

# Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 27th February, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented," see "Votes and Proceedings."]

## SELECT COMMITTEE, RIVERTON ESTATE.

Report Presented.

Mr. Piesse brought up the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the offer of 68 acres in the Riverton estate for repatriation purposes.

Report received and read.

Hon. P. Collier: Is no action to be taken on the report?

Mr. SPEAKER: No further action can be taken to-day. Standing Order 353 provides—

If any measure or proceeding be necessary upon a report of a committee, such measure or proceeding shall be brought under the consideration of the House by a specific motion, of which notice must be given in the usual manner.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the point. Should not the notice of motion be given now? I understand the usual practice is for the chairman of the select committee to submit a specific motion after the report has been read. I think the hon. member would be in order in giving notice of motion to-day.

Mr. SPEAKER: He would not be strictly in order, but there is no reason why he should not give notice to-day. If any hon. member desires to give notice on this select committee's report, I will accept such notice to-day. That has been done, but it is not quite in accordance with the Standing Orders.

Mr. Piesse: I give notice that at the next sitting of the House I shall move that the report of the committee be taken into consideration and that the committee's recommendations be adopted.

## MOTION—RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION, ESPERANCE NORTHWARD.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [4.44]: I move—

"That in the opinion of this House the first railway to be constructed in pursuance of the programme of railway construction authorised by Parliament should be the Esperance Northward line."

It is just possible that some hon. member may deem this a wearisome subject again to be introduced—the matter of the Esperance Northward railway. But hon. members will bear in mind that the subject, although not new, is of immense interest to the people in a large area of this State. My reason for moving the motion is that I observed that one of the Ministers of the Crown in visiting an outlying district in the neighbourhood of Bruce Rock recently gave

the settlers there to believe that the first railway to be constructed, as soon as facilities for construction were available, would be a railway in that neighbourhood.

Mr. Johnston: Which has not been authorised yet.

Hon. T. WALKER: Whilst the promise was made that that should be the first consideration of the Government when railway construction was under notice, as I am reminded by the member for Williams-Narrogin, the line the Minister then promised has never been authorised by Parliament. It has not been considered by Parliament at all. But the railway whose construction I am advocating to-night is, in its proposal, as old as constitutional government in this State. Right from the days of Sir John Forrest, when public expenditure was, I may say, almost lavished upon public buildings in Esperance—which the Public Works Department are now disfiguring for the sake of some old iron attached thereto—from the days when the Custom-house was being built and schools erected, there was a definite promise that a railway should be built connecting that portion of the State with other portions of the State, and particularly with the goldfields. Lord Forrest, then Sir John Forrest, definitely made the promise that a railway should be constructed. In point of fact, this was one of the first promised of all our railways. The maps published by the Agricultural Department in those days contain a survey, a line marked out, the route which the promised railway would take, and every succeeding Government have more or less dealt with the matter. But for some reason or other, this part of the world has been absolutely, not neglected, but wronged, injured, deliberately deprived of the rights of development exercised by other portions of the State. It will be within the memory of hon. members that when the Labour Government came into office one of the first of their acts was to introduce a measure dealing with the Esperance-Norseman railway connection. You, Sir, will remember that that measure passed this Chamber and was defeated in another place. Another session, and again the Bill was introduced and met with a similar fate. We were informed in this Chamber, and informed by members sitting in another place, that if the line were to be considered simply as an agricultural line, if we were to propose a railway going no further than the limits of the agricultural belt on that southern coast, the measure would have a chance of success, that members who were opposing the Bill on account of its connecting the goldfields with Esperance and therefore possibly opening up a trade route from Adelaide to the goldfields, that those members would then have no further objection. Following this hint, very forcibly expressed by members and in the Press and on the public platform, the Labour Government introduced a Bill for this Norseman-Esperance line, and limited its extent to 60 miles northwards of Esperance, presumably putting it therefore upon the level of agricultural lines, which were then so popular and were being built pretty well everywhere in agricultural districts in other parts of the State. The

measure passed, the work was commenced. In fact, before the passing of that measure, the Labour Government had shown their bonafides—I wish to insist upon this, because of those who have been busy circulating the rumour that the Labour Government were never in earnest, that the Labour Government could have done it if they wanted to. Let me repeat that before the passing of the Bill the Labour Government had shown their bonafides by putting on the Estimates the sum of £10,000 for the construction of a road which was to be so built that it could be utilised as part of the permanent way of the proposed railway when it came along. And that money was spent in the Esperance district, and so much of the earthworks are there to this day, subject, I admit, to natural corrosion and to the injury of atmosphere, and of rain and storms. The work is still there, and we can utilise so much of it to-morrow if the House wish. But, unfortunately, after the railway line was commenced in the Esperance district, by untoward circumstances, not by any balance of merit, but by a series of unaccountable disasters, the Labour Government went out of office.

The Minister for Works: That is a nice way of putting it.

Hon. T. WALKER: It is a true way of putting it. And then in came our late friend in this Chamber as Premier, Mr. Frank Wilson. Before he got warm in his chair one of the first steps he took as part of the machinery with which to fight the elections, was to turn up an old report in which Mr. Mann, the Government Analyst, had said that there was salt around Esperance, too much of it, in fact, to make the district desirable for agricultural settlement. It was placarded on every hustings in large letters, it headed reports in the daily and other newspapers, of the villainous action of the Labour Government in concealing the fact that there was salt down there near Esperance somewhere. And the present Minister for Works, following the lead of his leader, to give dramatic effect to it, to point out the heinousness of the conduct of the Labour Government, immediately stopped the procedure of the work.

The Minister for Works: Oh, go on!

Hon. T. WALKER: Does the hon. member deny it?

The Minister for Works: I do not deny the fact, but do not put on so much frill.

Hon. T. WALKER: Cannot the hon. member take his gruel? He does not like salt, I know, but he certainly requires curing, and if salt will cure him I strongly advise him to try it. I say, immediately, to give dramatic effect, to play to the country, those works were stopped, and the officers and the workmen withdrawn. Yet the Government themselves could not put a good face upon it. They could not of themselves vindicate or defend the course they had taken. They desired a Royal Commission, possibly to whitewash them, to inquire into the character of those lands, their fitness for agriculture, and the need for a railway. That Commission prolonged their labours. In view of the results obtained I am not going to blame them.

Having read their report, and the report of the evidence taken before them, I think they did excellent and conscientious work. But hon. members will recollect that it was a long delay and waiting, a long time of anxiety for the settlers in that district, men who had gone there, as this report shows, on the assurance of Governments that a railway would be built in that district, men who had taken up land there in the conviction that a railway would at least follow their settlement. I tried to hurry on this Commission. I could not for the life of me see at that time the wisdom of taking trips to the East to investigate the characteristics of the mallee country there, to see what was being done at Pinaroo, Minaroo, and other districts where they have mallee to cultivate. But eventually a report was obtained from the Commission, and that report absolutely vindicated the position the Labour Government had taken up, the position which I, as member for the district, had defended time after time, and which my predecessors, representing that district, had also done, vindicated and confirmed it up to the hilt. We were led to imagine that if this report were confirmatory of the position taken up by the Labour Government, if the lands were fit for settlement and if the railway would be of service in the further settlement of the country, that immediately the work was given works would be proceeded with. There are rails now stored at Esperance, rails and fastenings.

Mr. Harrison: How much?

Hon. T. WALKER: Ten miles of rails and fastenings. So much could be proceeded with, and the work would be so much the sooner accomplished after this ten-mile length was completed. But they are left there useless, doing no service to anyone at the present moment. Yet, so long ago as last April when I was dealing with this matter the Minister for Works interrupted me. I had said that the action of the Minister for Works, on the occasion of speaking on the construction of this line, was drastic and erratic, and the Minister for Works interrupted me by saying that there was nothing erratic about it, and that it was intensely businesslike.

The Minister for Works: And so it was.

Hon. T. WALKER: It was absolutely unbusinesslike.

The Minister for Works: That is your opinion.

Hon. T. WALKER: It is more than opinion; it is fact.

The Minister for Works: You do not know anything about it.

Hon. T. WALKER: I cannot be taught by the hon. member.

The Minister for Works: I do not suppose you can.

Hon. T. WALKER: I said then in answer to the Minister—and I think now there is the sting of the bee about him—"Bee-like and most erratic." The Minister for Works said, "I could start it again as soon as I get the word to do so."

The Minister for Works: So I could.

Hon. T. WALKER: What word is the Minister waiting for, the publication of this report?

The Minister for Works: No.

Hon. T. WALKER: The completion of these rails? That is not the only occasion when reference was made to the report of the Royal Commission. The Government would not do anything until the Royal Commission reported to this House. As soon as the report was given the work was to be proceeded with. In September last, I made other references to this matter. I was urging then the completion of this report. I said "When will these inquiries be completed." The Minister for Works was speaking at the time, and he said—

I cannot say. If it should be found that it is wise to go on with the construction of that railway it can be started within seven days or a fortnight after the word has been given. There has been some little delay, but in the interests of the State it is far better that we should be assured than rush along spending a lot of money only to find out that it is all a mistake.

The Minister for Works: Whose statement was that?

Hon. T. WALKER: These are the words of the Minister for Works. He was then in charge of the Works Department as a member of another Government. Could the House read those words without taking them as an assurance that as soon as these inquiries had been completed the work would be proceeded with, within seven days or a fortnight? The Minister apologises for the delay by saying that it was better to wait and be sure than to go along and find we had made a mistake.

The Minister for Works: All things being equal, we would soon start the work.

Hon. T. WALKER: All things being equal! This is the assurance given here so long ago as last September, that within seven days or a fortnight the work could be commenced. Did I say September last? I meant it was in September last, 12 months ago, that is in 1916, when these words were said. The seven days have passed into months, and are now going into years, since the hon. member made that promise. The war was on; there was difficulty in procuring rails, and all the attendant disasters of inability to finance were there then that are here now, and this was the assurance that was given us at that time.

The Minister for Works: We have six miles of rails; that is all we have been able to get.

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not care what the Government have had since then. What I am asking now is, when they do get rails, that they honour their promise, a promise made in words of this character and in still stronger language, which I shall be able to produce before I resume my seat. I ask that the Government shall keep faith with the people of Esperance. When they see Ministers going about the country and telling the people that such and such a line will receive priority of consideration I am in duty bound to ask the House to keep Ministers to their word, and not let them

play fast and loose with the important interests of the State. It was a strange coincidence that this report of the Royal Commission was not read until the by-election for the Brown-hill-Ivanhoe seat. Mr. Scaddan was standing for election at that time. He was interested in the construction of this line. The goldfields people themselves have always taken a strong view upon the necessity for the construction of this railway, and it was imperative that Mr. Scaddan should have some Ministerial support for the construction of that line. This support came along in the shape of the report being published during the currency of that election. It was issued then and hastened on, and the line was promised. Last July a deputation waited upon the present Premier. It was during the warmth and heat of an election, I will admit, but I admire the cool, calm and deliberate manner in which the Premier made his reply to the deputation which then waited upon him.

Hon. P. Collier: It was received with great applause.

Hon. T. WALKER: It was in regard to the continuance of the line. The speech of the Premier was so good that I am sure he will pardon me if I try to immortalise it by placing it upon the eternal records of this Chamber. The Premier in the course of his reply said—

It was interesting to him to meet those who were so strongly in the movement, which they had so much at heart for such a length of time.

These are words that I should use, but they have fallen from the calm lips of our modest Premier. He continues—

The mistake had been that people had been allowed to settle there before a railway went through. His opinion was that the people should not precede a railway, but that a railway should precede the people.

That is really good, but how long have the Government been in preceding these people with a railway? They never tried to precede the people there. The Premier continues—

And the State in that respect wanted to be more careful in the future. A government having satisfied itself as to the capabilities of a district should carry a railway to it, and not leave the building of one until the pioneering movement was over. He did not know much about the history of the movement in the early days, but he knew that the people had gone on the land. He could hardly imagine that these people would have done so without being satisfied in their own mind that they were going to have a railway at an early date. A man would be a fool who would have gone on the land otherwise.

That is what we have always been saying.

The Premier: Quite right.

Hon. T. WALKER: I quite agree with that. I am absolutely in accord with the utterance of the Premier on that occasion. I am only wondering why he did not let this galvanic state of zeal and enthusiasm continue until he had magnetised or hypnotised his colleagues into his own way of thinking. Mr. Kirwan then said that the Scaddan Government promised the railway but did not anticipate the

opposition of the Legislative Council. The Premier continued—

He was not a great politician in the ordinary acceptance of the term. It was a long time since he went into Parliament, and he had gone there to look in the first instance after the State, and then after the interests of his own electorate.

I commend him for these views. They are excellent. Let him apply them now and I shall be satisfied. He goes on—

He had very often voted against his own party when he thought they were not on the right track. He hoped they would not entertain any feeling that it was a political movement.

Hon. P. Collier: He had his doubts about that.

Mr. Munsie: It was an awkward time to make such a statement.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Premier continued—

He had no doubt as to the sincerity of their presence there that morning. It was his duty to think of Western Australia first and the conditions best suited to the development of the country, and the people. He had been pleased the previous evening to make the announcement that the Commission, that had been appointed to inquire into the Esperance lands, had reported that the line should be completed as soon as possible and extended to Norseman.

He has gone further than the Labour Government went with our Bill of 60 miles northwards. He has become a fresh advocate for extending the line right through and linking it up with the goldfields, and he made that announcement at Mr. Scaddan's electioneering meeting.

