

business. That I might meet the convenience of country members, I caused notices to be sent to them stating that the House to-day would only transact formal business and then adjourn until Tuesday next. I therefore move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.39 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 20th February, 1917.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Honorary Minister: Amendment of regulations under the Health Acts, 1911-15.

By the Minister for Mines: 1. Report by the Commissioner of Forests on the proposed permanent reservation of classified karri country. 2. Amended timber regulations under the Land Act, 1898. 3. Additional Regulation No. 205B under the Mining Act, 1904 (asked for by Mr. Willmott).

QUESTION—TIMBER AREA RESERVED.

Mr. WILLMOTT asked the Minister for Mines: 1. In view of the information recently collected by him, will he state what

area is at the present time permanently reserved for karri and jarrah, tuart, and other timbers? 2. Does he propose to increase this area? 3. Has the Inspector General of Forests made any report on the subject? 4. Will he supply the report to the House, and state the policy to be pursued?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, 1,995 acres. 2, Yes. 3, Yes. 4, I will lay a copy of the report on the Table of the House. It is proposed to consider the matter of further permanent reservations in Cabinet at an early date, after which I shall be glad to inform the House of the policy to be pursued.

QUESTION—FRUIT, WHOLESALE PRICES.

Mr. SMITH asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is he aware that large quantities of fruit are at present being sold wholesale at prices ruinous to the grower? 2, What steps does his department intend taking to ensure the orchardist a fair reward for his labour?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, Yes, considerably large quantities of fruit, much of it of very inferior quality, has been placed on the market. 2, The Government have advanced on loan £2,500 towards forming a co-operative canning and drying company. This company has been in operation for some months and it is doing good work, but requires financial support from the growers to enable it to widen its scope and increase its output. Fruit-growers in this State are relying entirely on marketing the fruit in its fresh state, and must in future dry, can, and jam a portion of the output. The department is doing its best to encourage drying and preserving of fruit. The production of fresh fruit has overtaken the demand, but we are importing annually nearly £200,000 worth of dried and preserved fruits. The Government are not in a position to guarantee a minimum price for fruit. If the producers will, through their organisations, point out how legitimate assistance can be granted, the question will be fairly considered.

QUESTION—RAILWAY PROJECT, YORKRAKINE.

Mr. HARRISON asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has the advisory board inspected the Ucarty, North Cunderdin, Yorkrakine, Kobj-Koodjin, Danberrin, North Nangeenan proposed railway? 2, If not, when is this inspection to take place? 3, Is he aware that the survey of this urgent railway was forecasted in the Governor's speech at the opening of the present session? 4, What tonnage of wheat and fertilisers is to be carted into the same radins this year?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, No. 2, No date has yet been fixed, as the question will require consideration at the hands of the present Government. 3, The late Government proposed to introduce a Bill to provide for surveys of a railway which would serve the district named. 4, The Government have no means of ascertaining this information, but if the honourable member will supply a list comprising names and addresses of all the farmers to be served by the proposed railway, the department will endeavour to ascertain from them figures upon which an estimate may be formed to enable the question to be replied to.

QUESTION—RAILWAY ACCOMMODATION, MERREDIN JUNCTION.

Mr. HARRISON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What is the accommodation for passengers waiting to continue their journey at the Merredin Junction station? 2, At what hours do the travelling public arrive and leave Merredin from district railways, booked through to Perth or Kalgoorlie? 3, What is the average number of passengers daily, inclusive of pass and season ticket holders? 4, Does the present ladies' waiting-room conform with the board of health regulations? 5, Do the present staff officers meet the regulations mentioned in No. 4? 6, When may improved conditions be expected?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Ladies' waiting room 12 feet by 12 feet, with lavatory attached. Gentlemen's waiting room 12 feet by 10 feet. Shelter shed 12 feet by 12 feet. 2, Trains for branches arrive Merredin: Tuesdays and

Fridays, 12.6 a.m. and 12.20 a.m.; Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 11.15 p.m. Depart from Merredin: Tuesdays and Fridays, 2.45 a.m.; Tuesdays and Saturdays, 2.30 a.m.; Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 3.35 a.m. 3, Average number of passengers is about 25 to 30. 4, Yes. 5, Yes. 6, When finances permit.

QUESTION—HEALTH PROSECUTIONS.

Mr. GREEN asked the Premier: 1, Did one of the men selected by the Department of Health to secure convictions recently at Kalgoorlie, under the Health Act Amendment Act, 1915, suffer from venereal disease? 2, Is it necessary to employ a man in this state of health to secure the convictions desired? 3, Did this man occupy a sleeping berth on the Kalgoorlie express? 4, If so, does the Health Department not recognise that this constituted a grave menace to the health of the goldfields travelling public, and that it is repulsive to ideas of common decency? 5, Will the practice be continued in future, if the same conditions prevail?

The PREMIER replied: In view of the provisions of Section 242 (o) of the Health Act Amendment Act, 1915, it is impossible to answer the questions in detail, but the Minister has received the assurance of the Commissioner of Public Health that there was no menace whatever to the public health in connection with the happenings implied in the questions.

QUESTION—ENEMY SUBJECTS IN GOVERNMENT EMPLOY.

Mr. TAYLOR (for Mr. Heitmann) asked the Premier: 1, In view of the declared policy of the Government to dispense with the services of all persons of enemy origin and the fact that a number of labourers and others have been dismissed the Government service, including one in Geraldton who has given four sons to the war, why is it that an officer of Parliament born in Germany has not received similar treatment? 2, Will the Government take immediate steps to apply the policy fairly?

The PREMIER replied: 1 and 2, The policy of the Government was brought under the notice of the Speaker on the 16th January last, but I have received no advice as to the result.

wives at the King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women will be given to women whose husbands have lost their lives while engaged in fighting for the Empire in the present war.

QUESTION—LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL AND CONSIDERATION BY PARLIAMENT.

Hon. J. SCADDAN asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is he correctly reported in the *West Australian* of Tuesday last to the effect that the Opposition had prevented him proceeding with the Land Act Amendment Bill? 2, Is he aware that this Bill was read a first time on 23rd November last? 3, Is he also aware that the Government control the order of business on the Notice Paper, and that this Bill has never been placed in such a position as to enable consideration by the House?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, I was not reported as saying that the Opposition had prevented me proceeding with the Land Act Amendment Bill, but that the measure had been hung up owing to the action of the Opposition. I did not wish to infer that their action had been in any way levelled at the Land Bill, but merely stated a matter of fact. 2, Yes, and that the House adjourned on 30th November until 23rd January. Since then but little business has been transacted. 3, The Government control the order of business on the Notice Paper, and it is intended to place the Bill in question in a prominent position when the ordinary business of the House can be again proceeded with.

QUESTION—MIDWIFERY TRAINING, PREFERENCE TO WAR WIDOWS.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Premier: Will he issue instructions that preference of admission for training as midwives at the Subiaco hospital should be given to women whose husbands have lost their lives while engaged in fighting for the Empire in the present war?

The PREMIER replied: If otherwise suitable, and other things being equal, preference of admission for training as mid-

MOTION—WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT.

Debate resumed from the 15th February on the motion by the Hon. J. Scaddan "That the Government do not possess the confidence of the country, because of their action in introducing during the time of war purely party measures to the exclusion of more urgent and important legislation affecting our national welfare, their incapacity in the handling of the public finances, their general lack of initiative and ability in the administration of the affairs of the State, and their abandonment of the principles of responsible government."

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.45]: During the last few days there has been a good deal of criticism in the public Press because of the fact that the Opposition deemed it wise in the best interests of the State to try and get the present Government out of office. The Opposition went so close to obtaining their object that every hon. member on the front bench took a fright. The actions of the Government, as to the means they adopted to obtain office, which they themselves said they desired to relinquish, have been criticised strongly throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia. There is no doubt that the first reason why the Opposition should seek to turn the Government out of office is found in the actions of the Government themselves. On the occasion of the submission of Ministers to their electors for re-election, it was distinctly stated that no matter whether they were returned to office or not, it was the intention of the Government to take the views and opinions of the people of the State to see whether they had the confidence of their electors. Again, we find that the Premier in speaking at Donnybrook was so pleased with himself that he had men with him of such business capability that the country began to think that at last we had got hold of proper men who would see that the affairs of the State were

carried out as they should be, and our finances placed in such a position that the deficit which had accrued would be almost immediately wiped out—and the Government have taken a good way in which to do that. The people, however, have been misled. They have now realised that their expectations have not borne fruit, that the Government have failed in the promises they made, and the result is that the people are asking that they should have an opportunity of deciding who should take control of the administration of the affairs of the country for the next three years. At Donnybrook the Premier expressed his appreciation of the position in which he found himself as head of the Liberals in Western Australia and leading a Cabinet of men of known capability, who could be looked upon to assist in bringing into operation in the State sound legislation and administration, and sound finance. We have seen during the present session of Parliament what action the Government have taken to bring about sound legislation. Scarcely a Bill has been introduced into Parliament this session, but some action has been taken to cause its removal from the Notice Paper, or it has been kept so far down the list that it has not received any consideration at the hands of members. Our friends on the cross benches, who are supporting the Government, thought when they made the change that they were going to do something wonderful so far as this State was concerned, but they must admit, if they are honest men, that they have gone from the frying-pan into the fire. When they got into the fire they came to the leader of the Opposition and said, "We know we cannot do any better than you have done; come and help to pull us out of the fire." So far as administrative ability is concerned, never since responsible government was established in Western Australia have the members of the Ministry shown such a lack of administrative ability as members of the present Government have done. The Premier told us the other night that the deficit has gone up by leaps and bounds, that it was higher than it has ever been before, and that sound finance has been brought about by the introduction of a Bill to fund the deficit; and we shall be told, if

the Government last long enough, on the 30th June next that they have wiped out the deficit by adding it on to the national debt. Since the Government have taken office they have done nothing to warrant the support of the electors. Their actions have been discussed more than those of any other Government in the State. I am of opinion that if the electors were given the opportunity, and there was a dissolution, about which the Government preached so much a fortnight ago, they would see that the occupants of the Treasury bench were men who understood the responsibilities of their position and knew how to look after the affairs of the country. In speaking to this motion it is perhaps necessary that I should go back a little. The Premier, when speaking on the public platform, has drawn attention directly to the large amount of loan money which the late Government had expended. On his showing they were responsible for everything that happened under the sun, no matter what it was. Why they have not been accused of bringing about this war I do not know. At any rate we have been accused of extravagance and wastefulness, and it has been said that there was no necessity to enter into such a large expenditure, that the State did not warrant it, that the agriculturists did not need it, and that the burden carried per head of the population of the State was greater than could be borne. We, however, have told the people before how the position stood. It is often forgotten that in 1911 the previous Liberal Government left a heavy financial burden behind them. On the 30th June, 1911, the railways opened for traffic in this State were 2,376½ miles in length. On the 30th June, 1916, the railways opened for traffic were 3,331½ miles in length. In addition to this mileage, which was handed over to the Railway Department, there were 112 miles of railway under construction over which traffic was run by the Public Works Department. During that period there were close on 1,100 miles of new railways constructed, including the number of miles of railway handed over to the Railway Department and the mileage of railways then under construction and upon which traffic was being run by the Public Works Department.

Out of these 1,100 miles of railway no less than 880 miles consisted of railways which were approved of by Parliament prior to the late Government taking office. Members of the late Government told the public that they would carry out the promises made by the late Liberal Government, so far as they could, in connection with the railway Bills which had been passed, and they carried out their promises. The late Government endeavoured, as far as possible, to uphold the honour and dignity of this Parliament. They did not turn down every promise which had been made by their predecessors in the way the present Government have been doing, but fulfilled the promises made by those who preceded them. In the carrying out of these promises they were faced with a large loan expenditure which had been left to them as a legacy by the previous Government. I should like to point out the position that the Government was then placed in. In 1911 the then Liberal Government, who of course, were the only people who had the interests and welfare of the State at heart, induced Parliament to pass legislation for the purpose of constructing hundreds of miles of railway. Immediately the new Government obtained office and tried to get this money to carry out the desires of Parliament we find that influence was brought to bear in the money market in London to prohibit the Labour Government from obtaining the money with which to carry on. The same influence was also at work in the money markets in the Eastern States. Every endeavour was made at that time, not only in London, but in the Eastern States, to hamper the Labour Government in the way of obtaining money with which to carry out the works for which Bills had been passed in Parliament. In the face of these facts, how can we expect a Government, of which several of the Ministers are those who occupied portfolios in the previous Liberal Government, and who did their utmost to prevent the development of the State in the way that I have shown, to really have the interests of the State at heart? Even if the late Labour Government did spend a large sum of money that money has been spent to assist in the development of Western Australia. On looking through some figures, I have been able to ascertain approximately the amount of

the legacy or burden which was left to us in the way of loan indebtedness. For the construction of railways there were left three millions of money, and they left us another quarter of a million to pay for land which they had taken over for the construction of railway works in Perth and for other land in Geraldton. We had to raise close on a quarter of a million of money to meet the indebtedness of the late Government and Treasury Bills to the amount of approximately £600,000. In all, there was a sum of about four millions of money expended and approved of by Parliament, even for the items I have mentioned, and which affected the Public Works Department only. Even if our indebtedness has increased considerably, and owing to drought and the war the money which we expended has not been so profitable as it has been in years gone by, any Ministry with any sense of decency would say straight out that they were responsible to a certain extent for the large amount of loan money which had had to be expended, and for the increased indebtedness of the State during the last five years. The Premier brought before the notice of hon. members a question which, in my opinion, should receive the closest consideration. If ever an inquiry by Royal Commission was required in connection with the finances of this State, it is certainly required in order to probe into this assertion of the Premier. Referring to the late administration of the Industries Assistance Board, the hon. gentleman said that 570 farmers of this State had received advances amounting to £238,000, and that the proceeds of the crops from these advances realised only £64,000. He asked, where did the balance of the crop go? The statement would appear to show that in connection with the advance of £238,000 to 570 farmers a sum of no less than £174,000 has been lost or stolen. If the insinuation does not mean what I have said, then I do not know what an insinuation is.

Hon. P. Collier: It is an insinuation of dishonesty against the farmers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the balance of the crops did not go into the legitimate channels, it follows that such balance must have been either destroyed or stolen. The matter is a very serious one for this State,

and I contend it is the duty of hon. members to discover where that sum of £174,000 went to.

Hon. P. Collier: The whole matter is one for the Country party.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the Premier's statement is correct, then some of the remarks made by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) at a certain meeting of farmers were justified.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The member for Pilbara was not allowed to make any remarks.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If it is true that 570 farmers are responsible for the State's losing £174,000 in a single twelvemonth, nothing too bad could be said of those 570 farmers. Certainly, the matter is one which we should probe to the bottom. For my part, I am doubtful whether the statement of the Premier is correct. I am doubtful whether 570 farmers robbed the country of £174,000.

Mr. Piesse: Surely the Premier did not say that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have quoted the Premier's words. I repeat, I refuse to believe the statement. I believe those figures are put forward for the express purpose of condemning those who administered the Industries Assistance Board prior to the present Government's advent to office. If the country really did make the loss as stated, heaven knows what condition we are drifting into now; for I am confident that neither the Government nor the present board know what moneys are being advanced to farmers throughout the State at the present time. The statement has been published—it appeared in the *West Australian* of the following day—that this State contains 570 farmers so dishonest that they robbed the country of £174,000 in 12 months. I contend it is the duty of the House to have the matter thoroughly investigated, so that justice may be done either to the farmers or to the State in this connection.

