent every single shilling he had saved.

Mr. Wells: A man came to me this morning with a complaint along the same lines.

HON. J. C. WILLCOCK: The hon. member will not agree that that is the proper policy to adopt. I will read a few extracts from the letter. This man says that he applied for work on a Government job where he had been employed before the work was closed down some time ago. He says—

I was told I would have to go to the police and apply there. This morning I was informed

at the police station that I would have to fill in the sustenance form and that unless I was destitute, there was no hope of work. As I have a house of my own in which I live and a few pounds in the bank, I was not able honestly to do this. Therefore, I declined to fill in the form but requested them to take down my application for re-employment, also my responsibilities, being a married man with wife and one child wholly dependent on me, and two daughters partially dependent. This they did.

There are very few men who will be eligible for employment on the work for which this man applied, because men require to have considerable experience in such undertakings. The man also says—

There are very few of the mechanics, etc., who will be eligible for re-employment on this destitution basis, and any way it is a crying scandal that the decent steady worker who has put by a little should be turned down and denied the opportunity to earn a scanty living at a time when it is practically impossible to get a job in Australia. I am trying to put the position calmly and without indignation, because I feel sure you can see the force of the situation. I know the present is an exceptional time of emergency but I also think that no emergency justifies injustice, and that is the way the present regulations work out.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the penalty for being thrifty.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: The man who squanders his money every week can get work, and the man who puts something by is debarred that opportunity.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: In the interests of the morale of the nation, we should not adopt any such policy. While it may be said that the Government can accept responsibility only in respect of people who are indigent, there is also a responsibility upon the Government to see that men of character and principle are not subjected to unjust treatment because they have been thrifty, and have lived frugally and in accordance with the dictates of exemplary citizenship in the past. We should re-adjust our views on this question. If it becomes necessary to provide sustenance for people who are in unfortunate circumstances, it should be a responsibility accepted by Parliament as a whole. It should not be the policy of any Government or of any country to permit deliberately any of the citizens to be pauperised and denied the right of employment. There are between

15,000 and 16,000 men who have been engaged in employment on public works, put in hand as the result of loans floated from time to time. Why should any Government rule that those who have been good citizens in the past and have not spent their money wantonly at the races, in hotels, or at two-up schools, must be pauperised before they will be given an opportunity to secure employment? In my opinion, those who have usually found employment on public works should be given the opportunity of re-employment irrespective of their financial position at the moment. I do not say that others who have never made that their practice in the past should be given the same opportunity under the same conditions. There are many men who have followed that occupation as the result of loan expenditure on public works for the past 30 years. Many of them have gone out into backblocks and have lived in tents under varying conditions, enduring all the hardships that such experiences entail. They have participated in the construction of railway lines to Meekatharra, Wiluna and other districts outback and have been employed in works of various descriptions away from centres of civilisation. They have lived frugally and simply and have saved a few pounds. Yet the Government decree that such men must be deliberately pauperised before they are to be given employment again. I appeal to the Government on behalf of these people—I think there are between 15,000 and 20,000 men who usually follow public works employment in this State.

The Minister for Works: Not that many.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: There are 10,000, anyway. In the past the annual expenditure of loan money has amounted to between £4,000,000 and £5,000,000. I do not mean that the number of men I have quoted would follow public works solely; I have in mind also work associated with the railways, for instance at the workshops, from which between 300 and 400 men have been put off because the Government have not been able to find money to continue the construction of rolling stock. There are also many other activities on which loan money is spent. When there is no loan money to spend, the employment of these people is gone. The possibilities of these men earning an honest living should not be denied. Equal opportunity should be given to every citizen to

obtain any employment that is offered, and if there is not sufficient employment to go round, then for those people who are indigent it might be necessary to supply sustenance. But we must not deliberately pauperise those who have done hard work to assist to build up the State.

MR. WELLS (Canning) [5.48]: I have listened with a good deal of interest to the debate on this particular subject, and I congratulate the Government on their proposal to find work for those men who are out of employment and in distress. A subject of this kind gives us food for a good deal of thought and we should all try to assist the Government to solve the problem in a way that will be in the best interests of the people of the State. I am inclined to agree with the view expressed by the member for Hannans that the best system would be to employ the men continuously and not on part time, employ them until the money had been expended. I am sure that would be much better for the men themselves, their families and the State in general.

The Minister for Railways: What would you do after that?

Mr. WELLS: I am merely voicing my opinion. If we gave these men the basic wage during the period they were working and kept them occupied full time it would be better for the men themselves and those who are dependent on them. There is a good deal in the point made by the member for Hannans that more money would be in circulation, and tradespeople and the smaller factories would benefit by reason that they would supply the articles that would be required. Thus in that way employment would also be provided for people in those directions, in addition to the relief work that was being carried out by the Government. Undoubtedly there are thousands of men who are dissatisfied because they are out of work, and probably this would be the best way to create contentment amongst them. I know, of course, that no matter what we might do for some men, they would still be dissatisfied. Those people, however, are not deserving of consideration. A number came to see me with regard to relief work and they freely offered opinions as to what should be done for them by members of this House. They expressed the view that we should all be annihilated and that everything

should be confiscated and distributed amongst those who are out of work. That kind of talk is all silly rot. The honest toilers should receive every consideration, and if we employed them on the basic wage we would be doing the right thing. So far as a main roads scheme is concerned, a definite programme should be submitted to this House. My experience of the Main Roads Board during the past six or seven years has led me to form the conclusion that it is one of the avenues which permits all sorts of loose methods to creep in. The policy of the Government in respect of roads should be submitted to the House and members given the opportunity to discuss it. I am positive that then the result of the criticism would be better and more economical work. It might also result in the avoidance of waste as far as money is concerned. I know of instances where thousands of pounds were wasted because of lack of proper supervision. Members are aware that there has been a good deal of waste under the Main Roads Board system, and therefore in times of stress such as these, we should see to it that every penny is judiciously spent. I congratulate the Government on their proposal and I feel sure that they have no desire to pauperise anybody in the State, but that they wish to do the best they can with the funds that are available. I repeat that I consider it would be better to employ men on relief works full time and pay them the basic wage until the available money was exhausted. Then, as the member for South Fremantle said, we could take the next hurdle on coming to it.

MR. MILLINGTON (Mt. Hawthorn) [5.53]: The proposal of the Government to absorb a number of unemployed, I presume, represents a part of the plan evolved by Governments for the overcoming of our difficulties. This is what they consider to be the best manner in which to expend the limited funds at their disposal. In the Minister's own words, the expenditure proposed will mean that each man will receive £2 6s. per week. The Government plan proposes that 10,000 men shall be absorbed. I understand that there are 16,000 unemployed in Western Australia but it is assumed that 10,000 will be engaged for a period of 30 weeks and that the earnings of each per week will be £2 6s. I think we must have a better plan than that, because at the end of

that time all those men will be worse off than they are to-day. There are also those who will not be absorbed under the scheme and they will be on sustenance. Does that represent the best that can be done from the Government's point of view with the money that is available? I think I have heard a similar proposal described in this way: It is like an attempt to fill a lot of narrow-necked receptacles such as bottles by throwing a bucket of water over them. I do not propose to deal with the scheme in detail, nor to reiterate what has been said by other speakers, but if we are disposed to resign ourselves to the existing conditions, there will happen what has happened in past years and what history has disclosed, namely, we shall succumb to dumb resignation, a disease from which civilisations have perished. That I am afraid is what we are drifting to here. It appears to me that those who are getting sustenance are not as fortunate, as are those who are having paid in full certain of their debts. What is the impression outside? I know that the Premiers and those associated with the Loan Council did their utmost to get the best assistance they could from our financial backers in Australia. The Premiers returned to their States and said, "This is the utmost amount we can get. We are now to devise a plan to provide employment and spread it over a period of 30 weeks." I presume that our financial backers are meeting our obligations and liabilities to a certain extent, but I am convinced that the most unfortunate are getting the best deal. As far as Western Australia is concerned, it will be said, "I have seen it advertised under the authority of the Minister for Works that the Government of this State can provide employment for 10,000 people." Consequently the financial backers will turn their attention to the problems of the more unfortunate people. They will say, "Western Australia has done splendidly; we expect them to come through and with the capacity of the Government in Power, and the admitted stamina of the people of the State—loyal people—Western Australia will be all right." Then attention will be turned to the Loan Council and to those responsible for providing the financial backing—a rather mysterious body. Inquiries will be made as to what will be the needs of Australia and they will be told how those needs can be supplied. As I said, as far as Western Aus-

tralia is concerned, the impression will be that this State will be all right for the next 30 weeks. Then no one else will bother about it and the attention of the powers that be will be turned to those who are driving harder bargains for the unemployed. It may also be that other obligations that do not merit the same attention as those of the unemployed will receive a better deal. Having got that money and not having been tied down with restrictions by the Loan Council or anyone else, instead of spreading the expenditure over a period, the Government should use it in such a manner that it will have a permanently good effect. The Government should have taken its courage in its hands and said that whilst they had this backing they would utilise the available money in a manner that would have some permanent effect on the unemployed. I do not think any member of the Government suggests that this scheme is going to afford any permanent relief: whereas, if instead of spreading it over 30 weeks the period were limited to 20 weeks, and a corresponding increase in pay given to those called upon to work under the scheme, some real relief might be afforded. Then it would be known that, not at the end of 30 weeks, but at the end of 20 weeks additional provision would have to be made. But it seems to me the Government are disposed to accept the position. Having given the unemployed problem this very thin coat of paint, they will find it too thin to cover properly and that, instead of having overcome the unemployed difficulty, they have not dealt with it at all.

The Attorney General: No one suggests that the scheme will overcome the problem.

Mr. MILLINGTON: No, it is only a question of amelioration. But it doesn't even afford amelioration. It does not increase the spending capacity of those employed to the extent that one would think; for although an additional amount will be given to a certain number of men, the Government themselves must have realised that the main difficulty in this proposal is that those receiving the extra £1 will not find it in any way sufficient. On several occasions we have suggested some way of overcoming the rent problem, have suggested that we should get an extra £1 to pay that. Now the extra £1 is forthcoming, but in such a way that not a penny of it can be utilised

in solving the rent problem. So the families affected will not have their condition in any way bettered, but will be actually living on the same starvation rate, because they will have to keep two homes. I do not think attention has been given to that phase of the problem. It is true that anyone employed in the metropolitan area will get the advantage of the £1. But I should like the Minister to explain how a man keeping two homes will get any advantage from that extra £1. The Minister knows perfectly well that that part of the problem, although it has been considered, does not relieve those employed under this scheme; it applies only where they are employed near to their homes, where they can keep their families together. The Minister knows it is perfectly useless when it comes to dividing the family and having to maintain two homes. That is why we on this side take strong exception to the money being spread over 30 weeks, and to the limitation of the amount despite the fact that the men are keeping two homes. While this is so it will have no appreciable effect on the trading section of the community. If the men were employed in Perth and so were getting the advantage of that extra £1, it would go into the avenues of trade and commerce.

