

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew) [3.11]: It is my intention to move that the House adjourn until to-morrow. Before doing so I wish to explain my reasons. Last Friday, realising that there would be very little business to do to-day, and in consequence of an arrangement made with some country members, I decided to notify members generally through the Press that no business would be taken to-day, that we would sit to-morrow. I did this purely for the purpose of meeting the convenience of those in the country who would have had to come down in order to do business extending, perhaps, over a quarter of an hour. I beg to move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until to-morrow.

Question passed.

House adjourned at 3.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 16th November, 1915.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3.0 p.m., and read prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Water Supply: Regulations under the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act, 1914.

By the Attorney General: Balance-sheet and profit and loss account of the State hotels for the year ended 30th June, 1915.

QUESTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE, DISPOSAL OF CROPS.

Mr. FOLEY (for Mr. Heitmann) asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Are the farmers, having accounts with the Industries Assistance Board, to be forced to dispose of their harvest before 31st December, as per circular sent out? 2, What will be the position of those who desire to sell only sufficient to meet their accounts? 3, What is to be the general line of action by the board as to the disposal of the wheat of the farmers owing accounts to the board?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, No. They will have a free hand to sell up to 31st December, 1915. After that date if they have not sold, the Industries Assistance Board may exercise its right to sell if it wishes. 2, Assuming the word "Accounts" means advances made by the Industries Assistance Board, the farmer will be permitted to redeem his securities on payment of his indebtedness to the board supported by consent of his creditors. 3, Farmers will be allowed to deliver their wheat in accordance with the terms of the arrangement laid down by the Federal Government, the details of which are not yet available.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1915-16.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 2nd November; Mr. Holman in the Chair.

Vote—Other Undertakings, £168,044:

Item—Agricultural Implement Works—Foundry, Meter and General Workshops, £6,555.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Will the Minister for Works inform us on what he proposes to expend the £2,000. There is a liability of £4,555 which has to be recouped to Loan Suspense Account. I have a rooted objection to spending an-

other penny on these works at Rocky Bay, and in this I think I can claim the support of the Minister. The works have assumed gigantic proportions; they have been allowed to expand from time to time, and they are now absolutely beyond control. We know they have been, and are to-day, losing money. The object of the Government at the time the works were started was to endeavour to take charge of the whole of the outside engineering works in the State. They were going to manufacture water meters, and accordingly altered the designation of the works. I think they have not started on the water meter racket; if they have I believe it has been such a fiasco that they are giving the work to the various factories which were previously manufacturing them. Not another penny should be spent on these works until the whole place has been cleaned out and put on a proper footing. I hope the Minister will be successful in the task he has undertaken; but I have my doubts.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So that there shall be no doubt in the hon. member's mind in regard to starting meter works, I move an amendment—

That the word "meter" be struck out.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You are not going to build them?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, the word should not appear on the Estimates.

The Premier: It was copied from last year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The £2,000 has already been expended. We had to pay for a hoist, a boiler, and other necessary additions to enable the works to be carried on.

Hon. Frank Wilson: This is the hoist which was lying idle.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was lying idle for a long time, but I do not know that it is idle at present. I am partially in accord with the hon. member, but I do not say we should not spend another penny on the works. I am of opinion that it is necessary to have machinery more especially to manufacture implements.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You will never manufacture agricultural implements there satisfactorily.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I differ from the hon. member.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You will have to alter your methods altogether.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is possible the engineering works might be kept somewhat separate from the implement works. Even at present there are different rates of pay. A week or two ago I visited the works and formed the opinion that extensions have been made in directions where the work should have been curtailed. There are other directions in which money could have been expended to provide necessary machinery and obviate hand work.

Mr. Willmott: Quite right. You have a man hand-planing there.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A large quantity of galvanised iron is used and there were no shears in the place. There were shears in the old harbour workshops but only a part of them could be found at the implement works. If it is desired to cut a strip off a 6ft. sheet of iron, a man and a boy are necessary to push it through 4in. cutters. It is impossible to make the works pay under such conditions. We are curtailing considerably the work carried out at Rocky Bay. Contracts have been entered into and must be fulfilled, but at present we are not tendering for outside work. I have some figures which will show the position, and though they prove to a certain extent a loss in connection with the works, there has not been altogether a loss to the State. Certain works have been carried out at a loss to the revenue, but if proper prices had been charged, the revenue would have received a larger amount from loan. We have been told repeatedly that the Water Supply Department would not give the implement works jobs if the price happened to be a shilling higher than an outside firm offered; they would not give preference in any way. There are some specials being manufactured at £10 15s. a ton against £9 14s. previously, and yet the present price at the implement works is

lower than the outside price. This refers to pipes.

Mr. Willmott: Have you £2,000 worth in stock there?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am dealing with the prices charged.

Hon. Frank Wilson: How do you know you can produce them for £10 15s.?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is the cost price since the new man took charge. He is keeping costs which were never kept previously.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Are you selling at cost price?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Instructions are being issued that the Works are not to make a profit out of what they do for other departments. So long as other departments are paying the actual cost of the works, that is considered quite sufficient for them to pay. There is another pipe which is costing £10 15s. and which previously cost £9 13s. 3d. In fact, in every instance there is a difference in the cost of from 3s. to £1. This shows that the State has been receiving goods at below the actual cost price, and even the prices charged to-day are a shade less than the prices charged outside. I hope that by having the Works placed on a proper basis, we shall be able to make them a payable proposition. Hon. members should not run away with the idea that all the money we have been losing has been lost on implements alone. The loss last year was spread over the total amount recovered for implements altogether; in fact, the total amount paid. It is admitted that the implements are costing too much, and that there is too much hand work. Some of the things are costing a shilling which should be made for a penny.

Mr. Willmott: Are you allowing the present manager to have control of the clerical staff?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The arrangement in that respect is the same as it was before.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I hope the Minister will see that machinery that is turned out is the best that can be turned out for the money. I think he will find

that they are not the most satisfactory implements that are at present on the market. It is important if a good class of implement is to be turned out that more up-to-date plant should be installed.