Mr. Green: What about a select committee?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is useless to move for a select committee so close to the end of the session. My own belief is that the Premier has been given incorrect infor-

mation. Now, we have been told repeatedly—and the statement was made again on Thursday last—that considerable savings have resulted from the changes effected by the present Government in the administration of the Industries Assistance Board. I doubt that statement very much also. From the last Estimates only one conclusion can be drawn—that the cost of the board's administration has increased instead of decreasing. If the Premier and the Minister of Industries really believe the statement I have just dealt with, as to the enormous loss resulting from advances to farmers, then, no doubt, increased expenditure would be justified for the purpose of preventing farmers from stealing the State's money or from destroying or improperly disposing of their crops. However, the Estimates which were presented to us prove that the cost of the board has increased considerably. While on this subject I wish to say again that the farmers have reason to be grateful to Mr. Oliphant, the member of the Industries Assistance Board whom the present Government dismissed from his position on that board. The farmers have to thank Mr. Oliphant for the price at which they have obtained bags, which price is considerably less than it would have been but for that gentleman's action. It might have been expected that the Minister, before taking steps to alter the board's administration, would ascertain what was the system in vogue, instead of accepting anything that Tom, Dick, and Harry told him. Only the other day he had to deny, through the Press, that farmers were not treated fairly. In connection with his reorganisation of the board, he should have examined the existing system to ascertain what, if anything, was wrong, and then proceeded to put the system, if he thought it wrong, on a proper basis. But the Minister never once visited the board's office, never discussed matters with the board, never saw a member of the board. Without any such inquiry the Minister, immediately on taking office, dismissed the men who had been appointed to the board for the purpose of protecting the interests of the State and of assisting the farmers in the development of the country. I con-

tend that action of the Minister was wrong and improper, and showed a want of capacity in handling the affairs of the State. I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without a few words as to the State trading concerns. The present Government have done more than they realise against the interests of Western Australia by their statements regarding the trading concerns. When in Melbourne a few weeks ago, I saw large headlines in the papers there—"One and a quarter millions loss on Western Australian State trading concerns—Mr. Gardiner's statement." Immediately on my return to Western Australia I read the *Hansard* report of Mr. Gardiner's speech on the State Trading Concerns Bill. There was not a word in that speech about a loss of $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions. In fact, no man reading that speech would say that it was not in the best interests of the State. The one aim of the member for Irwin (Mr. Gardiner) evidently was to see the State trading concerns put on a proper basis. But the speech was construed by someone in Western Australia as I have said. I myself, as Minister, have informed the House over and over again that one or two of the trading concerns were showing a loss on their working, and that others showed profits. But, no matter what statement I might make on the subject, so long as something is said in depreciation of the State trading concerns, that is given forth to the world as true and correct. Any statements to the contrary are represented as rubbish and mere bombast. The Attorney General, speaking at St. Luke's Hall, Maylands, on the 5th August, 1916, is reported as having said—

The loss on the Yandanooka estate last year was £11,000. How could this be helped when prime bullocks from Yandanooka, worth £24 per head in the local markets, were passed into the meat stalls at a value of about £10?

That statement is quite incorrect. Every bullock that went into the meat stalls was charged to them at the full market price. The statement was made for the purpose of misleading the public in regard to the operations of the meat stalls. Again, from the returns laid on the Table I observe that

the Yandanooka estate, which, according to the Attorney General showed a loss of £11,000, actually showed a profit of approximately £9,000. These are not my figures, but figures produced by the present Government. And yet we find the Attorney General, a member of the Government, endeavouring to mislead the people by this statement of a great loss on the Yandanooka estate. I wrote to the Press on this subject. I find, further, that during my absence in Melbourne the Colonial Secretary asserted through the newspapers, that the statements he had made about the trading concerns were correct, and that the Treasury figures showed a deficit of £24,650 in two years. The hon. gentleman further said—

Since the Yandanooka estate has been purchased, it shows a loss of £10,000. That assertion might do very well for those who do not know the position. Figures have again been used in such a way as to misrepresent. The Yandanooka estate was originally purchased for closer settlement purposes. As hon. members are aware, shortly after the drought, land was not selling as freely as before. Selectors then were not so ready to take up land and consequently the Yandanooka estate was lying idle. It was thought advisable, then, that something should be done to meet the payment of interest on the cost of the estate, and approximately 110,000 acres of it was handed over to the Agricultural Department. The department took the matter in hand, and eventually placed some cattle on the estate. However, as soon as the 110,000 acres had been handed over to the Agricultural Department, that department had to pay the full proportion of the interest for that area. The full proportion of interest has been charged every year to the Agricultural Department, and is now represented as a loss arising from State trading concerns. The estate has been farmed for practically only one year, and the result is a profit of approximately £9,000. In all probability, the estate will become a paying proposition before long. Our friends opposite, however, expect a State trading concern to pay almost before it is fairly started. The Premier has said that the State trading concerns would mean a big deficit which would have to be made up by taxation, a deficit of approxi-

imately £113,000. He made that statement for the purpose of showing how his deficit is being built up at the present time. Now, there is issued for public information through the *West Australian* every month a statement of the public finances. If hon. members will refer to those statements for the last seven months, they can ascertain exactly the financial position of Government business undertakings and State trading concerns. During the past seven months the Government have received from trading concerns and business undertakings the sum of £1,323,124, and their total expenditure has been £1,495,728, leaving a surplus of receipts over expenditure of £327,406. These are the figures which have been given to us in the monthly statement, but my friends opposite will say that it is not fair to take into consideration the receipts of the railways, and the receipts from the Water and Sewerage Department. That being so, we can deduct the figures of those two concerns and we find that in the period mentioned the Government had a surplus of £75,869, from which, it is true, they have to pay interest and sinking fund. As I pointed out the other night, very few of these concerns were established by the previous Government; they are extensions of concerns which were established prior to the Scaddan Government taking office. In the *West Australian* the other morning there appeared a report which gave the transactions of several of the trading concerns, and each showed a loss. Each of the trading concerns mentioned in the paragraph was started by a Liberal Government. There seems to be a general impression in the minds of the people of this State that all the trading concerns were established by the Labour Government, and it was also instilled in the minds of the people that it required business ability to make those undertakings pay. We know, however, who has been responsible for the white elephant at Albany, which was the leading concern referred to in the newspaper a few days ago, as showing a big loss. The Liberal Government were responsible for that. Where, then, did their business acumen come in? There is no greater proof of the manner in which the trading concerns affect the State than the Estimates which were presented to Parliament in November last

year. We have the Treasurer's own figures, and in submitting them he stated that he expected to receive for the year ended 30th June, 1917, a net surplus of £83,808. Yet we have it continually published in the Press that, owing to the action of the Labour Government in starting the trading concerns, it is not possible to conduct the affairs of the State without showing a deficit. How can this be when the Premier himself informed the House that he expects to receive a net surplus of £83,808 from the trading concerns?

Hon. P. Collier: And he is going to exceed his estimate.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It looks like it. At the present time he has a surplus, according to the figures published in the *West Australian*, of no less a sum than £75,869. Does it not look as if the Government, for party purposes, have been misrepresenting to the people of the State the position of those concerns? On one occasion I drew attention to a Press report regarding the State trading concerns, and also to the fact that they were not showing a loss. I asked that the public should read the balance sheet. The newspapers know that the public are gulled by headlines and it is always made to appear from the headlines that the trading concerns are not paying.

Hon. P. Collier: They keep those headlines standing.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, for the express purpose of misleading the country. We have also been told what the Government intend to do for the purpose of letting the people of the State get behind the scenes. The Premier, speaking at Capel, said that it was not intended to have a repetition of the Nevanas contract. We know, however, that the present Government have made a cattle contract. We were also told that they were not going to make any secret contracts, and that there would be no repetitions, in addition to the Nevanas contract, of the powellising contract, the establishment of sawmills, or the purchase of rattletrap steamers which were now ready to be thrown on the scrap heap, and the hon. gentleman also added that there would be a careful scrutiny made into everything, and that there would be obtained the assistance of the

experts and capable business men, with whom he was associated in the Cabinet. We find that the Minister for Works was the first who started on the scrutiny, and that he was assisted by his officers and a Press representative. Whether that is true or not, I do not know, but I do know that night after night, often until midnight, he was at his office going through papers in the hope of discovering something, and being able to tell the people of the State that his predecessor had hidden something in the pigeon holes in consequence of which the true position of affairs had not been revealed. What did he find? After several weeks of scrutiny and digging into the files with the assistance of the officers of his department, he discovered that I had sold a boiler and that, in consequence, there had been a considerable loss to the State. I immediately contradicted the statement which appeared in the Press about that sale, and, on the next day, the Minister admitted that he had made a mistake, and that the probable loss amounted to about £5. He tried to make a mountain out of a molehill; it was the only thing that the Government were able to discover after nights of scrutiny with the aid of experienced business men. The members of the late Government have nothing to fear from anything that might be disclosed as the result of any investigations which may be made. It is true that we may have made mistakes, but other Ministers may have made mistakes, and the members of the present Government may also commit errors. I defy the present Government, however, to point to anything that the past Government did which might be detrimental to the interests of the State. The Minister for Works tried to make a good deal out of the Wyndham freezing works, and he declared that he had sent the plans to New South Wales, and that he had secured the services of an engineer to advise in regard to them. The truth of the matter is that it was I who sent the plans to New South Wales, and the present Minister did not tell us that it was more than probable, if a new engineer was appointed, that the plans would go through a process of transformation. It is true that the new engineer recommended that certain improvements should be effected, and I maintain that a Government would be wrong

if they attempted to save a few thousand pounds by not carrying out suggestions which might benefit a concern like the freezing works, especially if they had any confidence in their newly appointed engineer. It is in this way that the cost of the freezing works has been increased. I have no doubt that other experts, if they were called upon to offer advice, would make further alterations, and, in that way, still add to the cost. With regard to the Fremantle Harbour Trust, the action of the Government, in removing the Engineer-in-Chief from the personnel of the Trust, was detrimental to the interests of the State. The Engineer-in-Chief was the principal advising officer in connection with the harbour works and was chairman of the Trust; he was originally the engineer of the harbour works, and it was considered advisable that he should be a member of the Trust so as to be *au fait* with everything that was going on. It was considered that there was no man who was better fitted to occupy the position, and he remained a member of the Trust for four or five years, and acted as the custodian of the State's interests. In every instance, therefore, he would see that those interests were safeguarded. Immediately there came a change of Government, however, our friends removed the Engineer-in-Chief from the Trust just as they did Mr. Oliphant for the reason that they were appointed by the Labour Government.

Mr. Hardwick: Who said that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Their actions said it.

The Minister for Railways: How much salary did he draw?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: He had £200 a year extra to his previous salary. The present Government said by their actions, "We must take steps immediately to remove from boards or Government institutions every person whom the Labour party put there."

The Minister for Railways: It is not so at all.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Their actions prove it. They shifted Mr. Morris from the Industries Assistance Board, they shifted Mr. Thompson from the Harbour Trust, and they shifted men from the hospital boards.

The Minister for Railways: You shifted people, too, remember.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In those cases where changes were made by us the officials resigned. We dismissed no civil servants who were capable of carrying out the duties of their offices. The action of the present Government in removing men from their positions merely because they had been appointed by a Labour Government shows clearly that the present Ministry are not qualified to control affairs of State. I have already pointed out that the present Government claimed that by applying their business acumen they would be able to bring the trading concerns into the position of payable propositions. I assent now the Government have not done one thing since they came into office with a view to improving the position of the trading concerns.

The Minister for Railways: What did you say about the Implement Works?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I told you the truth about the works.

The Minister for Railways: You claimed that you would put them in order.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes; and I would have done so. With the assistance of the manager, I improved the position of those works to the extent of £8,000 in one year. What has become of the legislation which the House was told was urgently required? The Government proposed an Electoral Districts Bill.

The Minister for Railways: Did you not consider it a fair Bill?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This House should always be prepared to consider legislation fairly, but I would point out that the hon. member and his colleagues did not secure their present position as a result of a reference to the people of the State. Had the question been referred to the people they would never have got over there. The main features of the Electoral Districts Bill indicate clearly that it was never the intention of the Government to do justice to all parts of the State. The first Bill dealing with the subject was introduced but withdrawn. They introduced another, and that Bill, too, is to be allowed to go by the board. That shows the Government themselves did not believe in the legislation they

introduced. Then we were to have increased taxation so as to put the finances in order. I should like to say here, lest I should forget to do so later on, that the Government have been able to do something to rectify the finances. They have been able to enact that we shall put a penny stamp on all receipts for amounts over £1. But that is all they have done. As a rule their legislation has never been on the Table for longer than a few days before they have become ashamed of it themselves. At present they have brought themselves into such a position that even those who have been connected with them as a party are now trying to have the name of the party changed, to have the name "Liberal" done away with. They know that if they go to the country as Liberals not one will be again returned to this House. A well known public man who spent many years in public life said to me the other day, "You need not be afraid, Angwin; no Liberal is game to contest the next election with you. They are ashamed of the name Liberal, it is mud." And they are going to adopt a new name, they propose taking the name "National." During the past few weeks we have been repeatedly told the time had arrived when we should drop party politics for the purpose of winning the war; that we should all work together to that end. But whilst this has been urged we have had the spectacle of a Liberal Government doing and attempting to do many things which are not in the best interests of the State. They urge that party politics should be dropped, but it is the politics of only one party which it is desired shall be dropped. We have evidence of that in the position obtaining in the Federal Parliament to-day. There a National Government has been brought into existence by an arrangement between the Liberals and some of the Labour party. They have joined together, we are told, for the purpose of winning the war. I very much regret that a few gentlemen in the Federal Parliament should take on their own shoulders the onerous burden of winning the war. I honestly believe there are few people indeed in Western Australia at any rate, who do not desire to do their share so far as it is possible towards winning the war. I regret, therefore, that we should be told there is any necessity

for the formation of a new party in order to win the war.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Most of your own party say so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not care who says it.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Why do you object then?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Because your party has taken the lead in the matter. In the Federal Parliament two parties have agreed to join and we are told that the first step taken is to drop party politics, to unite, for the express purpose of carrying out the wishes of Australia as they are understood to be, to assist the Mother country towards success in the war. I believe that every man in the Opposition in the Federal Parliament is as anxious that the Motherland shall be victorious in this war as any of those members who form the present Government in the Federal Parliament. On what terms has the agreement been arrived at? The Liberals said in effect that if they joined with the Hughes party in the establishment of a National Government the Hughes Government must jettison its wealth tax, and also must give the Liberals a big majority in the Ministry. Therefore, the winning of the war was not the first consideration. The real consideration was that the Labour party should drop its policy, and that there should be only one policy, the Liberal, in Australian politics. Give me the man who is willing to give those near and dear to him to fight our battles, whether he be conscriptionist or anti-conscriptionist, before the man who has neither chick nor child and refuses to contribute yearly for the purpose of seeing that there shall be adequate taxation for the protection of those men who, after fighting our battles, come back wounded and maimed. I know of members of this House who have been called unpatriotic and charged with being against the best interests of the Empire merely because they are anti-conscriptionists, yet who have given those dear to them, those whom they have reared from childhood, who have come back maimed for life. There are others, especially one, in the present Federal Cabinet, who have neither chick nor child, in the Ministry, who have offered to contribute £100 per annum for

three years for the purpose of stopping increased taxation. They can give only their wealth, they have no children of their own, but they are determined to prevent the imposition of taxation to make future provision for those who have been maimed whilst fighting our battles. I say again, give me the man who sends his own children, no matter how he may advocate on the question of conscription. The Liberals may desire the creation of a new party—

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Some of your own people advocate it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But in my opinion they merely want a change of name. Their actions since being in office during the past seven months have been such that they will clutch at any straw, like a drowning man, in the hope that it will serve to keep them in their present positions. And the only thing left for them to do is to change the name and grasp at the straw of a National party. I believe that some of the Liberals in the Eastern States do not agree with this movement for the establishment of a National party. They believe their party and their policy to be the right one. The Premier a few weeks ago twitted us that we were not game to go for an election. He said "Why did not you move the adjournment of the House? You are not game to do so." How heroic was the Premier and his Government! We took the business out of their hands, and refused them an adjournment. By way of retort they said, "It is about time the people should have a say in this matter. Owing to the want of that legitimate support which we should have, we are going to refer this to our masters, the people." And so they went off to the Governor, who said to them, "There is a lot of work for Parliament to do; it is necessary that steps should be taken in respect of repatriation. Get on with your work." No one was better pleased at this than was the Premier. But what was the important work that Parliament had to do? On the very next day the announcement was made that almost all the business on the Notice Paper was to be struck off. Every important Bill was to be dropped, and by this means the Parliamentary business was

to be quickly disposed of. As for repatriation, it is clear that a Government newly elected with three years life ahead of them would be in a far better position to evolve and carry into effect a satisfactory scheme than can be a Government directing the business of a dying Parliament with only a month or two of life left. Between this and October there cannot be any great demand for a repatriation scheme of land settlement. After October we may have a new Government, to whom the scheme prepared by the present Government might seem unsuitable, in which case all the work would have to be gone over again. On the other hand, if we were to allow the people to decide between the parties within the next few weeks, the result would be a Government in office with a probable life of at least three years before them, and who thus would be in a satisfactory position for the carrying out of the adopted repatriation scheme. So it will be seen that in the interests of the soldiers themselves the time is opportune for a general election. However, I am afraid this soldier racket is only playing to the gallery, and that we are inclined to ride on the backs of the soldiers, overlooking the necessity for preparing a repatriation scheme which will have the effect, not merely of putting the soldiers on the land, but of enabling them to make a comfortable living therefrom. I myself have seen several projected schemes, not one of which appeared to me to have a chance of success.

The Minister for Railways: Were they your own?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No; they were evolved by departmental officers. For the success of any repatriation scheme it is first essential that it should be put into operation by a Government having some years of life before them.