The Minister for Works: Quite a number of them will be employed in the metropolitan area.

Mr. MILLINGTON: There certainly is an advantage for those employed locally, but I understand that only some 700 will be employed in the metropolitan area, while the balance of the 10,000 will be employed in the country. So it is a question of seven or eight to one; the one will get an advantage, but the seven or eight will get no advantage under this proposal.

The Minister for Works: Why?

Mr. MILLINGTON: Because where a man goes from the metropolitan area to a country job he will not get the advantage of the extra £1, for the reason that he will have to keep two homes.

The Minister for Works: Thousands of men in the country are on sustenance.

Mr. MILLINGTON: On the Minister's own figures, let us take the metropolitan area. He gave us 8,000 married men and 3,000 single men. Out of those 11,000, only 700 will be provided with work in the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: More than that.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The more the percentage employed in the metropolitan area increases, the more bearable becomes the scheme. But the fact remains that the biggest section will have to leave the metropolitan area, where they are already housed, and go into the country. That is the weakness of the scheme and its most objectionable feature, the one which the Government have not been able to provide for. That is the objection raised by the man who is asked to take on this scheme. When we ask a man to work, we have to give him some incentive, to show him that his position will be improved if he does work.

The Minister for Railways: It will be improved, for he will get 5s. 6d. per week over the basic wage and we shall take only a shilling from him. That will give him 4s. 6d.

Mr. Marshall: He will get fat on that.

The Minister for Railways: Oh, you are only playing a political game.

Mr. MILLINGTON: There is no political game being played. Let us see what the Minister himself proposes.

The Minister for Lands: You know funds are not available with which to do what you are asking.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I am not complaining about the amount they receive for a week's work in the country. I am not complaining of the rate.

The Minister for Railways: The Communists have put it all over you.

Mr. Marshall: And they will put it over some of you, too, before long.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The Communists are putting it all over us on the one hand, and the Government are putting it all over us on the other hand; so we are crushed. The Minister says there is an advantage in this scheme. I agree that the man who went into the country and got the right rate of pay plus the allowance, would get an advantage if he could be permanently employed; although there is always a great disadvantage in keeping a home in Perth while working in the country. The Minister knows, too, that the men can draw their £1 per week plus sustenance.

The Minister for Railways: Which includes a man and his wife and family.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The fact that he gets £3 11s. 4d. per week plus 5s. 3d. does not affect the position, but it does affect the time he is called upon to work: that is all.

If he goes into the country and works at that rate for three weeks, he has £11 10s., after which he has to take time off. A married man will draw £1 plus sustenance per week. I defy the Minister to show that the unfortunate man can pay rent on that. That is the part which the Government have not provided for, the difference between a man who has to keep two homes and another man who is working in the metropolitan area. The last-named certainly gets an advantage which the other man does not, for he does not have to go into the country and leave his family to live on sustenance.

The Minister for Railways: It is not fair to say that.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Well, I want to be fair, because I recognise the difficulty confronting the Government.

The Minister for Railways: Four Australian Governments are Labour Governments, and they are doing no better than this Government. Why do not they stand up against the Communists, who have them firmly in hand?

Hon. S. W. Munsie: They have not.

The Minister for Railways: Yes, they have you all.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I have not abused the Government as a whole, nor any member of the Government. I do not suggest that any undue influence has been brought to bear on the Government, so why should the Minister suggest that I am subject to the influence of the Communists? I do not think the Minister intended that as a fair comment, nor do I think it has anything to do with the case.

The Minister for Railways: Yes, it has a lot to do with it.

Mr. MILLINGTON: If we had Communists here in this House they would not speak nicely and quietly to the Minister, as I do, but would give him plenty of abuse.

The Minister for Railways: And they might spare some abuse for your side. Your leader is accused of having linked up with us: he is getting abused, and not one of you is defending him.

Mr. MILLINGTON: At present we are analysing a scheme. It is not a question of abuse, nor of defence; it is a question whether we are making the conditions of the unemployed men any better. I do not think we shall get anything out of the Government by abusing them: my idea is to

reason with them. If the Minister can show that the unemployed, or those of them that go into the country, are getting any advantage under this scheme, I will be disposed to support him. So far he has not been able to show that.

The Minister for Railways: Here is a nice circular: "Beware of Trades Hall tricksters and A.L.P. fakers." Yet those Communists can go to your meetings.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: They cannot, and you know it.

The Minister for Railways: They do not go as a party, perhaps.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: The Minister knows that he is incorrect.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I do not think it would be any comfort to the unemployed even if we were dragged at the chariot wheels of the Communists. That would not be any comfort to the unemployed, for they expect us to deal with this scheme in the House. And the Minister is not going to get us off the track by reminding us that someone on the Esplanade called us names.

Hon. A. McCallum: And since the Minister is looking for trouble, he need not think we will let him off lightly.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The Minister knows we had to stand up to their criticism and abuse.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I was endeavouring to show that there should be a reconstruction of the Government's scheme. It appears that the Government are not prepared to accept even the slightest modification of the scheme as it applies to unemployed sent to work in the country. That is the objectionable part; it is a part that the Government could well reconsider. The unemployed are the ones concerned and they take a decided objection to country jobs on the conditions set out. Therefore, instead of members on the Government side imputing all the motives imaginable to us who are endeavouring to examine the scheme, I suggest that the correct attitude for the Government to adopt is to reconsider the proposal. I am prepared to admit the difficulties confronting the Government. No matter what party were in power, they would have to face the difficulties, but those difficulties will not be overcome if the Government will not listen to suggestions made in all good faith,

but generate as much heat as possible and defend their errors as they would defend their heritage. The Government, with a realisation of the difficulties, should be prepared to accept advice. The amount of money available is limited, and our suggestion is that it should be spent in a different way. When the available funds have been exhausted, then will be the time to approach the powers-that-be and apply for additional money to provide work for the unemployed.

The Minister for Works: We would not get it.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Not if the Government quietly submit to what is doled out to them. They should adopt the attitude adopted by the unemployed, who were offered a dole and did not hesitate to say they wanted something better. They have had sufficient courage to ask for something better. When we find a crowd of men situated as they are on the starvation line, who will put up a fight for better conditions, the Government should support them. What would be the position if members of the Opposition calmly accepted what they are informed is the best offering as the best that could be obtained. The unemployed have indicated the deficiencies of the plan, and we have indicated that the Government will have our support if they endeavour to get better terms from the financial institutions. There is a brighter prospect of the Government getting something better with the assistance of this side of the House than if we calmly accepted the scheme as sufficient to meet the problem. If such a proposal were accepted throughout Australia, the Governments, as well as the unemployed, would be asked to accept worse terms in future. I do not suggest that the Government are satisfied with what is now offered them, but I do suggest that with the backing they can get from this side of the House and from the unemployed—

The Minister for Works: What good will that do? To whom would we go for money?

Mr. MILLINGTON: What happened to other Government creditors? Have they accepted the terms? Only at the point of the bayonet. Even so, many creditors of the Commonwealth and State are demanding their pound of flesh.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Has not every Government in Australia, both Labour and Nationalist, accepted the plan?

Mr. MILLINGTON: The proposal I am discussing is something for which the State Government are entirely responsible.

The Minister for Works: It comprises the best terms that any Government could get.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The Government have a certain amount of money to spend on public works to absorb the unemployed, and the manner in which the scheme is laid out is something for which the Government alone are responsible. Therefore it is no reply to suggest that a Government in some other State may not be doing as well. It will take us all our time to settle the problem in this State. That is the task confronting the Government. Having made the best terms possible for the time being, the Government are laying out the money made available to them.

The Minister for Works: The terms are the same for all the Governments in Australia.

Mr. MILLINGTON: No; the Government are responsible for deciding how the money shall be spent. On that point they are not being dictated to. Neither the Loan Council nor the Premiers' Conference has stipulated that the State Government must spend the money over a period of 30 weeks in this particular way. That is what the Government have decided. Therefore we are making proposals to the Government. We have no means of meeting or influencing the Loan Council, but we have some say as to the manner in which the public money shall be expended in this State. I do not intend to draw any comparisons with what is done in the Eastern States or in other parts of the world. If we take the money and utilise it so that the unemployed and the community generally derive the maximum benefit, we can then go to the Loan Council and ask for additional money. On the other hand, if the money is spent as the Government suggest, I venture to say that at the end of 30 weeks they will not be able to make out much of a case for additional funds. The powers-that-be will realise that the money has been dribbled away, and that the unemployed are in a worse condition than they were before the scheme was started. Consequently the Government will defeat their own object if they dole out the money in the parsimonious manner proposed. If they adopted a bolder policy, and said, "While we have the money, we will lay it out so that the unemployed

will derive some advantage and be able to take their place in the community," there would be a possibility of industry's reviving. If we adopt this timid policy of attempting to overcome the difficulty by placing 10,000 men in work at £2 6s. a week, we shall not recover. The Government have the power to determine how the money shall be spent, and we suggest that the men going to work in the country will not derive any advantage from the scheme since the money they get will be spent in keeping two homes going. I submit, independently of the general request that the basic wage be paid, that there should be additional advantage given to those who go into the country and consequently have two homes to keep. That is a phase the Government will have to consider. With work laid down on the lines suggested by the Government, there will be a general deterioration amongst the men. What incentive will there be to give a reasonable return for the money spent? The money will be expended in dribs and drabs and as soon as the workers get into something like form, after having been out of work and poorly fed for months, they will be knocked off. If we want men to value a job, we have to make it worth while. No value will be placed upon the work by the men employed, and the work will be a total failure. Conversely, if we provide the incentive of a given number of week's work, and pay the men for it after it is completed, they will work well. Under the conditions proposed by the Government, it will be impossible to get satisfaction. Without indulging in any heated argument or undue criticism of the Government, I suggest that, in the interests of the Government, the unemployed, and the community generally, and in the interests of the revival of industry, the Government should reconsider the scheme on the lines indicated by members of the Opposition.

[Mr. Angelo took the Chair.]

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall—in reply) [7.41]: I naturally wish to take the opportunity to reply. I know members would be greatly disappointed if I did not answer the many statements made here to-night. The debate has been somewhat different from that which took place last night. When I came to the House yesterday I was not aware that my Estimates would be dealt

with, and I am sure, from the attitude of members opposite, they were in the same position. The consequence was that they had to advance some criticism—it was rather amusing to me—merely as an aid to carry on until they had an opportunity to investigate the matter further.