Mr. Green: He got an urgent wire when on the goldfields.

Mr. Johnston: That is to his credit. It is a good announcement.

Hon. T. WALKER: Am I not commending him for it?

The Premier: It was not at the election meeting.

Mr. Munsie: Yes, it was.

Mr. Green: We were there to hear you.

The Premier: That was in answer to a deputation.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Premier said "He had been pleased on the previous night."

The Premier: So I was. Quite right.

Hon. T. WALKER: That was an election meeting. The Premier said, "To make the announcement that the Commission that had been appointed to inquire into the Esperance lands had reported that the line should be completed as soon as possible and extended to Norseman." He said he had been pleased to announce this.

Mr. Harrison: Has it been possible to build the line since?

Hon. T. WALKER: It has been possible to start it, and use the metal which is there, and to do something.

The Minister for Works: Is it worth while for the people down there to start with the little material we have?

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly.

The Minister for Works: Rubbish; talk sense!

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not want the hon. member to begin to teach me sense, or I should soon be in the asylum.

The Minister for Works: You talk rubbish like that.

Hon. T. WALKER: Let the hon. gentleman set the example, as a Minister of the Crown.

The Minister for Works: Then do not talk rubbish.

Hon. T. WALKER: Let him not be an ass.

The Minister for Works: Some people have not sense enough to be an ass; do not talk rubbish.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Minister does not like it.

Mr. Holman: That is an ultimatum.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Premier continued—

Parliament had agreed to construct 60 miles of railway northwards from Esperance and the Commission had been appointed to go further into the matter. The Commission made an exhaustive investigation. Its members were perfectly honest and serious in the work upon which they were engaged. Therefore he thought he had the right to honour their report.

Mr. Harrison: It takes money.

Hon. T. WALKER: Of course, but has the hon. member observed the terms of my motion? I am only asking now that this House affirms that, when money and rails are available, this shall be the first line to be constructed. There are rumours that the Government intend to consider other portions of the State, more particularly in the neighbourhood of Bruce Rock. In answer to a question the other day the Premier told me that, when money was available, the Government would take into consideration which lines should be first constructed, and those which best suited the interests of the State would be the first to receive attention—an evasive answer which would enable me to say that the railway near Bruce Rock or Kondinin was preferable to the one I am advocating. I am asking that we shall, as the Premier said, honour the report of the Royal Commission and build one of the longest promised railway lines in the State. The report of the Premier's speech goes on—

So far as the Government are concerned, he could safely say this, perhaps this was the whole secret of the debate.

and this is why I call the Premier modest—

He could safely say this, that while not making any promise that would commit his colleagues, he felt sure that the report of the Commission would be honoured by the present Government.

Mr. Harrison: There is wisdom there.

Hon. T. WALKER: Imagine the Premier of the country speaking in those modified terms, as though himself, as an honourable man, convinced of the necessity for the construction of this line, he declares "I have to ask my colleagues if they are honourable, too."

The Premier: Oh, no!

Hon. T. WALKER: It means that. The Premier would not pledge his colleagues although he says, as a point of honour, that line should be constructed. The finding, the Premier adds, must be honoured and he believed the Government would honour it, but

he dared not say so without asking his colleagues. Those colleagues of his are not honouring it. They have had the opportunity of saying that it shall be the first line to be constructed. Then the Premier goes on—

At the same time he would like to say that he could not agree to introduce a Bill during the short session of Parliament for the construction of the railway to Norseman. He had given a strict undertaking that no legislation of a controversial character would be introduced during the forthcoming session.

That is a very mild excuse after we have had such Bills as the Criminal Code Amendment Bill, the Prison Act Amendment Bill, and the Health Bill, all controversial. I shall be satisfied to receive an assurance that the construction of the railway will be the first in its order as authorised as soon as conditions permit. The Premier goes on—

Mr. Kirwan had admitted it was a controversial matter, and the mere fact that the agitation had gone on for 25 years made it evident that it was a controversial matter. Having given that undertaking, they would understand that he must observe it in view of the report of the Royal Commission. He felt confident that the Government would find it to be their bounden duty to proceed with the construction of the line as soon as they possibly could.

I ask now whether the Government are still of the same opinion. If so, this line must be the first constructed. The Premier goes on to say:—

But the country was not in the same position as it had been in the preceding years. One speaker said that he had never known a Government to be other than hard up. The position now was very different from what it had been before. The money market in Europe was absolutely closed. The time was when the door was always open to us. Money could not be procured from the Old Country now. Our last money had come through the Commonwealth and in exchange for that money the Commonwealth had taken Treasury bills and the Commonwealth were demanding that the bills should be met on maturity. He hoped the Commonwealth Government would come to its senses and not insist on payment when the bills matured because he was told that there was a distinct understanding that the bills would not be collected until some time after the finish of the war. Outside that source it would be difficult for Western Australia to get loan money for public works. They might be assured that the Government would do all it possibly could to obtain the money by loan as we could not use Consolidated Revenue in order to keep the wheels of industry going and encourage production. His opinion was that when they had actually been started and the men had been taken off the land, it was a breach of faith—

Those are words stronger than I should use, and if I did use them I would be accused of stupidity by the Minister for Works. The Premier went on—

if the Government did not now, in the face of the Commission's report, continue the construction of that line as soon as possible, and he would do all he could to induce his colleagues to support that view, and knowing that his colleagues were in sympathy with the goldfields, and knowing they were imbued with the desire to assist not only one part of Western Australia, but the State as a whole, he felt sure that the interests of this particular part of the country would not be neglected. He would read the recommendations of the report of the Commissioners, and in doing so would say that he would place the greatest reliance on it.

I do not think I need go any further. The Premier continued by giving his own personal opinion that the line should not stop in a desert, so to speak; his opinion was that it should go right through to Norseman.

The Premier: If it was worth putting there, it should go to Norseman.

Hon. T. WALKER: I have always held that view. I agree with the Premier, but nothing whatever has been done.

Mr. Harrison: You want to get off the mark first.

Hon. T. WALKER: I want to fix this matter definitely. We have had so many promises and evasions. There have been so many accidents deliberate accidents some of them, that I want the direction of this House, and I want the opinion expressed by members, that it is only common justice that this line should be the next to be constructed, as soon as funds and material are available. I am justified in asking that because of the evasions during the currency of the life of the present Government. Questions were asked as to whether this line would be the first to be constructed when the programme of construction was renewed, and I was not told whether it would or would not, but that the Government considered any line that seemed to them to be the best in the interests of the country at the time would be constructed.

The Minister for Works: Who told you that?

Hon. T. WALKER: The Premier. I am, therefore, justified in resisting and resenting this kind of evasion. Hon. members who live in more prosperous parts of the State can scarcely imagine the sufferings which have been endured by the Esperance settlers. It has been a marvel to me that the men have stayed there so long. Their faith in the land has been such that, notwithstanding the fact that no markets were available to them, that all kinds of illusory hopes were held out to them by Government after Government only to fail, they still continue in their belief that this is the spot where homes can be built and the country settled.

Mr. Harrison: It shows the metal of the men on the land there.

Hon. T. WALKER: And I do not think the hon. member will be an advocate of treating this metal with scorn and contempt. These are the people we should seek to serve, men who have risked so much, who have withstood every possible kind of privation, and who have made every human sacrifice to show

their faith in the character of the soil and its possibilities. We can afford to neglect the nomads and the wasters, but the people at Esperance are made of that stuff which builds up a nation and makes it great. The party on this side of the House has always been for every section of the community, and for every portion of the State. It has always been opposed to that selfish parochialism that would strangle all the rest of Western Australia in order that one part of it might have a monopoly of the markets.

Mr. Maley: What about the debate on the wheat marketing business, did you show any signs of it there?

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly. The district of Esperance was excluded; it was left out from the wheat pool; it was ignored.

The Minister for Works: I sent a camel train down there.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think we can discuss the wheat pool on this motion.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am showing how these settlers have suffered. The Minister for Works sent a camel team down there but he charged a fair price.

The Minister for Works: You cannot call it exorbitant.

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not know.

Member: The hon. member does not know anything about camels.

Hon. T. WALKER: To show their enterprise, the settlers have actually hired a camel team to cart their wheat.

The Minister for Works: Three teams.

Hon. T. WALKER: Private enterprise on the spot is willing to do something to make good the deficiencies of the Government, but the Government have not come to their assistance one iota. Only recently the Government sent Mr. Huby down to the district to make inquiries. I have not yet learned the result of his report. Preparations are being made for next year's harvest and the people do not know what is in store for them.

The Minister for Works: I have done the best I can.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am grateful for anything that has been done, but these people are in a neglected portion of the State. I know the country members are in favour of the principle of decentralisation, of distributing throughout the length and breadth of the country all that it is possible to do. They wish to see the State of Western Australia simultaneously developed in all its parts.

Mr. Pickering: Equally with the member for Kanowna.

Hon. T. WALKER: Before any of the members of the Country party left the Liberals I advocated this. Those are the principles which I say the country party cannot go against. If they believe in fair play, decentralisation, the honouring of a promise made for 25 years, and if they believe in the Premiers own statement, if they believe in common justice, they must support my motion; besides which, I take it at this juncture it is more essentially necessary that that portion of the State should be developed. Here is a country that opens out at the seaboard to one of the finest harbours in the

State. I heard that harbour sneered at years ago and now my every word is supported by the report. There are gardens right down to the coast, the land is all of a universally good quality right to Ravensthorpe. Northward the land has been not only tested for its productiveness, but it has actually been demonstrated by the evidence of the Royal Commission. It has been shown to compare even more than favourably with that class of country in Victoria and South Australia. We are on the verge of repatriating our men who are fighting for the welfare of the country. They will come back and they cannot all be market gardeners, as was said the other night. They cannot all be sheep farmers, but here is a State in itself, a country easy of access from the ocean, in closer proximity to the rest of the commercial world of Australia than even Fremantle and Perth.

Mr. Johnston: That is the trouble.

Hon. T. WALKER: I know. If it were not for that short-sightedness, there would be no trouble at all. We must have these links of connection. We must have commercial lines closely bound.

Mr. Harrison: How long do you think it will be before the railway would pay?

Hon. T. WALKER: It would not be long, especially if the views of the Premier are carried out and the railway connected with Norseman. Then there would be a continuous stream of people, those on pleasure bent and those travelling for commercial purposes.

The Minister for Works: Passenger traffic hardly pays anywhere in the world.

Hon. T. WALKER: But this port is nearer the East than Fremantle. We would have freight landed at that port for the goldfields. If we had to wait until a railway pays we should not build any railways because railways are looked on as aids to development. They are part of the machinery by which we make the desert into a garden. That is the object, to carry out settlement, to extend it and keep it prosperous, to give it the means of bringing the earth to its utmost fruitfulness. Those members who sit on the cross benches representing decentralisation must support my motion.

Mr. Harrison: What sort of a fix would you be in if the line remained at the 60 miles?

Hon. T. WALKER: It would be easy for the Government to bring down a Bill, and I believe it would pass both Houses without any trouble, to joint the two portions. This motion is expressing the opinion that this line shall be connected. The 60 miles was a suggestion in deference to the other Chamber and some portions of this Chamber; to the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) who said, "If you make it purely an agricultural line we will vote for it." These members were taken at their word, but whoever thought that the railway would stop at the 60 miles? Everyone knew that the line must be continued, that the gap must be filled in.

The Minister for Works: This is a leg in.

Hon. T. WALKER: The difficulty is in getting over the stile, by the introduction of a Bill, promised in fact by the Premier for the continuation of the line to Norseman. It is enough to make one lose every shred of confidence in the word of a member of Parliament or a Minister or the vote of Parliament, if we leave un-

finished and untouched, when the opportunity comes, the continuation of this work. Nothing has been promised more solemnly. No more solemn pledge has been given than to go on with the work within seven days after the report justified it.

The Minister for Works: It was not promised within seven days. I said, "It could be."

Hon. T. WALKER: The hon. member said it would be possible. Was the hon. member juggling with words if he did not mean what the words conveyed; that when the report came forward, within seven days he would start?

The Minister for Works: No, they "could start."

Hon. T. WALKER: If the hon. member said seven days and meant seven years, then he was using language that is deliberately misleading. I desire an honest opinion from the House that no other line shall be started in priority to this. Let there be no misunderstanding. It must be started in the order in which the authorisation was granted by Parliament. This line stands next on the list. To place it second or third is a breach of faith, and a great wrong will be done this portion of the country which has such untold possibilities.

Mr. Pickering: Is the settlement increasing or decreasing?

Hon. T. WALKER: I am afraid it cannot be increasing because of promise after promise being broken. The old iron is being taken off the buildings which have been there for 20 years. They are simply rubbing it in. In some instances suggestions have been thrown out, to settlers "to go somewhere else, to come into the wheat belt."

The Minister for Works: Who is saying that?

Hon. T. WALKER: The suggestion has been made.

Mr. Harrison: Do you not think it a wise suggestion?

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not want to mention names but I heard it even this morning.

The Minister for Works: You never heard it from me.

Hon. T. WALKER: These people have been badly treated. They are getting dissatisfied. If Esperance were nearer to Perth they would express their dissatisfaction more strikingly and forcibly. Hon. members would hear from them to their discomfort. I commend my motion to the consideration of the House.

Mr. GREEN (Kalgoorlie) [5.46]: I have great pleasure in seconding the motion. To a certain extent I am discouraged when I find that the logical observations which have been delivered with such fervour by the member for the district most immediately concerned are received with hilarity in this Chamber.