The Minister for Railways: Well, we will stay on for years.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am afraid it is too late; the numbers are up. Many of us are fond of talking of our duty to the State. We have also a duty to perform in the protection of the honour and dignity of Parliament, and of the good name of the electors, and when we see attempts being made to whittle away Parliamentary privileges, we

should do our best to oppose those responsible for such attempts. I hope the motion will be carried, and that as a result the people will have an opportunity of saying whether they are prepared to allow the present Government to continue to control the affairs of State. If the answer should be in the affirmative, then the responsibility will be upon the people themselves. I trust the people will be given such opportunity at the earliest moment, for I have no fear whatever of the result. We on this side have no desire to go over to the Ministerial bench except at the express wish of the people.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [5.54]: The hon. member said that the party to which I belong is anxious for a change of name. What better name could it have than that of Liberal, which stands for freedom of opportunity, for generous treatment, and equal consideration to everybody? Of course I admit that it will never stand for preference to unionists, or to anybody else. It is well recognised that if there is any person in the community who desires preference, he is not a supporter of the Liberal party. In the course of an interesting lecture the hon. member referred to the dignity of Parliament. Yet he was here a few nights ago when there was taken the vote which practically brought about the present situation. We were beaten on an important clause in an important Bill. We asked for an adjournment of the debate, but hon. members opposite refused it, notwithstanding they knew full well that we were supported by a majority, although that majority did not happen to be here at the moment. In no other part of the world is a member expected to be in his place every day. In this House, however, no matter what might happen to an hon. member, he is denied consideration. He might have serious illness in his family, and still be compelled to sit here, day in and day out. And now the hon. member talks about the dignity of Parliament. When that vote was taken, hon. members opposite knew that their majority was only of a moment and that, therefore, they should have granted an adjournment of the debate, as would have been readily conceded in any other Parliament in the British Dominions. I be-

lieve that at least one member who voted with the Opposition on that occasion regretted having to do so. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) is a scrupulously fair man, and I venture to say that he regrets having had to vote as he did. Yet hon. members opposite talk about national government, national interests and national aims.

Hon. P. Collier: Who does so?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The member for North-East Fremantle did so for half an hour.

Mr. Foley: Can you tell me of a single instance of an hon. member who, being sick, was not allowed to go home, was refused a pair?

Mr. Hardwick: Yes, the member for York.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What I said was that a member might have serious sickness in his family, and yet be denied a pair. I was speaking generally on the question. I think the leader of the Opposition will agree that the convenience of members on either side should be considered when it comes to voting.

Hon. J. Scaddan: Not when they put their private interests before the interests of the country, as one of your members did.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Even the private interests of a member might occasionally be considered when such consideration can have no result on the voting strength of parties.

Hon. J. Scaddan: It was your colleague who publicly suggested it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Railways has the floor.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know about that. I was not talking about that particular thing, but was discussing the statement made by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin). The leader of the Opposition was not in his place when we were discussing this question and did not hear what the hon. member said. That hon. member's references to another hon. gentleman, who holds a very high place in the esteem of the people of the State and who sits in the Federal Cabinet, were most uncalled for, and I think were not generous. It is not usual for the hon. member to be ungenerous in

his statements. The hon. gentleman in question has no children to send to the war, and if he had I think they would have gone. To-day the son of his brother is serving as a private in Blackboy camp, and others of the family are fighting at the Front. Indeed, many of the Forrest family, and he has numerous relatives, have gone to the Front. He has given liberally to war funds, and is taxed liberally, too. He has been called upon to pay a very fair proportion of taxation.

Hon. J. Scaddan: He gave £300 to avoid taxation.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What connection can there be between this question of taxation and the question of fighting? We must have taxation in order to carry on the affairs of the country, and we are getting subscribed the money necessary in order to carry on the war. Do we benefit the workers of the country by excessive taxation? It is possible to tax men out of work, but it is not possible to tax them into work. Can any hon. member show how it is possible to tax men into work? As a matter of fact, we make less work by taxation. We can tax enterprises and capitalists, but it will be found that the men who suffer most are those who must have work day in and day out in order to earn their livelihood.

Hon. P. Collier: Has not the Federal Land Tax created work?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I doubt if it has.

Hon. P. Collier: It has been the means of cutting up big estates which have brought in four millions of revenue, and so created work.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think the hon. member is wide of the mark. If the lands in Australia have been taxed to the extent of four millions of money, I think they must have been taxed beyond their ability to pay.

Hon. P. Collier: Not at all.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would not come to half that amount, because the exemption is very liberal.

Hon. P. Collier: The exemption is £5,000.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think the hon. member will find that the Federal Land Tax probably amounts to a million and a half.

Hon. P. Collier: It is more than that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not think so. If we go on taxing we will find that we shall have very little work for our people to do.

Hon. P. Collier: Of course there is a limit.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I admit that there are some people sitting in Parliament who would run a steam roller over everyone who displayed any energy or enterprise, and who invested their capital and employed labour. I do not think, however, that they are wise in their desires in that direction. I have a word or two to say in reply to some of the statements of the member for North-East Fremantle. Our names have been coupled on many occasions in connection with Bills which have been brought down to the House, and often we have been found voting on the same side of the House on some of these Bills. To-day, however, I am in direct opposition to the views to which the hon. member has given expression. They were narrow, and they were not generous. As to the remarks of the leader of the Opposition, I have heard that hon. gentleman make very much better speeches. I am bound to confess, however, that he seemed to be actuated by some sense of responsibility which has been altogether lacking in many of the speeches which he has delivered before. We admit the ability of the hon. gentleman and that of many of his colleagues. He has, and so have they, a peculiar gift for putting up a very good defence and a very good attack. They have, notwithstanding, a peculiar habit of misrepresenting facts to suit their own arguments. I know no man in the Legislative Assembly who can reply to an attack quite as well as can the leader of the Opposition. I do not know of a man who can make out a stronger case against his opponents, but he is not usually restrained by any sense of responsibility, or by any desire to be particularly accurate. Having these peculiar qualifications and a willingness to make

use of them he invariably puts up the best case that it is possible to put up in support of his arguments. Having said that, I wish hon. members to realise that his case must have been a jolly weak one for the leader of the Opposition to make such a bad fist of it. I do not propose to recapitulate all the errors of omission and commission of the late Government. If I was to discuss them we should be here until at least midnight. It is not the time when we should indulge in party strife.

The Minister for Lands: Hear, hear.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is a time when the national interest should be of paramount consideration. Whether we call ourselves Liberals or Labour, national or any other party, the work of everyone should be performed from the point of view of the nation.

Mr. Carpenter: Why do you not practice what you preach?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have done so ever since we have been in office.

Hon. T. Walker: Nothing of the sort?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am bound to put up some arguments in reply to those of the leader of the Opposition and the other hon. gentlemen who spoke from that side of the House. I will not touch upon the hundred and one things which might be brought into a debate of this kind. We might well ask hon. gentlemen opposite to accept the responsibility of their hundred and one acts which have not been in the interests of the country.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You cannot prove one of them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) says that we do not represent the best interests of this country and that the people are no concern of ours. Nevertheless, I am quite content to-night to place before this House the case that I have to place before members in reference to the several departments with which I am particularly connected. I shall, therefore, for the moment at any rate, let them off.

Hon. T. Walker: That is dropping party politics.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We do not want to be let off. If you have any thing to say, say it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Then I will go on with them.

Hon. T. Walker: Go on with them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I certainly will do so if the hon. member says anything more.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: When I have finished the remarks which I propose to make, I will deal with the many matters about which hon. members opposite are not very anxious to hear much. The member for North-East Fremantle told the House that the Liberal party had induced the money lenders of London and the Eastern States to refuse financial assistance to the Government of which he was a member.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: So they did.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They did not. The statement is an erroneous one. No Liberal in the House has ever done other than help to develop the interests of Western Australia. If any Liberal sitting here had endeavoured in the early days of the Government which was last in office to deter the money lenders from providing them with funds in order that they might carry on the necessary works, he would have been a traitor to the country.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There are a lot of them too.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member knew full well when he endeavoured to attach some blame to the Liberal party in this connection that he was doing something which he had no right to do, and was making a statement which was absolutely wide of the mark. I will give the House the facts. When the hon. gentleman opposite came into office the sum borrowed stood at £23,700,000. They left office after five years, having borrowed £15,435,000. They would have borrowed more, I suppose, if, as they say, we had not deterred the money lenders, and induced them to close up their purse strings.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Those who did do it failed in their efforts.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This is fifteen million times proof of it.

Mr. Carpenter: You said you could not get the money.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The point is not that they got the money, but as to what they did with it when they got it.

The Minister for Works: Wasted it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think we can do better than by simply charging them with the waste of money, because if we produce the result of their expenditure this will, to some extent, furnish a proof. It is our duty to admit that we have a war upon us, that we had some drought years, and that the State was faced with troubles and difficulties. I wish the country to know that the revenue in the régime of the hon. gentleman opposite kept up satisfactorily, and increased year by year until it became an enormous annual contribution.

Mr. Green: It is better than ever this year but there is an increasing deficit.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, an increasing deficit. I want to show how it is increasing. In 1910-11 the interest and sinking fund amounted to a little over one million of money, and the earnings from invested money covered the interest and sinking fund at that date. In connection with the various big concerns, they were only short of interest and sinking fund to the extent of £189,000. We find that last year the interest and sinking fund amounted to £1,664,000. That is their five years' record, namely an increase in the interest and sinking fund of £617,000. That is what the hon. member for North-East Fremantle is so proud of.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Over three million pounds on railways are yours.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The earnings of these big trading concerns have increased by about £41,000. The sum of fifteen million pounds has been expended largely upon these Government concerns which ought to have been reproductive, and as a result of that expenditure the earnings have only increased by about £41,000.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Where did the losses come out?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If fifteen millions of money are invested—of course some of this went to the Agricul-

tural Bank and Industries Assistance Board, leaving a balance of, say, twelve millions—and only £41,000 are earned and £617,000 are paid for it, obviously we are £576,000 to the bad.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And you spent five millions on railways which did not return anything.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That excuse will not wash at all. The money is wasted and gone. The State is £576,000 worse off per annum on invested money up to 1916 than it was in 1910-11. Will the people in the country realise that this interest has to be paid year in and year out, almost in perpetuity and certainly for the next 30 or 40 years? Will they realise that interest and sinking fund this year will be at least £100,000 more than it was last year, making a total of £676,000 short on this invested money?

Mr. Carpenter: Your railway land boom is responsible for a great deal of it.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Before tea I was endeavouring to make it clear to hon. members that the loan expenditure of the past five years has resulted in an increase of interest and sinking fund payments without compensating advantage therefrom in the form of revenue. Notwithstanding that the greater proportion of the loan money of the past five years has been sunk in trading concerns, the revenue is only £41,000 greater than it was in 1911. Thus the increase in interest and sinking fund payments is the cause of the financial trouble. The returns from revenue-earning departments were £576,000 less last year than in 1911. For this year the loss on money invested in trading concerns will amount to nearly £700,000. Year by year for the next 50 years this vast amount will have to be paid in connection with the loan moneys thus expended. And there is something more to add. Sinking fund does not become payable until a loan has been in existence for four years. Thus the increase in sinking fund will be a very considerable amount in itself eventually—from £75,000 to £100,000 per annum. Over the greater proportion of the loan moneys I refer to.

sinking fund is not yet being paid. Therefore, the outlook as regards those loan moneys is not bright. It is true that latterly some of these loan moneys were spent on railways, which are not earning as much as they will earn when the country has been developed. If hon. gentlemen opposite had continued the previous Government's policy of land settlement, and had kept the Agricultural Bank active during the whole of their five years of office, the position to-day would be different. I know they will contend that they had to find a great deal more money for the Agricultural Bank than the previous Government found. That statement is true, but the truth of it is due to the fact that in the early stages of their control of this country's affairs they refused, by reason of their regulation disallowing transfers of leaseholds, to let private banks assist land settlement. Thus it came about that a considerable amount of capital had to be found by the previous Government for the Agricultural Bank. Further, I do not think they supplied money through the Agricultural Bank quite as cheerfully as they would have us believe. The previous Government had prepared plans of agricultural land which showed areas of which the settlement was subject to advances from the Government. Probably the amount to which the previous Government thus found themselves pledged was 1½ millions. Of course, they had to find money to meet the demands of applicants to that extent. As soon as that obligation was discharged, however, the late Government showed little inclination to assist the farmers; and for that reason the returns from the agricultural railways are not as good as otherwise they would be. A railway cannot be expected to pay during the early years of its existence; but, nevertheless, the earnings of the general railway system have been materially increased by the spur lines. I dare say a million tons of produce will be moved this year because of the spur lines, because of the policy of development in vogue up to 1911; not because of anything that has been done since. I wish to point out also that on the 1st August last year the departments were in a state of chaos, and that individuals were complaining of unjust treatment. First, we had to do justice to individuals. It is all very well to say that economy must

be practised; and it must be; but there is something more to be done in the government of a country than merely to practise economy. Where an individual injustice is to be righted, it is due from the Government to right that injustice before entering upon schemes of economy. The present Government have been in office six months, one-half of which time we have spent in this House. Further, I was in Melbourne for six weeks, and the Premier was there for some considerable time; so that other Ministers were compelled to take over our duties during our absence. It is plain, therefore, that members of the present Government have not had much time to go into the matter of cutting down expenditure. For my part, I do not believe that any great good can result from cutting down the civil service—saving a ten-pound note here and there. Something more will have to be done for this great country. Indeed, hon. members opposite know that many civil servants have gone to the war, and that their places have not been filled. I believe that a sum of £52,000 would represent the salaries of civil servants who have enlisted, while £14,000 would represent the salaries paid to temporary officials replacing them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What did you tell us the other night was the amount?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Deducting the difference of about £40,000 from less than £400,000 which the civil servants enjoyed before the war, I think we have done very well indeed. What the country wants is keen management of the departments by the departmental heads.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the point; or keen management from the Ministerial heads.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Undoubtedly the departmental heads must be helped by Ministers and by the Government policy. If the faults of the past Administration were closely inquired into, I think it would be found that what was to blame was too often the policy, and not the officials who have to suffer blame.

Hon. P. Collier: What is to blame just now?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Nothing except the past Administration.

Hon. P. Collier: When are you going to take up your responsibilities?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We took them up on the 29th July last, and we have faced them every day since. Up to the present, our main responsibility has been to straighten out the troubles left us by hon. gentlemen opposite.

Hon. P. Collier: Looking behind the scenes?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I want to see the public service put to better use. There is great work to be done for this country. If we are to economise, let us achieve economy by doing bigger things and better things. To hear hon. members opposite speak, one would think there was nothing more to be done for Western Australia. My belief is that the way out of the country's troubles is to increase production. There are tremendous opportunities in the pastoral lands of the North, which to-day are carrying about two and a half million sheep and 700,000 or 800,000 head of cattle. From these figures may be seen what is before us in the North. The 700,000 or 800,000 cattle can be increased to two or three millions, and the two and a half million sheep in the North to 10 millions, if only we adopt the right policy. I know hon. members opposite look upon the work of developing the great pastoral lands of the North as an easy matter and a highly profitable undertaking. In fact, however, it takes a tremendous lot of capital to develop land there.

Hon. J. Scaddan: What about the pastoral lands at Eucla?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If our northern areas are to be developed, the men who take up land there must have security of tenure, must have something which will guarantee them the right to occupy the lands for a considerable time. In the past the term of the leases has been 28 years; and there is, I think, still 10 years to run of the existing leases. No doubt, in connection with the renewal of the leases conditions as to compulsory improvement and compulsory stocking will have to be introduced. The men in the North now have earned the right to be there, if ever any men in the world have earned the right to the

land occupied by them. I agree that there must be increased rents and also certain conditions as to improvements and stocking; though there is no doubt that the greater proportion of our northern pastoralists have done very well in these two respects. In addition to deriving benefit from increased rents, the Government will receive additional revenue from the increased trade activities which will be the result of increased production. We want, when the war is over, to have every possible avenue of employment open to the men returning from the Front. With that end in view, let us see what we can make of our North-West and of our great primary industries. No other country in the world would allow such an asset as our North-West to remain unutilised for long. Given an opportunity, and given time, the Minister for Lands will show what this great territory can do. Turning now to the wheat lands, what are the opportunities there? Only a few years ago, not 10 years ago, Western Australia was importing flour. To-day our ports are busy shipping wheat. The ports of Albany, Bunbury, Fremantle, and Geraldton will be taxed to the uttermost during the next six or eight months to load wheat ships sent by the British Government. The 20 million bushels of wheat we expect to reap this year represent the result of the work of men mostly with comparatively little means and very limited experience settled on the wheat lands of Western Australia during the past 10 or 12 years. To multiply the wheat crop by 10 in 10 years is a great achievement. But the way out of our difficulties is to produce, not 20 million bushels, but 60 million bushels of wheat. When we do that, our financial troubles will be at an end.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What will you do in the meantime?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Go on with the work of settlement and development. Does the hon. member suppose the Government can in a short five months set straight the troubles caused by the unwise spending of huge sums of loan money during the previous Government's term of office? It cannot be done in that space of time. The wealth of the country will not bear the taxation necessary to provide for

its government and for war expenditure. If we go on taxing wealth without increasing production, we shall presently be in a very sorry plight.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The country will be in a sorry plight before the additional population comes.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. The hon. gentleman has not faith enough in this country, or in the people who elect the Government that are to do the necessary work.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We want facts, not fiction.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am giving facts. The hon. member wants to have a little faith in the country. What is the position in regard to the south-western lands. A great deal of fruit is being wasted and it is urged that canning factories should be established. That has been in our minds for a long time, but we have to remember that fruit growing is spread over a vast area of this country, and the getting of it together is the trouble. What we have to do is to increase the production in the various centres and then establish factories close to where the fruit is grown.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We had a factory at Donnybrook once.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is there now I suppose. The increase in the production of dairy produce, in the number of stock, as well as in the quantity of fruit, will help to straighten out the troubles which my smiling friends opposite have brought upon this country.