Mr. Kenneally: Until the Minister had an opportunity to study his own Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member studied them all his life, he would not be able to understand them.

Hon. P. Collier: Not in the way they are presented.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They are presented in the same way as they have always been presented in this Chamber.

Hon. P. Collier: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There are two exceptions, which were mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, the extra column on the side of the Estimates and the extra line at the bottom. Last night the debate centred on the question of the Estimates of the Main Roads Board, the first speaker having been the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. According to the "West Australian" report, he stated—

He hoped that Parliament would be given an opportunity of discussing main roads. However, there was not a mention of main roads activities, apart from the director's salary. How could authority be given to main road expenditure unless Parliament approved of it.

He went on to say that this was the first time that it had been omitted. Previously the whole of the programme of main road activities had been open for discussion, not only the programme for one year, but the programme for five years.

Mr. Panton: That is an unusually good report to find in the "West Australian."

Mr. Raphael: He must have paid something to get that in.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I thought I would read this to hon. members. There never has been a programme for main roads put up in this House, and this House has never been asked to approve of one. I have gone through "Hansard" and read all the speeches of my predecessor on the Public Works Estimates from 1926 onwards, also his speeches on the main roads legislation, on the Federal Aid Roads Agreement, and on the Loan Estimates.

Hon. P. Collier: You must have got up very early to read all that.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I did I wished to find out what the position was. The member for South Fremantle stated that this House has always been asked to give its approval to the main roads programme.

Hon. A. McCallum: I said to discuss it.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: He referred to the five years plan. In 1926 the then member for Yilgarn, by way of a question, asked the Minister for Works of that day if it was his intention to tell members what was proposed in connection with the expenditure on main roads. About two months later the Minister hung up in a corner of the Chamber a map showing the whole of the roads of the State upon which it was contemplated to spend money during the ensuing five years. There were no Estimates and no discussions. It was simply a reply to a question, and this is where I slipped in regard to the Public Works Estimates. When these have been discussed the Minister has always informed the House as to the expenditure for the previous year, but he has never asked the House to approve of the expenditure for the ensuing year.

Hon. P. Collier: He has stated the proposals for the ensuing year.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The five years' programme was never carried out. It could never have been carried out in the way that was then anticipated.

Hon. P. Collier: Conditions were changing all the time.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, it was impossible. If the proposals had been approved by Parliament and could not have been altered, the Minister and the board would have been placed in a bad position.

Hon. P. Collier: So far as we knew at the time the five years' programme was the correct thing.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Minister also stated that each local governing body was to receive an average of £2,000 a year during that five years. That was published in the Press. Every year there has been a report laid on the Table of the House from the Main Roads Board. I thought I would be able to lay this year's report on the Table before these Estimates came down, but I have it here now. When bringing down the Main Roads Bill, and the Federal Aid Roads Agreement I gave the House all possible information. There was

no item on these Estimates under which I could give such information. Last year when introducing the Estimates, in my reference to Main Roads Board activities, I mentioned the fact that in 1929-30 there were two items on the Estimates, one of £21,000 odd, grant to local governing bodies, and the other of £32,000 odd, coming out of revenue in connection with the Federal Aid Roads Act. Those amounts are not in the Estimates this year. That is the only information I gave to the House. The member for South Fremantle spoke after I did, and this is what he said in connection with main roads:—

There are two items at the top of page 81 of the Estimates, one for £21,000 and the other for £32,000 shown as the expenditure for last year. There we have a total of £53,000 expended last year and no item this year.

I had already explained it to the House, and re-explained it when introducing the Estimates. My predecessor did not say anything about "my Estimates." He simply left it there. I said, "You know the reason for that." The member for South Fremantle said, "Yes, I am drawing the attention of the Minister for Lands to some statement he made at Collie." Last year that is all that was said in connection with main roads. In 1929, the Minister for Works in introducing his Estimates, explained to the House the amount of money that had been expended in the previous year, and this I should have done. The Estimates were sprung upon me and I had not the information ready, though I have it now. This is exactly the same way in which the Estimates have been dealt with every year. I will now give the House the information I should have given when first introducing the Estimates.

Hon. P. Collier: If you plead guilty we will let you off lightly.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The gross expenditure on works undertaken during the year amounted to £558,510, provided for from the undermentioned sources: Federal A. Roads Fund, Main Roads, £286,633, developmental roads £172,075, Commonwealth-State grant No. 3 £17 6s. 8d., Commonwealth grant for relief to unemployed £9,662; State funds, main roads grant, maintenance of main roads, £55,216 11s. 9d., traffic fees account, maintenance of metropolitan roads and bridges £8,650 8s.

11d.; General Loan Fund, miscellaneous works, £2,157 7s. 11d.; Sale of Government Property Trust Account, £23,963; Works and Sales Account £119 18s. 7d. All this expenditure is referred to in the annual report of the Main Roads Board and appears every year. A copy of this report is laid on the Table of the House every year, and from it every member can see the amount of money allocated to each local governing body, the amount of money expended on each road, the amount expended each year, the amount still due, and the balance available. The Minister of the day in all good faith made his statement regarding the five-year plan. The reason why he did not carry it out was because of something over which he had no control. On the 21st February, 1930, this State was behind in the amount of money that had to be contributed for the building of main roads by £113,000. We have never found any money out of State funds since. Under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement this State has contributed £722,210. This was contributed up to the 21st February, 1930. From loan funds the sum of £73,000 was contributed, making a total of £795,210. If the programme had been carried out in its entirety over the five years, the State would have had to find another £644,790. The money has not been available, and we have not been able to carry out all the allocations to local governing bodies that it was agreed to make. Ever since I have been Minister for Works I have received requests from various local governing bodies. They have said, "You owe us money for our allocations." I have had considerable trouble in satisfying them that it was impossible for the Government to find the money, because it was not available. The Leader of the Opposition said all the money had to be appropriated by Parliament. I have here the Main Roads Act, passed in 1930. Section 17 says—

The Commissioner, so far as any moneys legally available for the purpose permit shall—

It then goes on to deal with surveys and investigations and so forth. Section 18 says—

No contract involving an expenditure by the Commissioner of an amount exceeding £1,000 shall be entered into without the written consent of the Minister being first obtained.

The ex-Minister for Works frequently stated that he had no control. The only thing he had no control over was expenditure under £1,000. It is not my experience that the Main Roads Board wish to take any wider authority than this. Section 30 says, under the heading of Main Roads Trust Account—

There shall be paid every year to the credit of an account to be established at the Treasury and to be called "The Main Roads Trust Account," the annual amount of the fees and moneys following.

It then deals with the petrol tax, all moneys payable to local governing bodies, all moneys received by the State under the provisions of the agreement set out in the Federal Aid Roads Act, 1926, and any variations thereof, and also all other moneys that may be received by the State Government from the Commonwealth for the purpose of the construction, reconstruction, or the maintenance of main roads. This money is paid directly into the Main Roads Trust Account, and legally the Commissioner may use it. Paragraph (e) of Section 30 says—

All moneys appropriated by Parliament or advanced by the Treasurer for the purposes of this Act.

The reason why these matters have been discussed on previous Works Estimates is that there has always been an item of £32,000 or £34,000, and members have been able to speak upon the matter. I have even done so myself, and have taken the opportunity to criticise the board for work that was being done in my electorate. I have not been able to ascertain what amount of money was spent and on what roads it was spent, for such questions have never been discussed by Parliament.

Hon. A. McCallum: They have been discussed by Parliament.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not in detail.

Hon. A. McCallum: We have discussed them every year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no record in any of the Minister's speeches that it has ever been done.

Hon. A. McCallum: It is in your speeches.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have said so. I asked for a plan of the ensuing year's work, but that plan was never laid on the Table.

Hon. A. McCallum: You never asked for the ensuing year's work.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I should have told members what was done last year. On the Loan Estimates we discussed the matter generally. I should like to be able to put a plan before the House to show where every road is, and exactly how much is being spent upon them. Once that expenditure has been approved by the House it becomes impossible to alter it. Frequently local authorities have decided they did not want this or that road but wanted another, and we have had to approach the Commonwealth for leave to alter the programme. It has been possible to make certain alterations as between State and Commonwealth Ministers, but such alterations could not have so readily been made if it had been a question of getting the consent of Parliament. Section 31 says—

The amount of all fees and moneys paid into the Main Roads Trust Account—(a) Shall in the first place be chargeable with the costs of collection as certified by the Minister . . . (b) Subject as aforesaid shall be used and applied in such manner . . . on the recommendation of the Commissioner.

The matter has always been carried out in this way. I have indicated what has been done in the past. In my opinion the position of Minister for Works at the present time is more difficult than it has been in the case of any previous Minister. It is impossible from one week to the other to make a plan because things change so rapidly in these times. There is unemployment everywhere and there are sustenance men everywhere. I regard it as my duty to assist the Treasurer in finding work for those men in the country districts. Accordingly, I have not always made a road where it was the best policy to make one. Nowadays it is not possible to do what one knows is right in order to get work carried out as cheaply as possible, say by calling tenders. We are faced with the difficulty of paying away in sustenance hundreds of thousands of pounds which we do not possess. I have here a list of 99 road boards showing that they have on sustenance no less a number than 1,945 men.

Hon. P. Collier: Are those men, who are working in the country, to get a chance as well?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am trying to arrange that now. Many of those men in the country are already working for sustenance. In fact, many men in the city

are at present working for what they receive by way of sustenance. But it is my hope that these men, instead of making footpaths, may be provided out of the Federal Aid Roads Grant with an extra £1 per week so that permanent work may be carried out. It will be much better for them if they receive the extra £1 per week. Notwithstanding certain meetings which have been held, I am convinced that 75 per cent. of the unemployed are only too anxious to get off sustenance and earn their own living instead of being paid out of the pockets of other people for doing nothing. The present position is one that in the past could never have been imagined. At all events, it is one which I myself could never have thought possible. Day by day and week by week we have to change our ideas.

Mr. Raphael: You will have to change to socialism yet.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I agree that in some districts the Government have done work which in ordinary times would not have been done. But the Government's guiding principle is to make the money available carry unemployed men on as long as possible. I did not think it would be necessary for me to deal with this scheme at the present juncture. I have been asked how similar funds will be spent next year, though of course we do not yet know how much money we shall receive then. Payment is only to be made as petrol is sold and the tax collected. We have been informed that we shall receive £20,000 per month. Whether that amount will increase at the end of the year can only be determined when the total tax of 2½d. per gallon has been collected. Of the amount of £300,000, it is suggested that £43,000 should be spent in the metropolitan area, £68,000 in the Bunbury-Bridgetown district, £17,000 in the Northam district, £44,000 in the Narrogin-Albany district, £22,000 in the Geraldton district, and £6,000 in the Kalgoorlie district, while £50,000 will be absorbed in salaries and commitments.