Hon. T. Walker: By Ministers.

Mr. GREEN: By certain Ministers, and by certain hon. members sitting opposite. It makes one think that there is a great deal to be said for that scheme of locating the seat of government which has been adopted in South Africa. There the capital has been established far from Capetown, well inland, so that the views of the people of the interior should be continually before the deliberative Chambers when discussing affairs of State.

I am reminded, too, that in America the practice has always been to place the capital of a State as near as possible to its centre, whether the particular town selected for the purpose be in itself of any importance or not. Indeed, the object has rather been to establish the Government in a town which, to begin with, has been of no particular distinction, with a view to counteracting the influence of vested interests, which in every country seems to have a tendency to draw all trade towards the already over-crowded centres of commerce. Let me direct attention to a fact which should hardly need pointing out in this country—a fact, indeed, emphasised last night by the member for Kimberley (Mr. Durack) when making a special appeal for his vast and remote territory. If there is one thing which, in Australia, we have to fight against more than any other, if there is one problem which confronts us more menacingly than do all others, it is the tendency towards large aggregations of population in small districts, whilst we have immense domains absolutely untenanted. In this small Perth of ours, the capital of what in point of size must be considered a vast empire, no less than 38 per cent. of our population is gathered together. And yet we find members of the Country party, or at all events some of them, treating the remarks of the mover with levity.

Mr. Johnston: This party took those remarks very seriously.

Mr. GREEN: I recognise that some members of the Country party received them seriously, but I cannot believe that one member was viewing the subject in a broad spirit when he sought to put a half-Nelson on the argument by asking, "Will the railway pay from the start?" Let me refer the hon. member to the last report of the Commissioner of Railways, in which he will find references to most of the railways which he and other members of the Country party, and members of the Liberal party, and, indeed, members of this party, were so anxious to pass in order that development might proceed in this country. When those lines of railway were mooted, no one asked whether they were going to pay immediately. But because the Esperance-Northward railway is to serve a district far removed from the seat of government, because it is not backed by the great vested interests, it becomes a matter for levity. Certain Ministers and members are moved to hilarity because the Esperance settlers are debarred from developing their portion of Western Australia.

The Minister for Works: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. GREEN: I fail utterly to understand how a man like the Premier, who was born in Western Australia, and a man like the Minister for Works, who has spent so many years in this country, can set their faces against a district like Esperance and try to prevent its opening up. Let the facts speak for themselves. When the Labour Government left office, the Esperance-Northward railway was already being constructed. Then, for the first time in the history of any country in

the world, the construction of a properly authorised railway was stopped. Such a position is nothing short of scandalous. In view of it, can one be surprised at the fact that the goldfields for years have not returned a Liberal for any constituency?

Mr. Davies: Was any reason advanced for stopping the construction?

Mr. Munsie: It was stopped on the strength of a report about ten years old.

Hon. T. Walker: A stupid report.

Mr. GREEN: The Government set a Royal Commission to work. This idea of Royal Commissions, which has for its object invariably the shelving of responsibility, which seeks to place responsibility upon the shoulders of someone else, ought to be resisted on every occasion. The Royal Commission it was hoped by some of those responsible for the appointment would report that the Esperance country was valueless and did not justify a railway. I believe that thought was deep down in the minds of many of the present Ministers.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Would the gentleman who was appointed chairman of that Royal Commission have been selected if the wish had been to condemn the railway? That is a very pertinent question.

Mr. GREEN: I do not wish to be interrupted by the Honorary Minister. I am saying nothing against the Royal Commission. I do say that the practice of appointing Royal Commissions upon subjects which are obvious and plain and clear to members of this Chamber is something that we should protest against. I protest against it as regards this railway. But I believe the Government had some justification, because some members of the Ministry did not really believe that the Esperance land could grow wheat successfully.

Hon. T. Walker: Some of them believed it.

Mr. GREEN: We were informed that the Government intended to wait until the report of the Royal Commission was available. The report was furnished, and any member who has read it must honestly admit that no report on land in any portion of Western Australia has been couched in more glowing terms. The report speaks enthusiastically of the possibilities of the Esperance land for cultivation.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): Do not forget that it was stated the Royal Commission were appointed to condemn the railway. That was stated by the member for Hannans.

Hon. T. Walker: The Royal Commission did that, too.

Mr. GREEN: Having regard to the conduct of certain past Governments of this State, the suspicion in the minds of goldfields representatives, that there was something sinister about the appointment of the Royal Commission, might appear to be well founded. My own view is that the Royal Commission builded better, or grander, than the Ministers by whom they were appointed expected them to do.

Hon. T. Walker: The report stopped the building of the railway.

Mr. GREEN: The report was such as not to leave a scintilla of doubt in the mind of any unprejudiced person that the railway ought to be built at the first possible moment. As the mover has remarked, the agitation for this railway now extends over 25 years. When Sir John Forrest went to the goldfields to initiate the works connected with the Coolgardie water scheme, in September, 1896, and was banqueted, there was stretched across the banqueting hall the Belshazzar message, "We want the Esperance railway." Right from that time the railway has been fought for in this Chamber; and once we got a Labour Government to give a fair deal, and members of a third party who were prepared to do the fair thing by other parts of the State, we got the Esperance-Northward Railway Bill through Parliament. And then, after all, the construction of the railway was stopped. Such conduct requires some explanation. If the Minister for Works is prepared to tell us that the stoppage was due to shortage of material, and if he will give the House the assurance asked for by the mover, that the Esperance-Northward railway will be, as it ought to be, according to precedence in passage through Parliament, the first to be completed when the necessary material is available, I am prepared to take his word. I am prepared to take his word as a man, if he is prepared to give it. If he is not so prepared, I at any rate shall lose my faith in government of Western Australia from the coast, and will go so far as to say that our Constitution is entirely wrong. I will say that, apart from the vested interests controlling another place, it is impossible, with the bulk of the population in one corner of this State, to get a fair deal for a distant portion which happens to be east of the 121st meridian of longitude. Some amazing evidence was placed before the Royal Commission. Mr. Mann, the Government Analyst, who favours one brand of whisky, Glenora No. 10, came along and said that by reason of certain percentages of salts in the Esperance soil wheat could not be grown successfully in that district. But a higher authority on agriculture than Mr. Mann—I refer to Mr. Sutton—entirely disproved this statement by pointing out that other portions of the State which successfully grew wheat showed a larger percentage of salts, and that the class of salt which Mr. Mann particularised as being detrimental to agriculture had no such effect, which was due to an entirely different class of salt, with which Mr. Mann was apparently not acquainted. The yield of the Esperance district this year—sadly small in area it is true—is higher than that of any other portion of the State. Higher, I mean, in average. The Royal Commission's report makes extensive references to the fact that mallee country never yields to its full capacity until the lapse of four or five years from the time of its first cultivation. Mallee country requires continuous cultivation, so that the large, circular mallee roots, so familiar to men who have come from



the Eastern States, may be completely torn out of the ground, thus permitting of proper cultivation. And so it is we find that the comparatively small areas that have been tilled in the district during the last few years are now beginning to show the fruits of successful cultivation. All we ask is that the remarks made by the Colonial Secretary at the opening of the Yilliminning-Kondinin line, the inference that other railways would be considered before this railway, is not correct. What we want is an assurance from the Government that the remarks complained of do not voice the policy of the Government, that the Government are prepared to do a fair thing by a distant portion of the State. We will then believe that the Government, although they differ from us in matters of policy, are going to do an honest thing by that neglected district.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [6.1]: I regret very much that this question of the Esperance railway should always generate a good deal of heat which perhaps would be better left outside. When the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) speaks in his usual style it is almost impossible for me to refrain from interjecting. I am sorry for it, and I apologise to the House. If the hon. member had contented himself with stating exactly the words used by the Minister for Works there would have been no necessity for me to interject.

Hon. T. Walker: Do you accuse me of quoting you incorrectly?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS**: You did not give the whole of my words.

Hon. T. Walker: I will give the whole of your speech, if you like.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS**: I am trying to put things as calmly as may be. What I said in regard to the Esperance railway and its stoppage was that the Government of the day, in other words the Premier (Hon. Frank Wilson), instructed me as Minister for Works to stop the construction of the line. As for the arguments as to whether it should or should not have been stopped, they are immaterial from my point of view. I stopped the line pending the report of the Royal Commission, and in doing so I took such precautions as I would have taken had I been the contractor or the manager for the contractor; that is to say. I had all my material properly stacked away, all my cuttings attended to, and all my banks sodded, so that there should be as little erosion as possible. If the money were provided and I was instructed by the Government to go on, I could start the line as soon as I could get men down there, in other words in from seven to 14 days. That is what I said. I did not say that as soon as the Commission reported, if the report was favourable, the line could and would be started. The "would" part of it has to come from the Government to me as Minister for Works. Let me read to hon. members my answer to a question asked by the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green) on the 1st August, 1917. The hon. member asked—

Is he prepared to proceed with the construction of the Esperance railway at once, and so make provision for the coming wheat crop, and in order to fulfil a promise made to Hon. T. Walker (the member for the district) that the work would be proceeded with within a fortnight after the Commission's report was furnished, if such were found favourable to the district?

Here is my reply—

The matter of proceeding with the construction of the Esperance railway is receiving consideration. When the line was closed down steps were taken to protect the material and the work which had been done, and the statement was made that the work could be re-started in comparatively little time, which is correct. Funds for construction have to be provided, and this question will be one for the Colonial Treasurer. As there are no supplies of rails on hand, and it is uncertain when a supply will be available from the Broken Hill Proprietary, it would be foolish at present to either call for tenders or to continue the work departmentally, it being impossible to do economical work when there is any question of shortage of rails. When the funds are provided, the Public Works Department will be prepared to arrange for an early commencement of the line.

I say the same to-day. It having been decided that the line has to be built it would not be for me to raise any objection to the building of the line; but if funds were available to do it I should advise the Government that if they wish to construct the line economically, for the smallest amount of money, they should start from Norseman and work it through to Esperance.

Hon. T. Walker: I have no objection to that.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Parliament has objected to that.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS**: I am giving that as my opinion, because to take all the supplies by boat to Esperance and work the line from that place instead of from a point where we are connected with rails is a prospect no contractor would face unless he had such a price as would enable him to do it. I apologise to the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) for having interjected "rubbish," but it did appear to me to be not quite the usual common sense the hon. gentleman applies to subjects, when he wanted to make out that we should continue that work with only 10 miles of rails on hand. We have there 10 miles of rails, but no prospect of getting any more. The Labour Government ordered from the Broken Hill Proprietary 60 miles of rails. That was over two years ago. I congratulate them on having done so, but we cannot get the rails.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They were to have been delivered in February, 1917.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS**: But they did not come to hand, and all we have been able to get from Broken Hill is five or six miles of rails out of about 5,000 tons. To

start plate-laying again and get a locomotive down there, with ballast wagons and other plant, on not more than 10 miles of rails, would be absolute foolishness. That is what caused me to make my remark to the hon. gentleman. I regret if I hurt his feelings, but I was then speaking rather as a man accustomed to doing the work than as a member of Parliament. I do not propose to say anything further in regard to the motion, because I believe it is to be left in the hands of the Premier. But I feel it is only just to the new members that they should understand the situation. If I or my colleagues had been imbued with any malicious feeling against the Esperance railway when, six or eight months ago, I was absolutely stranded for rails to get on to the wheat stacks, I should have removed those rails from Esperance.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You could not have got ships to take them away.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, I could.

Mr. Munsie: I would advise you not to send anybody there to take those rails. Your officers would get a pretty bad time.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are supposed to have law and order. If such an emergency should arise I hope Providence will give us a Government strong enough to deal with the circumstances. Had we been desirous of doing injury to Esperance we could have removed those rails; but we never thought of doing it. In order to get the necessary rails to ship the wheat, I took rails from Kalgoorlie, I robbed the abattoirs siding, I robbed everybody I could, but not Esperance. And now, after all, I have raised the ire of my hon. friend opposite.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [6.12]: I have an amendment which I trust will be acceptable to both the mover and the seconder of the motion. I move—

“That the following words be added to the motion:—‘And that all railways should be built in the order of precedence in which they were authorised by Parliament.’”

Hon. T. Walker: That principle I laid down in my motion.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am glad to hear it. My amendment seeks to carry the principle farther than the railway authorised the longest of all, and still unbuilt, namely, the Esperance railway. At present we have a number of other railways authorised by Parliament. The third reading of the Esperance-Northward Railway Bill passed the Council on the 27th January, 1915—more than three years ago—and on the 3rd February, 1915, a week later, Bills authorising the construction of the following railways were passed:—Katanning-Pingrup, Yillimining-Kondinin, extension to Merredin, Pinjarra-Dwarda extension to Narrogin, and the Busselton-Margaret River railway. These were all approved by the Legislature of the State, on the one day, and naturally the people in the districts concerned in those railways are all very anxious that they shall be built before other new proposals now being brought forward are constructed. Precedence was given by the Government of the day to the Esperance line. I wish to give the previous Government credit, not only for building good rail-

ways, but for always adopting the principle of building them in the order of their authorisation.

The Minister for Works: It might be possible to build a 25-mile line when it is virtually impossible to build a line of 60 miles.

