

House, and upon the Government, to tell us exactly where we are. I have said to Mr. Collier, "Tell us where we are, as at the 30th June last, and then, so far as I am concerned, you will never be asked to accept responsibility for anything prior to that date." This afternoon I have tried to analyse the position, in order to arrive at where we stood on the 30th June, 1924. My figures have been compiled from the records of this Chamber, and they can be verified by any member who cares to take the necessary trouble. I go further and say I am prepared to assist the present Government to smooth the rough road that a great many of our citizens have to travel. There is no denying the fact that Western Australia is financially involved, and at every turn is faced with difficulties that will undoubtedly require the best efforts of all of us to overcome, so that our country may be piloted into a safe harbour. I trust I have not offended anyone in the course of my remarks. All I have done is to try to make a plain statement of facts. Assuredly there will not be any attempt on my part to harass or attack the Government so long as they pursue a safe and sound policy. I have made references to the past, but only because I wished the Government, and also the people, to realise the seriousness of our position and to use their best endeavours to pull the State through. I do not think I can conclude with anything better than this quotation from Abraham Lincoln—

With malice towards none, with charity to all, let us bind up the nation's wounds.

I think I have shown to-day that there are many wounds to bind up, and if I can do anything towards bringing about a happier and a better condition of things in Western Australia, I promise the Government, here and now, that my best efforts shall be available. I support the motion before the Chair.

On motion by Hon. J. W. Kirwan debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 8.7 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 29th July, 1924.*

	PAGE
Questions: Railways—1, Bridge, North Fremantle; 2, Merredin facilities; 3, Merredin Station; 4, Narrogin-Darwin construction	27
Roads—1, Federal grant; 2, Fines under Traffic Act	28
Weights and Measures Act	28
Wire netting, Federal assistance	28
Agriculture—1, Light lands, utilisation; 2, Site for Agricultural College	28
Lunacy, reception house	29
Industries Assistance Board	29
Water Supply	29
Sitting days and hours	29
Government business, precedence	29
Bill: Supply, £1,363,500, all stages	29
Chairman of Committees, election	29

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

### QUESTIONS (4)—RAILWAYS.

#### *Bridge, North Fremantle.*

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to construct a new railway bridge at North Fremantle, and, if so, what is the estimated cost of construction (a) if built at North Fremantle; (b) if erected across the river at Bicton at the place already tested? 2, What amount has been expended on the present railway bridge at North Fremantle for the year ended 30th June, 1924, and what is the total amount expended on the bridge during the last five years?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Not for the immediate present. (a) Roughly £625,000, including steel bridge with one lifting span, deviation of main line between North Fremantle and Fremantle, and land resumption. (b) Approximately £700,000. 2, (a) £3,855. (b) £10,381.

#### *Yorkrakine district. Lay-out of Railways.*

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Premier: 1, Will the Government go carefully into the matter of railway facilities for settlers east and north-east of Merredin? 2, Is the Premier aware that a new wheat and stock province is in process of development in those areas? 3, Will he have a general investigation made into a systematic lay-out for future railways?

The PREMIER replied: The Government are fully aware of the latest developments in the wheat and stock areas of this State, and one of its missions is to provide essential railway facilities as speedily and as systematically as circumstances permit.

*Merredin Station, Rebuilding.*

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it the intention of the Railway Department to commence the work of rebuilding the offices, refreshment rooms, and station buildings at Merredin at an early date? 2, Was a sum for this work authorised by a previous Government?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Not at present. 2, No.

*Narrogin-Dwarda Construction.*

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Works: Is he in a position to indicate the probable date for the commencement of the construction of the Narrogin-Dwarda railway, as authorised by Parliament?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM, for the Minister for Works, replied: Not at present.

## QUESTIONS (2)—ROADS.

*Federal Grant.*

Mr. LATHAM asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is it his intention to lay on the Table of the House papers showing the allocation of Federal road grant to road boards? 2, Is it the intention of the Government to allow the road boards to carry out the work under engineering supervision?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM, for the Minister for Works, replied: 1, Yes. 2, Where the boards, in the opinion of the department, show that they are able to carry out the work in accordance with the conditions laid down, and if the necessary plant and facilities for doing satisfactory and expeditious work are at hand, opportunity will be given them to spend the money allotted to the work proposed by the department.

*Fines under Traffic Act.*

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that on 17th November, 1920, on a motion by myself, and carried by this House, "That fines inflicted for infringements of the Traffic Act, 1919, which are being paid into Consolidated Revenue, should be paid to the local authority initiating the proceedings, in the same manner as was done under the Municipal Corporation Act, 1906, and the Cart and Carriage Licensing Act, 1876," has been disregarded by the late Minister for Works? 2, Is the present Minister for Works aware that there is a strong feeling amongst local governing bodies as to this disregard of the instruction given by Parliament? 3, Will he rectify the matter?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM, for the Minister for Works, replied: 1, Yes; but the ex-Minister for Works having been advised that effect could not be legally given to the resolution, deferred action until the Traffic Act was amended. 2,

Some local authorities have expressed dissatisfaction. 3, Instructions have been issued that as from 1st July all fines imposed as the result of proceedings taken by local authorities shall be paid to such local authorities.

## QUESTION—WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Railways: Is it the intention of the Government to proclaim the Weights and Measures Act, No. 50 of 1915?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: Yes, so soon as a suitable building is available to house the standards. Action is now being taken to that end.

## QUESTION—WIRE NETTING, FEDERAL ASSISTANCE.

Mr. LATHAM asked the Minister for Lands: 1, How many applications have been received for assistance under the Federal wire-netting scheme? 2, How many have been approved by the State, with total mileage? 3, How many approvals by the Federal Government are the State Government cognisant of? 4, Have tenders been approved for wire netting, and, if so, at what price?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, £380. 2, 25 recommended for 100½ miles 1½ in. mesh; 109 recommended for 454½ miles 1½ in. mesh. 3, 25; 109. 4, Yes. 70 miles of 1½ in. mesh—£51 per mile. 230 miles 1½ in. mesh—£43 17s. 6d. per mile.

## QUESTIONS (2)—AGRICULTURE.

*Light Lands Utilisation.*

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Agriculture: In view of the immense area of light lands in this State, does he intend to support the proposals of certain Wheat Belt agricultural societies for a thorough investigation into the profitable utilisation of light lands?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: A State Light Lands Farm has been established at Wongan Hills, at which it is intended to carry out investigations for the profitable utilisation of light lands.

*Site for Agricultural College.*

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Agriculture: Will he cause the commission appointed to inquire into the question of a site for the proposed Agricultural College to carefully consider the claims put forth for the Merredin State Farm as a site?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: The suitability of Merredin Experiment Farm for an Agricultural College has been fully considered.

### QUESTION—LUNACY, RECEPTION HOUSE.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Premier: 1, What progress has been made in respect of the erection of a mental reception house and convalescent home on the site purchased at Point Heathcote? 2, Will he inform the House when the building is to be commenced, and what is the probable date of completion?

The PREMIER replied: 1 and 2, This matter is now receiving the consideration of the Government with the object of determining whether the necessary accommodation can be provided at a reduced cost.

### QUESTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD, FORECLOSURES.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is it true that a large number of settlers receiving assistance from the Industries Assistance Board have been notified that they should take an early opportunity of selling their farms, failing which the board would foreclose? 2, With a view to assisting settlement, will the Government instruct the board to defer the proposed action until after the coming harvest has been marketed, in order that each case may then be reviewed on its merits?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, Yes. 2, No, the Government cannot.

### QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY.

#### *Key Dams for Wheat Belt.*

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Works: What action has been taken by the Water Supply Department in regard to the construction of key dams or other central water supplies on the wheat belt?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM (Honorary Minister), for the Minister for Works, replied: Surveys, investigations, and plans are now in hand with a view to the preparation of economical schemes for district water supplies in the wheat areas.

### SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

On motion by the Premier, ordered:

*That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 4.30 p.m., and shall sit until 6.15 p.m. if necessary, and, if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards.*

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS—PRECEDENCE.

On motion by the Premier, ordered:

*That on Tuesdays and Thursdays Government business shall take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day.*

### BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £1,863,500.

#### *Standing Orders Suspension.*

The PREMIER and TREASURER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.55]: I move—

*That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable resolutions from the Committees of Supply and Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees, and also the passing of a Supply Bill through all its stages in one day, and to enable the business aforesaid to be entered upon and dealt with before the Address-in-reply is adopted.*

Question put and passed.

#### *Message.*

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation in connection with the Bill.

#### *Chairman of Committees, Election.*

The PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.58]: It being necessary at this stage to appoint a chairman of committees, I move—

*That the member for Brown Hill, Ivanhoe (Mr. Lutey) be appointed Chairman of Committees.*

Mr. MILLINGTON (Leederville): I second the motion.

Question put and passed.

#### *In Committee of Supply.*

The House having resolved into Committee of Supply, Mr. Lutey in the Chair,

The CHAIRMAN: On taking the Chair for the first time, I wish to say I feel proud indeed at having been elected your Chairman of Committees. With the help of hon. members, I will endeavour to do my best to carry out the duties of the office with impartiality and in accordance with the rules and regulations laid down by this Assembly.

The PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [5.1]: I move—

*That there be granted to His Majesty, on account of the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1925, a sum not exceeding £1,863,500.*

This is the usual motion for Supply, brought forward at the beginning of each session. I am asking for authority for expenditure in July and August, and the amount is based upon the estimated expenditure of last year, that is to say, it is one-sixth of the total estimated expenditure for the past financial year. The amounts covered in the Bill are, from Revenue £805,000, from General Loan Fund £745,000, from Government Property Sales Fund £10,500, from Land Improve-

ment Loan Fund £3,000, and from Treasurer's Advance £300,000. The expenditure last year under these heads was: From Revenue £8,094,753, from General Loan Fund £3,665,615, from Loan Suspense Account £238,563, from Government Property Sales Fund £62,502, and from Land Improvement Loan Fund £6,485. The total loan expenditure last year was just under £4,000,000. The expenditure under revenue was: Special Acts—interest £2,607,416, sinking fund £226,561, making a total of £2,833,977. Other special Acts £247,374. The expenditure under the heading of "Governmental" was £1,981,121, and on Public Utilities £3,032,281, making a total for the year, as I have already stated, of £8,094,753. As against the estimate the expenditure showed a slight increase in all these items. The revenue collection for the year was, as hon. members know, £7,465,595. It was in excess of the estimated revenue by £323,304, due mainly to the fact that the revenue received under the heading of "Taxation" was considerably in excess of that estimated by the ex-Treasurer. For instance, the amount received from income tax was £502,265 as against an estimate of £390,000. The receipts from dividend duties totalled £216,895, as against the estimate of £180,000, and the receipts from stamp duty totalled £194,176 as against an estimate of £174,000. So, under the heading of "Taxation" the total receipts were £1,173,567, as against an estimate of £1,016,000. The railway returns proved to be £164,894 above the estimate for the year and £303,524 greater than in the previous year. The railway results, according to the Treasury figures for the year, were: Revenue £3,189,894, expenditure £2,307,380, interest payment on the capital expenditure £787,221, leaving a balance of £95,293—which is usually described as profit—to meet sinking fund charges of £126,000. So, after allowing for working expenses, interest and payment of sinking fund, there was an actual loss of about £31,000. It is not usual, I know, to take into account sinking fund in respect of railway expenditure.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is quite proper to do so.

The PREMIER: But in the past it has not been the practice, in discussing railway finances, to include expenditure under the heading of "Sinking Fund." The profit or loss has generally been calculated after the payment of working costs and interest.

Mr. Holman: It was the practice before.

The PREMIER: No. So far back as I can remember, the practice has been to disregard sinking fund. It is somewhat misleading, because it might be given out that the railways had shown a profit for the year of £95,000, whereas they have actually shown a loss of about £31,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Treasurer has to find that loss.

The PREMIER: That is so. He has to pay the sinking fund as well as the interest. I do not know that there is much more in-

formation I need to give the House. The Leader of the Opposition, who has just vacated the Treasury, will be well acquainted with all the ramifications of finance in recent years. I hope to be able to bring down the Estimates at an early date. Hon. members will then be in a position to discuss the finances of the State on the information that will be made available to them in the Budget Speech.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.10]: May I offer you, Sir, my congratulations upon your appointment to the Chair? You know very well how important the position is, and to how great an extent the Chairman can help the business of the House. Occupants of the Chair in the past have proved highly satisfactory, and I am sure that your term of office will be equally satisfactory to us all. Hon. members, particularly new members, having heard the Premier's figures and appreciated the enormous amount of revenue collected, must not think that there is therefore a great deal available for disbursement. I should like to say to them that they will find it is not really revenue. The Treasurer has included in that eight millions the earnings from railways and other public utilities, money collected for services rendered. Really he has very little revenue clear of everything, so I warn new members that they need not expect favours because of the figures given us by the Premier this afternoon.

The PREMIER: I am glad you have given them that warning.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What a wonderful year the people of this country must have had to have been able to pay, as they have, so large a sum in income tax!

The PREMIER: There was a considerable amount to carry over from previous years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And this year, of course.

The PREMIER: Not nearly so much this year as in previous years. That, I may say, has been due to the assessments having been got out late in the previous year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course there is always a carry-over. Still, the people must have had a wonderful year to pay as they have done.

Mr. Holman: It will improve next year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Please God, it will. Of course it will not be necessary this year to pass so heavy a taxation measure as in past years. I should like to say to the Premier now that he is entitled to Supplies. It is quite reasonable that he should have Supplies with which to carry on the services of the country. His Supplies are based on the expenditure of last year, just one-sixth of what the House agreed to pay last year. I do not wish to discuss in a general way the financial position of the State, except to say I am delighted to find the deficit that has been with us for so many years has now reached fairly reasonable dimensions, namely £229,000 this year as against £330,000 two years ago.

That is highly satisfactory, particularly when we remember that the State's contribution to sinking fund is just about equal to the amount of the debit. So really, if we compare our finances with those of the Eastern States, we quickly see that if we were to adopt their methods of finance we should not show any deficit at all.

Mr. Hughes: Your sinking fund has not kept pace with your debits.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If we could set aside from sinking fund an amount equal to our loan expenditure, we should be in a very fortunate position.

Mr. Hughes: Your proportion is the same. You have been bluffing people for years on that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I leave bluffing to legal practitioners. It is satisfactory to know that the deficit is so much less than it was. That is due entirely to the work that has been done by the men engaged in our primary industries, particularly the men on the land. That position should improve, because the expenditure of loan moneys on developmental works is not yet bringing its full reward. The returns should be greater this year and even greater next year, and in the third year we should be reaping the benefit of a great deal of the money that has been expended in this way.

The Minister for Lands: It would ease my mind a lot if I thought that could be so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If I understood the Minister's mind I might be able to ease it. Having said that much I do not intend to say any more. I should not have risen to say a word against the passing of Supply, because the Treasurer is entitled to the money. That Supply has been opposed in the past, I have always regretted.

The Premier: It was not done during my time. I do not remember ever opposing Supply.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think the Premier's colleague, the Minister for Lands, had a word or two to say once or twice. What I desire to do is to call attention to an act of the Government which must mean considerable additional expense. I only know this from a statement which appeared in the "West Australian" in June last, emanating from the Minister for Works, Mr. McCallum. I am sorry the Minister is not here to-day.

Mr. Holman: Why not leave it until he returns?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I understand that illness has necessitated his taking a sea trip. In this statement the Minister said the Government were adopting the 44-hour system. He said—

As a first step toward giving effect to the policy outlined by the Premier (Mr. P. Collier) on the hustings, favourable to a working week of 44 hours, the Government has decided to restore to those workers who previously enjoyed that principle, the period of four hours a week which was taken away from them last year. The

forty-four hours will be worked in five and a-half days; that is to say, in five days of eight hours each with four hours on Saturday. In effect, this is really to carry out the principles of the eight-hour day logically. Previously there has always been some compromising by working more than eight hours on several days, in order to get time off on another day. Under the new arrangement the worker will work eight hours on five days, and a half-day on Saturday. There will be no reduction of pay—each worker will receive the same wage under the altered condition as he does now.

That is to say, he will get the same pay, and not less.

This decision is merely keeping faith with our electioneering promises. From our leader down every Labour candidate declared in favour of the 44-hour week, and the people having returned us with a majority, we are standing up to our undertaking. I have made an agreement with the unions which will carry them on till September, when last year's award will come up for review. Both sides will then ask the Court to embody these terms in an award.

Mr. Panton: It is the first time there has been harmony for a long while.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister continued in his statement—

At present the decision only covers those employees of the P.W.D. who previously enjoyed a 44-hour week. In continuous process and shift employment there is some difficulty in applying the principle, but I hope to overcome that in time and to gradually extend the application of the principle to other workers. However, this is a start. The new arrangement will come into force next week. The men will be grateful for the consideration shown to them, and I believe that the reduction of the working week to 44 hours will make little or no difference to the output. The unions concerned are:—Water Supply (metropolitan and goldfields), Coastal Harbours and Rivers, Painters, Shipwrights, Plumbers, Moulders, Amalgamated Society of Engineers, A.S.E. (goldfields pumping stations), and A.W.U.; and the approximate number of men involved is 3,000.

It will be noticed that no attempt is made to justify the reduction in the hours from 48 to 44, by reason of the 44 hours being too long for men in which to work.

Mr. Corboy: We did not think it was necessary to do that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I must at all events compliment the Minister on having carried out the promises made before the elections.

Mr. Mann: Whether to do so was right or wrong?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I congratulate him on having kept his word, but I cannot say that the promise before the election was justified, and I do not think

it ought to have been made. The promise, however, was made, and the people voted knowing well what was promised, and expecting to gain some benefit from the proposal.

Mr. Holman: Are you going to attack the people now?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am not going to attack anyone. I have stood by the worker always, and I shall endeavour to show that I am standing by him now. Members will think that if I oppose the 44-hour system it will be impossible for me to stand by the worker. I shall endeavour to show that this so-called boon will mean an increase in the cost of living. Nothing was said about increasing wages.

Mr. Holman: When the hours were increased was the cost of living reduced?

Mr. Marshall: No.

Mr. Holman: Do not attempt impossibilities.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I propose to make my statement in my own way, and no doubt the hon. member will later on make his.

Mr. Holman: I will show you what you have done before.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think an eight-hour day is quite long enough for any man to work. Eight hours' work and eight hours' play, and eight hours' in which to sleep, is a reasonable division of the 24 hours. If, however, members can show that the workers will benefit under the new system, I will be willing to listen to them. They must, however, show me that the worker himself will not lose under the new system. Already many unions have approached the Arbitration Court, in many cases saying they want the 44 hours, but they want a shilling a day more. They are quite right in their claim. They do want more money if they work shorter hours. I do not say they can get it, because a man can be paid only for what he earns. Since the 44-hour week was determined upon several unions have asked for more wages.

The Premier: They made that request for many years before this was granted.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should like to point out what happened in Queensland only the other day. The Premier and Ministers in that State had declined to grant the 44-hour week.

The Premier: You are referring to what appeared in the "Courier" of Brisbane. Who would believe that rag?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I believe it.

The Premier: I do not.

Mr. Marshall: You are easily taken in.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Perhaps the Premier will give me an assurance that this did not occur.

The Premier: I give my assurance that it did not happen.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Will the Premier deny that Mr. Theodore was not requested to put through a Bill providing

for a 44-hour week, and subsequently agreed to adopt the system.

The Premier: I do deny it.

Mr. Holman: Of course it is absolutely untrue.