The Minister for Works: The implements are all being thoroughly tested this year.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I hope the Minister will look into the complaints which have been made and will remove the causes for them. It is very doubtful as to whether the Works will be able to make harvesters satisfactorily for many years to come. We should have men at the Works who understand the business. Messrs. Massey-Harris spent thousands of pounds in sending commissioners round Australia seeking information upon a simple implement like a plough, and to-day they are able to turn out a satisfactory article. I hope the Minister will be careful to give good value for the money paid by the farmer. It is not sufficient to get an article at a low price if that article is inferior. I venture to think that when the harvest is reached this season there will be many complaints about the machinery which has been sent out from the Implement Works. If these complaints continue and the loss to the State goes on—

The Minister for Works: There will be a loss next year.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then the Minister must expect to have a warm time of it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have placed the Works in charge of a man with a high reputation as a Government officer, and I do not want the responsibility for the present position at the Works to be laid at his door, because he is not responsible for it. We are selling machines to-day at a price which was fixed some time ago and fulfilling orders which were taken some time ago. When the costs were taken out we found that the machines were costing more money than they were being sold for. When we discovered this we immediately stopped taking any further orders at the price. We

were, of course, obliged to go on with the orders which had been accepted.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What are Government losing on their harvesters?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I could hardly be expected to give the hon. member the information here. It is sufficient to say that we are losing too much. Material has gone up considerably, and the fact that we have to buy in Australia has increased the cost.

Amendment put and passed.

Item—State Steamers, £145,000.

Mr. ROBINSON: I have already addressed the House on this subject, during the general debate on the Loan Estimates. On that occasion I gave my views as to the law of the land relating to the expenditure of loan moneys, the expenditure of moneys generally, and the necessary authorisation which should be given before the moneys were expended. The main section of the Audit Act, to which I will draw the attention of the Committee is Section 58, which says that it shall not be lawful for the Treasurer to expend any moneys standing to the credit of general loan funds, except under the authority of an Act. In answer to my argument, the Premier said, "Look at Section 60." The answer to that is perfectly simple. Section 60 is merely a machinery section. After this House has voted or authorised certain moneys the Governor's powers follow as a matter of course. For any one to stand up in the House and say that the Governor has power on the advice of his Ministers by warrant to sign away the finances of the country without the authority of Parliament seems to me to be extraordinary. According to the law no money belonging to this country can be spent, and no money can be borrowed, without the authority of Parliament. Once that authority is obtained, the machinery section follows, and on the advice of his Ministers the Governor may sign his various warrants.

The Premier: What do you propose to do with your colleagues?

Mr. ROBINSON: I am dealing with State steamers. If it becomes necessary to deal with my colleagues, I will do so in

the same fashion. The law of the land must be respected. To show the utter disregard by the present Government for the law of the land, I would remind the Committee that on the 5th August last on the Address-in-Reply I took exception to what was a common rumour about town, that the Government were thinking of purchasing another steamer. In answer to me the Premier said that the Government had gone beyond the stage of thinking about the purchase. I then made another remark as to the Government being unable to spend this money without the authority of Parliament, and the Honorary Minister made use of these words, "The business will be done in the usual way."

Hon. R. H. Underwood: So it has been.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Their usual way.

Mr. ROBINSON: If the Honorary Minister voices the opinion that the business has been done in the usual way, then the sooner the Government are taught what the laws of the land are, the better will it be for this country. In criticising the State steamers, I am not making any attack on the policy of the Government *qua* State steamers. The remarks I have to make are solely directed to the policy of the Government in spending money without the authority of Parliament. If a Government bring down an ordinary motion for a State purchase, they are perfectly justified in spending the money. But I will not tolerate, and I ask hon. members on both sides not to tolerate, one or two members of the Government defying the law of the land and becoming, as it were, dictators. On the 30th July last a cablegram was despatched by the Government to the Agent General, and in this connection I will ask hon. members to bear in mind the date when the Premier told me that he had done more than think of purchasing the Diesel ship—the 5th August. He had, in fact, then purchased the ship; but he was not manly enough to stand up in his place on that day and say, "I have bought the ship." He merely said, "I have done more than think about it." I understand

the ship is paid for and has been taken possession of by the Government. On the 30th July the following cablegram was sent to the Agent General by the Premier:—

Referring to your cablegram of the 29th. Please arrange for offer of ship to be kept open till the night of the 4th August this year.

There had been a previous offer, and this cablegram was a request to keep the offer open. During this period Parliament was sitting.

The Premier: Do you know of a single instance in Australia generally or Western Australia in particular where, while Parliament was sitting, a Loan Bill has been brought down for the purposes of one act only of the Government?

Hon. Frank Wilson: Yes.

Mr. ROBINSON: I am not concerned with that at all. On the 2nd August we find another member of the Ministry coming into the business, the Colonial Secretary, who goes through the files and correspondence, reviews the whole position, advises that the ship be purchased, and states various terms on which it might be obtained. On the same day, the 2nd August, the matter comes before Cabinet, and there is a Cabinet minute—

Cabinet approves of the Hon. Minister's recommendation. (Initialled) J.S.

On the 3rd August the following cablegram to the Agent General was prepared, setting out the recommendation of the Colonial Secretary—

Diesel ship. Have decided purchase subject to finances being arranged on one of the following bases. Acceptance of 4 per cent. inscribed stock at par or at a discount equal to 4½ per cent. on nominal value of stock, or can you arrange purchase as suggested by Biles by insurance company advancing money on issue of inscribed stock, term 20 years as suggested above. Stock to be issued to insurance company to be redeemed by a 7½s. per cent. sinking fund in form of an endowment policy. Suggest you obtain sinking fund trustees to this special sinking fund. Arrange matters in conjunction Biles.