Mr. JOHNSTON: At that time we were building 300 miles of railway at a time and in the order of authorisation. Personally I do not expect to see the Government building any further railways until after the war is over, and I think the people in the districts affected by the authorised lines do not expect railway construction on any large scale until we have peace again. But there is at present a feeling of alarm in the districts to be served by those authorised railways, because statements have been construed as meaning that other lines at present not authorised are to have preference of construction.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. JOHNSTON: In addition to the five authorised railways I referred to before tea, I find there is a sixth authorised railway on our statute-book which has not been completed, that is the Bolgart extension, which was partly constructed but which, I understand from the member for Toodyay (Mr. Piesse) was stopped a few months ago because the rails were required in other parts of the State. All these six railways will be urgently required after the war for the development of the agricultural areas and in order to permit the settlers to get their produce to market. As far as the Esperance railway—referred to at such eloquent length by the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker)—is concerned, I would like to say that both on the hustings and in this House I have always supported that particular line and I am sure the member for Kanowna must have been cheered, as the people who so long fought for the railway were cheered, by the very favourable and appropriate and inspiring reply which the Premier gave to the Esperance deputation that waited on him at Kalgoorlie a few weeks ago. I say in all earnestness, and I would like to remind the member for Boulder (Hon. P. Collier) that, whilst absolving him entirely from blame on account of the fight he put up, the Labour Government had six months in which to go ahead with the completion of the railway to Lake Grace, and with the Esperance railway 60 miles inland, that these two railways were approved by the House of Parliament in one week. The Esperance railway had been fought for at that time for something like 20 years and the Government of the day, led by Mr. Scaddan, during the six months only commenced the railway.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Leave Mr. Scaddan out.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I would not have mentioned his name only for the interjections which have been made. I know the Lake Grace railway was built, very properly built, and opened by the leader of the Government of the day before he left office, whilst very small progress, in comparison, was made during that six months with the Esperance line. The other line was started, completed, and opened during six months when that Government were in power, and I think, in these circumstances, it would ill-become any member to cast any reflection on

the genuine statement the Premier made, and which I for one accept, in reply to the Esperance Railway League at Kalgoorlie. The member for the district of Esperance, who so long fought for this railway before there was a National Government in power, and many other members of the House should be pleased to-day that we have a National Government in power whose leader has given what I accept as a fair promise to build the line as soon as possible, and I trust the Premier will further show the people of this country the genuineness of his desire to build the line by accepting the motion with the amendment I have proposed, so that we shall have the policy which was followed in the past, of building railways in the order of their authorisation, without fear of favouritism, again carried out in the future. I should like to say that the third in order of construction of the authorised railways is the line from Dwarda to Narrogin. That railway runs through a great district of fertile and well watered land where there is absolutely no fear of drought at any time. The rainfall is from 23 to 26 inches, the land is held in small areas by settlers, some of whom have been on the land working and cultivating it for 20 years. This railway was authorised three years ago. It is required not only for the settlement and development of that great territory, but also to save 33 miles of freight to all the people from Narrogin southwards to get to their natural port of Fremantle. Narrogin's geographical situation places it in the fortunate position of capital of the Great Southern Railway. I should like just to say, too, that this railway will serve 133,000 acres of alienated and improved land of first class quality.

Hon. P. Collier: Are you supporting the authorisation of the railway?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am supporting its construction.

Hon. P. Collier: The House has agreed to its construction.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am supporting the construction of railways in Western Australia in the order in which they were authorised by Parliament and this railway is third in order of authorisation, and it should be constructed at the earliest possible date.

Hon. P. Collier: It ought to be the thirteenth.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The hon. member may think that.

Hon. P. Collier: It is the least urgent.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I know the hon. gentleman at Narrogin told a very different story. I always understood he had some influence with the Government of the day when they decided to authorise the building of it, and his interjections will be read with amazement by his many friends and political supporters in that district. There were, in addition, 45,000 unalienated acres of land when the Bill was authorised by Parliament at the instigation of the Government represented by the party which the member for Boulder now leads.

Hon. P. Collier: How much poison land is there?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Any poison in the district has been successfully eradicated. There is a large number of sheep depastured there to-day. The district is producing up to 20 bushels of wheat to the acre and up to two tons of hay.

The line was recommended both by the Railway Advisory Board and the Railway Department and the Commissioner of Railways himself urged that the junction of the extension should be Narrogin. The Railway Advisory Board recommended it as the first section of the great trunk line from Narrogin to Armadale, which, when completed, will save 57 miles of freight for the whole of that great district to the port of Fremantle. Parliament has approved of a permanent survey of this main trunk line.

Hon. P. Collier: It will not be built for 20 years; I think 50 years.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Minister for Works has told us of the success which has attended his efforts in robbing, I think he said, different departments of rails which were required, and I hope when the Minister again feels anxious to secure rails, even if he descends to robbery for the purpose, he will bear in mind the necessity of this particular railway. No more profitable undertaking, no more important public work, remains to be built in this State. I should like to say, too, that alarming statements are current in the district in regard to the Government railway policy. It is stated quite freely that offers have been made to the Government similar to the offers which caused such a great deal of outcry in New South Wales, by one or two wealthy gentlemen who have agreed to find the money for the State to build other railways in preference to this great authorised work. One other railway not approved by Parliament, it is currently reported, is to be built quickly with financial assistance from those interested in it.

Member: What are the names?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am glad to be able to confirm, with the Premier's authority, the denial which I have already felt is due to a statement of that kind.

Hon. P. Collier: What is a good national policy in New South Wales ought not to be amiss here.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The supporters of the National Government in New South Wales had backbone enough to prevent that policy from being carried out there.

Member: What is the line you refer to?

Mr. JOHNSTON: From Emu Hill to Bruce Rock. It has not been authorised by Parliament.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is authorised to Bruce Rock.

Mr. JOHNSTON: If the hon. gentleman is again a Minister and obtains authority to build a railway from Fremantle to Mandurah, he would not turn round and build it to the North Beach. Although I see the Government are seriously thinking of building new railways, we are not in a position to build a new railway in this country merely to save freights. We are not in a position to give people who have one railway already a second railway to save freights, at a time when there are districts such as Narrogin—Dwarda, and Esperance with no railways at all. I, for my part, want to see priority of construction given to railways approved by Parliament to serve districts

which have no railways at all. I want to see, when the day for railway construction again comes in this State, which seems a long way off, railways built which will serve new areas and fresh people before we build a second railway for those who already have one, so as to get a shorter route to the goldfields or to the metropolitan area. I feel sure that this is a policy to which every member of the House would subscribe. I do not expect to see any fresh railways built until after the war, and peace has come again, but when the time does come for resuming our great developmental and public works policy I ask the Government to keep faith with the people of the different districts in the order in which the promises were made to them by Parliament, and not to let any gentleman come along at this stage and ask for a new railway which has never been approved of by this House, and give such railway precedence over the authorised Acts which have been put on the statute-book. So far as the Country party is concerned, we stand for decentralisation and for justice to all.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Oh no, you do not.

Mr. JOHNSTON: We stand for decentralisation. We had a motion before us a few nights ago in regard to finding out where the shoe was pinching in connection with railway freights and fares.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not refer to that debate.

Mr. JOHNSTON: We stand for decentralisation and justice to all. It is natural that the motion of the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) should receive on this occasion some fair support from these benches.

Hon. P. Collier: Is this party, which you now say stands for justice, the same party you once described as being the Bulgarians of politics?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I did not make that statement.

Hon. P. Collier: It is in "Hansard" in your name.

Mr. JOHNSTON: It is not. I only repeated what the hon. member for Cue (Mr. Chesson) had said, just as an interjection is repeated by any hon. member when he is staggered by it. I repeated it after he had uttered it, and the records of the House can be produced to prove my statement. I have already had to take "Hansard" round my elbow in this and other connections.

Mr. Mullany interjected.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Even if I had said this it would ill become the member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) who has disassociated himself from so many of his erstwhile friends and supporters, to be the hon. member to draw attention to the action of another. I, like others, am subject to the varying political changes of the day. I hope the House will affirm the principle contained in the motion as amended in the interests of justice and of the whole of the people, who are patiently waiting to-day in the hope of the necessary railway communication being provided when the war comes to an end.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [7.50]: I second the motion, pro forma.

Resolved that motions be continued.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.51]: I am not greatly in love either with the motion or the amendment. It is the duty of the Government of the day to exercise the right of saying which railway should be constructed first or last. The practice in the past has been that railways should be constructed in the order of their authorisation. When the Esperance Railway Bill was under discussion in another place, an hon. member (Mr. Sommers) moved that the construction of this line should not be commenced, or be proceeded with, until the completion of the following authorised railways: Wagin-Bowelling, Bolgart extension, Wyalcatchem-Mt. Marshall, and Kukerin-Lake Grace. That amendment was not accepted by the Minister of the day in another place, because he realised that it was a matter on which the Government should be trusted. He indicated to that House that it was the policy of the Government at that time to construct railways according to the order of their authorisation.

Mr. Foley: That amendment was not accepted by the Minister.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, it was withdrawn. As Minister for Works at the time, I made a definite statement that all railways should be started in the order of their authorisation. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) has referred to the extension of the Kukerin-Lake Grace railway. He was so anxious about the progress of the Great Southern districts that he wrote a communication to the "Kalgoorlie Miner" for the purpose of bolstering up his position against the Government. This statement was entirely incorrect. He pointed out that we were taking rails from the goldfields for the purpose of constructing the Kukerin-Lake Grace railway, instead of sending them to Esperance.

Mr. Johnston: I said I was glad the Government were doing this.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member said nothing of the kind.

Mr. Johnston: I did.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The fact of the matter was that the Government were carrying out the alterations suggested by the Railway Department in connection with the Wagin-Bowelling railway. The Railway Department had pointed out that it was necessary to have a lighter engine to run on the Wagin-Bowelling railway, and that if the line was constructed with 60lb. rails a great saving would take place in its working, as it would not be necessary to keep a special engine for the purpose. That suggestion was eventually adopted. Although it meant an increased expenditure of about £35,000, the capital expenditure was nothing compared with the annual saving. I pointed out that 45lb. rails were taken up to the Laverton line, and that 60lb. rails were brought down for the Wagin-Bowelling railway. There were second-hand rails adjacent to Wagin which had been taken up from the Great

Southern railway, and were being held there for the purpose of constructing the Kukerin-Lake Grace railway. In accordance with the promise given that each railway would be started, and if possible completed in the order of preference, the Lake Grace railway was the first started, and the promise given was kept. The hon. member in trying to bolster up his case said that there was delay then in connection with the Esperance railway.

Mr. Johnston: I did not.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Were not the conditions different? As a matter of fact it was impossible to get shipping at that time. The very first opportunity that came along, in the shape of a steamer, was availed of for taking down the material to Esperance. The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) asked a question in regard to the rates for taking the stuff to Esperance, and I gave him a definite promise that the next railway after the Esperance railway would be the Pingrup line, in his electorate. Unfortunately, we were not able to put that undertaking into effect. I regret that there is any necessity for the motion. I realise the difficulty of the Government in extending the railway from Kondinin to Emu Hill, because it was anticipated, as the Minister for Works stated just now, that rails would have been supplied by the Broken Hill Proprietary Company to enable us to carry on the construction of those railways which have been promised. Orders were placed with this firm, but we are told that they have not yet been fulfilled. The rails should have been delivered 12 months ago, but have not yet arrived. There was no delay so far as the Esperance railway was concerned. Surely, instead of condemning us for opening up the Great Southern district, in which the member for Williams-Narrogin pretends to take so great an interest, he should applaud the action of the Government for what they did. People were out there 40 or 50 miles from a railway and had no chance of getting their produce to market. It was necessary that a railway should be carried to them as quickly as possible, and this was done. I was pleased when at Lake Grace recently, to see that the construction of the railway had been carried out in such a manner that it could not have been better done even under contract.

Mr. Stubbs: That is absolutely correct.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Whilst the hon. member is advocating the needs of his own district, he does not care a hang about the Esperance railway, or whether the Nyabing railway is constructed, so long as the Dwarda-Narrogin line is built.

Mr. Johnston: Of course we want more than that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This railway was for the purpose of making a through line to reduce the haulage distance.

Hon. P. Collier: It is the least important of any of the lines.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: All the land about there is already served by a railway.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It will be a great advantage to the railway system.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course it will be of advantage to the district.

Mr. Thomson: You are going to feed Fremantle.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This will reduce the number of miles over which produce has to be hauled. Where we have places like the Esperance district, which are so many miles away from any railway communication, is it not necessary we should see that the people there are the first to be afforded such facilities?

Mr. Johnston: They will get them under this motion.

Hon. P. Collier: And you will get No. 2.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This motion has been brought about as a result of the opening of the Kondinin-Emu Hill line. The Legislative Council elections will be coming on in April, and the gentleman who was present at this opening was talking to his electors. He is a candidate. This gentleman said that the Government intended to introduce a Bill for the construction of the line from Emu Hill to Bruce Rock, and that the work would be put into operation almost immediately. That is the meaning of the statement which was made, though not the exact words of it. This, at all events, is what has led up to this motion being brought forward to-night. Most of these people already have railway communication. If I mistake not, the reports of the departmental officers suggest that the railway should be continued to Merredin, and not to Bruce Rock.