Mr. Coverley: What about the North-West?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot assure the Chamber that it will be possible to carry out this programme.

Hon. P. Collier: Are the figures you have given based on a total of £300,000?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, including the amount secured through traffic

fees. Maintenance of all other roads in the State is also included. At present things in the Public Works Department are awkward for both myself and the officers. In ordinary conditions the officers know what money will be available from year to year, and do the work on full time. Thus things run smoothly. But now everything is changed. From day to day we do not know whether we can keep the work going. The Premier is not in the Chamber, but I may mention that from a discussion I had with him in his office I understand that the funds are provided by the Loan Council, and that the total amount of loan money available for the year is £1,200,000. So far, however, approval has been given only up to the end of December. After that date the remaining £600,000 has to be allocated. The funds are supplied only on condition that they are utilised in relief works. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that they are also used for the purpose of relieving revenue. Unless something like this is done, it will be absolutely impossible for the State to carry on. We have been told that our deficit will be financed up to a certain amount, but revenue is not being received. To hear some hon. members speak, one would think that the metropolitan area was Western Australia; but I have stated that I have here a list of country road boards with 1,945 men on sustenance. I hope that those men will be put on work and enabled to earn a little more money. I agree with much that has been said here, especially about the tragic position of men not on sustenance being unable to get work. It breaks one's heart to think of such a thing. Still, the Government cannot find money to keep unemployed men on sustenance doing nothing, and also find money for other men to do work. The two things are conjoint. The member for Hannans (Hon. S. W. Munsie) spoke of 30 months' relief work. Surely it is a poor look-out for Western Australia if we are to have relief work extending over 30 months. My hope is that such work will last far less than 30 months, and perhaps even less than 30 weeks. I hope that even before the latter period expires, men on relief will be in work.

Mr. Raphael: On 34 bob a week!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know about that, but if the hon. member applied to me for work at 34s. a week I certainly would not employ him. To be

serious, however, when I spoke of employment being found for 10,000 men, I expressed something that is a hope. The scheme approved by the Premier for my department is to absorb 6,000 men. Of the men on sustenance, two-thirds are married and one-third are single, which on a basis of 6,000 means 4,000 married men and 2,000 single men. I agree that it is not pleasant to ask a single man to work two days per week for 25s. 3d., but it is much better for him than to walk about the streets of the city on 10s. a week doing nothing. If he does work in return for the money he receives, he has his self-respect afterwards. I repeat, I am convinced that 75 per cent. of the men out of work are willing to accept employment of this kind, because they realise that there is none better offering. I am just as sorry as any other member that necessity places the Government in this position. We cannot do any better. We must take the men off sustenance so that we may carry on, and this is the only way we can do it. Although I agree that our problem is our own, yet the question of finance is not only Western Australia's problem, but the problem of Australia. We are bound up with all the other Australian States, and any money we get comes, not from our own State, but from the decisions of the Loan Council and the decisions of the banks if they can find the money.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Does the money come from the Federal Government, or from the Loan Council?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know.

Hon. P. Collier: It comes from the Commonwealth Bank. The Federal Government have to approach the bank.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not wish to speak about the Federal Government or any other Government.

Hon. M. F. Troy: You blame the Federal Government when you do not get the money.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. Surely the hon. member can leave out that aspect.

Hon. M. F. Troy: You revile the Federal Government whenever you can.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think I should be asked to reply here to some statements made to fellow-farmers; but anything that I said to fellow-farmers, I would be prepared to say here. With a

great deal of what hon. members opposite have stated I agree. The thrifty man who has saved his money has to spend it before he gets a job. That is a pitiable position, but what can the Government do? Here we are, paying away £600,000 a year in sustenance. We cannot pay it if we have not got it. We cannot continue to pay it and also fulfil our obligations to the Premiers' Conference. The money has to be provided out of loan in order to relieve revenue. The Premier has asked me to do that, and I have tried. I am sorry that trouble has arisen as to the picking-up of men, but up to date we have obtained all the men we require, and I honestly believe we shall continue to get them in future. The opposition to this plan, and for that matter to any plan, comes from a small but noisy section, who are stopping honest men from doing work which they want to do. I consider it to be the duty of all public men to disregard that small, loud-voiced section who never have worked and never will work.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They are fellows you are husbanding in Blackboy.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: And then when I put up a scheme that will take such men out of Blackboy, we find it opposed. I believe the scheme has taken them away from Blackboy and will continue to do so in the future.

Item, Director of Works and Buildings, half salary recouped by Public Works Department to Main Roads Department, £750:

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not wish to misrepresent anything that the Minister has said, except to draw attention to the contradictory nature of his statements. He said that there never had been a road programme submitted in this House, and then he pointed to the map on the wall disclosing the five years' programme.

The Minister for Works: Yes, it was hung up for our information.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: How can the Minister reconcile those two statements? Bound maps were placed on the Table of the House annually showing every road separately, so that members could ascertain every detail regarding roads dealt with in each year's programme. The Minister said that no item had appeared on the Estimates dealing with road construction. I have a copy of the

Estimates for 1928-29 and Item 185 discloses that the Vote for 1927-28 was £36,000, the expenditure for that year £18,900, and the estimated expenditure for 1928-29, £38,000, being an increase of £19,000. Yet the Minister could say that there never had been an item before the Committee for consideration!

The Minister for Works: I read out the item myself.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yet the Minister said never had there been such an item before members.

The Minister for Works: I did not.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: And then the Minister read out the item. I confess I cannot understand his attitude. It is true that the Minister was candid enough to admit, when he introduced his Estimates last night, that he did not understand them. Now I think we can add to that by telling him he does not understand his own speech. One moment he said one thing, and then he went on to produce the evidence to contradict his own statement. We have reached a pretty pass when Ministers of State—two of them in two evenings—have to confess to Parliament that they do not understand what the Committee were being asked to agree to. That is a pretty state of affairs for the Government to drift into! Who is governing the country? Are these the Ministers who are running the State? They can ask Parliament to vote money, and yet they do not understand what it is they are asking! To-night we are told by one Minister that he does not understand his Estimates, and last night another Minister had to make the same frank admission.

The Minister for Lands: You are generally fair, but you are not fair now.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am taking the Ministers' own statement.

The Minister for Lands: I said last night that I did not understand the figures that were referred to, because I knew there was a mistake. I told the member for Hannans about it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: A mistake made! The statement made by the member for Hannans amounted to more than a mistake. It was an absolute contradiction.

The Minister for Lands: It was a mistake.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: What statement that I have made does the Minister for Works say was unfair? Does he say I was unfair?

The Minister for Works: Yes, regarding the statement I made.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Minister said there had been no item placed before Parliament, and then he quoted the item.

The Minister for Works: I did not say it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Minister disproved his own statement and now denies that he said it. He denies himself from sentence to sentence. What notice can we take of Ministers when they adopt that attitude? What notice can the country take of them, seeing that this sort of thing is going on? Here we have responsible Ministers asking Parliament to vote money, and they say they do not understand what it is all about. The Works Department formerly spent millions of pounds, but the Vote this year is not so big. Despite that fact, the Minister candidly admits that he does not understand what he is asking Parliament to vote.

The Minister for Works: I did not say anything of the kind.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: You said that last night, and "Hansard" will prove it.

The Minister for Works: Then get "Hansard" and prove it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Why deny what you said in your opening remarks?

The Minister for Works: You did not hear what I said; you were too busy with your conversation.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I heard every word the Minister uttered, and I know the comment that went along this bench at the time. Yet the Minister can now deny having made the statement! Each year I made a long explanation of the work carried out by the Main Roads Board. I gave the chainage undertaken.

The Minister for Works: On the Estimates?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes. At what other stage could I have given the other information?

The Minister for Works: I will get your speech and read it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: And that applied not only for one year. I gave the chainage figures, particulars regarding the macadamising carried out, the length of road treated with bitumen and other details. Those figures were given annually, either on the Estimates

for the Public Works Department or on the Loan Estimates.

The Minister for Works: Then produce your evidence to that effect.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Had it not been that the point was raised last night, £250,000 would have gone through without a word of explanation from the Minister.

The Minister for Works: I said nothing last year.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: By interjection the Minister said he did not know where the money was provided and did not know anything about it. Here was a quarter million pounds from public funds passing through without a word of explanation from the Minister in charge of the department! Is that the way this department is governed? Is that the way Parliament is to be treated in dealing with public funds? The Minister for Works said that the five years' road programme had not been lived up to. He gave one explanation of why it was not so, but it can be taken as granted that Western Australia went further towards the completion of its mapped-out programme than any other State. That was admitted at conferences in the Eastern States, and the Minister can verify that by a perusal of the minutes of those conferences.

The Minister for Works: I did not deny it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: It was not because money was not available. The Main Roads Board had the money to spend, and they were not hampered to any degree apart from the decision of the Federal authorities to change over from day labour to contract conditions. That, practically speaking, delayed the programme for 12 months. The then Treasurer found all the money that was required by the board. The Minister told the Committee that the authority for the expenditure of money under this heading was to be found in the Main Roads Act. Not one member of this Committee will agree that the authority given in that Act denies members themselves of the right to discuss the expenditure in this House, or their right to have information respecting all details of work done by the Main Roads Board. If the Minister contends that, merely because a section in the amended Act is almost verbatim with the section in the original Act, which prescribes that the expenditure of the funds must be on the advice of the Main Roads

Board, thus indicating that the Minister of his own initiative cannot authorise expenditure, but requires to have the endorsement of the Main Roads Board, Parliament is to be denied the right to discuss the matter, then his contention is outrageous. We did not suggest that we should have the programme of work submitted to us showing all the details that had to be decided. We wanted to know what the report of the Main Roads Board contained, and what had been done.

The Minister for Works: The report is on the Table of the House.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: It was placed there to-day after our protest had been entered.

The Minister for Works: You did not put the reports on the Table.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Minister cannot charge the Labour Government with not having given the fullest information to the Committee. I challenge him to deny that.

The Minister for Works: I will do so directly.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I do not know what the Minister has in his possession, but I know that either on the General Estimates, or on the Loan Estimates, the fullest information was given to members. The Minister himself, as a private member, took advantage of the information supplied to him and discussed it.

The Minister for Works: On Estimates such as we are dealing with now?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The hon. member cannot hoodwink the Committee now by saying that it was not so. Every hon. member knows that it was so. I went further and gave each member an outline of the work to be done in his particular electorate by the Main Roads Board.

The Minister for Works: That was the work to be done over the five-year period.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes. The whole thing was quite open.