Satisfy yourself that price is bedrock. When this arranged satisfactorily, instruct Biles take over ship if he is absolutely satisfied after trials. Purchase should provide usual guarantee period and builders provide guarantee ship staff. Regarding charter think Bethell's offer low considering extremely economical type ship. Voyage should be via Cape and ship must leave with full capacity bunker oil. If no chance increase charter rate, accept same for loading at approximate date fixed by Biles.

The point of the cablegram affecting me is that the Government had decided on the purchase subject to one of the schemes of payment being adopted. The message was approved by Cabinet on the same day, and was accordingly despatched. Here we have on the 3rd August absolute authority given by the Government to the Agent General to close the deal.

The Premier: No.

Mr. ROBINSON: I say yes, because the first cablegram which I read asked that the offer of the Diesel engine ship be kept open until the night of the 4th August, and this later cablegram therefore authorised the Agent General to close the deal subject to his being able to finance it in one of the three ways mentioned. If the Agent General had been pressed on the subject, he must have said to the Diesel people, "Very well, we buy." There is not a word on the file showing when the Agent General purchased. He may have purchased on the 4th August, or not until later. I see by the file that the finances were not arranged until a later period, with which point I will deal presently. I draw the inference, the proper inference, that when the offer was extended to the night of the 4th August and the Agent General was instructed on the 3rd August to purchase, he had a right to do so.

The Premier: What bearing has this on the legal aspect?

Mr. ROBINSON: From page 23 of the file I learn that the view that the Government were already committed to the purchase is borne out by the fact that a

further cablegram was despatched at the instance of the Colonial Secretary, as follows:—

Information available here suggests that the "Lalandia" is single screw. Is so, is Biles quite satisfied in view of the practice to give these ships twin screws? If any doubt, do not close without further instructions.

This message shows conclusively that the men who sent it knew the Government had given the Agent General authority to close. On the 10th August a cablegram came back from the Agent General to say that the ship was a twin screw steamer; therefore that point was disposed of. Then followed cablegrams on the 8th, 10th, and 19th August dealing with the question of finance. They show that it was not until the 19th August that the definite step was taken to absolutely complete the proposal. My next point is that although during the whole of this time Parliament was sitting not one word in connection with the purchase was broached to this Chamber. No suggestion was made here as to how the ship should be paid for. I find on the file a memorandum from the Under Treasurer, who recognises the same point. The memorandum reads—

If you approve of the proposal and our recommendation, it will be necessary to provide in the new Loan Authorisation Bill an item for the purchase of this and other vessels, and for you to fix, under the General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act, a special sinking fund

That is, the Under Treasurer saw that it was essential a fresh Loan Bill should be brought in to provide fresh stock. Now, what was done? What was done is set out in a minute of the Executive Council dated the 1st September. The minute, after mentioning the names of the gentlemen present, reads—

In the matter of the "Loan Act, 1915" (5 George, No. 58), authorising the raising of a sum of £2,850,000; and "The General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act, 1910." It is submitted for

the approval of His Excellency the Governor in Executive Council: (1) That out of the sum of £2,850,000 authorised to be raised by "The Loan Act, 1915," the sum of £175,000 be raised by the issue in London of Western Australia Government Inscribed Stock (3) That the said stock shall be made redeemable for £140,000 on the first day of September, 1935.

The remainder of the minute shows how the details are to be carried out. The point is that the Governor was advised by this minute in Executive Council that he should out of the sum of £2,850,000 already provided in the Loan Act of 1915 take a sum of £175,000 and operate that on the London market for the purpose of raising the funds required to buy this ship. The next step is a minute from the Colonial Treasurer himself, for the Executive Council, advising His Excellency to issue an Order in Council for £175,000 to be raised under the Loan Act of 1915. That was in due course approved by His Excellency in Council, and the Order in Council was in due course sent forward to the Agent General as an order for the raising of that sum of £175,000. Let us look at the Loan Act of 1915. The Premier proposed to finance this transaction not out of a new loan, or a new authority, but out of the old loan.

The Premier: Does it say so?

Mr. ROBINSON: Yes, it uses the very words. This particular Statute is an Act to authorise the raising of a sum of £2,850,000 and was assented to in March of this year. Attached to that Statute is a schedule of works numbered 1 to 30, and it comprises Administration, Railways and Tramways, Harbours and Rivers, Water Supply and Sewerage, Development of Goldfields and Mineral Resources, Development of Agriculture, Sundries, and other State undertakings, but not a word about State steamers. I want to read to the Committee Section 2 of this Act which states—

It shall be lawful for the Governor, from time to time, to raise by way of

loan such several sums of money not exceeding in the whole the sum of two millions eight hundred and fifty thousand pounds, as may be required for the several works and purposes mentioned in the first schedule to this Act.

The Governor had no power to issue any sums of money other than for the items in that schedule, and State steamers is not one of those items. Section 3 says—

All sums by this Act authorised to be raised shall be paid to the Colonial Treasurer, and shall be by him placed to the credit of an account to be called the General Loan Fund, and shall be applied by the Colonial Treasurer to the purposes set forth in this Act, in such amounts and manner as the Governor by any warrants under his hand may from time to time authorise and direct, in conformity with the Annual Estimates of the expenditure of loan moneys sanctioned by Parliament.

There, too, the Governor is not given a free hand. He must comply with Section 2 and any items outside those numbered 1 to 30 must require special authority. Section 5 sets out—

The Governor may from time to time, by warrant under his hand, authorise the Colonial Treasurer to advance and apply to the purposes set forth in the first schedule of this Act, any sums of money not exceeding in the whole the sum hereby authorised to be raised; and any sums of money so advanced and paid shall be retained by the Colonial Treasurer out of any moneys coming to his hands under the authority of this Act.