Hon. J. Scaddan: What are you going to do about it?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members opposite should face the position seriously and help us to get the country out of its present difficulty. Development must be faced, and I believe when the war is over, if the land is subdivided and made ready for use, and roads, railways, and water supplies are provided, no place will offer such attractions to the settler as will Western Australia. It has been proved that we can produce wheat and fruit, and probably there is no place in the world which can do better. But our trouble is that we do not do enough, and all I am asking the House is that it should realise the import-

ance of increasing development. We know that Australia produces a fourth of the wool of the world. Unfortunately, however, we in this State are not doing quite our share in that regard. It is true that we have more sheep than South Australia, but let us develop our pastoral lands so that we may increase the production of wool. With regard to the gold mining industry, I suppose a good deal can still be done there. Then there are the pearling and the timber industries, both of which will come to life again when the war is over.

Hon. J. Scaddan: How are you going to bring all this about?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: With the aid of men and money. My complaint is against hon. members opposite for the way in which they spent the money which they borrowed. There are also secondary industries which will come into existence notwithstanding the heavy handicap which Federation has thrust upon us. These industries will grow quietly, and their growth will be responsible for increased population and revenue. I assure the House that all these things are possible in Western Australia, and if we have a little faith in the State it will be possible to do a good deal. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) talks about a national government. Let me remind him that every effort at the present time is national. The country will have to demand of the people that they shall do their very best, not only physically but intellectually. There is waste effort to-day on the part of many people of the State, and this must not be allowed to continue.

Hon. J. Scaddan: Tell them what they have to do; that is what they want to know.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They must work.

Hon. J. Scaddan: That is what His Excellency said to you.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I want to refer to the Industries Assistance Board.

Hon. P. Collier: And you fixed it all up in three days.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Hon. members object because I fixed it up in three days.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But is it fixed up?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is. I have refrained from criticising the work of the previous board, but I have been attacked by the member for Guildford. However, I do not wish to say much about what took place before the board passed out of the control of the three gentlemen who were running it. That system was wrong; it should have been in the hands of one person. The system could not work. Everyone is aware what the position was before the present Government took office. At the present time the general manager of the Industries Assistance Board is the manager of the Agricultural Bank, while Mr. Simpson controls the Industries Department, and Mr. Grogan has been appointed manager of the bank side of the board. I found that my predecessor was endeavouring to run this institution without any inspectors, and that all the work was done from Perth. Of course it was impossible for the board to know what was happening on the farms. It has been said that I wrote my instructions in the first three days. I confess that the matter was of sufficient importance to engage my attention from the very moment that I was sworn in. When I looked through the office I found room after room littered with books and papers galore. Everything that was not wanted was there, but those things which were required were not in evidence. I had had an opportunity of discussing what was required with many people who were concerned, and I knew exactly where to make a commencement. Is it to my discredit that I was able to write in the space of three days the instructions that I desired to have carried out? Is it to my discredit that I determined the farmers should not suffer a minute longer? The member for North-East Fremantle said I did not consult any member of the board. After I had my instructions written I called in Mr. Paterson and Mr. Morris, and I asked them to read what I had written with respect to the reorganisation that I desired to have carried out. Mr. Morris said "Yes, that will work," and so did Mr. Paterson. Hon. members will therefore see that I did consult them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Yes, after you wrote your instructions.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Certainly. The hon. member is disappointed because my system of reorganisation has worked so well. This is the time to be national in spirit and not petty. I have had loyal support from the staff, all of whom are good and capable men.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You are aware that the manager you put there was responsible for the muddle in the first place.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know that he is responsible for the successful and economical control of the Industries Assistance Board, and to him belongs a great deal of the credit for the existing position. The member for Guildford will find a reply to his charges of extravagance in the figures which I intend to quote. As I have said, I found the farmers dissatisfied, and I also found the offices crowded with dissatisfied men and women, and even children. I found a system which was impracticable and unwieldy. It seemed to me there was no control; letters remained unanswered and requests for supplies were delayed. The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) levelled against me a charge of maladministration. He charged me with extravagance in administration. The hon. member made the statement that the inspectors are running round the country amongst the farmers with cheque books, handing out cheques here and there without any inquiry at all. In effect he said that the 9s. a day I am allowing the farmer for his own work is too much. Notwithstanding that this payment may, as he alleges, be too high, I assert now that the work will be done, and is being done, more economically, that we shall advance less money than was necessary in the hon. member's time in control. Members on the cross benches who were inundated with letters of complaint before I took control do not now receive any complaints, which shows that the new system works well. For the six months between February and July, 1916, the average monthly expenditure of the Board was £1,763. During my first six months, from August to January last, the average monthly expenditure was £1,188, or a saving of nearly £600 per month. The appointment of inspectors was necessary for the dual purpose of protecting the bank and assisting the farmer. The in-

spectors save the farmer a considerable amount of trouble. The cost of the inspectors is £545 a month. The total cost at present, including the inspectors, and all other expenditure, is £1,733, or £30 per month less than when matters were controlled by my economical friend opposite. These figures have been supplied by my officers and members may accept them as being absolutely correct. Here is the sort of economy practised under the previous Administration. Taking incidentals alone, these amounted to £489. This figure has dropped month by month, £272, £269, £269, £200, and in January last, £182. Taking totals, it will be found that whereas the figures stood at £1,521 in September, it was only £1,000 in January. I mention these because I am compelled to do so. I would rather not have discussed the Industries Assistance Board, but the member for Guildford compels me to put up a defence. Personally, I do not think any great good can come of such discussion. Were it not for the fact that I have been engaged in straightening out difficulties which occurred before my time, it is probable that my figures would have been better by from £200 to £300. I will quote a few things which have happened, which will serve to show members how mixed things were. One hundred and twenty thousand invoices were sent out last year, entailing a large sum for stamps. Then, again, the matter of receipts. Because they must have red tape, Form 10 had to be used; and of these 100,000 were printed for use in the office. And in connection with the posting of ledgers it frequently happened that the dates were not in order. There would be an entry for January, 1916, and the next probably for December, 1915; probably the next entry would be for April, 1916, and then back again to February, 1915. The result was that in order to make the necessary calculation of interest on the 200 or 300 accounts, 150,000 separate calculations had to be made. Anyone who knows anything of the subject, knows well that that is not business. Under the new system the necessary calculations will number less than 3,000, consequent on the better system adopted. It was not a matter of men, but of system and policy. During January, 1916, nearly 20,000 letters were sent out,

costing in stamps no less than £83. In January last this number had been reduced to 3,600, or roughly 16,000 letters less in a month, due again to the system and better management of the department. With regard to advances—the money which is now paid out to farmers by inspectors on the spot, in order that the farmer may work and live in comfort on his holding—we have the following position: for the last six months the total was £321,000 or an average of just over £53,000 per month. For the first six months of 1916, under the economical administration of my friend, the member for Guildford, the total was £551,000, or an average of £91,000 per month, a difference of £40,000 per month. I do not claim that this difference may not be accounted for, but I do claim this, that the financial cost under the proper management methods now adopted will be much less than formerly, and further, that the farmer will have advantages which he previously could not obtain. It was absolutely necessary to appoint inspectors, not only for the purpose of encouraging production, but also of helping the farmer. The farmer is helped in many ways. He has no need now for correspondence with the office at all; he gets his supplies promptly, and the advantage this is will be realised when it is understood that the delays of the past cost the farmers of this State hundreds of thousands of pounds. The inspectors pay a farmer for the work he does himself and also the wages of men whom he employs. Under the control of the member for Guildford I know the case of one farmer who had to keep a man on for six weeks before the board sent him a cheque for the man's wages. That money was absolutely lost to the farmer for the reason that the man was dissatisfied and continually grumbling. Now the inspectors allow a farmer £2 per week for every man engaged upon the farm. There were many strange happenings under former control, but I shall not weary the House by recounting all of them. Let me quote one instance, of a husband and wife. The husband had 300 acres and his crop returned £257; the wife got a return of £716 from 400 acres. Of course, the husband was under the Board, while the wife was not. Here, too, is the case of a settler who was

supplied with $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons of fertiliser and given a monthly store account of £7 4s. which was paid regularly throughout the year. He had no crop at all, everything was thrown away. Another settler who enlisted drew his monthly allowance for seven months after enlistment, without being on his farm at all. Another settler who drew his allowance regularly worked for the roads board. Something has been said about 500 farmers who had a considerable sum of money advanced to them and returned crops worth £64,000. There is little reason to wonder at that. Here is the case of one man who had 120 acres under crop; his indebtedness to the board was £641, and he paid back £147, showing a loss of £500 in one year. How can the farmer or the Government either be benefited by such system or want of system? Then there were the 570 farmers referred to by the Premier who were advanced £238,000. and from whom the total proceeds were only £64,000. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) asked where the rest of the money had gone to. It is well known that fertilisers and other supplies frequently arrived too late, with the result that the crops were a failure. A man who got his fertiliser in June would secure a return of four or five bushels, whereas others who got their supplies at the proper time got 15 or 16. All this loss had to be paid for by someone, and to a large extent it was paid by the Government. In such circumstances, no one benefited and everyone was injured.

Mr. Green: If you have discovered these things since you took office, why have you not fired the officers responsible?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I wish members to realise that this has nothing to do with the officers at present in charge of this work.

Mr. Green: But are they still in the service?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In any case, it was a matter of policy, and the policy of the Government of the day was that the work should be done in this way. In those circumstances we cannot blame the officials, who were merely carrying out the policy laid down by the Minister. I will quote the cases of a few settlers taken at

random from the books. The average monthly payments last year to these farmers was £359; this year, including of course super, bags, etc., the average for the first six months was £240 per month. During the past four months it has come down to £206, or a saving of £30 odd per month. These farmers have done exceptionally well, and the average cost per acre under the present board has been very low. In these cases it has been only 16s. 5d. per acre for wages, manures, super, and bags. Therefore, the farmers have not been extravagant, even though under the system they are being paid 9s. per day. I doubt whether any farmers in the world could have done better.

Mr. Green: I suppose you claim that success as a result of day labour.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know what the result might have been had they been under the day labour system. I do not need to say very much more about the Industries Assistance Board. Though I could say much, I doubt that any good result would follow from my saying it. I could instance many irregularities, a good many cases in which, owing to the policy of the Government, the farmers have lost a great deal of money. Reference has been made to the fact that the millers of the State paid £1,845 to the farmers in connection with wheat. When I instituted inquiries on this point I was told that this money had been taken into account when the price of wheat was fixed. I found that £5,600 profit had been made by the board on seed wheat sold to the farmers, and I suppose we may say this £1,845 is included in the amount. Another question raised is the purchase of horses. I find that 410 were purchased and sold to farmers at an average profit of £2 10s. I do not know that this is quite the correct way for the Government to assist the farmer. So far as I am personally concerned, I am prepared to say it is not. To-day we get five per cent. discount for machinery purchases, amounting to about £4,000 this year. Every penny of it will be credited to the farmers. An attempt was made to persuade my friends on the Government cross-benches that we had not helped them when we reduced the fertiliser freights. But it is clear to any man that this reduction represents an ad-

vantage of £32,000, or taken in conjunction with the repeal of the terminal charges, no less a sum than £58,000. The member for Guildford told the House the other day that his Government had not hurt the farmer out-back when they increased the freights. As a matter of fact, it is clear that the man at Bruce Rock was made to pay 6s. 3d. per ton more for his freight than he had to pay in 1911. Yet the hon. member asked us to believe that the reduction we made was made in the interests of the farmers around Northam, who in reality have saved 4s. 2d. a ton as against 6s. 3d. saving to the Bruce Rock farmer. Admittedly the great thing is to get low freight on bulk goods, such as hay and wheat. The freight reduction on wheat to the farmer at Nyabing would mean this year a saving of £12 and to the same farmer the reduction in fertiliser freight and the repeal of the terminal charge would represent £8 12s. 6d. If we take the increased charges to the farmer at Nyabing, we find that, assuming he gets his stuff from Albany as he should do, he pays, not 7s. 9d. as the hon. member said, but something like 4s. 9d. per ton increased freight. In any case, if he got 10 tons of goods he would still be several pounds in pocket by the movement in freight since we have been in office. Something has been said about increased fares. The highest increase is 2d. single and 4d. for the double journey.

Hon. P. Collier: It represents 50 per cent. increase in the suburban area.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The member for Guildford endeavoured to make the farmers believe that the whole burden of the increased rates was on them. The hon. member also made a violent attack on me on the score of extravagance in the Lands Department, and told the House to take no notice of any figures I might produce. In 1910-11, when I had surveyed 3,200,000 acres, my total expenses in the Lands Department amounted to £153,000. The late Government surveyed nearly 200,000 acres less than did I, notwithstanding which their expenses were £40,000 greater. Then we find that under the late Government, when the surveys had fallen to 1,400,000 acres, the expenses were very nearly equal to those in my year. I mention this to show how reckless was the hon. member's

statement. I contend that every department administered by me during the six years I was in office was economically managed. The hon. member had a great deal to say about wheat, and he gallantly defended Mr. Sutton, quite oblivious to the fact that Mr. Sutton had not been attacked. It is true that Mr. Sutton was managing the wheat scheme for the hon. member. But the farmers wanted Mr. Sutton back at his legitimate work, and the Minister for Lands, and Cabinet, decided that Mr. Sutton must go back to his work. Mr. Sutton is invaluable at his own work. It is quite possible that he can influence the crops of the State to an extent that will mean a quarter of a million to the farmers. Mr. Sutton controls a vast industry, and a little work by him may have very far-reaching results. Mr. Sutton has been here for over six years, and during that time has been engaged in all sorts of things. Whenever the late Government wanted a report or were in need of a manager, it was Mr. Sutton who was put on to the business. Now, in the interests of the country, Mr. Sutton has been rightly asked to take up his proper duties. The hon. member also said that the committee who advises under this scheme was not consulted, and he endeavoured to make it appear that that committee manages this scheme. As a matter of fact, those gentlemen meet once a fortnight and discuss matters pertaining to the scheme, but they are in no sense its managers. How could so great a scheme be managed by a number of gentlemen meeting once a fortnight? I have frequently sought the advice of this committee and in every instance I have received good advice and have taken advantage of it. I have not found occasion to differ from the committee at all. Yet, we are told that I have treated the committee in cavalier fashion. This great scheme demands continuous management day by day, hour by hour, almost minute by minute. Under the old scheme my friend had fifteen million bushels of wheat to deal with. Under the new scheme we had six million bushels in hand, and now we have something like twenty million bushels of new wheat. Yet I am told it is a sort of penny-in-the-slot business, practically managing itself. The hon. member himself declared that there

were many stacks in the country not well cared for. How could it be otherwise, seeing that there was no staff to control those who handled the wheat? The scheme demands experienced management, and I have exactly that in Mr. Sibbald. Even the hon. member himself will admit that no man is more capable than Mr. Sibbald of managing this scheme. We have had to appoint a couple of additional inspectors to protect the farmers against waste, but I doubt if the added cost to the scheme will represent one-fiftieth of a penny per bushel. The member for Guildford said that his costs were 100 per cent. below mine. I do not know what his costs were, but if they were 100 per cent. less than the costs to-day, they could not have been anything at all. The hon. member discussed the millers' agreement. He himself made this agreement with the millers. Until I read the evidence adduced before the select committee, I had the idea that the hon. member regarded himself as an innocent trapped. I find that the whole matter of the agreement was discussed with him, and that practically he alone discussed it with the millers. I doubt whether the board was ever consulted, or whether Mr. Sutton was consulted. Indeed, Mr. Sutton was not here to be consulted when the details were arranged. Mr. Sayer, in his evidence before the select committee, said that he had put into the agreement exactly what he was told to put into it. If the hon. member will confess that he read that clause without having his suspicions aroused, I have no hesitation in saying that he should not have been a Minister of the Crown. The clause reads as follows:—

The agent may acquire such wheat from the Minister for his own legitimate requirements at the current rate as fixed by the State Wheat Marketing Committee, but such price shall be subject to adjustment on the ultimate realisation of the harvest, to a price equal to such rate per bushel as is receivable by the farmer under this scheme.