The Premier: That is a Brisbane pressman's imagination.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Pressman are very respectable people. Every member of this Chamber read what happened in Queensland, and knows that the 44-hour week has been granted there. I want to know if this system is to apply to all Government workers and to all workers in the State? It would be wrong to say to men who are in the Government service, "You work 44 hours," and to men outside the Government service, "You work 48 hours." That would set up an impossible position. The worker has his labour to sell. He is willing to work for 44 hours a week instead of 48 for the Government, and he is to get, not less pay but the same pay. If 44 hours is to be the week's work for workers they must receive more pay, and not less or the same pay.

Mr. Holman: We agree with you there.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the worker is to live in the same degree of comfort, and if his wife is to have the same amount of money with which to purchase her goods, there must be an increase in the wage. It is impossible for 44-hour boots to be manufactured as cheaply as 48-hour boots, or for 44-hour clothes to be sold as cheaply as those made under the 48-hour system. The baker and the butcher, and the other tradesmen who call at the homes of the workers, cannot if working 44 hours per week, supply goods for the same money as when they were working 48 hours. Let us see whether we are doing real service to the workers when we vote Supply for this purpose. That is all I ask. Let us examine the position.

Mr. Holman: Why deal with the question on the Supply Bill?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is the proper time.

Mr. Holman: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We are voting money for payment to these men.

Mr. Holman: We are voting the same amount as you asked for last year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This is the proper time to discuss the matter, and that is why I have mentioned it.

Mr. Holman: This is the amount you asked for last year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It was the statement of the Minister for Works that prompted me to raise the question.

Mr. Holman: But it has never been done before on a Supply Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then I am doing it now on the Supply Bill.

Mr. Holman: And you are making a mess of it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I want to know if the Premier thinks that goods made under the 44-hour system can be

sold as cheaply as those made under the 48-hour system. It would be impossible. We know that 80 per cent. of the spending power of the community—

The Minister for Lands: They used to say that before when the workers were employed 60 hours a week.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I agree that an eight-hour day is a reasonable day, and I would object to any more.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: How do you arrive at that figure?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: My friends opposite set up the eight-hour day years ago. We know that 80 per cent. of the spending power of the people lies with the worker, the people drawing less than £300 a year. We also know that 80 per cent. of the disadvantages from this lie with the worker. It is because of that I wish this House to consider before we pass Supply what it all means. Everyone knows that the last purchaser pays for everything. Can we afford to pay more for our requirements under the 44-hour system than we paid under the 48-hour system?

Mr. Holman: Have you read the latest return I have from Queensland, Mr. Knibbs' return?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If we pay more for our goods we shall be doing an injustice to the workers of the country. I should be sorry to see the standard of living decreased. I wish it could be increased, and could be done on an even shorter day than 44 hours. Everyone knows that nothing of the sort can happen. Under the altered conditions the present standard of living will not be maintained. Everyone has to work for what he gets in this world and the alteration will mean a different standard of living.

Mr. Holman: Have you perused the latest statistics prepared by Knibbs relating to Queensland?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier has satisfied me about Queensland and I have accepted his assurance. That ends that point. Queensland is not an ideal State. It always has difficulties because of the many unemployed there. I know the Premier, Mr. Theodore, very well. He used to wire me periodically asking what was our deficit. I got tired of it because I did not like always replying that it was £500,000 or £600,000, so one day I wired to him asking how many unemployed he had. He telegraphed in reply stating that there were 2,100 unemployed in Queensland.

Mr. Sampson: There were over 4,000 unemployed in March.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I wanted to stop him wiring continually about our deficit.

Mr. Latham: Did it have the desired effect?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, he has not asked a question since. It is not very pleasant to discuss this question. I know that it is possible to have a 44-hour week and I should like to know that we could cope with our work under such conditions. I know, too, that the 44-hour week will be popular with those who have to work that period, but very unpopular with those who will have to work 48 hours. We must do our duty to all the people.

Mr. Holman: It will be very unpopular with those who never work at all!

Mr. Latham: There are not too many of them in Western Australia.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The people I know do work, and I object to any statement to the contrary. It is idle to say that as much work will be done in 44 hours as is now done in 48 hours. Such a statement is tantamount to saying that the workers have been loafing during the extra four hours. I do not believe any such thing; it is a libel on them. The men work and work well. I protest against any such assertion that men will do as much in 44 hours as they do in 48 hours. I do know, however, that the people generally will not be able to live on the same amount of money when goods are supplied to them by men who work only 44 hours per week.

Mr. Holman: In Queensland they are paid more money and work fewer hours and the production there is greater than elsewhere.

Member: That is rubbish!

Mr. Mann: And what about the unemployed there?

Mr. Holman: The assertion about unemployed is not correct.

Mr. Marshall: You do not want more unemployed in Perth, do you?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I merely wish to point out what the position of the public will be when the workers are employed for only 44 hours a week. I object to one section receiving that advantage while others have to work the longer period.

Mr. Panton: Would you support a Bill making the 44-hour week apply generally?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The housewife will find it difficult to carry on with the money she receives now. When the unions asked for 44 hours and an increase of 1s. a day, they knew that they wanted more money. Then again the Premier will find it difficult to raise the extra money required because of the 44-hour week. It will mean that he will have to raise £250,000 a year more from revenue or from loan for the various services. Not the same number of men will be employed for the same money but really fewer, because the production naturally will be less.

Mr. Holman: The production was greater in Queensland than anywhere else in Australia.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It will be very difficult to raise the extra money and to secure the funds the Premier requires to carry out the works outlined in his legislative programme. We have had difficulty in raising money during the past two years and those difficulties are not growing less. The Premier will agree with that statement. In some services it is possible that less work will be done, but in other services the present work must be carried on. I am sorry to see a decision of the Arbitration Court so recently given, so lightly set aside by the Government. That the Government should have laid violent hands upon an award of the court is wrong.

Mr. Hughes: Why did you interfere with the court and put a partisan in charge? You are responsible for interfering with the court.

Mr. George: That is nonsense.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: A legal training, I have been told, tends towards the logical. I can only say that I have never appointed a partisan to the bench.

Mr. Hughes: You took one of your colleagues from the Treasury bench and put him on the Bench to take the 44 hours away from the men!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I did nothing of the sort and I ask that that statement be withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has taken exception to the statement and asks that it be withdrawn.

Mr. Hughes: I said that he had taken one of his supporters from the Treasury bench and placed him on the Bench. I will not withdraw the truth.

Mr. George: You said he appointed a partisan.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is refreshing to have a true statement made and I shall not ask for it to be withdrawn. The hon. member said, however, that I put a partisan on the Bench as judge to take away the 44 hours. That is what I object to.

Mr. Hughes: I said you took a colleague from the Treasury bench and put him on the Arbitration Court.

Mr. George: And you said he was appointed to take away the 44 hours.

Mr. Hughes: Of course.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I appointed a good man to be a judge of the Supreme Court and he was afterwards made President of the Arbitration Court.

Mr. Panton: We will take your word for it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member said that I put a partisan on the Bench to take away the 44-hour week.

Mr. Holman: I will go further than that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the hon. member did not accuse me of putting a man on the Bench to take away the 44-hour week, I do not object to his statement.

Mr. Hughes: But I did.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then I object and ask that the statement be withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must withdraw.

Mr. Hughes: On what ground?

The CHAIRMAN: You must not impute motives, and you did so.

Mr. Hughes: In deference to you, Mr. Chairman, I withdraw the statement.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am sorry to have caused so much trouble.

Mr. Hughes: Then you should not have done it!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I will not ask that that statement be withdrawn; it is not worth it. It is an absolute lie to say that I put anyone on the Bench to take the 44-hour week away from the workers.

Mr. Hughes: I ask that the Leader of the Opposition withdraw the statement that I uttered an absolute lie.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I must withdraw that, and I do so. It is wrong, however, for the Government to lay violent hands upon an Arbitration Court award so recently given.

Mr. Holman: Are you not imputing motives?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, I am discussing an act of the Government. If we are to have an Arbitration Court, then the decisions of that court should prevail. Apart from that, however, the parties to be considered by the court are the employer, the employee and the general public. Now we are told that the court is to register a decision that has been come to by the unions and the Minister. I do not think that the court will register a decision merely at the request of two parties.

Mr. Holman: The court will have to do so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, not if it is against the public interests.

Mr. Holman: The court must do so, but, at any rate, how is it against the public interest?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have endeavoured to show the Committee. I have declared emphatically that there will be less production if the 44-hour week is established and that it will represent a serious loss to the State. If it were to be a question of paying more money or granting fewer hours, I should prefer to agree to the money payments, for it would be better for the State. A better asset would be created, and there would not be the loss of production represented by the decrease of four hours.

Mr. Holman: Why not quote figures relating to production and give us some information on the point?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If less is produced with the advent of the 44-hour week, it will be bad for the State.

The Minister for Lands: I am glad you said, "if."

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I withdraw that word, for I am convinced there will be that loss. Moreover, it is unfair



to provide 44 hours for one section and not give it to the others.

Mr. Holman: Then let us give it to all workers.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I intend to move that Supply be reduced by £5,000 as a protest against the action of the Government in introducing a 44-hour week against the decision of the Arbitration Court. There are some industries where 48 hours are too much, but under our law the Arbitration Court can declare just where those hours shall not apply. The court is the proper tribunal to decide the question of hours. Parliament has decreed that the court shall determine the hours of employment. I protest against the action of the Government in reducing the hours of work to 44 against the award of the court. I move an amendment—

*That the total amount be reduced by £5,000.*

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [5.50]: Permit me first, Mr. Chairman, to offer you my congratulations on your election to the office of Chairman of Committees. I feel sure that you will carry out your duties with fairness and dignity. We recognise that the Government have, in the usual way, come along for Supply, and that it has always been granted by Parliament. Speaking from memory, I cannot recall any attempt to reduce the amount asked for by the Government in the manner that has been proposed to-day. I wish to say that the views of the Country Party with regard to the 44 hours were expressed on the hustings, and are well known. The members of the Country Party stand for a 48 hours week, which is the standard working week throughout Australia.

Mr. Holman: No.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I recognise that seated on the benches opposite are members who have done yeoman service in the direction of assisting the workers to secure the 48-hour week.