The Minister for Works: That was in 1926, and that was all the information we had.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: In this instance, the money would have been passed without a word of explanation from the Minister, who confessed that he did not understand the position. So far as I can learn, the Minister says that this money should not be spent in the metropolitan area. I

have yet to learn that he has spent a single penny out of this fund on work in the Kimberleys or the North-West since he has been in office.

The Minister for Works: That is not fair.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I have not looked it up.

The Minister for Works: Then look at the annual report.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We did a lot of work in the out-back districts, and spent large sums of money in the Kimberleys and other parts of the North-West, in order to assist the people.

Mr. Marshall: Yes, where there were no railways.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We constructed roads and bridges. We put a bridge across nearly every river in the North-West, and helped by the construction of roads as well. Thus, we rendered it easy for motor traffic to penetrate where it had not been possible before. By means of motor traction, we reduced journeys by bullock drays and camels that occupied 28 days, down to two days. What has been done for that part of the State by the present Government? We heard the Minister say that he does not know what money he is likely to have at his disposal. He does know that he will get 2½d. per gallon from the sale of petrol, and that he is to be apprised how the sales of petrol have proceeded throughout the country. He can ascertain the amount of money he will have available for road construction so that there is not much in his argument under that heading.

The Minister for Lands: We get our proportion of the 2½d. per gallon of petrol on the specified basis.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: That is so.

The Minister for Lands: It is on an area basis as well as on a population basis.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes, and that means that, next to New South Wales, Western Australia will receive the most. I did not mean that we would get the whole of the 2½d. per gallon. I wish that were the position. We are to get our share of that money on the stipulated basis. I do not wish to go into the scheme for the unemployed in any detail, but I do want to say the men themselves are not free agents in choosing this work. There is the economic

force that is driving them. They cannot starve, nor can they see their families starve. So they are not free to choose or decline the work; they are absolutely compelled by the circumstances. When it comes to married men shifting into the country, there are two phases of the situation which they must consider. The first is that if they shift out of their homes in the metropolis and go into the country, they will find it very difficult to get into houses in the metropolitan area when they return. The Minister must know that to-day the landlords are not admitting tenants into their houses unless the tenants can assure them that they are in work. No sustenance man is allowed to get a house. Proposed tenants have to sign an undertaking that they will not proceed under the law giving them protection; they have to contract themselves out of that protection.

Mr. H. W. Mann: And they have to produce their previous rent books.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: That is so. But the married men, having gone to the country, when they return to the city they will find it almost impossible to get homes for themselves and their families. I have here a letter from a man, a professional man, a skilled engineer, who previously was earning £600 per annum, but who, becoming unemployed, went to the country to get work. This letter shows that his family are now living in a garage in the city. When the men working under this scheme in the country come back to the city, they will still have to live in tents. So we shall be creating a community of tent dwellers, not only in the country but in the city also. And if a man does not take his family away to the country with him, while he, the husband and father, is in the country, what protection will his wife and family in their city home have against eviction? It is only because of certain circumstances that there are not now a great many more evictions than there are; and with the father away, and the mother and children left here unprotected, it is odds on that before a week or two have passed with no rent paid, the mother and her family will be out on the streets. And the man himself, while he is away, will have to scrape and stint himself in order to allow the home in the city to be maintained for his wife and family. So there are those two contingencies which each man will have to

consider. We can imagine the mental anxiety, as well as the physical strain, that will be on those men working under that scheme. I am glad the Minister admits that the figure 10,000, blazoned in the Press, is just a figure that he hoped for. It is like a good many other figures that have been given out since the Government took office.

The Minister for Works: Well, we must all hope.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: It is like the Premier's cry of "Work for all!" See how that boast has been realised! And so excellent has been the result of the Premier's attempts to provide work for all that, with Mr. Chandler, he is now applying himself to the task of finding work for boys.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is getting back to a general discussion.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: No. This item deals with the salary of the man in charge of the work.

The Minister for Lands: But not in charge of the boys.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, he is in charge of boys, too.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: This estimate of 10,000 is merely something the Minister hoped for. Look at other proposals that have been put up. There were to have been 1,500 men picked up in a week for certain drainage works, but when the Minister got down to facts it was found that fewer than 300 were required. And job after job has proved the same. As the Minister said just now, we all have the right to hope, and I suppose that is practically all that the community will have to live on while this Government lasts, for the policy of the Government is hope, and hope alone. When we met the Minister in his room, I understood from him that he was not going to extend this scheme to men already employed in the Government service. When, as a member of that deputation, I first put the question to him, he said he was going to extend it as far as possible, but later in the discussion he said it would not be extended to those already employed. However, that has now been done, and it has been extended to men who have been in the Government service for many years.

The Minister for Works: What scheme?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: This scheme of reducing.

The Minister for Works: No, that was the scheme for sustenance. We are not putting them on sustenance if they are working.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Consider a concrete case. A body of men were taken from York and put on the goldfields water scheme, being paid at the rate of £2 18s. 6d. as a maximum, while those with no children or only one child were paid £2 0s. 6d. There were, I think, 21 men in the gang. But they have all been reduced in their pay. Those who were to have got £2 18s. 6d. have been reduced to £2 1s., while those who should have been paid £2 0s. 6d. have been reduced to £1 14s. Yet some of those men have their families here, and consequently homes to maintain. How is it possible for them to do it? Of course it is not possible; we all know that. However, I do not wish to go any further into the details of that scheme to-night. As to the general position of the unemployed, no one can deny that it is becoming worse every week. More men are being thrown out of employment, and the number will continue to grow, so long as this policy of restricting the purchasing power of the people is continued. The one little ray of hope I can see is that there has been a change of policy in certain high places that previously denounced any such change, Great Britain going off the gold standard, and our own bank increasing the note issue. Previously, when that expedient was suggested, it was decried as inflation with ruination to follow. Yet 6,000,000 additional notes have been issued during the last six weeks, and the dejection of the gold standard by Great Britain immediately revived industry and, incidentally, helped us. So it seems now that people are likely to listen to reason and not stick to their old prejudices and orthodox methods. That is the only indication I can see of any improvement. However, my chief object in rising was to point out the inconsistencies in the Minister's speech. Now, at long last, he has brought down the report of the Main Roads Department. We should have had it much earlier with the fullest particulars, so that members might have been apprised of the details when this item was reached.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I agree that the viewpoint of the people we represent should be given in this House. It is that the Minister is not giving the unemployed a living wage, nor an opportunity to maintain themselves

in decent conditions. The Minister is assisting the Treasurer to save money by giving the unemployed only £1 per week with which to recuperate themselves when they go to live in the country.

The Minister for Works: It is better than nothing, is it not?

Mr. RAPHAEL: No, for some of them will lose by going into the country. A man performing arduous work needs more nourishment than the man who is walking around the street doing nothing. It will cost those men 22½ per cent. more to live in the country than it would to live in the city, and the Minister proposes to give them £1 per week to meet the extra charges. There are several reasons behind the scheme, one being to overcome the difficulty the landlords have to contend with in having unemployed tenants, to get the men out into the country in the interests of the city landlords.

The Minister for Lands: That contention may be all right in Victoria Park, but it will not go down here.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Because some here do not want to hear the truth. The Master Bakers' Association has been passing pious resolutions this week.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! We are discussing Item No. 2, and the hon. member cannot be allowed to proceed as he is going.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I am dealing with the application of the scheme and its effect on the unemployed who are to be picked up under the scheme and taken away from their homes, while their wives and families are to be left unprotected in the city, so that the landlords can deal with them.

Mr. Parker: Who is going to occupy the houses when those people are evicted?

Mr. RAPHAEL: The landlords would sooner see their houses empty than have them occupied by unemployed tenants. If a man accepts work in the country it will cost him 22s. a week to live there, and that will leave 12s. a week for his wife for food and clothing.

The Minister for Works: They get only 7s. a week sustenance at present.

Mr. RAPHAEL: But as soon as a man gets work, many liabilities will arise. The landlord will want his rent and the City Council will want their rates. While a man is on sustenance, such claims are not made. Some of the unemployed have to sell por-

tion of their rations and starve themselves in order to satisfy the landlords. Now the Government want to go a step further and get those people out of their homes.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the hon. member that the Director of Works is not responsible for the scheme. The hon. member must speak to the item.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The Minister said it was his duty to relieve the Treasurer of the need for paying the dole.

The CHAIRMAN: The item under discussion has nothing to do with the Minister. The hon. member must resume his seat unless he deals with the item.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The Minister, in explaining the scheme originally, said that arbitration awards would be observed, but he is breaking his word before the scheme is put into operation.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is still dealing with the Minister.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The scheme will be controlled by the Director of Works, and if I deal with the scheme, I do not think I shall be transgressing the rules of debate.

The CHAIRMAN: That is for me to decide. The hon. member had his opportunity on the general debate. He must now confine his remarks to the item.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Everyone else has had an opportunity to deal with the matter.

The CHAIRMAN: I allowed the member for South Fremantle to reply to certain statements made by the Minister. That was only just and fair.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I am prepared to deal with the Minister later on.

Mr. MARSHALL: I wish to ask a question regarding "goldfields water supply, £11,999."

The CHAIRMAN: That is only a deduction.

Mr. MARSHALL: It appears on the Estimates and the amount is £1,684 in excess of the expenditure last year.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not anticipated expenditure.

Mr. MARSHALL: Does the item involve expenditure for reticulation for Wiluna?

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot allow the hon. member to discuss it under that heading.

Mr. MARSHALL: If I am prevented from speaking on it, freedom of speech in this Chamber will be very limited.

The Minister for Railways: That is a reflection on the Chair.

Mr. MARSHALL: I want to know on what the money is to be expended.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member might ask his question under the item "Engineer for Water Supply, £725." If the Minister chooses to answer the question, I shall not prevent him.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Under the Estimates of the Goldfields Water Supply undertaking there is an item, mainly salaries, £11,999, "as per transfer from Public Works Department Estimates." The item shows a decrease of £1,684. That has nothing to do with the Wiluna water supply.

Item, Salaries generally, £20,302:

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is it a fact that one of the officers whose salary is provided under this item is also in receipt of an allowance of £100 a year for services as a member of the Unemployment Board? I understand that is so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not aware of the fact, but I understand there was some alteration in that officer's salary. At the re-organisation of the Works Department he suffered a reduction of status and a considerable reduction of salary. When the Public Service Commissioner made the re-classification, he reinstated part of the salary. The officer is still something like £200 below what he originally received. His salary was reduced £400 a year because of the lower status.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Who is the officer?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The explanation is not satisfactory. If the officer suffered a reduction because of the re-organisation and because he was reduced to a lower status, his experience has been no worse than that of scores of other officers. Even if the reduction was £400, he is a classified officer.