Mr. Johnston: We have authorised the Merredin line.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is authorised to go to Merredin on the advice of the officers of the department. Otherwise I would not have introduced the Bill for its continuation to Merredin. I regret the necessity for this motion. I hope the Government will follow the practice which has obtained, of letting each railway take its turn for construction according to the date on which it was authorised. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) has not a leg to stand on, because five railway Bills were passed on the same day. Which of them is first? Can he tell me that? The Kukerin-Lake Grace railway was authorised a week before the Esperance Northward railway, and the Kukerin-Lake Grace railway was constructed before the Esperance Northward railway. I hope the motion will be carried, not because I think it is really necessary, but because I consider, after certain statements which have been made by a Minister, that Parliament should specifically declare its intention to deal fairly with all the people throughout the State. A fair and just promise made by a Government should be kept. Any promise the carrying out of which would do injury to the State should be reconsidered by Parliament. It was a great mistake to suspend the construction of the Esperance line before all the rails available had been laid. To my mind there is not the least doubt that that railway was

stopped for the express purpose of casting a slur on the late Labour Government—a slur to the effect that they had kept from Parliament certain information which, it was contended, should have been given to Parliament, and which, as was proved conclusively, had been given to Parliament before the Esperance Northward Railway Bill was passed. I object to statements made by some of my friends on these Opposition benches, to the effect that the Esperance line has not been constructed because the people of the metropolitan area are opposed to it. I deny that point-blank. I represent a constituency of the metropolitan area, and my constituents do not care a hang if the Esperance railway is built.

Mr. Green: But certain St. George's-terrace people care.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the people of the metropolitan district were against that railway, they would very soon have questioned candidates for Parliament on the subject. They did not do so, and I object to a statement which is utterly wrong.

Mr. Green: What about vested interests?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In reply to the Honorary Minister, I say that if my electors had questioned me whether I would vote for the Esperance railway, I would have told them yes; and it would have made no difference to my election.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [8.6]: I support the motion. Like the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), I regret the necessity, if there be necessity, for the moving of the motion. The Esperance railway construction having been stopped, there is no need now for recrimination as to responsibility for the stoppage. Suffice it that the railway has not been built, and that the Esperance people are now labouring under the same adverse conditions as previously. That being so, we will give everyone concerned in the stoppage credit for honesty of purpose.

Hon. T. Walker: No.

Mr. FOLEY: For argument's sake.

Hon. T. Walker: Oh, for argument's sake!

Mr. FOLEY: I will omit that phrase. The argument that the Esperance land is not fit for cultivation has been blown to shreds. The very people appointed by the Government of the day to inquire into that point—I refer to the Royal Commission—have declared that everything claimed for the Esperance lands by the advocates of the railway has been thoroughly established. Thus there is no occasion to pit one portion of the State against the other. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) argued that there were other railways awaiting construction. But when the Bills for those other railways were before Parliament, every member had the opportunity of voicing his opinion as to the justification for any or all of those other lines. Parliament in its wisdom has authorised many railways, and therefore Parliament must be satisfied that each and every one of them is warranted. Next, we come to the question, which railway should be built first? The practice has been that railways should be constructed in the order in which they were au-

thorised. The member for Williams-Narrogin was credited with writing to the "Kalgoorlie Miner" to the effect that rails were taken from Esperance to be used in the construction of railways in the South-West. The goldfields people considered that an argument tending to boost the Esperance district, and not tending to boom other districts of this State. That is what was attributed to the hon. member. The Lake Grace railway was just as much needed, from the point of view of local settlement, as was or is the Esperance railway. Of course, it might have been argued that the Lake Grace people had not been languishing so long for railway facilities as had the Esperance people, and that, this being so, we should have gone on with the Esperance line first.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Lake Grace railway is not in question.

Mr. Johnston: I mentioned the Lake Grace railway. The "Kalgoorlie Miner" published an interview with me, and not a letter from me.

Hon. P. Collier: An interview for political reasons.

Mr. Johnston: The "Kalgoorlie Miner" wanted my opinion, and got it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. FOLEY: From the opinions expressed by the member for Williams-Narrogin, the goldfields people thought there was something else in his mind besides a desire for the welfare of the State as a whole. I do not assert that. A Royal Commission sat on the question of the Esperance railway, and decided that the land was worth a railway. I know we cannot get a railway built through the Esperance district at the present time, because we cannot get the rails. I am positive that if the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) had had it in his power to obtain rails at that time, he would have built the Esperance railway. A bad argument was, however, used by the mover, to the effect that he desired to see the Esperance line go right through to Norseman, because if it stopped at the point to which its construction had been authorised it would stop in a desert.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think that point is under discussion, though the mover did make that remark.

Mr. FOLEY: The railway will not stop in a desert even if it stops 60 miles north of Esperance. I wish to see the railway built, and in my opinion it is due to the people of Esperance that their line should receive precedence of construction, in the same way as preference in point of time has been extended to other railways. I see no need for heated argument. I trust the Government will consider the question having regard to the fact that Esperance is a part of this State. I regret to say that in certain respects Esperance has been tabooed by certain people. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

Mr. ANGELO (Gaseoyne) [8.12]: I intend to vote against both the motion and the amendment, as I consider that this is not the time to decide which railway shall be built first. I think all members will agree that some

considerable time must elapse before the State is again in a position to develop its railway system. Between this day and the date for which we all hope, and which we trust will come speedily, when the Government can tell us that they are in a position to continue railway development, some district which at present is not attracting attention, is not in the limelight, may suddenly develop a coal field, or a gold field, or an oil field, or other mineral proposition, and may call urgently for railway facilities. If either the promise asked for by the member for Kanowna, or that desired by the member for Williams-Narrogin, should be given by this House, the Government would, in the circumstances I have presumed, find themselves in an embarrassing position. They would have promised to construct some railway, and then found that another district demanded railway facilities far more urgently. The time for deciding which railway should be built first will have arrived when the Government have assured us that they are in a position to carry out any such contemplated work.

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies) [S.14]: I intend to support the motion of the member for Kanowna. Any goldfields representative, and indeed any man who has lived on the Eastern goldfields for any length of time, must support such a motion. Not that I believe the carrying of the motion will hasten the construction of the Esperance railway by even one day.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It cannot.

Mr. MULLANY: But I do desire that the House should place on record its opinion that the expressed will of Parliament must be carried out regarding the construction of the Esperance railway. Those of us who know the circumstances—I am positive that the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) does not know them—cannot but feel a high degree of sympathy for the settlers on the Esperance wheat lands. I shall not detail the circumstances which led up to the authorisation and to the stoppage of the work. Probably, in the whole history of railway construction in Australia, and in the whole political history of Australia, there is not to be found a parallel to what occurred when the construction of the Esperance railway was stopped. There may have been justification for it, but a Royal Commission inquired into all the circumstances which led up to the passing of the Bill for the construction of the line and everything else connected with the project, and I cannot see now that any set of circumstances can have arisen to lead one to believe that there can be any railway which can take precedence of the Esperance line. I agree with the Minister for Works when he referred as rubbish to the remark made by the member for Kanowna that the Government should go on with the construction of the 10 miles of line, the rails for which were in the district. I want it placed on record that the House desires to see that justice is done to the settlers at Esperance. With reference to the amendment, I do not intend to support the construction of any railways that the Government of the day may consider there is justification for. At the same time I admire in a way the characteristic astuteness of the member for Williams-Narro-

gin (Mr. Johnston) on moving the amendment, knowing as he does the circumstances of the Esperance project, and knowing the district of Esperance as he knows it, and being aware also of the case which can be made out in favour of the earliest possible construction of this line. The hon. member desires to tack on to the motion an amendment which will have the effect of bringing about the construction of a railway in his own district at a comparative early date.

Mr. Johnston: In the order of precedence.

Mr. MULLANY: I would not bind any Government to construct a railway in the order of precedence. Anyhow, to compare the two railways is an utter absurdity and no one knows that better than the member for Williams-Narrogin. I am not going to support the amendment. In matters of this description the Government must be allowed to exercise a certain amount of discretion. The Esperance railway has been advocated and fought for for many years past, and this Parliament would only expect the Government to promise that they would carry out this work at the earliest possible date.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [8.20]: The danger to my mind lies in the apparent justice of both the motion and the amendment. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) sounded a note of warning. We do not know what the future has in store for us and we do not know when money will be available for the construction of railways, nor do we know what will be the pressing needs of the State in the future. The danger to my mind lies in the manner in which the votes of members may be cast if a division takes place. Should a railway in the future be needed the influence of the present vote will prove a strong factor. The whole thing is an unknown quantity. I want to refer to a remark made by the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green) which no doubt has already got into "Hansard." He stated that I had a half-Nelson on the Government on account of an interjection which I made. In that interjection I simply asked the member for Kanowna when he was speaking about the urgency of this railway, as to how long he thought it would be before it could be built, and before the conditions at Esperance would be such as to make the line payable. We know that the returns from that district have been higher than usual on account of the rains and that if the people living there had the facilities of transit the district would be a good one to encourage. The hon. member's interpretation of my interjection was not a correct one.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [8.23]: I hope the amendment will be carried, otherwise I shall reluctantly be compelled to move a motion in connection with the Katanning-Pingrup line on exactly similar lines to the motion moved by the member for Kanowna.

Hon. T. Walker: You would not put yours before Esperance, would you?

Mr. THOMSON: To the settlers living in that part of my district a railway is just as important and as vital to their well-being as a railway is to the people of Esperance. I am quite prepared that this line shall take its place in the order of precedence. I have no desire to forestall the Esperance line, but I want to in-

form the House that there are settlers in that part of the Katanning electorate to which I have referred who have been on their holdings for 12 or 14 years. There is a saying that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick." These people are still hoping. The settlers there consider that the Government, intentionally or unintentionally, have done them an injury. They were promised a railway but the promise has never been carried into effect. These people were promised that as soon as the Lake Grace line was completed the men and plant would be transferred to the Katanning-Pingrup route. The then Minister for Works (Hon. W. C. Angwin) informed me that it was proposed to use the rails which had been taken up along the Great Southern line. Unfortunately that promise was not kept and our people had the unpleasant experience of seeing those rails being taken away to the goldfields and other parts of the State. I am not going to say that the Minister was not compelled to do that. I believe that the then Minister for Works was quite sincere in what he told me and that he fully expected he would be able to carry out his promise to those people who had been waiting for so long. I have almost slept on the doorstep of the Minister for Works' office in connection with this project, and I believe now that if the present Minister had the authority to proceed with the work of construction, he would lose no time in seeing that the line was built. But as he has told the House to-night, there are no rails available. The member for Gascoyne stated that this was not the time to discuss railways. I admit that. But we are not discussing new railways. We are discussing railways the construction of which has been authorised by this House and I trust that when the Government are in a position to proceed with the policy of construction, they will carry the promises into effect. The hon. member said that some new district might spring up where there was coal, oil, or even a banana plantation and that the Government might possibly be embarrassed if it were asked to build railways to those places. But I would impress upon the House that it is not the Government who would be embarrassed. It would be the settlers, many of whom have gone to distant parts and have and are still working under impossible conditions. In the district to which I have referred the settlers have to cart their wheat for 30 miles over sandy roads. Therefore, if there is any embarrassment, it exists on the part of the settlers. If a vote is taken on the question before the House, I trust the member for Gascoyne will remember that a promise has been made to the people to whom I have referred, and that that promise should be honoured on the first possible opportunity. Therefore I trust that the amendment will be carried. If it is not carried I will reluctantly be compelled to move an exactly similar motion as that moved by the member for Kanowna, but referring to the Pingrup line. There has been a feeling of alarm created in my district because we had the spectacle of seeing the Emu Hill-Kondinin extension carried out. True, that was done in the interests of the farming community so that they could get the rails up to the wheat stacks. I trust that the House will accept the amendment when, I feel certain, justice will be done to all parties.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [8.26]: It would ill become me if I did not make some reference to a very important railway, the construction of which was authorised in the South-Western part of the State, to wit, the Margaret River railway.

Hon. P. Collier: Was there a railway authorised in your district?

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think that railway is included in the amendment.

Mr. PICKERING: I am indicating a further amendment. The member for Katanning referred to some of his constituents who had been on their holdings for 12 or 14 years without a railway, but I would draw his attention to the fact that my electors have been starving for a railway for the past 50 years, that in fact they are amongst the oldest settlers in the State, and that the Margaret River railway would serve them.

Hon. P. Collier: You should have had it before.

Mr. PICKERING: There has been bad representation in the past but now that the district has a local member I shall do my utmost to get this matter brought prominently forward. Therefore I support the amendment, and if it is not carried I, too, will move a motion on the lines suggested by the member for Katanning.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [8.29]: I must see if I cannot find a railway that requires to be constructed in my district. I am afraid that I see danger in both the motion and the amendment. In the past the Governments of the day have always considered the matter of dealing with railway construction as of great importance. Circumstances, however, alter from year to year. At times it may be necessary in the best interests of the country to construct without delay a railway which has been authorised, but at a later date it may be found necessary to proceed with some other work first. And I think that it would be a very dangerous thing to tie the hands of the Government in the matter of precedence in the construction of railways. Circumstances might so fall out that the Esperance railway would be considered the most important awaiting construction. Such being the case, I think the Government should have the power to build that railway forthwith. I confirm everything the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) read to the House as what I had said to the deputation that waited on me at Kalgoorlie in regard to the Esperance railway. I think I gave a true and correct statement of the position, and I felt also that my colleagues would take the same view as myself.

Hon. T. Walker: Have they done so?