Mr. Panton: The 48-hour week was introduced before we were born.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: We on this side think that the Labour Party were wrong in promising on the hustings a week of 44 hours. We think that the working hours approved by the Arbitration Court should not be altered except by the court itself in a regular manner. It is true that the action of the Government in this matter has been bound up with the different policies that were laid before the people at the recent elections.

Mr. Marshall: There was only one policy, so far as we were concerned.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: There were three different policies, and the policy of the Country Party was opposed to the policy of the Labour Government on this point, and so was that of the Leader of the Op-

position. I regret that men of moderation and common sense should have put the 44 hours proposal before the people, and I regret still more that the verdict of the electors endorsed the proposal, although no election is fought on one issue. I admit, and everyone in Western Australia who takes an interest in politics knows, that the Labour Party promised the 44-hour week. Knowing the Premier and his Ministers as I do, I fully expected that something in the nature of what we now have would be introduced by them, no matter how disastrous the consequences might be.

Mr. Holman: Can you tell us one State that has not the 44 hours?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: New South Wales.

Mr. Holman: New South Wales has it.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: No, the Leader of the Opposition did a great service when he put the view of the position before the House to-night, but I regret that he did not take the opportunity of placing the position before the people in the metropolis and the industrial centres five months earlier.

The Premier: How could you expect that?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Leader of the Opposition made an excellent speech to-night, and when I heard it I thought that it was the right stuff for the electors. I could not, however, understand how it was that the member for Northam did not deliver that speech throughout Western Australia when he had the opportunity of doing so five months ago. It would have been welcomed everywhere. We of the Country Party stand for 48 hours.

The Premier: For the farmers?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The farmers work more to-day. I am afraid it will mean now that the farmers will have to work a little harder to make up for the innovation. I recall that when the elections were taking place, there were in the Katanning electorate two members contesting the seat, both of whom stood with the Leader of the Opposition for 48 hours. I repeat it is a matter for regret that the Leader of the Opposition should have wasted his time in that particular electorate and at Toodyay, when, in my opinion, he could have done infinitely better service to the State by addressing the people in the metropolitan area where the present Premier and his confreres were misleading the electors on this issue. The Leader of the Opposition has moved to reduce the amount of Supply. I do not remember that having been done before; certainly not with the approval of the Country Party. We are of opinion that the Government are entitled to a fair deal. Different measures that may be brought forward will be dealt with on their merits, but we do not propose to support the amendment just moved. (Opposition members: Hear, hear.) Every Government, since I have been a member of this House, has been able to get Supply through without factious opposition of this nature.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Last year we had all all night sitting on the Supply Bill.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I do not remember any amendment having been moved to reduce the total. If in the past there has been any such attempt made, I have, after wading through volumes of "Hansard," failed to locate it. We consider that the Government should have Supply, and we intend to oppose the amendment to reduce the total. We do this without prejudice to any action we may take regarding the 44-hour week. We consider that if the Leader of the Opposition wishes to deal with that matter he should do so by a specific motion of condemnation. If he takes that course, we shall then discuss it on its merits. We have no desire to reduce wages; we would rather give more wages for more work. The question of 44 hours should have been brought forward by direct motion rather than by dragging a red herring across the trail of the Supply Bill.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Will you pledge yourself to support such a motion?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: If the Leader of the Opposition will bring forward a motion, we will deal with it on its merits. The desire of the Labour Party evidently is for a 44-hour week for private as well as public industries. We oppose that altogether, and I would like to ask the Premier to tell us how he expects our industries to stand on the 44-hour week basis, and compete with the established industries of the Eastern State, where, in most instances, 48 hours per week are worked.

The Premier: The greater number of industries there work 44 hours.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I support the Supply Bill, and thank the Premier for his promise to submit the Estimates at an early date.

The PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder—in reply) [6.0]: I have no complaint whatever to make regarding the action of the Leader of the Opposition. The hon. gentleman is quite within his rights. The matter to which his amendment refers is one he can certainly bring forward on Supply.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The matter ought to be decided by this Chamber now.

The PREMIER: Yes; and I am quite willing to have it decided by the Chamber now or at any other time.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The present is the proper time.

The PREMIER: I agree that the time is quite opportune, and I have no objection whatever to the taking of a vote as to whether the Chamber endorses the Government's attitude in this matter. The Leader of the Opposition has condemned the Government's attitude root and branch. He stated that the former Opposition, the present Government, made a promise during the general election to grant a 44-hour week.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A Minister said that. I read it.

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman says that the promise was not justified. However, the party now on this side of the Chamber were perfectly frank and open and honest to the electors regarding the matter. In my policy speech at Boulder, and again in Perth, I stated, and in no uncertain terms, that if the Opposition were returned to power they would restore the 44-hour week to that section of Government employees who had been deprived of it only just towards the end of last year. I consider that the time for my friends now in Opposition to have made their complaint and declared their policy was when they were on the hustings. They should have made the 44-hour week an issue at the elections.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was made an issue.

The PREMIER: I followed closely the reports which appeared from day to day, almost daily, in the "West Australian," of speeches made by the Premier. The hon. gentleman was fortunate enough to be accompanied by a newspaper reporter wherever he went, and to be reported every time he spoke; and I do not recall one single instance in which he made a reference to the Labour Party's policy of a 44-hour week. He did not come out and declare to the electors that he and his party were roundly opposed to a 44-hour week. Nor do I recollect such a declaration by any one of his supporters. Neither the member for Perth (Mr. Mann) nor the member for Subiaco (Mr. Richardson) declared to the electors prior to polling day that he was opposed to a 44-hour week. Not on your life! No; there were second preference Labour votes involved in that question. Those two hon. members are courageous enough now on the 44 hours question, having a safe three years ahead of them before they will be called upon to face their electors again. But their courage pozed out at the toes of their boots as regards this particular question when they were before the electors. We, on the other hand, told the electors what we would do, and the electors endorsed our proposal and sent us back here to carry it into effect.

Mr. Latham: You did not tell them you would pay them for 48 hours.

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition says he stands by the workers; but in this matter he is not standing by the workers in the same manner as he stood by them in former years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, I am.

The PREMIER: He says the 44-hour week will increase the cost of living. He pities the housewife, and wonders how she is going to get along and make ends meet with the increased cost of living. Further, he says he objects to the 44-hour week because it applies only to a section of the workers, and not to all the workers. He says it is obviously wrong that the Government should grant a 44-hour week to a section and not to

all. Then he referred to the increased cost of commodities such as boots, which would result from the 44-hour week granted by the Government. I am bound to say the hon. gentleman has not a very good memory. From his statements one would imagine that the recent action of the Government represented the first time in the history of Western Australia that a 44-hour week had been granted voluntarily by a Government.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Oh, no!

The PREMIER: I want to show—and I am sorry to have to show it—that the 44-hour week was first granted in this State, not by a Labour Government, but by the Government of which the Leader of the Opposition was the head.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Following on an award of the Arbitration Court.

The PREMIER: I will deal with that aspect too. The 44-hour week was first introduced in a general way as the result of an award of the Arbitration Court delivered at the end of 1919 and applying to railway employees. The 44-hour week was granted by Mr. Justice Rooth, but it applied only to those workers who were before the Court. An award of the Arbitration Court is binding only upon those who are actually before the Court, who are parties to the application and are represented at the hearing. But what did the present Leader of the Opposition and his Government do? Because the Arbitration Court had awarded a 44-hour week to certain railway employees, principally iron workers in the Midland Junction workshops, the Government of the day freely, of their own volition, granted—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No. It was done under agreement.

The PREMIER: There was absolutely no agreement.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, there was.

The PREMIER: Before I sit down I will prove from correspondence, and from statements made by the responsible Ministers of the time, that it was not done by agreement, and that the Government were not under any obligation whatever to extend the 44-hour week to any section of Government employees other than that to which the award applied. I have here the report of an interview with the former Minister for Works, at which 21 separate unions were represented, apart altogether from the unions concerned in the award—the Australian Workers' Union, the Federated Coachmakers' Union, the painters, the Australian engineers, the carpenters and joiners, the plumbers, the amalgamated engineers, the engine-drivers, the moulders, the boilermakers, and various others. In the course of discussion as to wages and conditions of employment, the 44-hour question arose, and the then Minister for Works, referring to that question, said that while the Government had adopted the 11s. wage, they were not prepared to adopt the 44-hour week. That statement shows that the late Government were quite free when discussing the question with the unions. It is plain, then, that the

Government were not in any way bound to grant a 44-hour week. The late Minister for Works went on to say—

That is absolutely definite. We are keeping to the 48 hours, Thereupon the Minister proceeded to deal with the wages aspect, saying further—

My friend, Mr. Watts, gave me a shock the other week. He served on me a list which was very well drawn up and nicely typed. He wanted a 44-hour week, and nothing else would satisfy him; and in addition he wanted 13s. 4d. for labourers. We could not look at the 44-hour week.

Notwithstanding the declaration that the Government would not look at a 44-hour week, the Government did later on, of their own free will, grant the 44-hour week. That was in 1920, following on the award of the Arbitration Court.

Mr. George: What was the date of that deputation?

The PREMIER: On the 21st January, 1920, the unions went to the Government and asked for the 44-hour week; and here again I want to emphasise the point that the Government were absolutely free.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, they were not.