The Minister for Works: He was re-classified.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He was re-classified at a salary which the Public Service Commissioner considered adequate to the office held by him.

The Minister for Lands: I am advised that he does not get the £100 a year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Was he not getting it pending the re-classification?

The Minister for Works: No, he was reduced and was put up again by the Public Service Commissioner.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He was reduced considerably when the department was re-organised. Until the Public Service Commissioner had an opportunity to re-classify him, it would appear that some of the salary he lost was made up to him by an allowance of £100 for services on the Unemployment Board. Probably the Minister for Railways knows whether the officer received that allowance.

The Minister for Railways: He received no allowance from my department.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am informed that he received an allowance at the rate of £100 a year merely because he was a member of the Unemployment Board. Is that a fact?

The Minister for Railways: I am not aware of it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If it is a fact, it was favouritism to a particular officer. It would seem that he was appointed to the board so that an allowance could be granted him in excess of the salary he was entitled to draw.

The Minister for Railways: I will make inquiries and advise you when I present my Estimates.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If, in these times of financial stress, the Government deem it advisable to appoint a board of Government officers to assist in handling the problems associated with unemployment, those officers carry out their duties in office hours for which they are paid. If we make an allowance to them, where is it going to end? I am assured that this officer is receiving an allowance. This is only another way, and an unfair way, of increasing the salary of a particular officer. There are men as capable as this one who have been retired altogether.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Surely the Minister for Works knows what is happening in his department in respect to this officer.

The Minister for Works: The Unemployment Board has nothing to do with my department.

Hon. M. F. TROY: But the officer is employed in the Works Department, and the Minister in charge should know the facts concerning him. Officers do receive special remuneration for work that is done in their ordinary time. This particular officer is an engineer, and apparently he is receiving extra pay for the work he is doing in Govern-

ment hours. Another officer received £200 for doing some special work in Government time, whereas the member for Nedlands, then a private individual, took nothing for his services.

The Minister for Railways: Would it not be fairer to allow me to make a statement on my Estimates?

Hon. M. F. TROY: I am discussing the principle.

The Minister for Railways: The reclassification shows that this officer is receiving his maximum salary.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I will not say anything more on the subject.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Why should not all these officers who are working part time in various departments be shown as doing so on these Estimates? Here is a Public Works officer who is apparently doing work on the Unemployment Board.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have no item showing the expenditure of £100 for extra salary to an officer attached to the Unemployment Department.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: If he is getting it, it should be shown on the Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If he is not paid by my department, it will not be shown on my estimates.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: If he is receiving money from another department, that should be indicated.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The expenditure on salaries last year was £28,000, and the expenditure for the current year will be £20,000, a difference of £8,000.

Vote put and passed.

Vote, Labour, £4,080—agreed to.

This concluded the Estimates of the Minister for Public Works and Labour.

Department of Chief Secretary (Hon. C. F. Baxter, Minister).

Hon. C. G. Latham, Minister for Lands, in charge of the Estimates.

Vote, Chief Secretary, £12,169:

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [9.7]: I do not propose to discuss these Estimates at great length. They cover a variety of subjects dealing with social activities that are controlled by the Chief Secretary. Members

will be more interested in the items than in a general discussion, and I shall be pleased to afford them any information they may desire upon any particular vote.

HON. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [9.8]: The Minister for Lands ought to afford some explanation of these Estimates. I wish to express my regret at the resignation of the ex-Chief Secretary, the member for Nedlands. I am not with him in politics, but I desire to express my regret that a man of such outstanding qualifications and intelligence should not now be in the present Ministry. If we are going to have a Ministry, even one with which we disagree, let us have the best men available in it. It is a great pity we are deprived of the services of one of the best members of the Government. If the ex-Chief Secretary had been in his position to-night, we should have had an explanation of these Estimates. The utter bankruptcy of the Government is shown by the fact that the Minister for Lands does not know a word about these Estimates. He introduced them in the course of two seconds, and finished with them.

The Minister for Lands: Very seldom is any word said about them.

Hon. M. F. TROY: This department deals with fisheries, aborigines, gaols, harbours, lights and jetties, etc.

The Minister for Lands: I will give you all the information as we come to the votes.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Minister should have given us information concerning the development of the State as it has occurred under the administration of this department.

The Minister for Lands: There is no objection to members having a general discussion on these Estimates.

The **CHAIRMAN**: I should like to remind members that any general discussion on the Estimates as a whole must take place now, and that there can be no general discussion on each separate vote.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [9.10]: I have here detailed information affecting each department under the Chief Secretary. If any question is raised about aborigines, I am prepared to answer it. The Chief Secretary generally occupies a position in another place. There are eight or nine different votes on these Estimates. I am quite ready to go through them all if members desire.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Is there not something to be said for the progress made by the department?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The total estimated expenditure of the department is £169,018, and compared with the expenditure for the previous year, there is a decrease of £26,731. This decrease is largely due to reduction of salaries, the public service reclassifications, the Financial Emergency Act, and the rigid exercise of economies in expenditure by the department.

Hon. P. Collier: This is one of the least economically-run departments of State. The percentage of reduction is only 22, whereas that of the Works Department is 75.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: There was a distinction there. The only sub-department showing an increase is the aborigines. That is due to the fact that the falling-off of national income has deprived even the aborigines of an opportunity to earn a living. The increase is £648. I am sure members do not desire to be wearied with all these details. If they wish to ask any questions, I shall be only too glad to give them answers.

MR. J. I. MANN (Beverley) [9.12]: I would draw the attention of the Minister to the question of natives being admitted to hospitals. The case I wish to deal with is that of a native woman at Quairading. About 120 natives there are receiving rations. Apparently there is no law by which natives must submit to medical examination. This unfortunate native woman was in an advanced stage of cancer. The doctor admitted that she had to be treated somewhere, and instructions came from the Health Department and the Secretary to the Aborigines Department that she was to be admitted to the Quairading Hospital. That hospital contained only four wards, and is both a general and a maternity hospital. It is wrong for the authorities to be able to force the admission into a hospital of a diseased native who is in an advanced stage of cancer, from whom emanates a repulsive smell, and whose body is covered with vermin. Steps should be taken to ensure that natives who are diseased or sick are accommodated in some special way. There are numerous natives in the district, and they acquire various diseases. Surely the natives cannot be allowed to rot and die in the bush; they are entitled to some considera-

tion. I trust the Minister will make an announcement that wherever there are large congregations of natives, the Government will arrange hospital accommodation for them. A compound might be established, or a native settlement, or other special accommodation. The result of the admission of the native woman into the grounds of the Quairading hospital, where there was only one nurse available and eventually another female attendant had to be specially obtained, is that not a single maternity case goes into the institution. The settlers are indignant about the position, and declare that they will not allow their wives to go into the hospital. Dr. Atkinson informs me that cancer is neither contagious nor infectious, but the general public will take a lot of convincing on that point. Hospitals have been informed that they must admit natives or else lose the Government subsidies. Some of them will defy the Government and refuse to take in natives. Such a case as I have described should not be allowed to recur. Certainly the native woman in question ought not to be allowed to die in the bush like a dog.

MR. BROWN (Pingelly) [9.18]: I understand that the Chief Inspector of Fisheries is also Inspector of Game. An opossum season has not been opened for two years, with the result that these animals have increased rapidly throughout the country districts. The Government royalty on opossum skins is 1s. 6d. each. I have it on excellent authority that fair, average quality skins are saleable in Western Australia at 25s. per dozen, which amount, deducting the royalty of 18s. per dozen, leaves a return of 7s. per dozen. It stands to reason that no one will go out catching opossums for the sake of the few shillings remaining after the payment of royalty. I suggest that the royalty be reduced to 9s. per dozen, leaving about 16s. per dozen for the work of catching. Then unemployed men would go into the country districts to catch opossums. I do not know whether the Government, in refraining from declaring opossum seasons open, were actuated by the fear of extinction of the animals. I do not think there is the least danger of that. Though it has been stated that the Government believe opossum skins to be unsaleable, there is a ready sale for them here. Recently I saw a catalogue, dated April of this year, which showed skins

selling as high as 6s. 3d. each, and in odd cases up to 8s., the latter being skins which had been held for some time. I suggest that the Government declare an opossum season open.

The Minister for Lands: The trouble is that there is no sale for the skins.

MR. BROWN: Opossum trapping would be better than receiving 10s. a week. If the season were opened, sustenance payments would be reduced. I believe the Chief Inspector agrees with me that there is a market for skins, and that the season should be declared open.

The Minister for Lands: There is only a very limited market.

MR. BROWN: According to information I have received, the market is unlimited.

The Minister for Lands: That is wrong information.

MR. BROWN: Anyone can see what the catalogue shows, that skins previously withdrawn are now being offered for sale.

The Minister for Lands: The Government have not yet sold their last lot of skins. That is the regrettable feature.

MR. BROWN: It is strange news to me. I suggest that the Minister get in touch with the Chief Inspector, who I understand has information that there is a ready sale for opossum skins. I did not get my information on that point from the Chief Inspector, but from a man who knows more about the sale of opossum skins than any other man in Australia. All an unemployed man need do is to get some snares and put them on sticks, to catch as many as a dozen opossums in a night. Many years ago, when work was scarce in New South Wales, men were glad to trap opossums and sell the skins for 3s. per dozen. A trade in opossum skins would bring a good deal of money into Western Australia, especially in view of the rate of exchange.

MR. COVERLEY: (Kimberley) [9.23]: Like an earlier speaker, I greatly regret that the ex-Chief Secretary found it necessary to retire from the Government. I regret it for several reasons. The holding of the portfolio of Chief Secretary by the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) was the first occasion, in my experience, when this Chamber had the honour of housing a Minister whose department controls many activities associated with the North-West. The Chief Secretary is also Minister

for Education, and administers the Aborigines Act, the State Shipping Service, and the Harbour and Light Department. All those departments deal with conveniences highly important to the North-West. Any representations regarding them which were made in this House reached the Chief Secretary only at second hand, he being a member of another Chamber. I repeat, therefore, that I greatly regret the member for Nedlands found it necessary to resign the Chief Secretaryship. Again, the ex-Chief Secretary was the one member of the Ministry who had some sympathy for the North-West. That fact was made evident by the speeches of Ministers who have already introduced their Estimates. Over half of them spoke at length, and only one of them thought fit even to mention the North-West. That reference was to the transfer of the Cossack lazarette, with the consequent saving in money.

The Minister for Lands: That is not quite right. I also said that the patients would receive better treatment.