This clearly shows the Governor's power, and that which he is authorised by his responsible advisers to do must be within this Statute and not outside it. Schedules 2 and 3 of the Act have for their object the changing of the purport of the previous Loan Act, and the reallocating of money for certain other works. The second schedule sets out the works that were in the old Act and the third schedule shows how the reappropriation is to be distributed. The Statute, therefore, recognised the principle I am talking about,

that no expenditure can be made without the authority of Parliament. But no Appropriation Bill, nor a Loan Bill, has been brought before the House. The money in question has actually been issued under a warrant of the Governor, the bonds have been issued, they have been passed in to the insurance company, and the sum of £140,000 in cash has been raised and paid to the Diesel people, and the ship, I understand, is now on its way to Western Australia. Every bit of that has been done without warrant or authority. I can conceive of no party of free men representing the free labour movement of Western Australia who will tolerate a thing like that. If members opposite are prepared to allow their leaders to do things of that description, then all hope for Labour is gone forever.

The Premier: Gone forever, what a blooming sell!

Mr. ROBINSON: Proof of my argument is found in the Premier's flippant interjection. All he can give in the form of an answer is the refrain of a music hall song. That is his only reply to a serious argument. But I would prefer to have flippancy rather than his poisoned arrows, although we know he does not throw poisoned arrows unless he is first shot at. I hope the music hall ditty will satisfy the members of the Labour party. I claim to be one of the biggest democrats in this country and I declare that it does not satisfy me. If the Country party, or the Liberal party, had done any of the things I have been talking about in connection with these steamships, the country would have been made to ring from one end to the other with our wrongs.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You are speaking as an opponent of State steamers.

Mr. ROBINSON: I am not doing anything of the kind. I prefaced my remarks with the statement that the Government have a majority in this House as against the other party, and if it wants to purchase State steamers it can do so.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: It has done so and will probably do so again.

Mr. ROBINSON: No doubt, unless their wings are clipped. But if the slightest knowledge of this action of the Premier's had leaked out, the Supreme Court of this State, or the High Court of Australia, would have been appealed to to restrain him from taking the illegal action.

The Premier: Who would do it?

Mr. ROBINSON: The High Court of Australia.

The Premier: That is only a lawyer's assertion.

Mr. ROBINSON: Oh no. If the Premier will only give me an idea when he intends to do it again, I will show him that it is not a lawyer's assertion but that it is the knowledge of every man, woman and child in Western Australia, and that it is going home to the hearts of his own party and going home to every Labour man in the State, that the leaders they have chosen have feet of clay.

Mr. James Gardiner: You have been on fairly good ground up till now, but you are getting into deep water.

Mr. ROBINSON: I am glad to know that I have had the support of the member for Irwin up till now. No member should discuss on this item the question of State steamers generally. If the Government choose to buy them, they can do so.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: You want to hush it up.

Mr. ROBINSON: I do not, and if the Honorary Minister wants a fight, I am an Irishman and I will give him one every day in the week. This question is not as to whether it is good or bad to have State steamers. We have to assume, for the purpose of my argument, that it is a good thing to have State steamers. Assuming it is, and that we want to buy them, how are we going to do it? Statutes provide how that is to be done, but the Premier has ignored the Statutes of the country, and, worse than that, he has ignored this House and I stand here to voice a protest. Therefore, there is nothing for it but to cut out the item from the Estimates.

The Premier: Whether the circumstances warrant it or not, do you say we should not move without first consulting Parliament?

Mr. ROBINSON: I have not said that.

The Premier: Well, what have you said?

Mr. ROBINSON: It will all be in print to-morrow morning and I will send the Premier a copy of my remarks. The law must not be departed from and before loan moneys can be handled, the consent of Parliament must first be obtained. I am not saying anything about the negotiations for the ship. The Premier, in quoting a musical hall ditty, forgot the real issue. The purchase of the ship was practically completed on the 4th or 5th of August, when the House was sitting. On the 5th August I challenged him on the subject and he had then the opportunity of saying, "I have bought the ship and I am going to bring in a Loan Bill to authorise the payment of a couple of hundred thousand pounds for its purchase." He could then have submitted it to Parliament and carried it through this House without a division.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: And it would have been chucked out in the Upper House.

Mr. ROBINSON: It would have been carried. The Premier has resorted to subterfuge. He takes money voted under another Act and appropriates it, without authority, for the payment of a new steamer. He gave wrong advice to the Governor, who should not have signed the warrant. But as the boat has been bought and paid for, and the bonds have been issued, there is nothing for it but to move in the direction of striking out the item. I move an amendment—

The item be struck out.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I have a few words to say about what I consider a most unusual and, in my opinion, illegal purchase.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: You are well versed in the "usualities" of Parliament.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I intend to confine my criticism to the purchase of this particular steamer with the view of eliciting some information about it. We will start with Mr. Stevens.

The Premier: You made a definite statement; you said this was a most unusual and illegal course. I want to know how you arrive at that?

Mr. WILLMOTT: If it is not, I am very sorry for Western Australia and we are wasting our time coming here to Parliament. We will admit that Mr. Stevens was intensely anxious to purchase this steamer; but the question arises, has he had the necessary special training to warrant him giving advice on the purchase of a Diesel-engined boat?

The Premier: Do not attack the official; attack the Government.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I am asking for information. Has Mr. Stevens the necessary technical knowledge? Mr. John Denney was Sir John Biles's agent, and therefore it was his duty to see that Sir John Biles's interests were well looked after at this end. Admitting that Sir John Biles stands at the head of his profession as high authority on naval architecture, I have yet to learn that he is an authority on tramp steamers, Diesel-engined vessels.

Mr. George: He first condemned this boat, and, three or four days afterwards, advised them to buy it.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: That is absolutely a deliberately incorrect statement.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Sir John Biles will receive a big fee for having reported on this boat, and I shall be glad to hear from the Minister the amount of that fee.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: I thought you would get to something crook.

Mr. WILLMOTT: There is nothing crook about it.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: Dirt, and dirt only.

Mr. WILLMOTT: If the hon. member thinks that is dirt, he must have a most filthy mind.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: From whom will he get the fee?

Mr. WILLMOTT: From either the purchasers or the sellers of the boat. I want to know which.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: Go on, weigh out some more muck.