In other words, if the miller, having put his wheat into the scheme and got his 3s. advanced against it, takes it out at 5s. 1d. to grist; and if the farmers get 4s. 2d. at the siding, the miller

will get a refund representing the difference between 5s. 1d. and 4s. 2d. That is absolutely definite and clear, and the arrangement was made largely by the then Minister. Now the hon. member says that he was trapped, and we must believe him. But I say he was a jolly innocent man if his suspicions were not aroused. The millers had sold flour for export, and that flour was covered by about 33,000 bags of wheat. Someone said that the millers held 150,000 bags of wheat on which they received this enormous advantage over the farmer. But it turned out that they held 340,000 bags of wheat, and there was nothing in the arrangement to say that they should stop buying. Apparently they had an unlimited right to buy. At any rate no attempt was made to check the actual quantities; the millers were to send in their returns. It was not until two months afterwards that any attempt was made to check the quantities. And they drew money from the pool on their own certificates. Of course, the millers, in their negotiations with the then Minister, made the best possible bargain for themselves. The hon. member has asked what I am doing about it. I am doing all that I can. I have gone into the matter, and I intend to go still further into it. The millers got £165,000 from the pool. Under the arrangement they have not to pay interest on that, for the payment of the interest will fall upon the farmers. Indeed, the millers pay no part of the pool charges except railway freight, and they take 1¾d. per bushel for receiving their own wheat into the mill. I do not know how much of this the farmers will lose in the end, but I think they will lose a very considerable portion of it. That, however, is what the agreement provides. I suppose hon. members will agree with me that if we had had business men managing the wheat pool this £48,000 would have been saved to the pool. The acquiring agreement, too, is fairly favourable to the agents. Under this pool the wheat will be worth altogether six million pounds, that is the 26 million bushels that will have to be handled and shipped, and that which will be turned into flour, because we intend to ship about 7,000 tons of flour per month. Hon. members who are interested in the

quest for bran and pollard will be made glad to know that something over 4,000 tons of bran and pollard will be made available per month to the people of the State. This scheme is being most cheaply managed. I intend to see that the waste of last year shall not go on this year, and that there shall be no loss of money which can be avoided. Some waste and loss there must be. When it is remembered that there are 600,000 grains of wheat in every bushel and 20 odd million bushels concerned, it is easy to see how careful one must be in watching this work. The pool is being managed well now and the farmers will reap the full benefit of it. A good deal of work has been done in connection with the soldier settlement scheme which was touched upon to-night. The late Government arranged with the Federal authorities and the Governments of the other States to join in the work. A meeting was held in Melbourne and the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) attended the conference there. He very rightly and properly said that Western Australia would take a considerable number of soldiers and settle them upon the land. I think he mentioned 14,000 soldiers. He put up a good, bold scheme, and it was arranged that we were to get the money for the purpose. Months followed months, however, and not a tap was done either by the hon. member or his Government to further the object. We were then required to submit a scheme to the Prime Minister and Ministers representing the other States, who sat in Melbourne during January of this year. That scheme was submitted and approved by the Prime Minister, and funds are now available. The idea is that the Lands Department shall set aside and survey the very best land available in the State for our soldier settlers. It will readily be agreed that nothing but the best of land should be set aside for the purpose. When the Lands Department has found the land, it will hand it over to the Agricultural Bank authorities who will effect the improvements. The idea is to improve this land. The lands will be largely in the South-West, although whenever wheat lands are wanted they will be made available. The farms will, generally speaking, be made in the South-West. It

is proposed to set aside farms of from 80 to 160 acres in the very pick of our land. It is intended to fence the holdings and erect a cottage upon each and other necessary buildings, and to clear about 20 acres ahead of settlement. Having done that, and settled the soldier upon the land, it will be necessary to give him a contract under the Agricultural Bank system to effect further improvements. This money will be repaid by the soldier settler just as it would be by any other settler, the only difference being that he will pay interest at a low rate, down to $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in the early years. The difference between $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and the amount the State will have to pay for the money will represent a loss, and part of this will be borne by the Federal authorities and part by the State Government. The soldier settlers will be controlled by the inspectors, just as the assisted farmers are to-day. In other words, we should have inspectors controlling the farmers, giving them advice and help, and paying them month by month for any work they do under the Agricultural Bank system. It must be realised that, of course, there must be some delay before they get off their first crop. They will, therefore, be allowed to earn something in addition to this. In the South-West 20 acres of land well worked, in that portion of the country down below Bridgetown, will enable a farmer to produce such crops as potatoes and to do some dairying. It is found that 40 acres of cleared land in that district will make a very fine holding indeed.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I hope they will have a better market for their fruit than is to be found this year.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is to be hoped they will have. It is not proposed, however, that they should grow fruit on the first 20 acres. It will be found that many people are doing marvellously well on very small areas in that part of the State. If hon. members will visit a farm near Torbay, about 30 miles from Albany, they will meet a farmer who has been cultivating 40 acres for a long time. He has five acres under orchard, 10 acres under English grasses, five acres each year under potatoes, and the rest under mixed crops. He told me he was getting about £400 for

his crops and that apart from the expense of fertilisers his costs were but little. In the Eastern States I found that dairy farmers on small areas of from 20 acres to 160 acres were doing very well indeed. The land I saw was not equal to the land in the south-west of this State, but it was bringing from £20 to £40 an acre.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Where was that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: At Lilydale, and between that place and Melbourne.

Mr. Green: Why, it is the best land in Australia.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I had no opportunity of going further afield than Lilydale.

Mr. Lambert: You would not draw a fair comparison between Lilydale land and some of the South-West land.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think that much of the land in the South-West is very much better than the Lilydale land. The people are living well there. I visited a dairy farm of 160 acres, but I found that the owner was away in his motor car. He was living in a comfortable house. What can be done in Victoria can be done in Western Australia. I think that the soldier settlers are going to help us settle this great problem of dairy production in the South-West. At Lilydale the people live almost altogether upon their cows. The inspector who took me out to the district from Melbourne had been inspector in charge of the Lilydale district. He said, "You would imagine you were in Ireland when you get to this district, for every farmer has his hunter."

Mr. Foley: They are nearly all Scotch around Lilydale.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I mention this to show that the dairy farmers there are on small holdings, that they do live in comfort, and enjoy life. I suppose very few of us have seen much of the South-West of this State. A good many of us criticise it without knowing much about it. It is beautiful country and a great deal of it is first class land and can be put to good use by the soldier settlers. We are going to give the men this land in holdings of up to 160 acres, and I hope that in a few years' time, when the dairying industry is opened

up and intense culture is practised, the land will realise a value equal to the best value to be found in Victoria. I do not see why our farming areas should not do very much better than those in Victoria, at any rate for the first few years, because we have to buy our bacon, our butter and milk and tea, and dairy produce from Victoria, which means a fairly high freight to be added on to the price of these commodities. Because of the fact that these goods have to be brought over from Victoria, and that there are two or three profits to be made out of them, if we grow them here we should do very well out of them. The leader of the Opposition did not make out a very strong case in support of his motion. I do not know whom we ought to blame for it. It is at all events very comprehensive, and must have been drafted at a big party meeting and everyone there must have added a word or two.

The Premier: It does not say much for the party.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. They say we have a lack of initiative and ability in the administration of the affairs of this country.

Mr. Thomas: Your own supporters' papers say so.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They say that we have abandoned the principles of responsible Government. I venture to say that the country was never so prosperous as it was in 1911. It is perfectly true that the farmers for these last years of our Government were very prosperous, and happy and cheerful. They had plenty of hope and something to look forward to. It is also a fact that they have never been so comfortable since, until—

Mr. Thomas: Quite recently.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Quite recently. We took over the Treasury benches on the 29th July last, and I believe the farmers began to feel prosperous on the 1st August. The farmers have never had a better time than they have had since the 1st August, and have never been in such comfortable circumstances.

Mr. Holman: What do you put that down to?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: To good administration and faith in the Government of the country.

Mr. Holman: Your colleagues say they have had no time in which to go into matters.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have had time to effect that change, at any rate. If we are given an opportunity the broad acres of the farmers will assume again the value which they had before the days of the Labour Administration. That Administration knocked the bottom out of the industry by destroying values. They made securities worth nothing. They damaged the farmer without benefiting anyone. Before their days the land represented some security. When a farmer took it to any financial institution or any merchant, he could get credit upon it. By false methods, not viciously undertaken, and by lack of knowledge and experience, the Labour Government destroyed absolutely the value in our C.P. leases.

Hon. T. Walker: Had not the drought something to do with that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This was before the drought. They destroyed credit. No one would take a lease as security, or lend money on it. The hon. member says that the drought had something to do with it. Of course the drought had something to do with it, but our farmers will rise superior to a drought or two. They have done so in the past. That is not the point at all. It was a question of deliberately, not viciously, damaging the security of the farmers. Every acre held by our farmers and agriculturists should be made the best security possible.

Hon. T. Walker: You are doing that for Esperance, are you not?

Mr. Green: You dropped your policy there.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think I will leave the hon. member to talk for Esperance. If we want our country to develop, our lands must represent good security. We must give the people some security of tenure, something they can take to a financial house and borrow money against, so that they may provide themselves with stock, effect improvements, and supply themselves with water, etc. We must allow

them to employ labour and improve their holdings. The men who take up these lands are not millionaires. It takes money to develop our broad acres, and we must allow people to borrow. Every producing country is a borrowing country, especially one which has only one crop of wool or wheat in the year. It will take at least 1½ millions to put in the next crop. Some one has to find that money and the people who hold these lands have to borrow. It is for the House to see that the security of our broad acres is maintained. The regulation of the late Government affecting landed securities struck a heavy blow at the interests of the whole people. With regard to financial assistance to the agricultural industry, it is true that a sum of three millions has been advanced to the farmer in ten years; but during those ten years the farmer has created assets worth 30 millions. At one swoop the late Government destroyed the security of many farmers. There is no country in the world but would be in trouble under such reckless administration.

The Premier: It was ignorance, largely.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If it were not for its wheat and wool, where would Western Australia be to-day, and where would the worker be?

Hon. T. Walker: How about your argument as to expending money extravagantly? It was spent for the benefit of the country.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There we are again. Where would the country be to-day but for its wheat?

Hon. P. Collier: We spent so much money developing the agricultural industry and constructing railways and harbours all over the country.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Without our wheat and our wool to-day, there would be nothing in Western Australia for anyone to do or for the people to live on. There will be eight months' solid work for the lumpers at Fremantle and Bunbury and Albany because of the agricultural development promoted by the previous Liberal Government.

Hon. T. Walker: Out of the 15 millions we borrowed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member's Government did not build so many agricultural railways after

all. One thousand miles in five years does not constitute a record for Western Australia. The previous Liberal Government were building at a better rate when borrowing 1½ millions annually, as against the five millions borrowed annually by the last Government. If there were assets for the 15 millions spent by the previous Government, assets earning interest and sinking fund, no one would have a word to say against the last Administration on that score. But the assets are not there, and now hon. members opposite move a vote of want of confidence in the Government because, by reason of the reckless expenditure of the previous Administration, we cannot immediately set things right. Let those hon. members be fair, let them admit their errors, let them admit that the trouble is of their creation and not due to the men who have just assumed office.

Hon. T. Walker: Admit your own misrepresentations.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am always careful to avoid misrepresentation, and I have been specially careful to-night. Here is the situation, and one cannot get away from it—the money is gone, and has to be repaid by taxation. I warn the House again that the wealth of the country will not bear the taxation necessary to meet this enormous charge year after year. It will have to be met by increased production; and I call on every hon. member to help the Government to achieve that end. In this time of stress and trouble, let us get rid of doubt. Let us get to work. Let us be national—since that is the cry. Just as our men at the Front are helping to achieve victory over the enemy, so let us here help to achieve victory over nature.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Why do you not go on with your programme?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What are we going to do now?

Mr. Green: You should resign.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Let us not have this waste of time in senseless criticism and no-confidence motions. The country can be helped out of its troubles, and will be helped out of them.

Mr. Underwood: You will be out of office before then.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The country has to be developed now, because of the reckless extravagance of hon. members opposite. It has to be developed in order to pay its way; and that may prove some compensation for the recklessness of the past Government. I hope the motion will be rejected, as it deserves to be rejected. No doubt the voting will be on strict party lines.

Hon. P. Collier: How is the new independent party going to vote?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Government will steer the ship of State into a safe harbour. They will bring back prosperity. They will prepare for the homecoming of our soldiers, which hon. members opposite cannot do. What did the previous Government do in that direction?

Mr. O'Loughlen: What have you done in six months?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In January we got instructions to go ahead, and we are going ahead. We will make work plentiful if we are given the chance.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You are closing down works, instead.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Had not this war occurred, the greatest unemployed difficulty ever known in Australia would have come about in this numerically small State. The year 1915 would have seen such an unemployed difficulty as the late Government could not have faced, as would have forced them to leave office. We must secure population, and encourage the people in their activities.

Hon. T. Walker: In order to do that, we must get rid of you.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Notwithstanding the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), the people are ready and willing—

Mr. O'Loughlen: To deal with you.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the hon. member interjecting gets justice done to him he will not think much of it.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I will take the risk.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I personally have no fear of an appeal to the people. I am a democrat, and that is more than hon. members opposite can say. Notwithstanding this hostile motion, we shall

be in office long enough to bring back prosperity to the State. When we have done that, and have added another 100,000 or 200,000 to the population, hon. members opposite may have an opportunity by persistent misrepresentation to turn us out of office. But that time has not come yet. Hon. members opposite do not really think that if there is a general election they will get back to the Treasury bench. I regret the motion has been moved at this stage. There are much better things to do than to discuss this motion, which can have only one result. Hon. members opposite know they cannot carry it. Let me just refer to the charge of hanging on to office.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What about last week's happenings?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is no sincerity in that charge. Hon. members opposite carried on the government of the country for eight months when they were in a minority. They would not give Parliament a chance during all that time, but kept right away from their masters, still spending money recklessly, indulging in State trading, in the purchase of steamers, and so forth, behaving just as if they had a majority behind them. They pursued that course for eight months; and now they say to us, "Go to the country, leave the Treasury benches!" When the test comes, they will regret it.

Mr. THOMAS (Bunbury) [8.56]: In the weary waste of words to which the hon. gentleman has treated the House, I have been able to grasp just one point on which it is possible to hang an argument. The Minister for Railways said that the present Government had restored confidence to the country. In order to do that, they would have to restore, first of all, the confidence of their own followers. And yet we have such an exhibition as was recently given in that widely-circulated publication controlled by the member for North Perth (Mr. Smith), which told the Government supported by that hon. member to "get on or get out." That publication informed Ministers that they had made a failure of everything they touched. Further, there was the spectacle of the Colonial Secretary journeying all the way to Wagin for the purpose of per-

suading one hon. member to stick to the old ship a day or two longer. And in the face of these things we are told that the present Government have restored confidence to the country. It is, in fact, the common talk of the people in the street that Parliament House has been concerted into a place of ridicule, that Parliament House has been made the laughing-stock of Western Australia.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not reflect on the House.

Hon. P. Collier: The hon. member did not reflect on the House. He said the people were saying these things.

Mr. THOMAS: I accept your ruling on the point, Mr. Speaker; but I am reminded of an anecdote of the famous London comedian, Little Tich. He was taken to the British House of Commons, and after he had listened to the proceedings for an hour or two, he was asked "what he thought of it." His reply was that it was all right, but that it would be better if they had a piano there. I have conjured up to myself the vision of a piano in the midst of this Chamber, with the Minister for Railways in burnt cork playing away, and the Attorney General sitting in the middle as interlocutor. No doubt the proceedings would be highly interesting, and possibly they might prove more instructive than under present conditions. To proceed with my examination of the arguments of the Minister for Railways as to the restoration of confidence: so effectually have the Government restored public confidence in themselves that we are told on the best of authority—I do not think Ministers themselves will dispute this—that the Premier has been ordered by his own followers to throw overboard his financial proposals. So subservient has the hon. gentleman become to the wishes of those who are keeping him in his well paid position, that he has obeyed this order. He reminds me of a Parliamentary candidate at Albany who—it is related—concluded his speech by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, these are my principles; if you don't like them, I can alter them." The Premier introduced his financial proposals, his taxation Bills, and other things; and when the first puff of adverse wind came along he said, "These are my proposals, but if my fol-

lowers do not like them I can easily alter them." It reminds me of the time when Sir George Reid was Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, and he had been doing something rather worse than usual. A cartoon appeared in the *Bulletin* showing that the Right Hon. gentleman had taken off his hat, collar and tie, boots, coat and waistcoat, each garment spread around him on the ground being labelled "Principle." The last scene of all was his valet asking him whether he would take his shirt off as well, and Sir George Reid replied, "Yes, take that off, too, because I am going to have a gay time."