Mr. COVERLEY: The Minister for Lands was the only member of the Cabinet who had the decency even to mention the North-West, and certainly I do not blame him for his introduction of the Chief Secretary's Estimates, seeing that they are not the baby of the Minister for Lands. The Minister for Lands is merely performing a function for a Minister in another place. I should like an explanation of the increase of £648 in the Aborigines Vote. I have expressed here, on more than one occasion, my opinion of the Aborigines Department, the whole box and dice, and what I thought should be done with them. I shall not go over that ground again. A reduction in the staff seems to be simply foolish. The travelling inspector, Mr. Mitchell, the only person who did travel over the North-West and inspect the natives to see that at least they were getting decent food and clothing, is the officer whose services have been dispensed with on the plea of economy. The department save his salary of about £450 a year, and in spite of that show an increase of £648. That is not fair to the aborigines, whom the department is supposed to protect. To me it is astounding that on the score of economy the Government dismiss a man of Mr. Mitchell's calibre and at the same time bring down Estimates showing an increase greater

than the amount of that officer's salary. Mr. Mitchell was the only person who did the job for which the Aborigines Department is supposed to exist. If that kind of thing is allowed to go on, it is hardly worth while to pass any Vote whatever for the aborigines. I repeat, the remarks one makes here reach the Chief Secretary only at second hand. I have had the experience that things I have said here and matters which I have tried to illuminate in this Chamber reached the Chief Secretary in such a form as suited the departmental officer concerned. In one instance, as a consequence, something entirely wrong was done, and when I challenged the Minister on it he replied, "You said so and so in the Chamber." In fact, I had said nothing of the kind. My statements had been misconstrued by the departmental officer concerned. Another item related to the Aborigines Department is tanning, but I am afraid that comes under Moola Bulla cattle station. As regards the Harbour and Light Department, we have a number of harbours extending from Geraldton northwards, and all of them are in a bad state of repair. Year after year, they get the usual general maintenance, and the rolling stock is in a deplorable state, particularly at Derby. I hope the Minister will give us some information regarding the Government's intention with reference to the rolling stock controlled by the Harbour and Lights Department.

[Mr. J. H. Smith took the Chair.]

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. G. Latham—York—in reply) [9.31]: The member for Beverley dealt with hospital accommodation for aborigines. The position regarding the aborigines is the same as that relating to others. Where hospital accommodation is necessary, we provide it in one way or another.

Hon. M. F. Troy: If the accommodation is available.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. In fact, we are bound by law to do so for the aborigines. It is part of the Constitution; and I am not sure that it is wrong.

Mr. Coverley: And the Chief Protector of Aborigines, when the matter is mentioned to him, will point out that he has no power under the Act.

Mr. J. I. Mann: And that is just what he told me.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know very well the case to which the hon. member referred. When we found that the woman was suffering from the disease, the matron took her and cleansed and dressed her wounds. When the people objected to the woman being in the hospital, we provided a tent and extra money so that she could be attended to properly. I have since discussed the matter with the matron and she admitted that there was more noise made about the incident than was warranted. We have arranged to erect a small building of two rooms as a hospital for the aborigines who may need attention. As to the suggestion that we should erect a hospital on the aborigines' reserve, it is quite impossible to find the money for that purpose. So long as I am in charge of the Medical Department, I am not going to allow anyone to be prevented from having medical or hospital accommodation, if it is at all possible to avoid it. As to the member for Pingelly, I wish his forecast were correct. I regret that I have to inform him that we have still a carry-over of opossum skins from last season.

MR. BROWN: Where are they; in this State?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. The hon. member must know that we experience great difficulty in securing markets for any of our products. The financial difficulty is not restricted to Western Australia. Countries overseas as well have had their national income diminished. Just as we have a carry-over of opossum skins, so we have an accumulation of pearlshell on hand. These lines cannot be regarded as necessities, but more as luxuries. As soon as we can find a decent market for those goods, we shall avail ourselves of it. In the meantime, to send out people to trap opossums would entail the waste of so much money.

MR. BROWN: You could investigate my contentions to see if they are correct.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course, but my information is that we already have a carry-over, and that it would be extremely difficult to effect sales. Surely, in the circumstances, it is better to have the opossums running wild in the bush than to send out men to kill them and store their skins until some future time when they can be marketed.

MR. ANGELO: You would first have to sell the skins you have on hand.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, when a market was available.

MR. BROWN: You would have to reduce the royalty.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The royalty has already been paid on the skins I refer to. The position is just the same with sandalwood. It is a useless policy to adopt to send men out to destroy and gather that for which there is no market. The member for Kimberley referred to the increase in the Estimates for the Aborigines Department. My information is that the increased expenditure is mainly on account of blankets and clothing, £1,116, store provisions, £300, and, in addition, there are the arrears that have to be made up to the native missions. Provision is made in the Estimates this year under that heading. Regarding the retirement of Inspector Mitchell, we are sorry to lose the services of such a valuable officer. I was not in charge of the department when it was decided that some retrenchment would have to be effected, and that officer was selected as the one to go. If we could secure the means necessary to enable us to keep the officers fully employed, we might be able to save money in the long run, but I do not think we could possibly find the money immediately to enable us to carry on along those lines. Regarding the hon. member's references to the Harbour and Lights Department, the expenditure for last year amounted to £21,174, and the estimated expenditure for this year is £18,555, showing a decrease of £2,619. The decreases provided for mainly apply to salaries and wages and do not affect the cost of services to any great extent. That fact is disclosed in the Estimates themselves.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON: What percentage is taken from the rolling stock?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will be seen that there is a decrease of £205 under the heading of Contingencies, a decrease of £954 on account of wharfingers, jetty and tramway wages, and a decrease of £61 in connection with jetty and tramway working expenses. It will be noted, therefore, that the money provided is but slightly different from last year's provision.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON: The trouble is that the rolling stock won't roll.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will be seen that the decreases apply mainly to

wages and salaries, and not so much to services.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Aborigines, £22,941—agreed to.

Vote—Fisheries, £3,629:

Mr. ANGELO: As I was in the Chair, I was unable to participate in the general discussion on the Vote for the Chief Secretary's Department, but I shall not take up much time in dealing with the Fisheries Vote. A splendid effort is being made in Western Australia, and, in fact, throughout Australia, to encourage the use of local products. We have along our coastline in Western Australia, such a wealth of fish as will enable us to supply, not only our own requirements and those of Australia, but to participate in the export trade as well. At the same time, little is being done.

Hon. P. Collier: How is that shark business getting on at Carnarvon?

Mr. ANGELO: I will deal with that business. Australia imports nearly £2,000,000 worth of fish that is fresh, salted, smoked or tinned. The importations for this State last year represented over £100,000. Most of the fish we imported could be provided locally, particularly the smoked and canned fish. It could be done if we could but get the right people to undertake the work. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the shark-fishing industry. I confess we thought we had the makings of a fine industry in that respect. The man who was in charge of it was a scientist who thoroughly understood his job. Unfortunately, the company directors at Home appointed him general manager as well. It is well known that, as a rule, a scientist is not a good business man. The expenditure incurred here was extremely heavy, far too heavy, in fact. In addition to that, when the general manager returned to London, he found that the expenditure at the London office was ridiculous. There were eight or nine directors each drawing £1,000 a year.

Hon. P. Collier: Then the sharks were really in the Old Country.

Mr. ANGELO: They did not wait until any were exported from here. One result of the undertaking, however, was that it was proved to the satisfaction of Dr. Enright the scientist to whom I have referred, that

there was in the shark-fishing industry a most payable proposition, if properly run. Take one item alone—shark flesh. I have seen the account sales, and these show that at the outset he received £12 a ton for the product. Improvements were made in the drying methods and the price of the flesh rose to £16, and later to £22. He was told that if the flesh were dehydrated, instead of being sun dried, the Chinese would pay as much as £35 a ton for it. As there are sharks to be caught in millions along the coast, it will be realised what a wonderful profit can be made from the industry if such prices can be obtained. Quite apart from shark fishing, members can appreciate the quantity of edible fish that could be taken from the waters along the 2,000 miles of coastline extending from Geraldton to Cape Londonderry in the North. So far, little has been done. Apart from other varieties of fish, there are the turtle, dugong, and other valuable marine products that can be turned into profit.

Hon. P. Collier: In view of that position, it is regrettable that the price of fish down here is so extortionate.

Mr. ANGELO: I agree.

Hon. P. Collier: Fish should be quite cheap, having regard to the vast quantities available along our coast.

Mr. ANGELO: I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that in Shark Bay, fishermen were paid from 1½d. to 3½d. for the best fish delivered at the factory.

Hon. P. Collier: What has gone wrong with the British fishermen? The trade is in the hands of foreigners now.

Mr. ANGELO: I am coming to that phase. Some little time ago we had the pleasure of a visit of three South African members of Parliament. One of them was well acquainted with those who were carrying out wonderful work in connection with fish preservation in South Africa. A large quantity of South African fish, both frozen and smoked, has found a market in Australia at prices that enable them to compete with Scotch fillet.

Hon. P. Collier: And our sea teems with fish!

The Minister for Lands: The trouble is that companies have been so unsuccessful.

Mr. ANGELO: I asked those visitors to get in touch with the people in South Africa. They wrote to me, and I replied

telling them of the possibilities here for a company such as theirs, which had both money and experience. Writing back to me they said they were sorry, but they had just invested all their accumulated profits, some £160,000, in a whaling expedition to the South Seas. Those people made their money from very small beginnings, and there is the same opportunity here for any company with capital and experience of the industry. We are said to have failed in the putting up of some of our fish. One of the chief requirements is uniformity of product. Again, to deal with canned fish a full-time chemist is required. The Government, of course, could not take on such an enterprise themselves, but at least they could help. Regarding many industries in the State, illustrated pamphlets are broadcast all over the world showing the possibilities of those industries. I suggest to the Government that the Chief Inspector of Fisheries should be asked to have a pamphlet prepared showing attractive photographs of the fishing possibilities and giving all information. Such a pamphlet, distributed where it would do most good, would serve to attract the notice of those who could enter into the industry in a proper way.

Hon. A. McCallum: Is Zane Grey coming out this year?

Mr. ANGELO: The last information I had was that he would be here this month or next month. However, he is coming out for pleasure, not for business, although I hope that when he does come he will write up the possibilities of the fishing industry in Western Australia and so induce the proper people to put their money into it. If a number of copies of such a pamphlet as I suggest were sent to Mr. Angwin he would make good use of them in Scotland, where experienced men are to be found.

Hon. P. Collier: But you cannot get Scotsmen to leave Scotland.