Mr. WILLMOTT: We find that Sir John Biles was the first to move in this matter, and that he recommended the boat to the Government. We also find that the East Asiatic Company at one time had a big interest in this boat. They are an important shipping firm, thoroughly honourable, and I can find nothing against them. They have given the greatest impetus to the propulsion of vessels by Diesel engines. In 1914—it must not be forgotten that war broke out in that year—they had five vessels running with Diesel engines, four others under construction in Copenhagen, and four or five under construction by Harland and Wolff. Also, they had arranged to take the steam engines out of certain of their vessels and put in Diesel engines. Why? They said they required Diesel engines in their boats where the trade was suitable for oil fuel, where a plentiful and cheap supply of oil could be obtained. On the other hand, for certain of their trade routes they are building steamers, because on those routes coal is comparatively cheap and oil comparatively dear. The competitive prices of the two fuels constitute the most important factor in deciding on coal as against oil fuel. I think it will be found that Mr. Stevens was in error when he said that this boat was built in Belfast. I think she was built on the Clyde. The engineers connected with the "Lalandia" have had considerable experience in designing, constructing, and working marine engines. Their types are considered to be equal to any and better than most. Then we come to Diesel engines. Are Diesel engines to be recommended for cargo-carrying boats? No doubt they have come to stay, but they have yet to be proved. Most certainly they have not yet been perfected.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: I say they have.

Mr. WILLMOTT: They have not yet proved themselves. It is worthy of note that in 1913 no fewer than 3,890 vessels were built, of which only 20 were Diesel-engined boats. It would seem that not all shipowners are rushing in for Diesel-engined boats. These boats must not be confused with oil fuel vessels.

The Premier: What is the difference?

Mr. George: One is an internal combustion vessel, while on the other oil fuel is used to generate steam.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Again, was the purchase of this steamer too much rushed, and had the interests of the State been safeguarded? First of all, what trials did she undergo? Did she undergo a sea trial?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Yes, before ever she was built.

Mr. WILLMOTT: If so, for how many hours? What was the consumption of fuel, and what speed did she attain?

Mr. O'Loughlen: And was there a liquor bar on board?

Mr. WILLMOTT: If so, and if the hon. member had been there, he would have been hanging round it all the time. The price asked for the vessel was 25 per cent. too high.

The Premier: It might be in normal times.

Mr. WILLMOTT: In abnormal times, it is 25 per cent. too high. The member for Perth asked, whether it was a fact that the vessel draws 23ft. 4½in., and he said that she would not go within half a mile of the Geraldton jetty. Then the Minister for Lands interjected, "Will she draw 23ft. if loaded or not? Suppose she is only half loaded, what will she draw?" If she were only half loaded, what would her stability be? Would she be safe in a rough sea and beam wind? If a Minister of the Crown tells me this wonderful ship can be taken into Geraldton half loaded, at half cock, I say she will go off at half cock, she will turn turtle, and Ministers will find their money at the bottom of the sea. Ministers should be thoroughly *au fait* with shipping contracts, seeing that they have purchased some particularly smart and wonderful vessels. It is well known that ship-build-

ing contracts are of a very stringent character.

Mr. Heilmann: You had better stick to jarrah.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I never knew a better man for sticking than the member for Geraldton. Shipping contracts generally include provision for failure to deliver to an agreed date, failure in speed of vessel, lack of stability under various conditions of loading, failure to carry quantity of cargo or specified draft of water, too heavy a consumption of fuel, some defect in hull or machinery, failure to pay instalments. It would be interesting to find out the real grounds on which the East Asiatic Co. was not allowed to take possession of this boat.

The Premier: Ask your correspondent to write direct to the Minister and he will give the information.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I have no correspondent. The insurance company, through whom the financing of the "Kangaroo" was arranged, will not accept the boat as security. The Government have to put up £50,000 worth of bonds beyond the value of the boat, showing that insurance companies and shipowners have not the faith in Diesel engine vessels which the Government seem to have. Mr. Stevens, the great authority regarding the purchase of this vessel, said—

With such a ship, the question of whether wheat in bulk can be taken from Australia to England successfully could be settled definitely, and to this Government and Western Australia will fall the credit of leading Australia in this most distinctly progressive move.

If the "Kangaroo" is a success then well and good; if she is not, we shall have been experimenting light-heartedly to the tune of £100,000. Can this State afford to experiment in this way? I, for one, think it cannot.

The Minister for Lands: Where do you get the £100,000?

Mr. WILLMOTT: It will cost that by the time the Government have paid Sir John Biles and so on. This purchase should never have been made without the

consent of Parliament having been obtained.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Of experts like yourself.

Mr. WILLMOTT: No, I criticise to obtain information; the hon. member lays down the law without having the knowledge. I care not which party occupy the Treasury bench.

Mr. Thomas: Yes, you do.

Mr. WILLMOTT: While I am in this Chamber I will do my best to take any Government to task for any action of this kind.

The Premier: I have heard that said here many a time.

Mr. WILLMOTT: It is a pity the Premier did not take heed of it.

The Premier: We have done the right thing.

Mr. WILLMOTT: When questions were asked regarding this steamer, why did not the Premier make a statement? The reason for observing secrecy has been given by the Honorary Minister who said the Government were afraid the Upper House would not agree to the purchase.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: And I will say it again.

The Premier: It is not correct; we put the papers on the Table.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Honorary Minister made that statement this afternoon.

The Premier: He did not.

Mr. WILLMOTT: He did, and the reason for this course of action on the part of the Government was to flout Parliament.

The Premier: We placed the papers on the Table before the purchase was completed.

Mr. George: You had no right to buy the steamer.