The PREMIER: Emphatically they were. Everybody who knows anything about arbitration matters and arbitration awards knows that in this particular instance there was no obligation whatever on the Government to grant a 44-hour week except to those employees whom the award covered. The Government could have said to all the other unions, "The 48-hour week is our principle, and we are standing by that, and shall not reduce the hours." The Government were free to do that, but they did not adopt that attitude. Instead, they granted the 44-hour week to the bricklayers, shipwrights, carpenters and joiners, painters, plumbers, docks and harbours and rivers employees, metropolitan water supply employees, goldfields water supply employees, members of the Australian Workers' Union, engine drivers, Boya quarry employees, and others. To all those the late Government in 1920 freely and voluntarily granted the 44-hour week. Here is the letter of the responsible Minister conveying the decision. It is dated the 5th February, 1920, and addressed to Mr. McCallum at the Trades Hall, and is signed by the responsible Minister of the day. The letter reads—

Re the Railway award delivered by Mr. Justice Rooth, President of the Arbitration Court, Perth, on the 15th December, 1919, and its proposed application to the Departments of Public Works and Water Supply. In further reference to the interview you, together with the representatives of the various unions, have had with the Hon. the Premier, and the letters you forwarded to him setting forth the claims of your members, I am directed by the Hon. the Premier to communicate to you the final decision of the Government: (a) The minimum rate of pay for labourers

will be 12s. per day of eight hours, as provided for in the Railway award of December 16th, 1919. (b) The date from which this minimum rate will be paid is August 1st, 1919. (c) The 44-hour week will be adopted and paid for as from January 1st, 1920, instead of from February 1st, 1920, as named in my letter of the 27th January.

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

The PREMIER: I was endeavouring to show that the late Government in 1920 was really responsible for doing something which they now condemn the present Government for having done. In pursuance of that object I was quoting the correspondence that took place between the then Minister for Works and the present Minister for Works, who at the time was secretary of the Trades Hall. Paragraph (c) of that letter sets out that the 44-hour week will be adopted and paid as from the 1st January, 1920, instead of from the 1st February, 1920, as named in his letter of the 27th January. Mark the words that the 44-hour week "will be adopted." If the Government were not entirely free either to grant or withhold the 44-hour week there should be no need to employ those words. If it were an award of a court or any form of compulsion by promise or otherwise, there would be no need to say they would "adopt" it. The Government adopted it freely and voluntarily.

Mr. Latham: But that was after the decision of the Arbitration Court.

The PREMIER: It was after a decision with regard to a particular case affecting the railway employees. But the hon. member must understand that the award of the Arbitration Court with regard to railway employees was not in any way binding upon all those other employees.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was.

The PREMIER: If the Government had been consistent in their support of a 48-hour week they could have said, "We shall have to concede the 44 hours to the railway employees under the provisions of the court's award, but outside of that we stand firmly by our policy of a 48-hour week." They would have replied to all those other unions I have enumerated, 19 or 20 of them, "No, the 48-hour week is our policy. We will not reduce it unless you go to the Arbitration Court and obtain an award to that effect."

Mr. Latham: Possibly the Government gave it, knowing they were sure to lose in view of the previous decision.

The PREMIER: No, the courts frequently give an award for 44 hours in one week and 48 hours in the next week. Only last week the Arbitration Court gave an award of 44 hours for the painters.

Mr. Latham: The railway award included many of those industries.

The PREMIER: I have quoted a long list of those it did not include. As a

matter of fact the 44-hour week that we are told has recently been granted by the present Government applies only to those same unions and sections to which it was granted in 1920. We have not given a 44-hour week outside or to any more unions than those to which the late Government gave it in 1920.

Mr. Mann: Would the Arbitration Court reverse it?

The PREMIER: The previous Government, without reference to the Arbitration Court, decided to grant the 44-hour week. If the late Government, in the exercise of their discretion and the power they possessed, decided to grant the 44-hour week, what is wrong with the present Government doing exactly the same thing? We are told there was an award of the court, but I remind members opposite that it is not an unusual practice at all for employers and employees to vary the terms of an award given by the Arbitration Court. I have known instances of the court having delivered an award and reduced wages, and the reduction has never been given effect to. The employers and employees have met and agreed to continue at the higher rate.

Mr. George: The circumstances are altogether different.

The PREMIER: In what way?

Mr. George: Instead of having a whole lot of cases in the court, we agreed to abide by the Arbitration Court's award.

The PREMIER: Which shows that the hon. member was not sincere in his advocacy of a 48-hour week.

Mr. George: We were quite sincere, but had to decide according to our discretion. You have made a decision before you knew where you were.

The PREMIER: We have known where we were for years past. When members opposite granted the 44-hour week, we endorsed their action, and we stand to-day where we have stood all these years. We have known all along where we were, but the hon. member does not know where he is on the question of hours, because he was in one place from 1920 to 1923 and in 1924 he is standing somewhere else. He stood for a 44-hour week during those three years, but to-day he says it was all wrong and that he stands for a 48-hour week.

Mr. George: We had a surprise packet sprung on us by the Arbitration Court, and you have sprung one on the people.

The PREMIER: There could be no springing anything on the people by us when our attitude and policy were proclaimed from every platform throughout the length and breadth of the State. But the hon. member and his colleagues, in objecting, are springing something on the country, because they did not make it an issue at the elections. They did not come out and say boldly, "If you return this party you shall have a 48-hour week. We are opposed to the 44-hour week." When the hon. member was addressing the electors at the Peel Estate,

those members of the A.W.U., he did not stress his policy of a 48-hour week.

Mr. Mann: You do not think him fool enough to say that and expect to get any votes?

The PREMIER: He got only two votes out of 67 in one place.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He deserved the other 65. They are very sorry now they did not vote for him.

The PREMIER: If they had known the hon. member's principles better they might not have voted against him.

Mr. George: I got very fair support from the old gang.

The PREMIER: But in the gang where the hon. member got only two votes, he slipped a bit. The letter written by the ex-Minister for Works was written pursuant to a decision of Cabinet. I have a copy of the Cabinet minute of the 21st January. It says, "Cabinet decided to adopt the railway award as to pay and hours so far as it does apply to men employed in the Government departments; to date from February 1st, 1920. Signed, James Mitchell."

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We had agreed to it.

The PREMIER: But the hon. member was under no obligation to agree to it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course we were.

The PREMIER: The hon. member freely conceded the 44-hour week.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, no!

Mr. George: There is a report of a whole lot of deputations months before, and an agreement was come to.

The PREMIER: Of course the unions were asking the hon. member to grant a 44-hour week, but the fact that he was asked for it placed him under no obligation to agree to it if he did not wish to.

Mr. Mann: Did not he agree to comply with the court's decision?

The PREMIER: He may have done so.

Mr. Mann: That is the point.

The PREMIER: No. Why should a member who does not believe in a 44-hour week pledge himself to apply a decision of the court to thousands of employees covering a large number of unions to whom the award itself did not apply? Why should he do it? The whole thing is rank inconsistency. Members opposite have forgotten the events of 1920.

Mr. George: We have not forgotten anything.

The PREMIER: They have forgotten and now they want to blame the present Government for doing something for which they themselves were responsible, which they initiated and carried on for a period of three years, namely, from January, 1920, till September, 1923.

Mr. George: The circumstances are altogether different.

The PREMIER: Of course they are! They are different when an Opposition is

trying to make out a case. I have been there myself. With an Opposition desperately hard up for something on which to hang an attack, circumstances, of course, are always different.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Are you going to give it to the lot of them?

The PREMIER: To just those unions the hon. member gave it to.

Mr. Mann: You are drawing the line.

The PREMIER: For the time being at any rate. The motion for Supply covers only those. We have granted the 44-hour week to the same section of Government employees as the late Government granted it to.

Mr. George: And without the same circumstances.

The PREMIER: It is contended that we had no right to do this because there was no award of the court.

Mr. Mann: That is the point.

The PREMIER: It is a very dull point.

The Minister for Lands: You did not say anything about it.

Mr. Mann: I said as much as did the hon. member.

The PREMIER: The member for Perth was careful not to say anything in condemnation of the 44-hours.

Mr. Mann: I answered all the questions.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is very courageous now that the elections are behind him, but he did not stress it on the hustings.

Mr. Mann: I did not evade it.

The PREMIER: That is the insincerity of the whole case put up by the Opposition. A few members may have been honest about it. Although it was proclaimed and published in the Press what our policy was, not one member of the Opposition, so far as I know, and certainly not the Leader of the party or the ex-Minister for Works, ever asked the electors to make an issue of it. They were silent on the Government's policy of a 44-hour week.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: My views are well known.

The PREMIER: The hon. member spoke in a good many places, amongst others under a spreading chestnut tree, and I am sure he was so fully and faithfully reported by the "West Australian" that had he given any expression of his views on this question, it would not have failed to obtain publicity.

Mr. Mann: Are you going to apply it to the rural workers?

The PREMIER: We are going to apply it to some of the hon. member's constituents. That is enough for the moment. An award, we are told, is sacrosanct and must not be interfered with. I have a long list showing awards that have been varied by employers and employees. An

award of the court is not binding upon those concerned if they mutually agree to vary it. There is nothing illegal in departing from an award of the court in that way. The court lays down a minimum wage; it would be a breach for any employer to pay less than the minimum rate. The court lays down the maximum hours; it would be a breach of the award to work anyone above the hours prescribed. But there is nothing to prevent any employer, whether Government or private, from paying a wage in excess of the minimum awarded, or from granting working hours of less than the maximum fixed.

Mr. Latham: But it is not a sound policy for a Government to do that.

The PREMIER: Of course it is.

Mr. Latham: Then you could go on varying the award for ever!

The PREMIER: One of the greatest Arbitration Court judges Australia has known, namely Mr. Justice Higgins, has complained from his place in the court that Governments have not fixed the hours of labour. He said it was a matter of policy that should be decided by Governments, not by the Arbitration Court.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: By Governments or by Parliaments?

The PREMIER: By Governments—and Governments are responsible to Parliament. The hon. member did not always come to Parliament before he acted. Frequently he did things and came to Parliament for their endorsement; because he had the majority behind him. And so the Government in this instance considered they were justified in giving effect to this aspect of their policy. That is all the Government have done. And they have done it openly and in the full light of day. It is inconsistent in our friends to adopt their present attitude. The Arbitration Court does not regulate industry; it merely acts when there is a dispute between employer and employee. There was no dispute in this case. The Government believe in the policy, and there was nothing wrong in the action of the Government in doing what they did. And I say again, it is rather late in the day for the Leader of the Opposition to be concerned about that unfortunate housewife who will have her troubles intensified by the rising prices he predicts. The granting of a 44-hour week now will have no greater effect upon the cost of living than it had when the hon. member granted it. There is in the minds of many hon. members an idea that in granting the 44-hour week we attempted to initiate something entirely new, or something that does not obtain in other parts of the world. As a matter of fact Western Australia to-day is behind, not only every other State of Australia in the matter of working hours, but nearly every other country in the world.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about the engineers all over Australia, with their 48-hour week?