The Minister for Works: What is the meaning of that?

Mr. THOMAS: It means that the Government's principles are going to be scattered to the wind, and they are going to hang on to office by their eyebrows and have a giddy time, though the country may suffer in the process. One of the greatest sins of commission, so far as the Government are concerned, apart from financial blunders, is the attempt they made to foist the Trading Concerns Bill on this House, and I lay at the door of the Minister for Works the blame for that. Notwithstanding the fact that he endeavoured by a subterfuge to foist the Bill on to the House as the product of some of his officers, the cat has been let out of the bag that the hon. member prepared the objectionable clauses himself, those clauses whereby he sought to deprive the people of Western Australia of their dearly-won liberties, the highest privilege they have in this land, adult suffrage. The Government talk about having restored confidence; if they thought for one moment that they held the confidence of the country, would they endeavour to introduce a Bill to this House which would have the effect of depriving the Labour party for all time from carrying one of the planks of their platform into effect.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Would they do what they did last week if they thought they had the confidence of the country?

Mr. THOMAS: I do not suppose they would.

Mr. Nairn: What do you refer to?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Many things.

Mr. THOMAS: The people of Western Australia realise that an attempt has been made by the present Government in this Chamber and by the Minister for Works to tamper with their liberties, and no matter what else they may forget, the people will be slow to forget the action the Government took recently in connection with the Trading Concerns Bill. Hon. members are sent to this House to protect time honoured rights and privileges, but the Minister for Works in introducing a Bill which would deprive the Chamber of the right of starting any trading concern, a right which it has possessed for the past 20 years—

The Minister for Works: It never had the right.

Mr. THOMAS: It has had the right and privilege for 20 years, but the Bill which the hon. member introduced meant that the whole of the adult voters in Western Australia would be powerless to carry into effect their wishes, no matter what they might be, and by the reactionary conduct of the Minister for Works, before a majority of the electors could do anything the approval of another Chamber would have to be obtained. Not content with all the boasted confidence they have in the country, the Government want to entrench themselves still further behind the property Chamber in order that they might hold what they have to-day. If the Government did not fear the people they would not be perpetrating these tricks.

The Minister for Works: Why do you not alter the Constitution?

Mr. THOMAS: If the hon. member had the spirit he professes to have, he would go to the country.

The Minister for Works: You know that you do not want to go yourself?

Mr. THOMAS: I have no ambition for an election, less possibly than any other member, but I am sent here to guard the interests of Western Australia, and whatever my personal convictions may be I shall fight so long as I have the power to hurl members opposite from office so that the sovereign will of the people may be expressed and that those hon. members may once more be relegated to the cool shades of Opposition. We heard that the Govern-

ment were making great preparations with regard to repatriation.

Mr. O'Loghlen: They have entrenched themselves.

Mr. THOMAS: They are beginning to understand something of warfare because they are getting into their dug-outs. It would be reasonable to anticipate, when the leader of the Government has been talking about national politics, that the question of the repatriation of our soldiers, and providing for the men who are bearing the brunt of battle in the firing line to-day, the Government would at least give Parliament an opportunity of discussing those problems, so that a word might be put in from every side of the Chamber as to the best means of doing something for those who have done so much for Western Australia. Yet even to the extent of the rights of soldiers fighting at the Front, the Government want to make the matter a party one, and whatever they propose to do is going to be done after they have crawled into recess, after they have succeeded in getting through this session as quickly as possible by throwing overboard everything that might cause them trouble. Only then do they propose at their Cabinet meetings to decide what is to be done for the soldiers of Western Australia. One would imagine that the members of the Ministry were the only individuals in the State who had an interest in the returned soldiers. The matter is so vital, so pre-eminently important to Western Australia, that it should have been discussed in the early days of the present session, and it should have received the fullest and profoundest consideration because, no matter what Western Australia may do in the days that are to come, no gratitude we can express and no favours we can extend will ever repay those men for what they have done for Western Australia. It would have been to the credit of the Government if they had given Parliament a chance to deal with this problem which is so near to our hearts. The people of Western Australia are longing to show some generous appreciation of those noble fellows who have fought for us. On the floor of this House there should be a free discussion as to what is best for their welfare,

and whatever scheme of land settlement is to be offered to them, I would like to see it on the most generous scale that can possibly be conceived, so that those who decide to embark on land settlement shall have their future secured. It would be a credit to Western Australia if those who have fought for us knew that in their hour of trouble and need the State was going to stand by them. But are we going to do that? We are going to have a proposal which will be fathered by six members of a Ministry, and there will be some scheme about which there will be said some day, "You Labour fellows did nothing to help the returned soldiers." I suppose when the repatriation of our soldiers is effected the breezy optimist from Northam will claim all the honour that can come from whatever has been accomplished. I appeal to hon. members on the Ministerial front bench who have been courteous enough to listen to me to seize the opportunity before it is too late to place their proposals before Parliament.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And seek salvation.

Mr. THOMAS: Yes, here is the penitent form. There is still hope for the Minister for Works if he will come to the penitent form of the House, confess his sins, and promise good conduct for the future. I had the pleasure of hearing a great portion of the Premier's reply to the charges made against him by the leader of the Opposition and by the member for Guildford, and I also had the pleasure of hearing his understudy, the leader of the Country party, explain the deficit. The leader of the Country party said that all the troubles of the present Government were due to the muddle which existed before they came into office. If the present Treasurer is such a heaven-born financier, if he is the Napoleon of finance he would have the country believe he is, why did he deceive the people by telling them that he could square the ledger and stop financial drift and bring back prosperity?

Hon. J. Scaddan: A deficit of £615,000 in seven months.

Mr. THOMAS: Why does not the Premier give some evidence of his capacity? And what has the Attorney General done? His sole accomplishment has been to pro-

nise, as the *Sunday Times* says, a round table conference on mining matters in order that the people interested in the industry might have a chance of expressing their views. Seven weary months have passed and the Attorney General is still meditating in his tired fashion as to when the time will come that he will give the people an opportunity of expressing that opinion. Nothing has been done. The excuses which have been offered by the Premier are old and hoary; they have grown whiskers and are toothless. During the past seven months the present Government have put up an Australian record, because, so far as I can ascertain, no Treasurer has ever accumulated a deficit at the same rate as has been done by the man who praises himself so much.

The Minister for Works: Your chickens are coming home to roost.

Mr. THOMAS: The hon. member who now leads the Opposition in nearly five years was responsible for a deficit of £1,400,000.

Mr. Nairn: He started off scratch.

Mr. Munsie: No; he began with a deficit of £83,000.

Mr. George: The Liberals went out with a £30,000 credit.

Mr. Taylor: They did not, and you know it.

Mr. THOMAS: The present leader of the Opposition, going through a period of strife and trouble, in nearly five years accumulated a deficit of a million and a quarter, but the men who cried to the country of their business acumen, and their power to show a judgment superior to that of those Labour fellows and whose training accurately fitted them for the job, the men who were going to bring about prosperity, have in seven months done almost half as much in the way of creating a deficit as the leader of the Opposition was able to do in five years.

The Minister for Works: Nothing of the kind.

The Attorney General: We have had to spend most of our time in Parliament.

Hon. J. Scaddan: He is arranging to go into conference.

Mr. THOMAS: I thought it might be he was arranging the mining conference. I am satisfied we have given the Government a fair trial extending over seven months, and they have been seven months of depression and failure. The Treasurer's whole life has been a record of failure, and the hero of a thousand failures has achieved yet another success as a failure.

The Minister for Works: You have a right to talk about life-long failures; what about your own?

Mr. THOMAS: My life has been satisfactory so far as I am concerned. I have had a good time and am rather enjoying myself at the present moment. I have nothing to complain of. We also heard a great deal from the members of the present Government when in Opposition about the nefarious secret contracts of the Labour Government.

The Minister for Works: What about the Ministers who resigned and nearly broke up your party over the Nevanas affair?

Mr. THOMAS: When did any of the Ministers resign?

The Minister for Works: There is one of them (Mr. Collier).

Hon. J. Scaddan: Did one of your Ministers resign recently? Answer that.

Mr. THOMAS: The leader of the Opposition evidently knows something about the present Ministers.

Hon. J. Scaddan: I do. I know that one of them threatened to resign not so long ago.

Mr. THOMAS: This question is one of interest particularly to my hon. friend who interjects so much (The Minister for Works). He is always harping on the question of secret contracts, that the Labour Government trailed the honour of the country in the dust, that when in office they did all sorts of things which were a disgrace to Parliamentary Government. I assert that no other Government administered the affairs of this country more honourably than that Government, the members of which now sit in opposition. But what do we find now? Shortly after the present Government came into power, they themselves, notwithstanding their loud-mouthed abuse of what the previous Government had done,

entered into a secret contract with Messrs. Emanuel Bros., for the purchase of 14,000 head of cattle. And in connection with that contract we find that the show was put away by one of their own supporters in another place. That supporter, after endeavouring to get the Government to rectify their blunder which they foolishly refused to do, laid clearly and distinctly before the people of this State the terms of a secret contract which had been perpetrated by the very people who are always howling against secret contracts.

The Minister for Works: That statement has been blown out long ago. Why not give us the truth?

Mr. THOMAS: For the information of the Minister I may say I never speak on the floor of the House anything I do not honestly believe.

The Minister for Works: Then you are talking about something you know nothing at all about.

Mr. THOMAS: On the contrary, I am speaking of something which I thoroughly understand. One of the most lamentable and regrettable incidents of the whole procedure was—and I am accepting the statement of Mr. Holmes—that after he had given the details of this contract to the Chamber and the people of Western Australia he had just walked out into the corridor when a man representing the Government offered to buy 500 or 1,000 head of cattle from him on the same terms and conditions they had previously offered for the 14,000 head purchased from Emanuel Bros. This was done, notwithstanding the fact they were not in a position to ship the cattle. They would give Holmes Bros. no chance for a contract prior to this, but when the matter had been exposed to the public of Western Australia and they saw the Government in danger, they sought to buy this man off. That was a most disgraceful proposal. It is scarcely believable that in Western Australia to-day any Government would have been guilty of such an act.

The Minister for Works interjected.

Mr. THOMAS: I have only the assertion of the man who made the statement, Mr. Holmes, and it has never been denied, that immediately he left the Chamber after exposing the action of the Government he was

approached by this man who said he had been sent direct from Ministers.

The Minister for Lands: He said he had been sent by one Minister. There are more Ministers than one in the Cabinet.

Mr. THOMAS: If the Minister is referring to himself, I will accept the statement. It is true he is not the only Minister in the Cabinet.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There are not too many like him.

Mr. THOMAS: I accept the Minister's word, but I repeat it is one of the most regrettable incidents which has occurred in Parliamentary history of Western Australia, this obvious attempt to buy a man off the course he intended to pursue. They would silence him by an offer of £10,000 for 1,000 head of cattle.

The Minister for Works: You have made that statement, now prove it.

Mr. THOMAS: I have made the statement that Mr. Holmes made the statement in another Chamber.

The Minister for Works: And you are quite ready to believe it.

Mr. THOMAS: Notwithstanding that the Government has a representative in that Chamber in the person of the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Holmes's statement has not been denied. If it is not true, why was it not denied?

The Minister for Works: We will tell you all about that.

Mr. THOMAS: In connection with this contract, the Government did not call for competitive offers; they consulted no other firm as to whether they had any stock to sell, made no attempt to ascertain the price of bullocks in the North-West. They merely entered into an agreement to purchase 14,000 head of cattle at £10 per head.

The Minister for Lands: That is not correct.

Mr. THOMAS: It may not be exactly correct as to price, but it works out approximately that amount. As a matter of fact the contract price was 3½d. per lb.

Hon. J. Scaddan: They provided £120,000 on the Estimates.

Mr. THOMAS: Which works out in the vicinity of £10 per head. That contract was made with a firm which had not previously shipped one head of stock by the State

steamer. It works out at £140,000, and if cost of carriage, £5, be added it will mean that over £200,000 of this country's money was placed in a secret contract by a party which had howled from the house tops that they did not believe in secret contracts. And the contract had to be dragged from the Government before they would allow the country to see it.

The Minister for Works: You have a great imagination.

Mr. THOMAS: Where does the imagination come in? What is more, I am told by people interested in the cattle trade that taking the cost delivered at Fremantle it will amount to anything up to £15 per head, which is the highest price ever paid in Australia for a big herd of cattle.

Mr. Butcher: And the contract was made by your own party.

Mr. THOMAS: It was not. Holmes Bros. have said they bought cattle in the North-West last year for from £4 5s. to £4 10s. per head to ship down for sale at Fremantle. I cannot see why the price of cattle should jump suddenly from £4 10s. per head to something in the vicinity of £10. We are told that in open competition cattle could be bought for from £4 5s. to £4 10s., but when it comes to these gentlemen who hold secret contracts in such abhorrence, they enter into a deal like this involving £200,000 without allowing any competition whatever.

The Minister for Lands: Did your Government buy at £4 10s. per head?

Mr. THOMAS: They bought at 3d. per lb. If members will cease interjecting across the Chamber I should endeavour to elaborate my argument.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They do not want you to elaborate.

The Attorney General: You will at least admit that the Minister for Lands is an honourable man.

Mr. THOMAS: There is one honourable man left in the Ministry and they all appeal to and hide behind him. They say in effect that if the others are finished and done with, one must at least trust the Minister for Lands. All I can say is that if that Minister has any faults they are probably due largely to the company he keeps. As a result of the debate which took place elsewhere, the

Colonial Secretary was led into partly making a statement that he would give other growers in the North-West an opportunity of shipping their cattle, or the Government would purchase from them on the same terms and conditions as the purchase from Emanuel Bros. Further to that we find that in an interview with the *West Australian* of the 13th November, the Premier said—

He maintained that Emanuel Bros.' contract was a good deal for the people of the State, and the Government were prepared to extend similar terms and conditions to other cattle owners in the Wyndham district.

On the 30th January of this year a communication came to one of the other cattle owners from E. H. Golding, in which he said—

I shall be glad to know when it will be convenient to call on you regarding the purchase of your fat cattle by the Government.

And the Premier had previously said that he would give the other cattle owners the same conditions as he had given to Emanuel Bros. After a lot of preamble and delay in bringing the Government to the point, this is what they offered to the other cattle owners—

The contract for the purchase of cattle by the Government from Emanuel Bros. is for a fixed and definite sale of from 10,000 to 14,000 head of cattle to the Government, and the latter number to be reduced if the season is short.

Etcetera, etc. That is to say, if Emanuel Bros. have any inconvenience they can lop off 4,000, but if it suits them they can send the full 14,000. The draft agreement submitted to the other cattle owners reads—

Provided that the vendor is to give the Government an option over a number of fat cattle, bullocks—

Etcetera, etc. They purchase outright from Emanuel Bros., paying them within 30 days of landing the stock in Fremantle. Notwithstanding the Premier's promise, notwithstanding what the Colonial Secretary had said, they purchase for cash from Emanuel Bros., but in dealing with the small owners they will take an option.

The Minister for Lands: There is a good reason for that.

Mr. THOMAS: Of course; a most excellent reason—you will protect the country, which you did not do before. Let me continue—

Emanuel Bros.' contract provides that the cattle are to be delivered at the yards at Derby between the 1st May and the end of September.

The other agreement provides that if the Government exercise their option, the vendors are to ship between the 1st April and the 31st October. That is to say, they will have to travel their cattle in the worst month of the year, when it is too wet for travelling in the North-West, and when the people to whom the Government pay cash would not take it on. Yet the man whom they offer an option must consent to travel his cattle in April.

The Minister for Works: Is there not any difference in the districts?

Mr. THOMAS: Not so far as regards this point. Under the contract with Emanuel Bros. the steamers have to make direct trips, and all the trips the boats can do between the 1st May and the end of September are provided for. Consequently, all that can be offered the other cattle-growers is the running of the boats in April and October, two impossible months from the growers' point of view. I draw this contrast to show that to their friends Emanuel Bros. the Government give the cream of conditions; they buy from them at cash, and every condition in the agreement is in favour of Emanuel Bros.

The Minister for Lands: Does the hon. member know when the cash has to be paid?

Mr. THOMAS: I understand it is 30 days after delivery in Fremantle.

The Minister for Lands: That is not cash. We first get the money for the cattle.