Mr. WILLMOTT: This House was not taken into the Premier's confidence in the matter, and if he expects to be lauded and applauded by the Country party for actions of this kind, he is making a big mistake.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: We are not a great deal worried about the Country party and, after listening to the able marine speech of the hon. member, I feel less worried

than ever. I do not intend to go into the constitutional point further than to say I am convinced we have acted well within the Constitution in connection with the purchase of this ship. The hon. member said we could have passed a Bill in this House. That might be so, but the chances are that it would not have been passed by another place. Talking about the Constitution, our opponents have always been unconstitutional in that they have used another place to defeat the intention of the Constitution. The intention of the Constitution is that this House, being representative of the people, shall control the finances of the State, and during the last four years the Upper House have deliberately flouted the intention of the Constitution. Yet the hon. member says we should put up with the poisonous gas fired into us year after year and still stick to the intention of the Constitution. We have acted well within the letter of the Constitution. The hon. member said these ships can run only when oil is cheap.

Mr. Willmott: They can run anywhere if you like to pay the piper.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: This ship is intended to run to Wyndham for frozen meat when the works are finished, and that is the dearest coast in the world for coal. On that point the purchase is a good one.

Mr. Willmott: I understand she is going to run with wheat.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: Yes, and then she will be running past oil tanks. The hon. member quoted from a publication entitled *Steam Engine* to prove that the Diesel engine is no good. I might as well quote the Country party as authorities on politics. The idea of the *Steam Engine* being quoted against an engine which is going to defeat it!

Mr. Willmott: That has yet to be proved.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: When the offer of this ship was received, what position were we in?

Hon. Frank Wilson: A rotten one.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: The shipping companies are controlled

by the Baltic Exchange, as has been pointed out and not denied, and were raising freights against everybody. The owners of ships are making huge profits out of the disasters of other people. We were told by the member for Irwin that the shipping ring is controlled by the Baltic Exchange. What is the Baltic Exchange? It is composed, I will guarantee, considerably of Germans. I will undertake to say it is composed of men who have no god but money, and no country but the world where they can rob others. These are the people who are putting up freights against our settlers. The freights, which were 40s. before the war, have risen to 90s. with 20 per cent. on. That was 20 per cent. on 40s., and it means a great difference to pay 20 per cent. on 90s. There has been no justification for raising freights to this extent. The wages are practically the same, the price of coal is the same, the wharfage, light and other material dues are practically the same and there is little extra insurance. Yet they have raised freights by 150 per cent. We knew that the Baltic Exchange were raising freights against our settlers who had to get their produce to the markets of the world. The legal luminary from Canning raised a constitutional point. A legal luminary has been well described as a light charge brigade, and this light charge brigade necessarily want to get in and obtain a bit of charge from the Baltic Exchange. It is said that Nero fiddled while Rome burned; and the member for Canning asks us to consider constitutional points while our wheat and wool growers are being strangled by a foreign combination and we must not interfere; we must sit down and encourage them and feed them like sucking doves. The hon. member says we should have consulted Parliament before purchasing this ship. He knows perfectly well, having read the file, that it was not possible to take that course. The offer made to us was subject to there being no publication of a sale until the purchase was completed. We were put into the position that we had to come to a decision, and had either to buy the ship or refuse the offer.

Mr. Willmott: The East Asiatic Company must have had half or three-quarters of it.

The Premier: They could not take the ship.

Mr. George: Surely it appears on the file that the purchase of the ship was not recommended.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: The hon. member is wrong, if not deliberately so.

Mr. George: The Honorary Minister might be civil.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: After listening for some three weeks to the weary, dreary monotone, like that of the blowfly, of the hon. member, we are asked to be civil to him.

Mr. George: You are paid for it.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: The money is not worth it. We were in the position that we could not consult Parliament, and either had to accept or reject the offer. No man in the world has been successful if he has always waited for approval of his actions before acting. There was a deal before this country once before in regard to the purchase of the Midland railway. Had the Government made that purchase without coming to Parliament it would have been worth a million pounds to this country. The Government, however, did bring the purchase before Parliament, and with a mean and miserable desire to get into office men on the Opposition side of the House combined with a few on the Ministerial side of the House defeated the proposal. To-day, members on the opposite side of the House are trying to do the same, and from a mean and miserable point of view to put the Government out merely for the sake of getting into power themselves. No matter whether the deal is a good or a bad one they are prepared to take any means possible to turn the Government out.

Mr. George: And the Government take any means possible to keep office.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: There was no question of putting the proposal to purchase this steamer before Parliament. We were not allowed to do so under the terms of the

offer. I contend that we had ample grounds for accepting the offer in view of the unreasonable rise in freights which had taken place, and of the fact that our squatters in the north and our wheat growers in the south had wool and wheat to send away and were likely to be strangled by the Baltic Shipping Exchange. Had the opportunity presented itself of buying ten ships, and had these ten ships been bought, members would not have had the same faults to find. Anyone who can bring ships to Australia to-day is conferring a benefit upon Australia. We want ships at the present time to carry the produce away, and particularly that of the primary producers, from Australia.

Mr. James Gardiner: What is the capacity of this vessel?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: Her capacity dead weight is 6,700 tons. If we could procure 10 ships of this size we would not have to worry about getting our wheat away. There is one proposition which members can discuss. Did we take reasonable precautions in purchasing that vessel? We had to satisfy ourselves that she was a good ship, that she was profitable, and, most important of all, that we did not spend money upon this boat which might be wanted for other important work in the country. With regard to the quality of the ship, much has been said by the member for Nelson (Mr. Willmott). He tells us that the Diesel engine ship has not yet been proved, and that we should have an enormous number of things in our contracts.

Mr. Willmott: Things that are always in any contract.

The Minister for Works: This was not a contract at all.

Mr. Willmott: How was she proved?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: She was proved by trial. We bought the vessel subject to a satisfactory trial. If the trial proved unsatisfactory there was to be no purchase.