Hon. S. W. Munsie: No, they are working 44 hours in Queensland.

The PREMIER: The 44-hour week applies to fewer trades and occupations in Western Australia to-day than it does in any other State of the Commonwealth or in most countries of the world. And when the acting Leader of the Country Party says that by this action we are going to handicap this State in respect of manufacturers—

Mr. Mann: And the farmers too.

Mr. Hughes: How many hours do you work on your farm?

The PREMIER: The hon. member has a farm, it is true, but he directs it from the Terrace. I venture to say that in this instance the hon. member has a divided allegiance. As a farmer he is concerned about the working hours of farm labourers, while as a metropolitan member of Parliament he is concerned about the working hours of his electors. So he has a divided allegiance.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell interjected.

The PREMIER: I remind the hon. member that by way of interjection he has said more to-night on this subject than he said in six weeks on the hustings. The working hours have been coming down all over the world, and just in so far as attempts have been made to reduce the working week, so have the opponents of that principle in every country of the world attempted to raise that cry. They have said, "The 44-hour week will have the effect of increasing the cost of production, and will hamper every State or country that adopts it and is in competition with other countries in the markets of the world." However, all history shows that those prophecies are false. The leading countries of the world to-day are those that give the best pay and the shortest hours to their people.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The best pay, I agree.

The PREMIER: And the shortest hours as well.

Mr. George: Eight hours a day will not hurt anybody.

The PREMIER: Precisely that argument was used by the opponents of the proposal to shorten the 12-hour day. They said, "Twelve hours a day will not hurt anybody." It was contended that it would not hurt even little children eight years of age who were put into the cotton mills of England.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That was sweating.

The PREMIER: It is all a matter of degree. With the march of science a greater volume of production can be obtained to-day in a 44-hour week than could be obtained 15 years ago by working 12 hours or 14 hours per day. Are we to say that all the industrial improvements, the fruit of man's genius, are to go to the em-

ployer alone, and that the workman is not to receive any benefit from them? Is it all to go in increased profits to employers, and none of it by way of leisure and recreation for the workers? In all the building trades in England and in engineering, ship building, railways and agriculture in South Wales, hours have fallen from 54 and 60, even 65 per week in 1914, to 48 hours per week to-day.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: In some trades 44 hours are being worked in England.

The PREMIER: That is so. The tendency is to reduce hours. During a period of six years in England, hours have been reduced by from 11 per cent. to 33 per cent. I have here the hours of labour: for carpenters in England and Wales, 44 hours; in Ireland, 44 hours; in Scotland, 44 hours; in the United States from 40 hours to 44 hours; in Canada 44 hours for the wood workers; in New Zealand, 44 hours; in South Africa 44 in 22 towns, 45 hours in one town, and 48 hours in 12 towns. That review covers a pretty wide area of the world where 44 hours are being observed. In America—and America, I am sorry to say, has never been amongst the advanced countries in regard to working hours and conditions—at the time of Mr. Justice Higgins' award in 1920, the 44-hour week for boilermakers was observed in 11 of the chief manufacturing cities of the United States. In America, too, the blacksmiths, the machinists, the iron moulders, the sheet metal workers, the structural iron workers, the carpenters, the bricklayers, the plumbers, the painters, the plasterers, the hod carriers, the stone cutters, and the wiremen all had a 44-hour week in 1920.

Mr. Latham: America can better afford to carry it than can we.

The PREMIER: That is a pitiful old cry. "We are at the dead end of things." The hon. member's Government have been in office for the past eight years, and so things here are not very bright, I admit.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think that with reduced hours they get also better pay.

The PREMIER: Of course everybody is better off than are we. Yet the hon. member will be heard at some function to-morrow night or the night after, claiming this as the one great State in the world, a State better than any other State in the Commonwealth. He will say that if and when he goes to give a word of welcome to our migrants. He will tell them they have come to the best country in the world. Yet now he says we are a poor old State and cannot afford to observe decent working conditions. In New Zealand the classes of labour enjoying the 44-hour week are the engine-drivers, the motor men and firemen in gold mines, electrical workers, the building trades, the quarry workers, the clothing trades, freezing works, the furniture trades, the harbour employees, the railway workshop employees and the municipal employees. It is as well that hon. members should be made aware of the fact

that we in this State are not pioneering the 44-hour week, but are trailing a long way behind other countries in this respect. I have mentioned the wood workers in Great Britain and Ireland as having the 44-hour week. Then there are the building trades, the coal miners' quarry men, the printing employees, the transport workers, thread mill employees, the labourers in sawmills, and the workers in the furniture trades. All these occupations in Great Britain embrace millions of men who have had the 44-hour week for some years past. In Canada the same thing obtains. Here are the trades and occupations enjoying the 44-hour week in Canada—

Mr. Mann: Did you not read that before?

The PREMIER: No, I quoted Canada in regard to the wood workers only.

Mr. Latham: The difficulty we have is to prove that all this is not so.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member will but wake up, he will find that in opposing this principle he is one of the political troglodites of the age. Coming to Australia, it is contended apparently that the 44-hour week does not operate in the Eastern States, and that therefore it will handicap us as against those States. Among the industries in Victoria that have the 44-hour week is the boot trade. Seeing that Western Australia draws its chief supply of boots from Victoria, at all events those who are engaged in bootmaking here will not be handicapped in competition with Victoria, where they have had the 44-hour week for many years. The list includes also bricklayers, builders' labourers, carpenters, quarrymen, chaffcutters, cigar trade workers, coaltrimmers, farriers and engravers, headwear makers, knitting machine operators, lime burners, organ builders, painters, photographers, plasterers, plumbers, and sewer workers.

Mr. Mann: From what source do you get those records?

Mr. Panton: From the Trades Hall.

The PREMIER: A little energy and research would enable the hon. member to get them for himself. These are authentic figures, and facts that have been used officially over and over again. The hon. member would not suggest that I have come here with faked figures.

Mr. Latham: Oh, no!

Mr. Mann: I wondered where you had got them.

Mr. Marshall: He has had a lot of experience himself.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: There is no Chinese balance sheet about this.

Mr. Marshall: And no Quong sandalwood.

The PREMIER: When the award was delivered in 1920 in the Railway case, Mr. Justice Rooth said it was a test. He was rather dubious about granting it, but he said he was prepared for the time being to accept the statement of the union representatives that it would not result in any

decreased production, that there would be the same output under the 44-hour week as under the 48-hour week; but he said he was going to give it a trial, and that if it did not result in the manner stated by the union, it would be no use their coming back and asking him to change the hours later on. The award was put into operation at the beginning of 1920. At its expiration the matter came before the Arbitration Court in 1922. The parties were unable to agree as to the wages and working conditions, so the case went to the court for hearing. This time Mr. Justice Draper presided. If the contention of the opponents of the 44-hour week could be supported, there was an opportunity in 1922 of showing the court by evidence that the effect of the 44-hour week had been a reduction in the output, or an increase in the cost of the work performed at the Midland Junction workshops. That should have been an easy matter, because the costs are kept in the workshops very clearly, and the details of every item are available. It would have been an easy matter for the Commissioner of Railways. He asked to have the 44-hour week reversed. If he had been able to make out a case, he had at his disposal all the costs prior to the 44-hour week award, and all the costs of operation from 1920 to 1922, a period of nearly three years. It was only a matter of putting in a statement.

Mr. Hughes: He had it all ready, but was not game to go on with it.

The PREMIER: We must bear in mind that the Judge stated he would not again grant the 44-hour week if it resulted in any increased cost. The Commissioner, however, did not go on with it.

Mr. Mann: He contended it.

Mr. Corboy: But did not attempt to prove it.

The PREMIER: He contended it. The only time he made the contention was in his annual report, six months after the system had been inaugurated. He went to the court in 1922. There was presiding Mr. Justice Draper, who gave the award last September in the case to which this now applies. The Commissioner was unable to convince the judge that the hours ought to be increased. Mr. Justice Draper, therefore, awarded the 44-hour week, just as Mr. Justice Rooth had done in 1920. When we analyse the awards of the Arbitration Court during recent years we find that they bristle with inconsistencies. It is impossible to follow them. That is one of the reasons why our industrialists have become so dissatisfied with the Arbitration Court, and the administration of our industrial laws. They do not know where they stand. There is no degree of consistency in the awards. Mr. Justice Draper in 1922 awarded the railway employees a 44-hour week. In 1923 all those classes of men, to which we are now referring, were awarded by him a 48-hour week. Where is the consistency? The Leader of the Opposition com-

plains that we applied this only to one section. Why did the Arbitration Court judges apply the 48-hour week to one section, and the 44-hour to another. It is the function of the Government to do what they think is fair and right by their employees. Why does the Arbitration Court deal with the matter in this inconsistent manner?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In some industries a 44-hour week is quite enough.

The PREMIER: If the lesser week is to apply to all, it should apply to that section of the industrial army whose work is the most disagreeable. I refer to those who have to go out in all weathers—this applies in this case—to the labourers who are working long hours, and are mainly in casual employment. That is the section that is entitled to consideration equally with those in permanent employment, the latter being comparatively well off as against the others. I am unable to understand the point of view of our Arbitration Court judges, when they can give such inconsistent awards as have been delivered in this country during recent years. If I had time I would quote a few of the opinions of Mr. Justice Higgins when President of the Federal Arbitration Court. I am speaking with some practical personal experience and knowledge of the subject. I am not viewing the question of a 44-hour week from the comfortable surroundings of a luxurious club. I am not referring to members of this Chamber, but to some of the critics of the actions of the Government. I know that some of those men who sit in well-appointed lounges and sitting rooms in the city, work only 25 or 30 hours a week, from 10 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon. They sit back in their comfortable chairs and say how shocking it is that the Government should grant a 44-hour week to the poor devils who are toiling away in all weathers. I am afraid those men have not much consideration for the State, or for humanity. I have not heard of any outcry on behalf of the farmer, for instance, who has to work such long hours, as indicated by the member for York. The men I speak of do not worry about that. They think more of the rainfall, and what it will bring them.