Mr. THOMAS: In the one contract dates are fixed, and the ships have to be there on time. In the agreement submitted to the other owners, nothing is said on this point of the shipping of the cattle. Emanuel Bros.' contract provides that the firm shall deliver a specific number of cattle at Derby for each shipment, and that the Government accept all responsibility immediately the cattle are put in the yard. The draft agree-

ment for the other owners provides that the Government may alter the date, or quantity, of any shipment by giving the vendor seven days' notice in writing. It means that the other people have no chance whatever of shipping their cattle. Emanuel Bros. control the whole situation. The cattle of the other growers may be on the road before notice is given to the growers, but in the case of Emanuel Bros. notice must be given well ahead. Again, Emanuel Bros.' contract provides for direct carriage from Derby to Fremantle, whereas the other people's cattle have to be carried from port to port, the journey thus occupying a much longer time, with a consequent large increase of wastage, which, as everybody knows, is greater in port than at sea. Under these conditions the increase in wastage would be as high as 20 per cent.

The Minister for Works: Which firm do you represent?

Mr. THOMAS: The people of Western Australia, and I am trying to keep the State's politics pure. Emanuel Bros.' contract provides that any cattle not up to the required standard may be rejected by the Government at Derby, and that any cattle so rejected shall, if desired by Emanuel Bros., be shipped to Fremantle on Emanuel Bros.' account at £5 per head, including freight, fodder and attendance. This gives Emanuel Bros. the option of shipping any rejected cattle, or returning them to the station. Suppose the Agricultural Department, having engaged space on one boat for 750 head of cattle, were to cull out 100 head, and that Emanuel Bros. refused to ship the culls; the State ship would have to come down the coast with £500 worth of space empty. So, we see the Government are practically compelled to buy anything Emanuel Bros. like to offer them.

The Minister for Lands: That is not fair.

Mr. THOMAS: I see no other reading of it.

The Minister for Lands: In any case, it is the late Government's agreement.

Mr. THOMAS: What I strongly object to is that a contract for a huge sum of money has been made with Emanuel Bros., the wealthiest pastoralists in the State, a contract in which every

condition is made favourable to the firm, while the smaller cattle owners, who have patronised the State Steamship Service ever since its inception, are left out in the cold; and, after a lot of battling, the Government say to them, "We cannot buy your cattle. We deal with only wealthy pastoralists, but just to pacify you we will take an option over your cattle, although probably we will never exercise it." Emanuel Bros.' contract provides that their responsibility ceases when the cattle are put in the Derby yards, irrespective of whether a steamer is available. The draft agreement with the other poor unfortunates provides that the Government are not held responsible for any failure to take delivery caused by loss, damage, etc., to the steamers which would otherwise have been available. For the wealthy buccaneers everything is provided and guaranteed, but for the small growers nothing whatever is done. It is the most ghastly attempt to treat those people unjustly that has ever been made in Western Australia. It is the most disgraceful agreement ever put forward by any Government.

Mr. Nairn: Is it as bad as the powellising agreement?

Mr. THOMAS: There was nothing wrong with that. The hon. member is merely trying to draw a red herring. A peculiar phase of the contract with Emanuel Bros. is the provision that, in the event of the loss of a shipload of stock, the firm has the privilege of estimating its value by the previous shipment they sent, or by the next succeeding shipment. Now, assuming that a ship did go down with 750 cattle on board, if Emanuel Bros. desired to be dishonest—and I do not think they would—in the subsequent shipment they could send down the finest beasts grown on any of their stations, and when they arrived in Perth the Government would have to pay the value of these bullocks for the shipment that had previously been lost.

The Minister for Lands: Did not that exist in your own agreement?

Mr. THOMAS: They have even gone to the extent of buying their fodder from Emanuel Bros.

Mr. Munsie: And they did not grow one ounce of it.

Mr. THOMAS: No; but they are buying from someone else and making a profit out of the Government.

The Minister for Lands: Tenders were called for the fodder.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Had you not sufficient fodder on the Yandanooka estate?

Mr. THOMAS: I do not see any mention of tenders being called for the future. I see that it provides that the fodder for cattle en route to Robb's Jetty will be supplied by Emanuel Bros. and delivered on rails at their store at Robb's Jetty, and that the quantity to be fed on each vessel is to be not less than 140lbs. per head per voyage. Experts say that the most fodder to be consumed would be approximately 70lbs. per head, but that, allowing for delays on the way, 90lbs. would cover everything. It appears, therefore, that Emanuel Bros. are to be paid for 50lbs. of fodder more than would be required on the voyage down.

Hon. P. Collier: Where did they get the fodder? They bought it from agents.

Mr. THOMAS: They managed to get the ear of someone.

Mr. Munsie: I would not mind so much if they had bought it from the Yandanooka estate, even if they sold it back to the Government.

The Minister for Works: How did they manage with the previous shipment under your Government? The terms are the same, and it is the same contract; it is your contract.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is a totally different thing.

The Minister for Works: You had not the pluck to sign it before you left office.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bunbury has the floor.

Mr. THOMAS: I have sufficient confidence in the Minister for Lands to believe that he will tell the House honestly who did make the contract.

The Minister for Works: The late Government were too lazy to sign it before they went out of office.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. THOMAS: I have the denial of ex-Ministers that they had anything to do with the formation of this contract. We have

proof that the Hon. J. M. Drew refused to enter into any arrangement for this year because he anticipated at that time that he would be leaving office. If he had made any agreements he said he would have made them the same as were made in the previous year, when the carriage of cattle belonging to the other people in the North-West was fairly and squarely provided for.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Did not a deputation wait upon the Premier?

Mr. THOMAS: He was then leader of the Opposition, and expressed his approval—not in unqualified terms—of a contract being made that it would provide for the shipping of cattle for all and sundry in the North-West. It comes to the lot of a Liberal Government, whose Ministers have prided themselves so much upon their aversion to secret contracts, to make the biggest contract of its kind that has ever been made in Western Australia, to pay the highest price that has ever been paid for cattle in the whole of Australia, and to make a one-sided agreement in favour of a wealthy firm and offer to the other dealers in the same locality an agreement which is unjust and unfair in the extreme.

Mr. Nairn: That statement is not right.

Mr. THOMAS: The same old interjection. It is not right, it is untrue, represents the limit of the hon. member's vocabulary.

Mr. Nairn: The Queensland Government paid a penny per pound more than this Government.

Mr. THOMAS: If it was the matter of the price of a bottle of wine the hon. member might be a fair judge.

The Minister for Works: What about a box of pills?

Mr. THOMAS: Yes, they would do the hon. member the world of good. It came to the lot of the Liberal Government to perpetrate an agreement which will cast a reflection upon them so long as they remain in political life.

The Minister for Works: You ought to be happy.

Mr. THOMAS: Can I be happy when I see the honour and integrity of this Parliament brought into question, and an injustice such as this done to the people of that vast province?

The Minister for Works: Any stick to beat a dog with will do for you if you get hold of it.

Mr. THOMAS: So long as the hon. gentleman admits that I am beating him now, it is all right. I have spent some days in going into this question, and have tried to deal fairly and honestly with it.

The Minister for Works: How many pounds of beefsteak are there in a bullock?

Mr. THOMAS: One might just as well try to find out how much intelligence there is in the hon. member's top story. If the hon. gentleman desires to interject surely he can find something else than cheap insults.

The Minister for Works: One gets tired of hearing these tarradiddles.

Mr. THOMAS: The facts are too solid either for the Minister or his colleagues. They cannot clear away the stigma which is attached to them for ever having carried into effect this contract.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [9.53]: In speaking upon this no-confidence motion, I wish it to be clearly understood that whilst this country is so upset by the war, and whilst conditions remain as they are at present, I do not care what Government is in office. I have heard a great deal of national government, and have heard the word "national" used ever since I have been a member of this Chamber. When the war broke out there was talk of looking at everything from a national point of view, of giving over party differences and party squabbles, and setting all these aside until after the war. The present Opposition were then occupying the Treasury bench. As a Government they were honest in the compact, they made, and honestly kept that compact, that they would not bring forward in this Chamber any controversial matters. The then leader of the Country party, the member for Irwin (Mr. Gardiner) said in an impassioned address to members of this Chamber that party politics were out of the question, and there were "Hear, hears" and all sorts of wishes expressed when that hon. gentleman made his speech. At the very first meeting of the House after that speech criticism was levelled at the then Government by the present occupants of the Treas-

ury bench. This criticism was the most stringent I have ever heard since I have been in this Chamber. It was not levelled for the sake of giving any helpful advice to the Government, but levelled at them from a purely party point of view, and it was one of the worst and lowest-down party tactics that could possibly have been resorted to. From that time onward they have never let up on the Labour Government, and on every possible occasion they have dragged party in its worst form into their attacks upon that Government. Then we were told that the finances were wrong and that everything was wrong. I challenge any member of the Liberal party during the currency of this war to prove to me, and this Chamber, and through the Chamber the State, that they have ever in one instance and in connection with one measure or any one subject indulged in any helpful criticism at all. They have never given one word of credit to any Minister holding a portfolio under the Labour Government. They ask why a want of confidence motion is proposed at the present time. Such a motion is absolutely necessary, and this State is calling in language most eloquent that the confidence of this House should be tested by the people who put us here, and to be allowed to give an expression of opinion on the question of the present Administration. We find a list of Bills on the Notice Paper. One is the Franchise Bill, and there are many more on that page. We then come to the various taxation measures, and to others of a most controversial nature, including the Trading Concerns Bill. There is not one of these measures I have mentioned but in some way or other in a direct fashion represents matters with which the policy and principles of the Labour party are closely connected. They now ask this House to give over all party criticism, but to allow them to bring in every thing of a party nature whilst we lay down the principles that the people of this State put us here to speak upon and work for. And now, because we put principle and sincerity first, they think we are doing wrong in launching a no-confidence motion. Immediately before this motion was launched a section of the Government made an appointment. A vacancy was caused by the gentleman who

held this position resigning from it. Whether the change that was brought about is going to be good from the point of view of the gentleman who now holds the position, I cannot say. Had the Labour Government been in office and resorted to such tactics every newspaper in the metropolitan area and every man who took any interest in public affairs would have had something to say about the appointment I have spoken of. That was done by a section of the Government. And the members of that Government twitted this side of the House, when on the Treasury bench, in regard to certain appointments. The fact reflects little credit on them that they should have criticised the late Government for appointing to the management of the State hotels a man who was among eleven applicants selected as the best of those who had responded to the advertisement of the position. The Minister for Railways has told us that the Government did not make a certain appointment. But did not the gentleman appointed by that Minister take the place of Mr. Sutton? Mr. Sutton has done good work in this State, and enjoys the confidence of the people. Never in one instance did Mr. Sutton betray the confidence placed in him by the former Minister for Agriculture. Undoubtedly, however, he was an overworked man. Whether the position will be better filled by Mr. Sibbald, whom the Minister for Railways appointed without consulting either the House or anyone else, remains to be seen. In view of Mr. Sibbald's appointment, it will ill-become the Liberal party to criticise any appointments which may be made by any future Labour Government. My knowledge of politics tells me that sincerity is the main essential of good government.

Mr. Thomson: Are you sincere now?

Mr. FOLEY: I refuse to take notice of ineane interjections. Let us see whether the present Government have given any evidence of sincerity. The Premier said that he was bursting and burning to get to the country; that the people, who are masters of the situation, should have the earliest opportunity of expressing their opinion as to who should occupy the Treasury bench. He is reported as having said on the 24th July last:—

The people should be consulted at the earliest possible moment, but not before

we have had an opportunity to look into things.

The Government have had several months to look into things, and the business acumen with which they credit themselves should have enabled them to know their policy within that period. I am strengthened in that view by the fact that the Minister for Railways worked wonders with the Industries Assistance Board in nine days. We are told of many things that have happened in nine days; there are many nine days wonders. If the hon. gentleman could put the Industries Assistance Board on a sound business footing in nine days, why does he not extend his reforming activities? He said to-night that he had never accused the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) as Minister with doing anything wrong. The Premier, however, did criticise the member for Guildford, saying—

The Industries Assistance Board was found to be in a state of chaos, ledgers and books not being well kept. My friend, the member for Northam, who is now again seeking election as a Minister, in nine days did everything that was necessary to put it on a firm and fair business basis.

Speaking not as one who knows much about what the Industries Board have done, but yet speaking with the knowledge of a member of this Chamber who has closely studied the Act under which the board operate, speaking, too, as one who recognises that industries assistance was a new thing, sprung upon the people of this State, I recognise that a large undertaking of this nature must be liable to mistakes. The Premier stated that he brought a wise man from the Eastern districts who rectified everything in nine days. The Premier said that for this reason he wanted the electors of Northam to return that hon. gentleman to this Chamber.

Hon. P. Collier: Why does not the Premier turn this marvel loose in the Treasury, to fix up things there?

Mr. FOLEY: Western Australia is at the present time in need of an autocrat, if the right man can be found. Assuming that the member for Northam made such a success of the Industries Assistance Board, why does not the Premier shift him along

a few seats and let him take charge of the Treasury? In fifteen days he might straighten out the finances. Goodness knows but what he might stop the war as well. There is a remote possibility, or say a fair business risk, even of that. On the subject of a dissolution the Premier further said—

If Mr. Scaddan's object is to get a dissolution, I will promise him that as soon as it can be arranged. I will not hold office a moment longer than the people of this State want, but I will give them the opportunity of saying who shall be on this side.

Hon. P. Collier: Brave words.

Mr. FOLEY: Then there is the legal luminary, the recruit from the Young Liberal League, in the person of the Attorney General—

Hon. P. Collier: The boss of the bridges.

Mr. FOLEY: Who is going to bridge this matter over in the same manner as the Swan. He showed good judgment in saying after his re-election for Canning, and not before—

I am dug in for Canning. It will take all the Willie Johnson big guns to shift me out of Canning. I am here to stick.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): So he is; quite right.

Mr. FOLEY: The price at which that hon. gentleman and his fellow Ministers are here at the present time, is defiance of the people of this State. Their leader in another place, Mr. Colebatch, the demi-god of everything in Liberalism, the great I-am, the man who was going to do everything, the trenchant critic who knew everything when he was in Opposition, and who has been the most miserable failure in a Ministerial capacity, said that the Liberals were burning to get to the country. The Liberals ought to be pretty well burnt now. Mr. Colebatch did have a victory last week—the first victory he has gained since he has been a Minister. If he has done nothing else, he has re-cemented his party. Still, bearing in mind the pliability of the gentlemen now occupying Ministerial positions, there is not much credit due for the job he performed in that direction. As regards looking into things, there are one or two on which Ministers might well exercise their judgment. A great deal has

been said about what the Liberal party have done for the pastoralist. But only one class of pastoralist is being considered at the present time. Almost the whole of the area from Kalgoorlie north to Peak Hill is now being pioneered by pastoralists, small men. They are outside the rabbit-proof fence; it is said that it does not matter much which side they are on, though every member of the Liberal Government maintains that the rabbit-proof fence is a great blessing to these cattle men. At the same time they are paying far more for their land than the pastoralists of the North pay. It was the present Minister for Railways who raised the rents of these small cattle men—the men who are doing so much to give the people of the goldfields and of the metropolitan areas cheap meat at the present time.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): When did this happen?

Mr. FOLEY: Before the Minister took that trip.

Hon. P. Collier: In 1906.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): He was not in office then.

Mr. FOLEY: It was when he was urging the miners to go on the land, when he was saying to them, "Do not keep down in the dark, dank mines; do not kill yourselves working in mines, but go on the land; all you have to do is to tickle the soil and up comes the golden grain; if you have no money, we will lend it to you; if you have no horses, we will give them to you; if you have no machinery, we will give it to you." In fact, the hon. gentleman was going to shovel everything possible into the miners. Unfortunately, many miners were bulldozed into taking up land on areas where they should not have been settled; and they have not made a success of agriculture in consequence. It was just at this time the then Minister for Lands was negotiating to raise the rents of the small pastoralists in question.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): When did he raise the rents?

Mr. FOLEY: Just before making that trip.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): I say, no.

Mr. FOLEY: The Honorary Minister will have ample opportunity of replying to me. I feel positive that Ministers, when they come to reply to my statements on this subject and to the criticisms of the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) on the cattle deal, will have all the denying to do that they want, and all the trouble they are looking for in order to prepare their reply. Whether I am right or wrong as to the time, those cattle men who are pioneering that portion of the State are growing some of the best cattle we can produce, and some of the best horses to be found in Australia. Yet these people are hampered worse than those who are in the North-West. The Premier does not want a dissolution, though the Attorney General who spoke on the same platform as the Premier declared that he wanted a dissolution. He, however, was not serious. Our old friend the Minister for Works, who is the Alpha and Omega of everything so far as the world is concerned, said, "Try us with a dissolution." So far as the Labour party are concerned, we are sincere on this question and we are convinced that a dissolution would mean that the people would be consulted. We were willing and anxious to consult them.