Mr. Willmott: Were the usual trials given?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: In this case we relied upon our agent, Sir John

Biles. The *West Australian* recently published an article from a paper called *Fair Play*, reputed to be a very good paper. The Hon. W. Kingsmill quoted the same article. It had reference to the Flour Ship Company. This company was operating with two-cycle Diesel ships and they did not prove successful. The article which was quoted was published in the *West Australian* on 1st July, and yet *Fair Play* on 19th August published the following article—

The motor ship makes slow progress, but it is catching on fairly well, considering the conservatism of owners and the very keen competition of turbines, reciprocating engines and transmitting gears. The largest vessel of the type yet built in this country is under construction in the Belfast yard of Messrs. Harland and Wolff. Not only is she the largest, but she will also be the first (not counting two little West African coasters) owned by Messrs. Elder, Dempster and Co. She is to be named "Montezuma," and will be 435 feet in length, and of 5,500 tons gross. Her propelling machinery will be supplied, as a matter of course, by the Burmeister and Wain Oil Engine Company, of Glasgow—a concern in which Lord Pirrie is largely interested. It will consist of two six-cylinder, four-cycle engines, with diameter and stroke of 670 mm. and 1,000 mm. respectively; running at 110 revolutions per minute, and giving a total of 3,600 h.p. at normal speed.

Messrs. Elder, Dempster & Co. are the registered owners of 98 steamers. Many of them are 10,000-ton boats. Yet we find they are going in for Diesel engine ships.

It is a tribute to the confidence of her owners in the machinery and in the contracting firms that they are beginning in this line with the largest British-built vessel. That their confidence will be justified may be taken for granted quite safely. Messrs. Harland and Wolff have had considerable experience at Glasgow in the way

of building such vessels, and no firm has more knowledge or experience of oil-engine manufacture than the Burmeister and Wain Company—an offshoot of the famous Copenhagen firm. So there will be considerable interest among builders, engineers, and owners in the addition to the Elder Dempster fleet of the "Montezuma."

We find also from the *Shipbuilding and Shipping Record* the following:—

The first motor ship for the Nordstjernan Company, the "Suecia," was built in 1912, and at the same time this firm took an option for building five more motor ships should the results with the "Suecia" be satisfactory. All these ships have now been built and, moreover, the owners have now ordered four more motor ships.

The member for Nelson says we are experimenting. If we are, we are following a pretty good lead. Again, the *Daily Shipping Index of Australasia—Weekly Summary*, contains the following article, headed "The British Motor Ship at last," "The 'Hermes' coming"—

The approaching visit to Australia of the British motor ship "Hermes" must be looked forward to with interest. We here in Australia know the class of vessel well, as visits have been made by the East Asiatic Company's "Annam" and "Siam," of similar type, but of foreign ownership, so the "Hermes" will be really nothing new to us in one way, but the gratifying feature is, that the vessel is under the "red ensign." This clearly indicates that, despite the trouble accruing from the war, the British owner has not lost sight of the advantages the motor ship holds out, as we feared might be the case when the subject was last dealt with in our columns, and that he is determined to keep pace with all competitors as of yore. If the advantages are so great as are claimed for this class of vessel, and it is our impression they are, Great Britain could not afford to be behindhand in their use, for economically run craft means, very naturally,

lower freights, and when this war is over the vessel most profitable to run will be the one to secure business, and if the motor ship was entirely a foreign proposition, it is obvious that the regular steamer costing more in every way to run, might suffer, and only secure what business the cheaper vessel could not take up, which would be a most regrettable event indeed. Through the war, Great Britain and her Allies have had to withdraw much attention and concentration of thought from less important subjects in many cases, but amongst the subjects are some that assuredly will be of vital interest later on, and amongst that category is shipping affairs. This cannot be obviated, of course, but it is satisfactory to note that the shipping interests are not being entirely overlooked, for after all our shipping is of very vital interest to the nation as a whole, and neglect of it would certainly leave us in a bad position when only business conflicts hold sway again.

These are the opinions of a standard publication. The builders of the ship, Harland & Wolff, are perhaps the best known and most respected firm of British ship builders. They do not build in the ordinary way, turning out a boat at a given price. They ascertain the dimensions of the ship required and then say to those requiring her, "We will turn you out a ship on those lines and will charge you the cost of material and labour and a certain percentage for construction." Whatever that cost may amount to, those who order the ship have to pay. The Danish company had ordered this particular ship, and it was known that the British Government had decided that no British owned or British built ship was to be allowed to pass into the possession of any foreign power, whether neutral or enemy. Therefore, the Danish company could not obtain the ship. Sir John Biles bought the contract which the Danish company had, and he paid for it what the Danish company would have paid for it. The cost would be greater than

under ordinary circumstances, because of the rise in the cost of material and of labour since the outbreak of the war. That, however, is the only increase.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What did Sir John Biles pay for her?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: One hundred and forty thousand pounds.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No, he did not.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: I should have said that Sir John Biles got the contract. He did not pay anything for it, because the contract could not be fulfilled. So much for the contract. The engines of the ship were built by the firm concerning whom I have been reading to the Committee. Sneers and innuendoes have been thrown out regarding Sir John Biles, "What did he get? He is going to get a commission. What did he pay for the ship? Don't know. There must be something crooked." In all seriousness, if Sir John Biles is crooked, then the whole of the commerce and business of the British Empire is crooked. If we cannot depend on a man of Sir John Biles's reputation, then British trade and commerce are rotten to the core.

Mr. Willmott: Who said that concerning Sir John Biles?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: The hon. member interjecting said so.

Mr. Willmott (in explanation): I deny the statement of the Honorary Minister that I said anything derogatory of Sir John Biles. I would not think of doing so. Sir John Biles is a man of the highest standing.

The CHAIRMAN: The Honorary Minister must accept the hon. member's denial.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: I accept the denial of the member for Nelson, and am sorry. The Government acted on the advice of a man who can be trusted. In connection with ordinary steamers, there is at the present day great difficulty in securing firemen.