The PREMIER: The Royal Commission had just then reported on the question of the Esperance railway, and the report came into my hands as I was going to Kalgoorlie. The people were informed through the Press that this report had been delivered, and a deputation waited on me in reference to it. When that Royal Commission was appointed it was distinctly understood that if the report was favourable to the construction of



the line, the line should be started. Mr. Wilson, who was then Premier, when speaking to the Address-in-reply in September, 1916, said in answer to an interjection by the then member for Guildford, "Work will be resumed if the report is favourable." That was quite definite enough for me. Mr. Wilson said that if the report of the Royal Commission was favourable work would be resumed. I do not think I have ever read any report from a Royal Commission more favourable to a project than was that which came from the Royal Commission dealing with the Esperance railway. I am bound to admit that. And, knowing the men who composed that Commission, I was quite prepared to honour their opinions and views, more particularly when I was aware of what the late Premier had said shortly after the appointment of the Commission. I considered it my duty to honour the statement of the late Premier, who had said that if the report was favourable the work would be resumed. As hon. members know, it is quite impossible to build the Esperance railway at the present time. The member for Kaowna knows that perfectly well. We could not just now get the money to construct that railway from Esperance. On consideration, it appears to me that the amendment might defeat the motion altogether, and, perhaps, put off the construction of the Esperance railway for a number of years. The Royal Commission reported that, in their opinion, the Esperance railway should be constructed in the interests of the country, but that it should start from Norseman. It seems to me that railway could be much more cheaply constructed starting from Norseman than from Esperance, and the Government may yet ask the House for authority to start that railway from Norseman instead of from Esperance. If this should happen, and if in the meantime the amendment is agreed to, we might find that the Esperance railway could not start from Norseman until all the other authorised railways had been disposed of.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You know that Parliament refused it from Norseman.

The PREMIER: For many years Parliament declined to authorise a railway to Esperance at all. Twenty-five years ago Parliament was asked to authorise a railway from Coolgardie to Esperance. This matter has been before the House for a very long time.

Hon. T. Walker: Is not this more or less quibbling? Does it matter very much where that railway extends to from Esperance?

The PREMIER: Economically considered, the railway should start from Norseman. To run a railway from Esperance to a point 60 miles north is a strange proposition not very helpful to the people of Esperance and of no use at all to the people of the goldfields.

Hon. T. Walker: You can bring in a Bill to extend this railway to Norseman to-morrow if you choose, and get it through.

The PREMIER: The Government are not able just now to bring in a Bill for the extension of that railway. But I think there is danger in both the motion and the amendment. As I told hon. members just now, I

was seeking to find a railway in my own district. I have found one that was authorised in 1912, long before the authorisation of the Esperance-Northwards line. That line in my district is not completed yet. Still, I do not consider that the Government should be tied down to any specific order in which railways should be constructed. In a State like this circumstances alter so very quickly that I think the Government should have a certain amount of latitude in this particular. We know that all Governments have endeavoured, as nearly as possible, to build railways in the order of their authorisation, but if circumstances arose which rendered it advisable to vary that order, the Government ought to be in a position to use their own judgment. I feel I am unable to support either the motion or the amendment.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.40]: I regret very much the pronouncement of the Premier that he is unable to support the motion. With the Premier, I am entirely opposed to the amendment. I dissent entirely from the principle of constructing railways in the order of their passage through the House.

Mr. Thomson: Has it not always been followed in the past?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, almost invariably. But to lay it down as a hard and fast rule, not to be departed from in any circumstances, would be exceedingly foolish on our part. If railway Bills were introduced in the order of their importance it would be sound sense to carry out construction in that order. But what happens? The Government decide upon a railway programme for the session, including half-a-dozen railway Bills. They give instructions to the parliamentary draughtsman to get on with the preparation of those Bills. Quite casually that official takes the first on the list, prepares it and sends it along to the Minister. The Minister brings it down to the House. Next day he receives another from the draughtsman, and perhaps the whole half-dozen are put through in the course of a week. To say that we should tie ourselves down to the principle of constructing railways according to the order in which they go through the House would be ridiculous. Moreover, there is the further point that several years may elapse before the final completion of that policy of railway construction, and in the meantime circumstances may have materially altered in the respective districts. One district may have gone back and, in consequence, the need for a railway may be much less pressing than it was when the Bill was resolved upon. On the other hand another district requiring a railway, the Bill for which passed through the House a week later, may have developed very rapidly, the number of settlers may have doubled during the intervening period, and the need for the railway may have greatly increased. Therefore, I have no regard at all for this principle of constructing railways in the order of their passage through the House.

Mr. Johnston: On general lines it has always been followed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not say it should be entirely disregarded. All things being equal it would be a very good principle to follow, but circumstances may make it desirable to vary the precedence of construction.

Mr. Johnston: But—

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member has had a very good innings with his Dwarda-Narrogin line. In respect of that proposition I will say unhesitatingly that of the authorised railways awaiting construction the Dwarda-Narrogin is the least urgent.

Mr. Johnston: Do you say that on behalf of your party?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is my own independent personal opinion and I do not care if the hon. member makes political capital out of it, as he endeavoured to do out of the taking of the outback rails from the gold-fields.

Mr. Thomson: Suppose the Minister introduced a Bill for the construction of a railway and gave a definite undertaking as to the order in which it would be built?

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Minister did this, then the undertaking ought to be observed. I am sorry that the Premier has expressed his intention of opposing the motion. The position is entirely different with regard to the construction of the Esperance railway from the construction of any other railway.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): You are arguing against yourself.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not. I shall be glad if the Honorary Minister would show me where I am doing so. This House passed a Bill for the construction of the Esperance railway. It was commenced in all good faith, and had been going on for a considerable period when the Government of the day took action, which is without parallel in the history of responsible government in Australia. By an administrative act, they set aside the clear mandate and instruction of this Parliament and stopped the construction of that railway. For the sake of argument we will admit that these reasons were genuine, and that they wished to be satisfied as to the quality of the soil and the merits of the line. That Government gave a definite pledge to this House, as quoted by the Premier from "Hansard" a few moments ago, and on other occasions as well, that if the report of the Royal Commission was favourable, the work of construction would be resumed at the earliest possible moment. After holding up the operations on this line for 12 months the Government have received the recommendation of the Royal Commission that the work should be resumed. Indeed, the entire report of that Commission places the Esperance lands on a much sounder footing than they were ever placed on before. Notwithstanding this, the Government say, "We will honour that promise and resume operations if we think it desirable, that is, in its relationship to the construction of other railways." Morally as well as legally, the Government have an obligation cast upon them to build that line before any other line on that particular list when the money and rails are available.

Mr. Harrison: If in the interests of repatriation a railway was required, would you say that it should stand over until the Esperance railway was built?

Hon. P. COLLIER: There are just on a million acres, according to the latest report we have, worth 10s. an acre on the average, in the Esperance district.

Mr. Harrison: You have not answered my question.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the recommendations of the Royal Commission are worth anything, they point to the fact that there is a larger area of land suitable for repatriation in that district than in any other part of the State.

Mr. Johnston: In the hands of the Crown.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. There is, indeed, a very limited area of Crown lands in the State suitable for repatriation or any other purposes.

Mr. Angelo: It is unsuitable.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Certainly I have not in mind the large and fertile area along the Gascoyne which the hon. members represents. I know that is a wonderful area of elysian fields, and no doubt one day when the windmills are dotted along the banks of the river, the water is being pumped up to the soil, and the banana plantations are flourishing, and all the rest of it, this will be another garden added to Western Australia. I wish the hon. member luck with the beautiful part of the State he represents. For the time being it is outside the scope of my argument. The Government have not been fair. I did expect the Premier to say that, having regard to all the circumstances surrounding the commencement of the Esperance railway, and the subsequent improper action of the Government of the day in closing down the works, together with what has transpired since, the Government recognised their legal and moral obligation to recommence the line at the earliest opportunity and carry it through to completion. As things are, we are left where we were before in a hopeless state, according to our beliefs.

The Premier: I have conveyed my opinion that I do think it is a moral obligation upon us that we build that railway as soon as we can.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If that is so, why does not the Premier make a definite promise, and a definite statement to the House that this will be done?

The Premier: I have already said that.

Mr. Harrison: Why make a definite promise under indefinite conditions. Where are the money and rails?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know what the hon. member means by indefinite conditions. If the Premier believes there is a moral obligation cast upon him, why does he not pledge his Government to have the work carried on ahead of all other new railways? The Government of the day have defied Parliament, and if the decision of Parliament had been carried out that railway would have been completed 12 months ago. Off their own bat, the Government have set aside the decision of Parliament, and, when they did

receive a report favourable to the construction of the railway, they still neglected to carry out their promise. If the Government are going to keep good faith with the people of Esperance and the public generally, and if they have any regard for their moral and legal obligations in the matter, they will give a definite pledge that this Esperance line will be the first one that they will carry out.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [8.52]: As a representative of an outside port, and recognising as I do the disability our port labours under owing to the policy of centralisation now being carried on, I feel a genuine sympathy with the people of Esperance in their grievance, and am prepared to support the motion moved by the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker). To a certain extent, I am prepared to support the amendment, if only because of the experience we have had in connection with the Bullfinch railway. There was no justification for the building of that line, and had Parliament had before it a motion with its amendment such as this the country would have been saved considerable expense and this unnecessary railway would not have been built. The Government have certain responsibilities in connection with the administration of the country, and I do not think we should seek to take these responsibilities from them in this manner. If I did think of supporting the amendment, I would hedge it around by such conditions as to provide that the House should give its consent before priority was accorded to any particular railway.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): In fact you would nullify the amendment.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The House should decide whether the Government should be placed in a position of having to abide by an amendment of this sort. At any rate, I do not feel inclined to support the amendment. In ordinary circumstances the Government should have full control of the railway policy of the State, and should be able to build those lines which are most necessary in the interests of the State.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna—in reply) [8.55]: As this subject has now been thrashed out thoroughly, I will not detain the House at any length by way of reply. I only wish to make an explanation. When the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) moved his amendment, I distinctly thought that it had reference to the wording of my resolution. My resolution is that in the opinion of this House the first railway to be constructed in pursuance of the programme of railway construction authorised—that is the lines already authorised—must be the Esperance line. The order shall be taken as to the dates of authorisation. But the hon. member's speech went a good deal further, and laid it down as a general rule that there should be no exceptional railway lines built warranted by circumstances unforeseen at the time of authorisation.

Mr. Johnston: We can always meet special cases of the kind.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am afraid now that I cannot accept the amendment, and shall therefore have to stand by my motion and vote against the amendment. It goes too far. I am only dealing with those lines already placed on the statute-book as authorised by both Houses of Parliament. In that order, I want the Esperance railway to take its proper place, and other authorised railways will take their proper place in their sequence of passage through Parliament. I would not for all time lay it down as a principle that there should be no departure from that rule. I would not assert that as a principle for the guidance of responsible Governments, who must stand or fall by their railway policy in this respect.

Mr. Thomson: You want the Esperance railway and no other.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is not so. I want all those railways which have already been authorised.

Mr. Thomson: Are you moving a further amendment?

Hon. T. WALKER: No, I say, "in the opinion of this House the first railway to be constructed in pursuance of the programme." I am referring, of course, to all other railways that are put down on that programme.

Mr. Johnston: We will accept that.

Hon. T. WALKER: If that is accepted I stand by it. My motion does not say that no other railways shall follow. I have said that the first on the programme of authorised railways is the Esperance railway, and I want to see that this programme is taken in its order, the Esperance railway being first in that order. The other railways would naturally follow, according to my motion, in their order of sequence in pursuance of the programme.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	7
Noes	..	..	..	..	35

Majority against .. 28

#### AYES.

Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Maley	Mr. O'Loghlin
Mr. Pickering	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Money
Mr. Brown	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Collier	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Davies	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Draper	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Durack	Mr. Roche
Mr. Foley	Mr. Smith
Mr. George	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Green	Mr. Troy
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Holman	Mr. Walker
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Jones	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Lefroy	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Question put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	27
Noes	..	..	..	..	15
Majority for ..					12
					—

#### AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Maley
Mr. Brown	Mr. Mullaney
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Collier	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Davies	Mr. Roche
Mr. Foley	Mr. Smith
Mr. Green	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Holman	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Troy
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Walker
Mr. Jones	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Lutey	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Draper	Mr. H. Robinson
Mr. Durack	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Money	(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

#### RETURN—RAILWAY DEPARTMENT, SPECIAL SERVICES.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [9.10]: I move—

“That there be laid on the Table of the House a return showing the special services rendered on behalf of the Government by the Commissioner of Railways for the past 10 years, on the lines indicated in the report of the Commissioner of Railways for the year 1916-17.”

The paragraph of the Commissioner's report to which my motion refers reads as follows—

During the year special services were rendered on behalf of the Government to the value of £8,457. To cover this a Treasury vote of £1,500 only is granted; this leaves a balance in excess of the vote of £6,957. Taking the past five years, 1913-1917, inclusive, services to the value of £39,917 were rendered on this account, against a total vote of £7,500, so that railway revenue has been under-credited by £32,417 during that period.

The “West Australian” drew attention to this paragraph of the Commissioner's report some time since, and suggested that the member for Sussex would not be courageous enough to bring before the House a motion to the effect of that which I have just moved.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Is that your reason for moving it?

Mr. PICKERING: No. I have brought forward this motion in accordance with statements which I made while fighting my election. I then said that all possible means of economy should be exercised as regards travelling on the railways, and I instanced many cases which had

come under my notice, where the Government car had been dragged about the railway system for no special purpose. So that I am not moving this motion owing to the remarks of the “West Australian.” There are certain conditions prevailing on our State railway system which are quite different from the conditions prevailing in the Commonwealth railway service, which was instanced by the Commissioner of Railways. The Commonwealth railways were constructed in fulfilment of an obligation due to this State, and one main purpose of the Transcontinental Railway is defence. On the other hand, the railways of this State have been constructed more for development purposes. Whilst I realise the difficulties under which the Commissioner of Railways labours in endeavouring to conduct his business on commercial lines, I also recognise that certain expenses consequent upon the issue of free passes to members of Parliament and others cannot be calculated on the basis of ordinary annual passes. If the Commissioner of Railways keeps a return of these special services—as he should do, to enable him to make such a statement as I have quoted from his report—he will be able to show exactly the cost entailed upon him by those services.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He could not possibly do it.