Mr. ANGELO: They will go wherever money is to be made. Some time ago in Sydney I found a company very much interested in this business. They wanted information about our North-West and were anxious to be supplied with pamphlets such as I propose. I told them all I knew, but the trouble is there is nothing authentic, with the Government stamp on it, that can be supplied to those people. We have now overtaken the local market with our butter,

and almost with our bacon, but still we are importing fish when we have enough along our coast to feed, not only ourselves, but also the teeming millions of people in China. They have exhausted the fish supply on their own coast and are willing to pay for all they want. We certainly should make some effort to build up a lucrative fishing industry in this State.

Mr. COVERLEY: While I do not propose to contend with the hon. member in the telling of fish stories, I desire to support his remarks as to the opportunity there is for establishing a profitable fishing industry in Shark Bay and Gascoyne. But my chief object in rising is to draw the Minister's attention to the bird-catching industry in Kimberley. Up there quite a number of people make a living snaring various pretty birds. Recently permission was granted to a man from South Australia to catch 12,000 birds. I do not know that the department should restrict such permits to any particular person, but I am sure the Chief Inspector of Fisheries would not grant such a permit to any person unless he was convinced that that person would snare and transport these birds with the greatest care.

Hon. P. Collier: Are they going overseas?

Mr. COVERLEY: I do not know.

The Minister for Lands: The Commonwealth restrict the export of birds.

Mr. COVERLEY: The person engaged in snaring those birds under that permit is transporting them by motor truck via Alice Springs to Adelaide. If there is sufficient trade to warrant that person's enterprise, the Minister should try to restrict those permits to Western Australians. We are losing a large amount of revenue in consequence of those birds not being shipped through Fremantle. I do not wish to penalise any person by making him pay freight around the Australian coast, but what I am concerned about is that quite a number of Western Australians in Kimberley have depended on this enterprise for part of their annual earnings. Since Ministers and departmental officers do all that is possible to preserve various industries in the southern districts for Western Australians who follow those occupations, I think the same policy ought to be followed in Kimberley,

where so many Western Australians depend on bird catching for part of their earnings.

Mr. SLEEMAN: There is one way in which the Minister could practice economy in this department. There is an inspector, a very valuable officer, in charge of the fisheries launch. On many occasions this officer is called away from port as the result of some mishap along the coast. He may be away for 24 hours at a stretch searching for missing people, and not infrequently he returns to find that those people were discovered shortly after he left port. Consequently many valuable hours of his time have been lost. But with a small expenditure of from £15 to £20 a wireless installation could be put into the launch so that whenever necessary the boat could be recalled.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am pleased that the member for Gascoyne has given the North-West the advertisement to which it is entitled in respect of its fishing. We have had a few attempts at establishing the fishing industry in this State and I do hope that whatever company next makes a start it will start with sufficient capital. Undoubtedly there is a fine market for fish in this State, but people who embark in the industry with only a small amount of money and who shortly afterwards expect the Government to furnish them with financial assistance, are of no use to us. Our fishing is largely in the hands of Southern Europeans, whereas our own people ought to be able to conduct it.

Hon. P. Collier: Fish have become an absolute luxury.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Along the North-West coast the sea teems with edible fish. There are two small companies at Geraldton canning crayfish, and I must say a sample of their product which I received from Boan's was very palatable and should commend itself to consumers.

Mr. Angelo: It is beautiful stuff, but 1s. 6d. a tin is too dear.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If you buy the stuff imported from Japan it is dear, and certainly it is preferable to buy our own local product. It is a great delicacy and I know people who have paid 2s. for a tin only equal in size to that put up at Geraldton, which is sold at 1s. 6d. Some local people are curing and smoking schnapper and mullet, for which there is a good mar-

ket. I will have the matter brought under the notice of the Minister, together with the suggestion of the member for Gascoyne for advertising our North-West possibilities. The Fisheries Department seem to be blamed for everything. One member used to blame it for the kangaroo menace; now the member for Kimberley is blaming it for the traffic in birds. I do not think a license is required for taking birds.

Mr. Coverley: Yes, it is.

Hon. P. Collier: I think the matter of exporting them is controlled by the Commonwealth.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. The officer who has assisted me with the Estimates knows nothing about licenses for catching birds.

Mr. Coverley: Every person catching birds must have a license issued by the Fisheries Department. If the man at present catching them can provide a motor truck and buy petrol for it, he can afford to ship them down here.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will ask the Chief Secretary to institute inquiries.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The Estimates are woefully incomplete.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Bird licenses are probably covered by Game Act licenses. The matter of the wireless set for the fisheries launch will also be brought under the notice of the Minister. In Inspector Brown and those associated with him we have a very capable staff. If we could relieve him of the anxiety he must suffer from time to time in the work he is called upon to perform, we should do so. A wireless set for the launch would have to be protected from damage by salt water. I had one trip in the boat, and I know what it is capable of doing. If a wireless set can be installed at reasonable cost, I think the matter should be considered.

Vote put and passed.

Vote, Registry and Friendly Societies, £9,993:

Item, Registrar General, Government Statistician, Registrar of Friendly Societies and Government Actuary, £1,080:

Mr. SLEEMAN: An increase of £180 is shown for this officer whereas everybody else is being reduced. Why should a £900 man go up £180?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The letter "(a)" appears alongside this item, and there is no corresponding note to refer to. This has occurred previously in these Estimates. In some instances the figures are wrong. The Estimates have been badly prepared.

The Minister for Lands: We have had to cut down expenditure.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Evidently the Estimates have been compiled by some amateur. They were obviously not read over by a competent officer. It is not fair that Parliament should have a slipshod lot of Estimates thrown at it as these have been. Evidently it is thought that any old thing will do for Parliament. There is evidence of carelessness that should not be tolerated and I protest against it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A sum of £300 was previously paid to this officer for insurance work and it is now added to his salary.

Mr. Sleeman: The Deputy Registrar-General is shown as receiving an increase of £86.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is his assistant and the same explanation applies. Those officers have been subjected to reduction by reclassification and also by the Financial Emergency Act.

Item, Temporary Clerical Assistance, £360:

Mr. SLEEMAN: I understand there is a move on foot to abolish the district registrar at Fremantle, and if an appointment is made I take it payment will be made under this item. The present registrar has held the position for many years, and members of the family held it before him. He receives no salary he is paid on a common basis and pays the rent of his office. He is an old and valuable servant. I understand the office is to be abolished and a permanent official is to be located at the courthouse. Cannot the Government obviate throwing this man on the scrap heap?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The department know nothing of such an alteration being contemplated, but I will bring the matter under the notice of the Chief Secretary.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I should like to add a word on behalf of the Fremantle registrar. The office has been in the family ever since the earliest days. The registrar receives no salary but works on commission.

For many years the business was done in the home, but now the registrar pays for an office in the town hall buildings. I understand it is intended to move the business to the police court. That building is out of the beaten track, and people object to doing such business at the courthouse.

Hon. P. Collier: Does he perform marriages?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: Some people may think they are being taken to the lock-up if they have to go to the police court.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The least the Government can do is to wait until a change is essential.

The Minister for Lands: I will take the matter up with the Chief Secretary.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Gaols, £28,824:

Mr. SLEEMAN: It seems to me the Gaols Department at Fremantle is undermanned. There has been an agitation to the effect that the warders are too few in number to carry out their duties.

The Minister for Mines: There may soon be enough comrades there to take over the establishment. When they get in they will want to run the whole place.

Mr. SLEEMAN: While economies were being effected some time ago, an officer was engaged in patrolling a certain part of the wall. He was "pegging the clock" when a German prisoner got over the wall in another part of it. At the inquiry that was held I believe it was established that the warder was not attending to his duties and he was dismissed. Since then the prisoner has been recaptured, and I believe it has been discovered that the warder was actually engaged in one of his duties when he was "pegging the clock" in another part of the wall. In fairness to the ex-officer something should be done.

The Minister for Lands: He was a very slick prisoner.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Owing to the economies in the department there were not enough warders engaged at the time. This ex-warder should not be penalised because of what occurred, as he was only discharging one of his duties.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no hope of increasing expenditure in the

department, although I understand the gaol is not overmanned.

Hon. A. McCallum: It is overpopulated just now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. Sleeman: There is one prisoner you can release.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know the facts of the case referred to, but I cannot help thinking that the prisoner must have been a very slick person, or the clock is awkwardly placed.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Harbour and Light, £2,150—agreed to.

Vote—Jetties and Tramways, £18,555:

Mr. MARSHALL: The estimated expenditure this year is £9,400 and last year it was £9,396 in connection with jetties and tramways. Is any of this money absorbed in wages at the Beadon Point Jetty?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The whole of this money is expended on wages and salaries. Nothing is provided for maintenance.

Mr. MARSHALL: A sum of £1,000 is set down for working expenses and contingencies. Would anything come under that heading for wages at Beadon Point Jetty?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This is the usual Vote, but it has been decreased by £61. The money is provided in case of emergencies.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Lunacy and Inebriates, £82,850—agreed to.

Vote—Observatory, £1,457:

Hon. M. F. TROY: I should like to know how the negotiations for the transfer of the Observatory to the Commonwealth are proceeding.

Hon. P. Collier: They were concluded in our time.

The Minister for Lands: The difficulty was in connection with the land.

Hon. M. F. TROY: We could not give the Commonwealth all the area they required. The Observatory has been very useful and has performed good service to the country. Its services are becoming more valuable as

the years go by. The facilities for getting weather reports are constantly improving.

The Minister for Lands: You are now speaking of the Federal officer. This is a national, and not a State work.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I appreciate the work the Observatory is doing.

Mr. ANGELO: We pay a good deal for the museum, the zoo, and other similar institutions on the grounds that they are a means of educating our people. The Observatory comes within the same category. Nearly every night two or three parties visit the Observatory and are greatly assisted by the officers there.

Hon. P. Collier: Counting the stars.

Mr. ANGELO: These officers are always ready to assist parties. This is part and parcel of the work of educating the people. Astronomy is a subject in which we should all be interested. The officers are never found wanting in readiness to impart knowledge to persons anxious to learn something about astronomy. I would recommend members of this Chamber who have not already visited the institution to do so. They will come away with considerable knowledge that they did not possess before, and probably will spend many a happy evening in consequence. At one time I considered that the Observatory was a luxury and as such ought to be done away with, but now I honestly believe that it has the character of an educational institution and therefore should be retained.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The negotiations for the transfer of the Observatory to the Commonwealth were broken off when the present Leader of the Opposition was Premier, and quite rightly broken off because the Federal authorities wanted the whole of the Observatory site. The Leader of the Opposition was unwilling to give away so valuable an area. Personally I regard the work of the Observatory as a national work, which should be taken over by the Commonwealth. The Meteorologist, a Federal officer, has now been moved from St. George's-terrace into the Observatory building.

Vote put and passed.

This concluded the Estimates of the Chief Secretary's Department.

House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.