Mr. Latham: They are more concerned about the State.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is not more concerned about the State than I and my colleagues are. I am just as much concerned about it as he is.

Mr. Latham: I am glad of that assurance.

The PREMIER: The Government have not taken any action, and will not take any in the future, that will be harmful to the best interests of the State.

Mr. Latham: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: According to our judgment, of course. I have worked 10 and 12 hours a day, and 8 hours a day, and 44 hours a week. I am working long hours now, but get no overtime. I know from practical experience, notwithstanding what may be said as to the output and the cost of



production, that men will, taking it month in and month out, and year in and year out, produce just as much, and in many cases more, with shorter hours as with longer hours. All the official figures and records go to substantiate that contention. There is a limit to human endurance. A man may stand at a machine or at a job for 10 hours a day, but he has to spend a tremendous amount of energy in doing it. If he has to do this for long hours he must conserve his energy, and he cannot work with the same vigour as if his hours were shorter. The whole trend of the world's history is towards shorter hours.

Mr. Latham: So long as this applies to all workers, it will not matter.

The PREMIER: Then if we grant a 44-hour week all round, that will meet with the hon. member's approval?

Mr. Latham: Let the farmers be included as well.

The PREMIER: We thought we would follow the excellent example set by our predecessors, and apply it for the time being only to that section to which they applied it. Later on we may extend it. The remarks of Mr. Justice Higgins would have been worth quoting. He has given half his life to the question of wages and working hours and conditions, and his views should carry a fair amount of weight. After full and anxious consideration in 1920 that Judge awarded a 44-hour week. Mr. Justice Higgins was hearing an application for a 44-hour week when the Government of the day brought down legislation that had the effect of preventing him from giving an award with regard to hours. It amended the Arbitration Act by stating that anything less than a 48-hour week should only be awarded by a court consisting of three members. Following that they appointed two members of the Court. I do not say they were friends of theirs.

Mr. Panton: They were very old.

The PREMIER: They were very old, and not likely to have to endure any of the hours of labour they were going to prescribe for other people. Our Government have done nothing to regret and nothing illegal or wrong. Everything has been done in the open light of day. That is where the inconsistency of the Opposition comes in. We did nothing more than was done by the Opposition in 1920 and maintained by them for three years. There is, I have no doubt, an idea in the minds of the people that we have initiated something new. I want to dispel that idea. This is not new. We have merely adopted the excellent example of the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) when Minister for Works. We have merely followed in the footsteps of our friends opposite, and I think they are inconsistent in the attitude they are taking up on this occasion.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [8.15]: It is not necessary to say much on this question. When members of the Com-

mittee and the public read the reports of this discussion, I think they will find it has not been altogether unprofitable, if only for the fact that the Premier has been good enough to give certain information to the Assembly, which we accept, as we must do, as authentic. The difference between the attitude of the Mitchell Government and that of the present Government is that we were a democratic Government and the Collier Government is an autocratic one. The Mitchell Government felt that in dealing with matters relating to labour questions, it was only right to allow the Arbitration Court, which was established to deal with such questions, to decide them. The present Government evidently felt that, although that court had been established through the persistency and at the request of members of their party, they were justified in putting the court on one side. I think they are wrong, not only so far as the State is concerned but wrong where the Ministers themselves are concerned. If Ministers are to cope with what I, as Minister for Works, had to deal with in connection with labour matters for several years, they will find themselves in difficulties. In fact, if they go very much further on these lines we will have no trouble in taking up the reins of office again and resuming the functions of government.

The Premier: I do not know why you retired and why you could not have kept on with us as Minister for Works!

Mr. GEORGE: There is a limit to physical endurance, and after a man has passed the 71st milestone, he has to consider himself in these matters. The Mitchell Government had to deal with labour questions, and received constant demands and requests from the various unions which were pressed upon me as Minister for Works. I did whatever I could to deal with the matters because I would rather settle industrial disputes myself. I found, however, that the demands upon my time were such that I could not cope with other work that was of importance to Western Australia. Consequently, we appointed a labour commissioner, Mr. Munt, who had to devote the whole of his time to securing a complete knowledge of modern labour conditions. It was ridiculous to suppose that a Minister of the Crown, however experienced he might be, could keep himself in as complete touch with those conditions as was necessary, because he could not find the time to do so. By the appointment of the labour commissioner, it was possible, when that officer furnished the Government with full details, to deal with matters as they cropped up, in concrete form. The present Government have appointed a Minister for Labour in accordance with their policy. They have done away with the labour commissioner and incorporated him with the staff of the Minister for Labour. Now, apparently, they are acting in a manner that is really superseding the Arbitration Court.

The Premier: You are wrong.

Mr. GEORGE: I am not disputing the fact that the Government are carrying out what they have the power and right to do.

Mr. Corboy: And what we told the people we would do.

Mr. GEORGE: Whether such an action is wise in the interests of the whole of the people, or is in the interests of one section of the community only, is another question.

Mr. Corboy: The people elected us on that policy.

Mr. GEORGE: The people did not return the Government with its present majority on that point at all, but I will not discuss that phase.

The Premier: We won not on our merits but on your weaknesses!

Mr. GEORGE: The Premier is now in a position to act as he has done. The overwhelming responsibility of it all, however, is shown by the fact that one of his colleagues has already felt the weight of the responsibility, and I feel sure that when the Premier proceeds a bit further and finds out how things are going, he, too, will feel the responsibility of it all.

The Minister for Railways: He is finding out a lot of things now.

Mr. GEORGE: It is all very well for members to say that they said this or that during the course of their election speeches, for people say lots of things at election time.

Mr. Corboy: But only a few give effect to what they stated.

Mr. GEORGE: The Premier referred to the action taken by the Mitchell Government on this question. The facts are that a railway case was before the Arbitration Court. Unions representing kindred trades were asking the Government to alter their wages and conditions. We knew that those trades would be dealt with by the Arbitration Court and wages and conditions settled by that tribunal, and a promise was given to a deputation as indicated by the Premier. We promised that we would abide by the railway award, and the unions were satisfied with that undertaking. We said that when the railway award was issued we would apply it to those kindred trades. That award, when issued, was a staggerer. I cannot yet understand how any man with any knowledge whatever of working conditions could ask men doing identical work to get exactly the same pay, although one section was only required to work 44 hours a week, while the other section had to work 48 hours. I cannot understand why men working for the Public Works Department on railway construction should receive different wages, or have different conditions, from those of men engaged on railway construction under the Railway Department. It was always the endeavour of my colleagues and myself to have working conditions made uniform in the same class of work. This was desired in order to avoid confusion and so that men would know what conditions were to apply. For that reason we agreed

to abide by the railway award, and did so. I do not know why we should be reproved for doing so. I regret it has been necessary to raise the question at this stage, because it is somewhat of a new experience to me, even with my long occupancy of a seat in this Chamber. When the Leader of the Opposition brought the question forward, however, it seemed to me that it would be better to discuss it now, rather than to deal with it during the Address-in-reply, because it is a matter of vital importance, not only to the working class, the manufacturers and merchants, but to all industries throughout Western Australia. With a question of this description before us, it is better that it should be discussed when we are dealing with a special item, rather than that it should be smothered up in a debate on general topics such as characterises speeches on the Address-in-reply. The Government have adopted the attitude that because their predecessors in office applied the railway award to other occupations, that gave them justification for what they have recently done regarding the 44-hour week. The point I wish to stress is that we were applied to by the unions with the requests I have indicated and instead of putting them to the expense and trouble of approaching the Arbitration Court, which would have been correspondingly further congested, we told them that we would apply the railway award and thus overcome the difficulty.

The Premier: If the railway award was good enough for you, is it not good enough for us? We have simply applied the railway award.

Mr. GEORGE: The position was different. By agreeing to do so, we prevented the unions from wasting money and time and saved the Government in that respect as well. We avoided the additional congestion of the Arbitration Court, and so forth. Now, however, the Government, instead of getting a direction from the court, or even making an application to the court, have chosen to regard the result of the appeal to the country as justifying them in carrying out their policy regarding the 44-hour week.

Mr. Panton: There was nothing wrong about that.

Mr. GEORGE: If that question had been the sole issue at election time, I would not say anything about it, but it was not the sole issue. It was a side issue that now, by the action of the Government, becomes prominent. The reasons I have advanced in explanation of the Mitchell Government's action are valid, and show that that action was in the interests of the State. I cannot see why the Premier should have endeavoured to camouflage the question as he did. The Premier, however, issued what was perhaps a timely warning and it was not very veiled either. He said that if the opportunity arose he might apply the principle elsewhere. It is as well that the people of Western Australia should know that that is the intention of the Government when the opportunity arises. It is well that

the people who are endeavouring to establish industries should know that the present Government, at any time they choose, without reference to the Arbitration Court, may alter conditions of labour without any regard to what the effect may be on those employing similar labour in private industries. Within the last two or three days we have had an instance of what this policy will mean. When I was Minister for Railways tenders were called for the construction of the Piawanning railway, and Irvine and Rodgers put in a tender and got the job. Instead of having a 48-hour week, however, they now find that they are faced with a 44-hour week. If there were to be a guarantee that as much muck will be shifted and as much work done in the 44 hours as would be done in the 48 hours, it would be all right. This gives an opportunity, however, to ascertain how the Government will deal equitably with a firm placed in this position. They put in a price when certain conditions were prevailing; the Government have altered those conditions and we shall see how the tenderers will be dealt with by the Government.

Mr. Panton: Would not the same conditions apply if the Arbitration Court had made the alteration?

Mr. GEORGE: The risk of the Arbitration Court doing such a thing is not nearly so much to be apprehended as the action the Government has taken. One of the first acts of the present Government was to issue a decree that will materially affect the position regarding railway contracts.