Mr. PICKERING: Then, how is he able to make the statement that it costs him so much? My contention is that the railway pass of a member of Parliament cannot possibly be valued on the same basis as the all-lines pass used in an ordinary commercial business. Therefore, in making his computation, the Commissioner of Railways should not assess against Parliament the full expense of ordinary all-lines passes.

Hon. P. Collier: He could not do that.

Mr. Holman: He must be doing it.

Mr. PICKERING: He must be doing it to bring out the amount stated. That is the point. I consider that the Commissioner should have shown some of the items instead of merely making a bald assertion. Evidently, the Commissioner realises the seriousness of his position as manager of the State railways, and is trying to shift a certain amount of the responsibility by alleging abuse of privileges by members of Parliament. If he makes that statement, he should be prepared to substantiate it; and certainly he should be in a position to present to this House figures proving his statement. I contend it is unfair to charge against Parliament the cost of members' passes on the same basis as a commercial traveller's annual all-lines pass. The commercial traveller's pass is in constant use, whereas there are members of Parliament—to wit, City members, and also North-Western members—who may use their passes very seldom. Many members, indeed, rarely use their passes; and assuredly it would not be right to debit against Parliament for each member's pass the value of a commercial all-lines pass. It is the only way in which I can arrive at the accuracy of his figures. It may be that there are certain abuses by members of their privileges, for instance in connection with the reserving of carriages.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It does not alter the cost.

Mr. PICKERING: It must alter the cost. I used a sleeper on the Kalgoolie express for the first time the other night, I had to sign for it, and I take it the cost of that sleeper will be debited against the Parliamentary account. If I reserve a carriage I take it that the Commissioner will say that the charge is so much. If I were Commissioner I should do so. In view of what has appeared in the Press and also in the report of the Commissioner, we are entitled to ask for a return showing the actual cost extending over a period of 10 years.

The Minister for Works: Do you not want the detailed cost of the items?

Mr. PICKERING: I want a return showing how the Commissioner arrives at his figures. Why does the Commissioner fix five years as the period, as he does in the report? If he can supply the information for five years he can give it for ten. I submit the motion for the consideration of the House.

On motion by the Minister for Railways, debate adjourned.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

#### MOTION—LAND RENTS, SUSPENSION.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [9.20]: I move—

“That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the land rents payable by selectors who are being assisted by the Industries Assistance Board should be held over until the selector makes a sufficient surplus, above his expenses for the year, to pay such land rents.”

It will be observed that the motion is a simple one and is practically self explanatory. The House has already adopted the principle of giving extension of time for the payment of land rents to those settlers in need of that extension. We have gone a lot further than that by providing, in regard to new selections, that the land shall be granted rent free for the first five years. Apart from that, so far as old selections are concerned, we can give returned soldiers and any others who may be deserving cases approved by the Minister for Lands, the right to have their rents extended for not more than five years. The assisted settlers referred to in the motion can only be deserving men; if they are not deserving and worthy of assistance they would not be on the roll of assisted settlers. Some people think that the farming community has been too liberally spoon fed and resent anything that is brought forward on their behalf. I venture to say that at the present time even the Minister for Industries, who takes a special interest in the work of his department, will admit that economy is the guiding motto of that department's operations. Advances at the present time have been sparingly, I may say grudgingly, given under the policy of the Government of the day, and the very great work and the splendid results shown in that department with the assistance and co-operation of the Minister and officials, are obtained by the settlers despite the fact that in many cases economy has to be considered instead of some of their necessary requirements. The figures placed before hon. members by the

Government lately will surprise hon. members as showing the little new money that is being received by the Industries Assistance Board, for the purpose of carrying on this work. I find in the returns supplied by the Treasurer a few days ago for the year 1914-15 that a sum of £602,110 was advanced by the Industries Assistance Board. In the following year, 1915-16, the Treasurer had to supply the board with a sum of £199,890, whilst in the year 1916-17, although over £1,200,000 was advanced by the board, so great was the amount of money in the board's hands from repayments by settlers and for wheat received, that according to the returns supplied by the Treasurer, it was not necessary to find any new money; in other words the board was able to carry on under the repayments made by the settlers themselves.

Hon. P. Collier: You are very importunate.

Mr. JOHNSTON: There is no importunity about this.

Hon. P. Collier: Have you received a request from the farmers to move this motion?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Yes, from one end of my electorate to the other. I will confess that the idea was not mine. I have submitted the motion in accordance with requests put before me by branches of the Farmers and Settlers' Association.

Hon. P. Collier: Give the State a chance and let it go for a year or two.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I would draw attention to the interesting statement the Minister for Industries made on this subject shortly after the opening of this session. Referring to the operations for the year ended the 31st March, 1917, the Minister pointed out that the assisted settlers in the State, whom the leader of the Opposition regards as being importunate in their request, put into the pool £737,717 worth of wheat.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not refer to the importunity of the settlers, but to the importunity of the hon. member.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The amount of £737,000 odd is what was actually received on last years operations, and there is in addition to that a sum of £190,000 to go to the board on account of the assisted settlers as soon as the next dividend of 1s. per bushel is paid by the wheat pool; in other words the crop produced by the assisted settlers alone—and many of those settlers suffered through the drought and other adverse climatic conditions—was worth £927,770 last year. Of the first payment of £737,770 we find that no less than £595,770, in round figures £600,000, was paid to the board as a recoup for advances made, whilst a sum of £142,000 was distributed by the board to the creditors of the assisted farmers. It is surprising to me that the amount should be so large, because most of the creditors in my district seem to have got a “nil” return. At the same time I mention these figures because they are a tribute to the energy displayed by the majority of the assisted settlers in working their properties, and to their undoubted desire to repay their accounts and get off the board as soon as they could. The figures are so great that they must undoubtedly inspire confidence in every hon. member and the public.

as well in regard to the future of the great agricultural industry. It is most gratifying to find that the assisted settlers who suffered from the drought, amongst themselves paid nearly £1,000,000 into the Treasury last year. One of the best features of their patriotic action, too, is that a number of those who got on well and who are in surplus with the board, are actually leaving the money there and allowing the Government to have the use of it for making advances to other people; they are content to leave their surpluses with the board, not drawing interest, instead of drawing out those surpluses and paying them to their credit at private banks. The Minister for Industries in his report pointed out at the time the report was laid on the table of the House that there was no less than £30,000 standing to the credit of the various assisted settlers who were leaving that money with the board, although no interest was being paid. The Minister pointed out that this policy assisted the financing of the board's requirements and that was of considerable help to the Treasurer. Farmers have to pay from the time they start to keep the wheels of industry moving and to keep the people in the cities going. The farmer, the miner, the timber getter, and the pastoralist are the primary producers. No settler is assisted a day longer than an inspector thinks he should be helped. Instructions which have been issued to the inspectors are to put men off where their cases are not very hopeful. The policy of the country should be to keep the people on the land as long as possible. With regard to the motion, I would point out that whilst a number of the settlers are in a good position, the Minister has classified them as good, fair, and doubtful.

Mr. O'Loughlin: If we carry this motion of yours we may get a request for relief from taxation.

Mr. JOHNSTON: No. I hope to convince the hon. member before I sit down that it is a wrong thing for the Government by book entries to say that a man is paying his land rents when he has not produced it off the farm at all. It is money supplied by the Treasury, and if that money is paid to the Lands Department we make the settler pay six per cent. interest on money which he has not earned off his holding, and which is really swelling the revenue at the expense of loan funds.

Mr. O'Loughlin: Why should the merchant be paid and the State get nothing?

Mr. JOHNSTON: The State has first charge on the surplus above the amount the man actually receives in hard cash. I should say the State should come first for repayment for its advances during the year. Then one year's land rent follows under the Act, and after that the various creditors come in.

Mr. Foley: Would you extend this to the prospectors crushing at the State batteries?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I would give every possible assistance to prospectors. If the hon. member brings forward a reasonable proposal of a specific nature, I think the House will be prepared to do justice by it. At any rate, there is a section of assisted settlers in a bad way, and these men are compelled to

work their farms under the direction and supervision of the inspector, who goes round from farm to farm and visits each assisted settler once a month, directing him as to the manner in which he shall work his farm. The settler is even told which portion of the land he is to clear. The inspectors are specially selected men, with very good knowledge of agriculture and with local knowledge of their respective districts. Undoubtedly the advice and guidance initiated lately under this system of regular supervision is a very good thing for the Government and for the settlers as well.

Mr. O'Loughlin: It is pretty costly, with 36 or 39 inspectors on.

Mr. JOHNSTON: They have a pretty busy time. It is no picnic for them in those scattered districts. The point is that the inspector directs the settlers' operations, the board actually instruct him in detail. They instruct him as to what proportion of early wheat he shall plant. And unless the settler carries out the inspector's directions the assistance is no longer afforded him.

Mr. Foley: Are not the Government charging for that advice given?

Mr. JOHNSTON: No. In the circumstances it is quite clear that if the farmer does not make a surplus on his year's hard work it is not his fault. He is carrying out the expert instructions of the official adviser, and therefore it must be the fault either of the season or of the land. Surely, therefore, it is unfair for the Industries Assistance Board by a book entry to advance to the Lands Department money which the settler has never had, and then charge that settler six per cent. until he pays it back. It has been said that this policy was carried on to a large extent with a view to getting loan money into revenue. I am glad to say I have not heard the same measure of complaint lately in regard to so much land rent being paid for assisted settlers against their wishes. The Government have recognised the necessity for giving exemption in regard to the payment of rent. We have told every new settler that he can get his land rent free for the first five years. Surely, in these circumstances, since the assisted settlers are all working on the land, the Government can afford to hold over their land rents where those settlers cannot earn enough off the land to pay those rents.

Mr. Holman: Why not give the same privilege to settlers not being assisted?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Settlers not being assisted can make application and, under the Act of last session, the Minister has power to grant them exemption for periods not exceeding five years.

Hon. P. Collier: Without fines?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Yes, no fine is imposed. It is an extension under the Act. The passing of this money for rents is a mere book entry: the settler does not earn the money. Why should we credit the Lands Department with revenue which the settler has never earned? If ultimately the settler goes off his block that money is wrongly forfeited as revenue. It is a wrong thing to allow any money advanced by Parliament for the assistance of

settlers to go into land rents. If the man is working on the land, and if his year's operations do not earn land rents, the Lands Department has the benefit of the improvements on the property. It is an unfair charge against assistance to settlers and it is using the Industries Assistance Board for the purpose of paying land rent which the properties have not earned.

Mr. Holman: You want the Lands Department to stand their chance of getting the rent.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is so. If there were no Industries Assistance Board the Lands Department would not get the money, and would not dare to put the settler off the land. We have never yet had a Minister who desired to put the settler off his property because he could not pay his land rents. The present Minister has a fixed desire to help the settlers, and I trust that he will show it further by preventing the funds of the Industries Assistance Board from being used in this way for the conversion of loans into revenue.

Mr. Holman: It is borrowed money practically going into revenue.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Yes, and the settler is being charged six per cent. interest, which he would not have to pay if there was no Industries Assistance Board. The relief I ask for is urgently needed by a deserving section of the community, working hard to build up a great industry. Only those settlers who have suffered from drought and from adverse conditions can be assisted under the Act, and they can only continue to receive assistance while they work their farms to the approval of the inspector. I very much appreciate the work the board has done, and I am not moving the motion in any carping spirit.

Hon. P. Collier: No, you are moving it on broad national lines.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Yes, on broad national lines, and I trust the leader of the Opposition has a mind broad enough to recognise that this is a national question. I leave the motion in the hand of the Government and of hon. members, feeling certain that the appeal to their sense of justice will result in their approval of the motion.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [9.40]: I have listened with great interest to the remarks of the mover of the motion and I thank him very much for the kindly way in which he has referred to me as Minister, and to the board which really does administer the affairs of the farmers who are, what is called, on that board. However, the question before the House is whether the rents now payable by assisted farmers should be held over. I wish to draw attention to one or two matters bearing on that subject. It must be borne in mind that almost every day, certainly every week, there is a number of men who, having struggled along for the last four years with the assistance of the board, have cleared their way into prosperity again, and once more become free and independent farmers. During the last four years those men have managed to climb to that position and have paid their rents. Outside of that class there is another class, very numerous in Western Australia, the ordinary farmer, who is not on the board at all,

the independent farmer. I do not wish to suggest to what extent he may, or may not, be involved, but I feel perfectly sure that there are very few farmers in Western Australia who have not got a bank overdraft; and if in the course of the year they have to pay their rents, as they do, it adds to that bank overdraft, and on that sum they pay interest, a higher rate of interest than the interest charged by the Industries Assistance Board. If we are to agree to the motion it naturally follows, in justice to the other farmers, that we must treat them all alike; in other words, we must say that the farmers of Western Australia, until they get clear of their bank overdrafts, need pay no rent at all. I hardly think that even the greatest pessimist would desire to place Western Australia in that position. I want to point out another phase of the matter. The hon. member has been kind enough to refer to the statement I laid on the Table of the House the other day. When farms get into such a deplorable condition that the board has to conclude that the settlers cannot carry them on any longer, and they become, what is termed, abandoned or hopeless farms, we cease to pay rent upon them. I think we are quite right in doing this, otherwise we would be doing an injustice, and paying revenue directly out of loan moneys, money which we can never recover. The practice of the board is, therefore, when a farm has reached that stage, to cease paying the land rents. In the other classes, those whom the members of the board can see that with a little more nursing, care, and assistance they can be carried safely through to an independent stage, the rents are paid in the ordinary way. The rent of the land is really the foundation of the whole business. It is, so to speak, the start which keeps the roof over the heads of the settler, his wife, and his family.