Mr. Thomson: You have a safe seat.

Mr. FOLEY: That is the only consideration amongst Liberals at the present time. They do not care about the country; the position is as to how it will affect them personally. I like an interjection from the member for Katanning because I know he always replies to it himself. We heard a fortnight ago the leader of the Country party making his policy speech. I listened to it but I really could not say what his policy was. I have this idea, however, that before he spoke to the majority of his members the Premier spoke to him and told him what he wanted. The leader of the Country party of course is a blind follower, and unfortunately for many members of that party they are obliged to follow their leader. I take no notice of the leader of that party because no criticism comes from him; he is bound hand and foot to the Premier. They talk about the Labour party being bound hand and foot by Caucus! We are not bound hand and foot into being forced to stay here when the people

should have the opportunity of saying whether we have a right to continue to be here. This subject is mentioned, and the member for Katanning interjects that he might lose his seat.

Mr. Thomson: I did not say that.

Mr. FOLEY: The hon. member can hardly expect us to know what he really means.

Mr. Lambert drew attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung, and a quorum formed.

Mr. FOLEY: The Government are not sincere in their desire to go to the country. What they are sincere about, or perhaps I should say anxious about, is to get into recess. I want to know what they propose to do when they are in recess. The Minister for Railways talked at great length to-night on the question of the repatriation of the soldiers.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): He talked with some effect, too.

Mr. FOLEY: I do not agree with the hon. member. Hon. members and the people of Australia have been talking on the question and that is all that has been done. Hon. members can talk till doomsday about repatriation but the soldiers will derive no benefit from it. I contend it is the duty of the Government not to go into recess until some scheme of repatriation has been brought forward and every member in the House has discussed it and assisted to formulate a policy as to what we should really do. But the Government want to hurry into recess and they are only doing what many people and editors of newspapers in Australia are doing, namely, beating hot air. This is not a work for the Minister for Railways to take in hand during the recess. It is a matter of the greatest importance and it is the duty of every member of Parliament to discuss it and assist in the direction of formulating a definite scheme. Something has been said about returned soldiers being started on the work of growing potatoes. The Minister for Works told us that two tons of potatoes which were recently sent to the markets brought about £2, and we learned also that on another occasion six bags were sold for 6s. If potatoes are being grown to fetch only that

price, it is very apparent that the South-West is too far away from the markets for successful potato growing. If men who are physically fit cannot grow potatoes successfully down there, how are we going to expect returned soldiers, many of whom will be physically unfit, to make a living in this way? I contend it costs a good bit to put in an acre of potatoes and to take them off; I suppose it would come to £18 an acre, and when we are told that two tons recently fetched £2, the outlook is very poor for returned soldiers. The suggestion has also been made that some should be assisted in the direction of fruit growing. Is it not a farce to take about physically unfit soldiers undertaking this work? An hon. member in this Chamber recently wrote an article which appeared in the *Producers' Review* on the subject of fruit growing, and that hon. member knew what he was writing about, yet fruit was only fetching 1s. 6d. a case. How can returned soldiers become orchardists when fruit only realises that price? I am convinced that potatoes and fruit are right out of the question. So far as wheat growing is concerned, we know that it is impossible for even physically fit men to make a success of it and yet it is proposed to established returned soldiers in this industry. There are quite enough men on the land who are not fit to be there and whose failures have to be borne by the taxpayers of this State.

Mr. Thomson: Rubbish.

Mr. FOLEY: There are men on the land in the hon. member's constituency who would be better off it, not only from their own point of view but from that of the taxpayers of the State. Yet we propose to put more men on the land. We should also remember too that there are 1,000 farms in the possession of the Agricultural Bank which are not being worked to-day, and these are farms which have been thrown up because those who started them failed to make a success of them. And now the member for Northam tells us he proposes to do something for those men. Probably he will allow those forfeited holdings to remain idle. But it may be that he will make a virtue of necessity and put the returned soldiers on to that land, and

under the guise of doing them a good turn will do them a similar bad turn as was done to hundreds of men from the goldfields under his previous administration. This House should insist that the Government arrive at finality on this question of the repatriation of soldiers. Unless they do so, it will be a very serious indictment of the Government; it will show that all they have told us has been merely beating the air and idle talk. It is our duty to legislate for the soldiers, and unless we do so we are not doing that which the State pays us to do. I want the Government to bring down a Bill and afford the House an opportunity of discussing it. After the sad experience of the thousand farmers on the Agricultural Bank, I want something more than the member for Northam has told us. I want also the opinion of the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson), and I want the best brains of this Chamber brought to bear on the inauguration of a scheme for the repatriation of our soldiers. There is little need for me to speak on the question of the finances, for it is not given to everyone to be an expert on finance. At the same time one does not require to be a great mathematician to realise that, despite the business acumen, the business ability, and all the other attributes of business possessed by the present Government, if we may take them at their own valuation, the deficit has steadily increased month by month. Not only that, but there has been a cessation of the policy followed when the present leader of the Opposition was in charge of the Treasury. At that time in many parts of the State, but more particularly in the metropolitan area, a good deal of work in sewerage connection was carried out which is calculated to bring in revenue in the future. We find to-day that scarcely a man is engaged on that work in the metropolitan area, and almost every man employed on water supply at Kalgoorlie has been put off. I wish to issue this warning, that unless the matter of the upkeep of the pipe line is carefully watched, we may in the very near future be faced with the position that our goldfields areas are without water. I will not say the Government would not think anything of that; they would consider it a great calamity. But if the cheese-paring policy of

the present is allowed to continue, most of our mines may have to close down, and if that happens many of them will not start again. They are at present working on a very close margin between profit and loss, and we should see that they are afforded every facility to keep working. The Government, by their cheese-paring policy, have committed an act which, in the near future, may leave Kalgoorlie without water. And why have they done this? To save an odd penny here and there. The member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) has pointed out in connection with the cattle deal that it is possible for rich men to get thousands of pounds out of the Government—and still they wonder why it is a no-confidence motion is hurled at them. The Attorney General assures us that business acumen will be used. It is marvellous how that cry of business acumen is always trotted out. When the leader of the Opposition was in charge of the Treasury, it is true we had a deficit, but it was not so big as that of the present Treasurer. But he did not stop works of every description. He kept the wheels of industry going to a greater extent than the present Government have done. The present Government claim to be men of business, but, seeing that they have increased the deficit, despite enhanced revenue, I submit it is about time we had some result from that business acumen.

Member: They showed business strategy last week.

Mr. FOLEY: I never questioned the Government's capacity for strategy. I know them to be strategists, and would advise some of them to go to the goldfields where they would certainly secure a job as underground engineers. How has the Attorney General shown his business acumen insofar as it affects those who elected him? He has raised the railway fares to every station in his electorate, to Burswood, Mt. Lawley, Maylands, Bayswater, Victoria Park and Belmont. And he has raised the fares on the working man. The Attorney General sticks out his chest and says he is a better Labour man than any of us on this side. He tells himself this so often that probably he believes it. He has raised the second class fares by 66 per cent., from 3d. to 5d. That is the good business acumen the people

of the Canning electorate have to thank the Attorney General for. He said to himself, "My best friends ride first class, as I do," and he showed class bias by drawing a line of demarcation between the wealthy people who ride first class and those who ride second. He did this when he raised the first class fare by only 40 per cent. as compared with the 66 per cent. rise in the case of the poor man. The fares of the navy, of "Bill Bowyangs," the shop girl, the men and women whom he cajoled into voting for him, and the apprentices, have been raised 66 per cent.; but the big men occupying high positions in the town, who ride first class, have had their fares raised only 40 per cent. The Attorney General has lost no opportunity of raising the taxes on poor men in the Canning electorate. The people of that electorate elected him to show his business acumen. If this raising of taxes on the poor represents his business acumen, he ought to take the first opportunity of asking his electors if they are satisfied. If he did this, I am inclined to think his big victory at the recent election would now be exactly reversed. The member for Leederville (Mr. Veryard), a supporter of the Government, has to take dictation from the Attorney General, for the Attorney General has also put a tax on the electors of Leederville, whose second-class railway passengers now pay a 66 per cent. increase, while the first-class passengers pay a 40 per cent. increase. The same imposition has been put on the electors of Subiaco. In respect to North Perth, we see nothing of the promised penny sections on the trams. Personally I admit I do not think our population sufficiently large to warrant penny sections; but they were promised, and the promise should be fulfilled. Again, the business acumen of the Government was made manifest in their income tax proposals. Here, also, they drew a class distinction between the rich and the poor, for in their Bill they proposed an increase of 181 per cent. on the poor man in receipt of £200 a year, while the increase proposed to be levied on the man worth £2,000 a year was only 23 per cent. I am not objecting to equitable taxation. To my mind any man not at the Front should be perfectly willing to pay taxes; indeed,

if they were to tax us to the extent of 10s. per week, no one would be justified in cavilling at it. But I object to the Government drawing class distinctions in their taxation proposals. What we want is, not class legislation, but legislation which will bear equitably on all, will give equal opportunity to all.

Mr. Smith: You have not had equal opportunities for all from the Trades Hall.

Mr. FOLEY: The only time I met my friend at the Trades Hall he had equal opportunity with me. The Government have criticised everything that the late Government did, more particularly in respect to State steamers. Long before ever State steamers were established, the present Premier issued a circular letter to the pastoralists of the North, asking them if they would support a service of State steamships. On the 12th May, 1916, the Premier declared that they would take advantage of the high market to dispose of the disastrous State steamers. Why, then, have the Government not given effect to their policy, as enunciated at the Canning election, and sold every one of the State steamers? Why do they not sell the "Kangaroo" at a profit while they may? At the Canning election the worst that could be said about the State steamers was freely said by the Premier, the Attorney General, and the Colonial Secretary. If those gentlemen felt so keenly about the State steamers why do not they now get rid of them? They have made more than the "Kangaroo" cost during the present year. There are people in the North-West who are not getting a fair deal from the Liberal Government, even from the steamer they have at present. As the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) said, they have to make about 10 direct trips from Fremantle to Derby during a certain season, which means that all other portions of the North-West are without a steamer service during that time. This service was not instituted by the Labour Government to make money for one firm, but to take the place of railways which people enjoy in other parts of the State. The whole thing is a scandal and a shame. All other parts of the North-West are being sacrificed for the sake of one firm which is going to make a fabulous sum of money out of the country. They

are paid for the cattle which come down, and they will also get the cattle from the small men who bring their stock into Derby. On the understanding that they are going to get a boat the small men will get their cattle on the road between their stations and the port, and Emanuel Bros., who will have the vessel, will send out their agents and buy these cattle at a price which will represent a sacrifice, as the owners would rather accept that price than take them back to the station because of the lack of feed along the road. Even before State steamers were in operation the big cattle firms took every available foot of room in the boats to the exclusion of the cattle of the small men. This has taken place in the past, and will continue to take place in spite of what the Minister for Lands thinks. I do not say that the Government are doing this for the sake of putting small men down, but without a knowledge of the question, which they should have from their officers, they have made this agreement which is so much opposed to the interests of the small men. The Government have not kept their word, and have not given the State a scintilla of evidence that they possess the business knowledge necessary to run the country, in spite of their saying they possessed it. They have done nothing but bring in a number of party measures and fight them with a party bitterness on every possible occasion. If they come before the House after recess with a repatriation scheme for us to discuss, and not one for the members of Cabinet only, they will be doing something which the country demands that they should do. When we find them stooping to the methods they have employed for the purpose of hanging on to office, we cannot expect much from them. When the Premier was beaten fairly and squarely one night he asked the Governor for a dissolution. His Excellency told him to go back and get work. He did not put it in two words. I have always had a deep admiration for the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood). In the Chamber one night he said that he would be prepared to carry on the duties of Governor at £500 a year and do the work well. If the position only needs a man to tell people to go and get work, I am sure the hon. member could carry out the duties with greater effect than

even His Excellency. The leader of the Country party was then consulted. In my belief the Government knew well that a dissolution would not be granted, but nevertheless they brought the leader of the Country party to heel. They cajoled him into thinking that he was the only pebble on the beach, whereas it was not the leader of the Country party, but the party sitting behind him, some members of whom had expressed independent opinions. Unfortunately for the State, the Premier was then able to cajole the Country party into submitting to anything that would keep the Government in office. This was an absolutely wrong thing to do. When criticised the other night the Minister for Mines, to use a slang expression, flew off the handle. I hope he will not do so to-night, because I want to tell him something that he can do for the miners. The mining industry just now is at a low ebb and on the wane. It is an industry which was responsible for the progress of this State, and had it not been for the war and the scarcity of men our mines would have been flourishing to-day. There are new shows opening up, and some of our gold-producing mines would have been turning out more gold but for the conditions brought about by the war. Costs of material which is used in the production plants have gone up from 60 per cent. to 80 per cent. We as a State must do something for an industry which has brought about so much progress in the State and which for many years represented, possibly, the paramount factor in that progress. There has been nothing in the policy formulated by our friends opposite for the assistance of this industry, and nothing new put before us by the Minister for Mines except the proposal for a conference.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): That is more than the Labour Ministry did.

Mr. FOLEY: If the late Minister had committed the folly of calling a conference I would have criticised him for so doing. If there was any idea totally bereft of anything that would do good for the industry it is that of calling a conference.

Mr. Carpenter: It has not been called yet.

Mr. FOLEY: They have promised to do so. I hope the Minister for Mines will not carry out his promise, and if he does not we will be thoroughly satisfied.

The Attorney General: What is your suggestion?

Mr. FOLEY: That the Minister should leave the conference absolutely alone.

The Attorney General: Then you can consider your invitation cancelled.

Mr. FOLEY: I was a member of one mining conference, and another member of it was a publican who—I should say from a knowledge of him extending over years—had never gone three steps from his own door. He had a pretty good mine, which petered out when the town petered out. I have heard that gentleman dilate on the great qualities of the prospector, the man who blazed the track. That was the man he was going to stick up for. But it all ended in absolutely nothing. And similarly the Minister's proposed conference would end in nothing. In my opinion, what is needed to stimulate goldmining at the present time in Western Australia is the appointment of a man who thoroughly understands the subject, from top to bottom, to go all over this State visiting old shows, and then, with the assistance of the data in the possession of the Mines Department, to report to the Government which of the old shows are worth working again. Such a man is to be had in this State, and he should be paid by the Government a salary commensurate with that which would be offered him outside. The Government could come to the assistance of mining by pumping out such old shows as this man might recommend. Many of them were closed down because at that time their low-grade ore did not pay to work. The same man could look round for likely country for prospectors. It is all very well to point to the State Geological Survey Branch; but what the Government should do is to put on fifty good men to go over the known auriferous belt, or a little further out. Under the supervision of a good man, these prospectors could do much to stimulate mining; or, for that matter, the Government could obtain on our fields prospectors who would not need supervision. But the Government, so far from assisting mining development, are

in many cases charging exorbitant rates for water at subsidised mills where prospectors crush their stone. That does not help the industry, and I have not yet heard of any contemplated change of Mines administration in this respect. In fact, I know of nothing for the advancement of mining that has emanated from the present Government. A mining conference is to be held in Melbourne, and if the Minister for Mines proposes to attend it he should get a man who knows mining in this State—irrespective of whether he is a Government officer or not—to accompany him, so that what is needed in the interests of Western Australian mining may be laid before that conference. In respect of mining, this State is unlike any other State. If the Minister adopted this course, we should have some reason to credit the Government with sincerity. If the prospecting vote will not meet the cost, advantage can be taken of a section of the Industries Assistance Act, in the same way as that measure is applied to promote agriculture. The Act contains the necessary provision, though the previous Government said that everything needful would be done under the Mining Development Act. The Minister for Mines will be well guided if he adopts this suggestion in order to assist the first great industry of this State.

On motion by Mr. O'Loughlen debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.5 p. m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 21st February, 1917.

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

QUESTION—ESPERANCE RAILWAY, EXPENDITURE.

Mr. SMITH asked the Minister for Works: 1, What expenditure, exclusive of the Royal Commission, has been incurred in connection with the Esperance railway since the stoppage of work? 2, Are there any officials or workmen on the line at present and what are they engaged in?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1. On land resumption survey, £303; caretaker's wages, etc., £23—£326. 2, One person only is employed—a caretaker.

QUESTION — INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD. WHEAT BAGS.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Industries: 1, Have the Industries Assistance Board arranged the price which is to be charged the farmers for the wheat bags supplied? 2, If so what price has been fixed?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIES replied: 1. Yes. 2, 8s. 8d. per dozen.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, BAYS-WATER AND MAYLANDS.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Water Supply: 1, Whether he is aware that during the summer the water supply, particularly of Bayswater and Maylands, has been deficient in quality and