The Honorary Minister (Hon. S. W. Munsie): We took the first opportunity of giving effect to our pledges.

Mr. GEORGE: Other classes of labour will be affected by the action of the Government. Others must necessarily apply these altered conditions to their activities, and it must be remembered that people have to arrange for the supply of articles at a certain price for a certain time. The cutting down of a working week from 48 to 44 hours will make a big difference to them. I am not of the opinion that 44 hours' work will produce the same result as 48 hours' work; I am jolly certain it will not do so.

Mr. Panton: There is a lot of difference now as against when you were working, 40 years ago.

Mr. GEORGE: If there applied to-day the conditions that applied then, I would be the biggest agitator Australia has ever seen. It is all bunkum to suggest that the men will do just as much work in 44 hours as in 48 hours.

The Premier: Then why did you grant them 44 hours?

Mr. GEORGE: They could do it if they would, but they will not. The hon. member never spoke a truer word in his life than when he said the men evened it up. They used to do the same thing in my time. If a man knows he is going to work

for more than eight hours, he feels he must conserve his strength. However, let me give the instance of what happened at the State Implement Works. The engineers, represented by Mr. Barker, had a Federal award imposing 48 hours per week, whereas the other men had a 44-hour week. The engineers said they would not work 48 hours, and so they went on strike. They remained out for some time, but finally they gave in. We had the farce under which the bulk of the men were away from work and the other men had to come in on the Saturday to do work in practically an empty shop—I do not know what they did, because I never went down there to see.

Mr. Panton: You continued the farce.

Mr. Hughes: If you had not continued the farce the strike would have broken down.

Mr. GEORGE: However, there is the difference between the action and policy of the present Government and those of the Mitchell Government. We preferred a tribunal that had at hand all the records, and special officers for giving information; we held that that tribunal could deal with it better than could a Minister who had but part of his time to give to the question in his office. This little interlude of debate to-night will throw a good deal of light upon the subject. The public will have learnt something about it. I have heard from the Premier to-night things that have surprised me. No doubt some good will result from the debate. I do not think the Premier and his colleagues, when they decided upon this 44-hour week, had any idea of seeking justification from what the previous Government may have done. No doubt their defence has turned upon a fortuitous discovery in the files of the department. I hope that in future the Government will be very wary before they take steps that may dislocate industries and interfere with the occupation of men. In effect they are on the one hand inviting outsiders to come here and settle down amongst us, while on the other hand they are throwing obstacles in their way.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [8.35]: I do not know that there is anything to be gained by further pursuing this debate. The Government no doubt will have a good majority, because the acting Leader of the Country Party has intimated his intention of supporting them. In this article that appeared in the Press on the 28th July, there is a paragraph to which very little allusion has been made. It reads as follows—

There will be no reduction of pay. Each worker will receive the same wage under the altered conditions as he does now.

Do the Government intend to pay them for 48 hours and ask them to work only 44 hours?

The Minister for Lands: No, we pay them for 44 hours.

Mr. LATHAM: As far as I can understand, that has never been definitely stated. Am I to understand that the employee is to get the same pay for 44 hours as he was getting for 48 hours?

Hon. S. W. Munsie: The Arbitration Court previously awarded the workers 1s. 2d. extra pay per week for four hours extra work. We say, "You can keep the 1s. 2d., but we will not work you the extra four hours."

Mr. LATHAM: As far as I can interpret it, this means that we are to give the workers a concession of four hours per week and pay them for the four hours.

Mr. Panton: It is a right, not a concession.

Mr. LATHAM: If I reduce my hours by four per week, I am not entitled to any pay for those four hours.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: When was the worker's wage based on his production?

Mr. LATHAM: If you pay a man by the day, and suddenly decide to reduce his hours per week, his pay should be correspondingly reduced.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: When were his wages fixed on that basis?

Mr. LATHAM: Things are becoming very serious. I should like very much to have this 44-hour week, provided it is given to everybody. When I refer to the workers, I do not mean only those represented by members on the Government side of the House. The real workers are the primary producers.

Mr. Panton: Who are they but the workers?

Mr. LATHAM: They are the people who are paying in taxes the revenue that meets the payment to these other men working only 44 hours per week. In addition, the primary producer has to pay a lot of the profit that goes to the manufacturer.

Mr. Panton: You are associating with the representatives of the profiteers.

Mr. LATHAM: The Minister for Lands to-night interjected that his department was almost bankrupt. It makes one wonder whether we can give concessions in one direction when we know that we are handicapped financially in other directions.

The Minister for Lands: I should be well off if only I could get the money due to me.

Mr. LATHAM: The Minister gets a good deal of revenue through the I.A.B.

The Minister for Lands: I have had to borrow £300,000 to pay my interest this year.

Mr. LATHAM: If the Minister had not the I.A.B. he would be getting less revenue than comes to him to-day. Another thing: A Government using one man's money to provide concessions for another man are not doing what is right. If the question raised

to-night has done nothing else, it has drawn from the Government the statement that for the present at least they do not intend to extend this principle of a 44-hour week. I understand the Minister for Works has promised certain employees that in alternate weeks they may work 40 hours and 48 hours. Is there not a great danger that the minimum hours worked in one week will become the maximum? The less one does, the less one wants to do.

The Minister for Lands: But that has been the practice for years past.

Mr. LATHAM: Well it is a very dangerous practice. With the Labour Government in power, those people are going to demand things they would not demand from any other Government.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: They will ask us for them because they know they have no chance of getting them from you.

Mr. LATHAM: According to the Premier to-night, they have got a good deal from past Governments. We have to get money to finance the State, and if we are to give concessions to one section of the community and demand increased taxation from the primary producers—

The Minister for Lands: They have had concessions all along.

Mr. LATHAM: And they have paid for them.

The Minister for Lands: I wish they had.

Mr. LATHAM: The Minister knows they have done so. Of course he has a few bad debts on his books.

The Minister for Lands: I will deal with that later on.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope the Minister will deal with it sympathetically. There is no 44-hour week on the farm.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: And very few 12-bob-a-day men run motor cars either, although a fair number of farmers have them.

Mr. LATHAM: The motor car has become a necessity on the farm.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: It is just as much a necessity for the 12-bob-a-day man, but he cannot get it.

Mr. LATHAM: Not very long ago I had occasion to go along a railway construction work and I saw what some of the men do on such works. Although it was a Sunday afternoon several gangs were working.

Mr. Panton: A wonder they were not playing two-up.

Mr. LATHAM: I inquired why they were working on Sunday, and they told me they were on piece work. They did not find it necessary to work 44 hours a week; they were satisfied to do some work on Sunday afternoon.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: If I had been their boss they would not have been there on Monday morning.

Mr. LATHAM: And possibly if the engineer in charge had seen them they would not have been working that day. That breaks down all the argument to the effect that a 44-hour week is long enough.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Did you inquire how much time they had lost during the week?

Mr. LATHAM: I was living not far away and I know what was happening. We have received a certain amount of value from the discussion in that we have an understanding from the Government that they do not intend to extend the 44-hour concession in view of the state of the finances.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

#### Committee of Ways and Means.

The House having resolved into Committee of ways and means, Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

On motion by the Premier, resolved—

*That towards making good the Supply granted to His Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1925, a sum not exceeding £805,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, £745,000 from the General Loan Fund, £10,500 from the Government Property Sales Fund, £3,000 from the Land Improvement Loan Fund, and £300,000 from the Public Account for the purpose of temporary advances to be made by the Colonial Treasurer.*

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

*Bill introduced, etc.*

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions, Bill introduced, passed through all stages, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

*House adjourned at 8.58 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Wednesday, 30th July, 1924.*

	PAGE
Question: Tramway extensions ...	47
Motion: Committees for the Session ...	47
Bill: Supply, £1,863,500, all stages ...	48

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

#### QUESTION—TRAMWAY EXTENSIONS.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to extend the tramway service from Wellington Street across the Horseshoe bridge? 2, If so, has consideration been

given to the dangerous state of the bridge for the present traffic? 3, Seeing that the Roe Street end of the bridge is the most dangerous crossing in the city, what provision will be made to make the approaches safe enough to carry the extra traffic?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes. 2, Due consideration has been given to the state of the bridge, which is considered safe to carry all tram and vehicular traffic. 3, All provision considered necessary by the department will be made.

#### MOTION—COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

*Eligibility of certain members to sit.*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.37]: I move—

*That Sessional Committees be appointed as follow:*

*Standing Orders—The President, Hon. J. W. Kirwan, Hon. A. Lovekin, Hon. J. Nicholson, and the Colonial Secretary.*

*Library Committee—The President, Hon. A. J. H. Saw, and Hon. H. Stewart.*

*Printing Committee—The President, Hon. A. Lovekin, and Hon. T. Moore.*

*House Committee—The President, Hon. J. Cornell, Hon. E. H. Gray, Hon. J. W. Kirwan, and Hon. G. Potter.*

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [4.38]: I take no exception to the motion as it stands, but there is a phase that has arisen recently in connection with these Committees that requires to be cleared up. It affected me on the last House Committee, I understand it affected Mr. Lovekin on the Standing Orders Committee, and probably it also affected other members. Last session I was a member of the House Committee. In the course of events I went up for re-election. I was successful, and declared a member of this House, and the writ was returned before the time had expired when I would have ceased to be a member had I been beaten. I received a notice to attend a meeting of the House Committee. I attended, but the ex-Speaker, who was Chairman of that Committee, gave me to understand that if I attended the meeting the question would be raised as to my eligibility to sit. That may be a perfectly correct process of reasoning, but it is a phase that, if my recollection serves me, has not previously been encountered. This House should definitely lay down that this is to be the position, or it is not to be. I admit that exceptional circumstances surrounded the situation, inasmuch as for the first time in the history of responsible government in Western Australia the dissolution of the Assembly occurred about the same time as the biennial election for this Chamber. In the ordinary course of events this would not occur again for six years. The situation that confronted me, as well as Mr. Lovekin, can, however, crop