Mr. Johnston: We are giving new settlers five years rent free.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES: That is quite a different proposition. That concession is given for the purpose of encouraging new men. It is the most desirable innovation in the laws of Western Australia.

Mr. H. Robinson: Is that not given for men who are 12½ miles from a railway?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES: The hon. member is wrong. The member for Williams-Narrogin, however, is quite correct in saying that new settlers can get five years' rent free. That is the suggestion of the member for Albany, and it is the law of the State. The settlers affected are in quite a different category to those persons mentioned in the motion. I do not think it helps the member for Williams-Narrogin at all. The assisted settler is in a different position from the ordinary settler. He is immune from attack by any creditor. Every man on the Industries Assistance Board is protected by statute from the rest of his creditors. Storekeepers, merchants, and creditors of any description have to stand over and wait.

Mr. Johnston: Except the Government.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES: Who have helped him in the distress he is now in. The new settler has all these disabilities to

face. He has to pay 20s. in the pound to everyone with whom he comes in contact. In order to encourage that man the Government have said under the Land Act Amendment Act passed last year that for the first five years we will give him rent free. The member for Williams-Narrogin said that in special cases the Government might defer the payment of rent and give exemption. This section was incorporated in the Land Act, 1915, and deals with leases already granted—

In respect of any land held under conditional purchase lease to which the Act applies, and situated more than  $12\frac{1}{2}$  miles from a station or siding of a railway, the Minister may in his discretion defer the payment of rent for any period not exceeding five years, and may extend the term of the lease subject to the like provisions as are contained in the last preceding section. In special cases to be approved by the Minister this section may be applied to land situated within  $12\frac{1}{2}$  miles of a station or siding of a railway.

I do not wish to cast aspersions upon any one. We have farmers on the board and independent farmers, although they may owe money. If we give this special concession to men who are on the Industries Assistance Board, how shall we ever expect to clear them off the board? Will not many of the farmers who are so deeply indebted, but not on the board, at once wish to go on the board so that they may be free of land rents?

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): It would not be fair to keep them off.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES: That is so. I am hoping, and working every day of my life so that I may be able to tell the House during my term of office that the Industries Assistance Board has come to an end, and that every man who is at present assisted has been turned back into a free and independent life, such as the farmer should enjoy.

Mr. Foley: You are only young yet, and you still have a chance of realising this.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES: I venture to say that a succession of good seasons will bring this about. The accounts of those clients of the board that are bad must be wiped off. The remnants that cannot be finished with, I would suggest should be handed over to the Agricultural Bank, and the Industries Assistance Board disbanded. I feel that the time will soon come when the functions of the board, which have been given to it by Parliament, should cease.

Mr. Holman: How many approximately are you assisting now?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES: I think there are 2,378 farmers on the Board, less 110, leaving a balance of 2,268. This number is decreasing by five or ten every week. I think I have given sufficient reason to justify the House in saying that it will not agree to the motion of the hon. member.

On motion by Mr. Foley, the debate adjourned.

## RETURN—FREEZING WORKS, WYNDHAM.

Mr. H. ROBINSON (Albany) [9.53]: I move—

“That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing—(a) the cost of the Wyndham Freezing Works to the 31st January, 1918; (b) the anticipated cost when completed; (c) the maximum and minimum weekly wage paid to (1) men, (2) boys; (d) the hours worked; (e) the amount paid to the same date in passage money for employees from Fremantle to Wyndham and back, and also the allowance for lost time in travelling.”

My special reason for asking for this return was to find out the exact position of the Wyndham freezing works, the probable time of completion, and the probable cost. Is it not possible at this late hour to debate the question of the work being done by contract instead of under the day labour system? As the Minister is prepared to furnish this return, there is no need for me to detain the House any longer. I therefore move the motion standing in my name.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [9.55]: I move an amendment—

“That after the word ‘be’ in the second line the word ‘now’ be inserted.”

Hon. P. Collier: What need is there for such an amendment?

The Premier: There is no need for it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have the return here, and I wish to lay it on the Table now.

Hon. P. Collier: The Minister is not prevented from doing that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have consulted the Speaker, and that is his advice.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [9.56]: I suppose the amendment does not make very much difference, but it is departing from the practice which has ever been observed since I have been in the House. The wording of the motion is clear enough, and I cannot see why the return should not be laid on the Table of the House without the insertion in the motion of the word “now.”

The Minister for Works: I shall have to move for leave to do that to-morrow.

The Premier: No.

Mr. HOLMAN (Murchison) [9.58]: In view of the promptitude of the Minister for Works in being prepared to furnish this return before it is moved for, it seems to me that he is offering an insult to his colleagues. Motions have been moved many months ago and the returns are not yet ready. There appears to be some idea that this return was prompted by the Works Department for some reason or other.

The Minister for Works: It has been ready for three weeks. I was to have laid it on the Table before, but was ruled out of order. I want to get rid of it.

Mr. HOLMAN: I hope the fact that the Minister has carried this return about with him for three weeks will do him a lot of good. At the same time this is casting a serious reflection on his colleagues, in that motions



for returns were carried in this House many months ago, although the returns have not been presented. By his amendment the Minister shows how anxious he is to have this return presented. Seeing that the hon. member who moved the motion is desirous of having this return, and that the Minister has had it ready for three weeks, it will be rather difficult to ask the Minister to hold the matter over until to-morrow afternoon, and so overburden himself and give him extra work which he is not capable of carrying out.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. DRAPER (West Perth) [10.0]: I intend to oppose the amendment, firstly because it is unnecessary, and secondly because I look upon it as a reflection upon the member who moved the motion. The member for Albany (Mr. H. Robinson) asked for this return in good faith, and there can be no object in the amendment moved by the Minister for Works, who treats this motion so cavalierly.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The amendment is not yet seconded.

Mr. SPEAKER: In that case it is not under discussion.

Mr. DRAPER: I think I am in order in protesting against the amendment being moved.

Mr. SPEAKER: The amendment is not under discussion. The hon. member can protest against the motion or support it. There is no amendment before the House.

Mr. DRAPER: Then I support the motion.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [10.1]: It is customary for a member when moving for a return of this kind to give reasons. That has not been done in this instance. In my opinion, reasons are advisable, and even necessary, before members vote for the production of a return of this kind—a return, moreover, which has already been published in the Press. The inference from the motion is that something is wrong with the carrying on of the works. The inference is that something outside the usual system has been done in regard to the men employed. When the member for Albany gave notice of this motion, the Minister for Works interjected suggesting the addition of certain words; and the member for Albany fell in with the suggestion. I do not know whether there is collusion between the two in this matter. At the suggestion of the Minister for Works the mover added paragraph (e) to the motion.

The Minister for Works: I did that to prevent the moving for another return.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Is that all? The men in question were employed under the Port Darwin award. Any alteration in that award would apply to them also. They were sent up from here on the understanding that they should be paid three-quarters of metropolitan rates during the voyage, and that if they remained on the works for 12 months their fares would be paid on the return trip. Of course, if a man broke down in health by reason of the climatic conditions, and furnished a medical certificate to the effect that his return south was necessary, that had to be arranged. But any man who left the works before completing 12 months' service, without such a certificate, had to pay his own fare back. That was the arrangement made in all cases of

men being sent up there. The cost of the works when completed it would be rather difficult for the Minister to estimate, because there have been considerable additions to the works, inclusive of a new jetty which was not provided for at all when Mr. Nevanas made the original estimate of cost. The expense involved in that jetty has been materially reduced owing to the position in which the Public Works Department find themselves at the present time, timber having to be used in the construction, instead of concrete as first specified. From the answers given by the Minister for Works recently to certain questions, it appears that various men on the works are being paid 2s. per day less than they should be paid.

The Minister for Works: Which of them?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The carpenters.

The Minister for Works: They will get 2s. 9d. extra as from the 1st April.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Carpenters are being paid 22s. per day at Port Darwin.

The Minister for Works: When the agreement with our carpenters is up, they will receive the same rate.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The return will show what wages the men are receiving. The hon. member is not in order in discussing, under this motion, rates of wages at Port Darwin.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There must be something underlying the motion, and it is only fair that hon. members should know exactly what are the conditions of employment on the works.

Mr. SPEAKER: The mover wants to know the cost of the works, and what the men are receiving weekly. The return will show that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The motion speaks of maximum and minimum wages.

Mr. SPEAKER: The return will show those also. The hon. member cannot now discuss what men are being paid at Wyndham. The hon. member can do that when the return is laid on the Table.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I cannot do it then.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member can discuss anything on giving notice.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I know all about that. There must be something underlying this.

Mr. SPEAKER: I wish to remind the hon. member that I do not think he can read into this motion any insinuation. The motion reads as follows:—

That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing (a) the cost of the Wyndham Freezing Works to the 31st January, 1918; (b) the anticipated cost when completed; (c) the maximum and minimum paid to the same date in passage money for weekly wage paid to (i) men, (ii) boys; (d) the hours worked; (e) the amount employees from Fremantle to Wyndham and back, and also the allowance for lost time in travelling.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is five times we have had the motion read now.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no insinuation in the motion. The hon. member is not in order in discussing the motion from that viewpoint.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I wish to point out that, while the motion may appear all right to hon. members, it is published in the Press.

When, previously, a return has been moved for, members have always had an opportunity of discussing the items asked for. The right to indulge in such discussion has never, to my knowledge, been previously denied. At the same time, Sir, I bow to your ruling.

Mr. SPEAKER: I wish to make it clear to the hon. member that I am not in any way restricting him in dealing with the motion, or with any part of the motion. I only point out that there is no insinuation in the motion itself, and that the hon. member is not in order in referring to some insinuation in the motion when no insinuation is there.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I made those remarks, Mr. Speaker, in reply to your statement that the motion did not deal with wages.

Mr. SPEAKER: I said the motion did not deal with wages at Port Darwin. The hon. member said something to the effect that wages were 22s. a day at Port Darwin.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I was merely pointing out that the same conditions as applied at Port Darwin applied at Wyndham.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): And then you immediately said they did not.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I said the agreement did not. It is only fair that hon. members should realise the position, and know what it means. As regards the cost of these works, it will be argued that the Government did not exercise discretion in fixing the wages paid to the men at Wyndham. That will be the next point. But here is the position: immediately the Port Darwin works were completed, or almost completed, and only a few men remained at Port Darwin, the Port Darwin wage was raised for the express purpose of increasing the cost at Wyndham. In my opinion, there is not the least doubt of that; and hon. members should be made aware of the position. I entertain no doubt that later, in connection with these works as in connection with other works, the men will be accused of taking advantage of the Government; whereas there will really be no grounds whatever for an accusation of that kind. The agreement is an agreement, and should, as far as possible, be carried out to the letter on both sides. I realise the difficulties of the Government in regard to the Wyndham works. I realise that the Minister cannot supervise the works, but must depend entirely on the officers. He cannot go all the way to Wyndham to see how the work is being carried out. Unless the Government enter into a satisfactory agreement regarding wages at Wyndham, it will be impossible to regulate the wages paid there. I rose chiefly for the purpose of explaining the conditions of the men at Port Darwin.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion does not deal with any conditions.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have finished, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister for Works may lay the return on the Table now.

The Minister for Works laid the return on the Table.

House adjourned at 10.10 p.m.

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 28th February, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

### QUESTION — PAPERS, GOVERNMENT BOTANIST AND PLANT PATHOLOGIST.

Hon. H. STEWART (without notice) asked the Colonial Secretary: Will the Minister see that all papers authorised by my motion, referring to the transfer from the Agricultural Department to the Mines Department of the Botanical and Pathological work, which was agreed to in the House on Thursday last, be laid on the Table. I have every reason to believe, from information I have received from Ministers and others, that there are other papers which should also be submitted. In fact, a perusal of the files themselves shows that one minute referred to is not there. Some of the files referring to Mr. Wakefield and Dr. Stoward go back to 1909 and 1911, but others dealing with the position of the botanist and pathologist start as late as the 27th December. November 1st is the date on which the first notice appeared in the Press and I believe there are papers prior to that date which have not been placed on the Table of the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: I will endeavour to get what the hon. member wants. So far as I am aware all the papers have been laid on the Table.

### BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Select Committee's Report.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL bought up the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the Health Bill.

Report received and read.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [4.53]: I move—

"That the report and the evidence be printed."

I am submitting this motion with a certain amount of diffidence, because of the necessity for avoiding all possible expense at this juncture. But I feel sure that hon. members, when they have an opportunity of perusing the evidence which has been given before the select committee, will realise that this evidence deals with matters which affect not only this Chamber, not only this community, but it is of such wide reaching interest and importance that it would be committing a crime against the public health, not only of this but of other communities, if the evidence were not available for future use. Pleading that, therefore, as my excuse, I submit the motion.

Question put and passed.