Mr. Willmott: That is got over by the oil fuel.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: Yes, and that is why the Government

are getting this Diesel ship. Further, this ship, with her tanks full, can travel once and a half round the world. The "Western Australia," a first class boat for short runs, took practically a full load of coal to carry her from here to Carnarvon and back—5,000 tons. Apart from the question of bulk of coal as against bulk of oil, there is the consideration that this steamer will not require the services of lumpers, but will have her fuel fed to her from a tank. Obviously, her running cost will be very much less than that of a coal-driven ship. It can be guaranteed that these Diesel ships are coming to stay. It will not be many years before coal-fired steamers are abolished. As regards freight for the ship, it is necessary that when the Wyndham Freezing Works have been constructed we should have a ship to carry away the product; and, as is shown by the file, we made sure that this ship can easily be turned into a freezing ship. Even apart from frozen meat, ships with freezing chambers are absolutely necessary for the fruitgrowers of Western Australia, whose space in ships now trading is taken from them by the great fruit interests in the Eastern States. Here we have a ship which can carry a large quantity of fruit. Further, our farmers and squatters want their wheat and wool carried. Should we consider the Baltic shipping exchange and be tender to that wonderful combination? Should we consider whether the Baltic shipping exchange will lose a shilling or two in freight, or whether our farmers will save a penny or two per bushel on their wheat? As regards financing the purchase, it was necessary in these times, when we cannot get all the money we require for developmental purposes, to avoid obtaining funds for the purchase through the ordinary channels. To deflect £140,000 from general developmental work for the purchase of this ship would have been against the interests of people out-back needing railway facilities, and also of people near at hand needing harbour facilities. We saw that we could raise

the money in such a way as not to involve our obtaining a pound less in the ordinary way.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: But you borrowed the money in that way only after the ship had been bought.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD: I have said infinitely more than the member for Nelson has asked for. However, allowance must be made for that hon. member's desire to air his nautical knowledge. I do not think the hon. member really represents the Country party in this matter.

Mr. GEORGE: The Honorary Minister, with that crudeness which distinguishes him, always denies what is not palatable to himself. During his speech, I asked him how it was that this boat was not spoken well of by Sir John Biles only a few days before the Government purchased her, and the Honorary Minister said I was wrong.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: I say again, you are wrong.

Mr. GEORGE: I asked the Honorary Minister to refer to the file, and he said that the file contains nothing of the sort. I ask hon. members to listen to the following from page 3 of the file—

Nothing more occurred until the 29th June, when Mr. Denny received the following cable from his principal: Mr. Denny is the agent here for Sir John Biles, who is Mr. Denny's principal in London.

"Your cable of the 24th received. Full instructions received. Price Diesel Triumph ship about £140,000; modifications extra. Advise you inform Stevens of possibility of buying Diesel ship, but do not recommend it."

Hon. R. H. Underwood: Not for the North-West trade.

Mr. GEORGE: The Honorary Minister interjects "not for the North-West trade," and yet the bulk of his argument, or of his tirade of ignorance and abuse, was that she was required for the Wyndham Freezing Works.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: That is not the North-West trade.

Mr. GEORGE: What ridiculous nonsense it is for the Honorary Minister to talk about purchasing in August last a ship for the transport of the product of the Wyndham Freezing Works, when he knows, and knew, perfectly well that those works would not be finished until probably the season of 1917.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: We had the wool and wheat meantime.

Mr. GEORGE: Where could be the necessity to purchase this boat for the freezing works? On this same file which has been laid on the table of the House by Ministers, Mr. Stevens has written to his Minister that he agrees with Sir John Biles for the reason that the ship we want for the North-West coast is quite a different type from the tramp style of low speed, and if the tramp ship were purchased and altered to take mails and passengers and chilled meat, a great blunder would be made. That was Mr. Stevens' opinion. What is the use of calling this House a deliberative Assembly? What is the use of attempting to make out that it is a House of argument when we get a Minister with brains, sharpened up by contact with his other colleagues, coming here and deceiving the House in the way he has done this afternoon? The file also shows that a cable was sent by Mr. Denny to Sir John Biles that Mr. Stevens had turned down the Diesel vessel. I am not going further than that. I have proved what I have stated out of the file as to whether the Diesel engines are suitable. I say distinctly that it has not yet been proved that they are thoroughly reliable. It has been proved that some of the Diesel engined steamers, for instance, one called the "Annam," has made one or two voyages around the world satisfactorily. Another has made a trip from South America to Sweden and back satisfactorily. but we also know there are vessels of this type which have not proved satisfactory. I believe, however, it is only a question of time when these internal combustion engines will be found to be absolutely reliable for the purposes of maritime traffic, but at the present time

it has not been satisfactorily determined that they are reliable. It is exactly the same with motor cars; when motor engines were first introduced they were a source of trouble and annoyance, but to-day they are almost thoroughly reliable and as easy to work as one could wish. I think that oil engines will even take the place of our steam locomotives, but I do not think they have yet reached that stage when they can be thoroughly relied upon. My objection to the matter is that the Government have not been as frank in connection with it as they might have been. Some courtesy was expected from the Government, and a certain amount of decency as well, but I think they have failed in regard to both those points. The leader of the Opposition asked questions in regard to these vessels, but answers which were evasive were given.

The Minister for Works: No.

Mr. GEORGE: At any rate the answers were not as frank as they might have been. My object is to protest against the Government entering upon this maritime traffic. They have no warrant for it. They have had no experience, and they are going in for it just as blindly as they started on the freezing contract. There is no necessity for these steamers. We know that many enemy vessels have been driven off the sea and that consequently freights have gone up in just the same way as wages go up when there is a big demand for skilled labour and the supply is only limited. It is idle for the Premier to imagine that the Government are going to interfere with the regular laws which govern all these matters of freight. There is a right way and there is a wrong way of doing things, and the Government have certainly gone about this in the wrong way. It would have been quite right for the Government to have found that £10,000 or £15,000 necessary to enable the freezing works to go on so as to provide meat for Great Britain, but this business of buying ships which are not suitable is quite another matter. The purchase of this steamer is only an

excuse to enable the Government to embark on freight carrying between this State and the Old Country. The Government are desirous of entering on the oversea trade and they have taken any excuse to justify themselves in the purchase of this steamer. I think they have done wrong. I am satisfied that the trouble they had last week will make them more cautious in the future. We have had a lot of flapdoodle spoken by the Honorary Minister on this question this afternoon, but I hope that the Government will get well dropped over this ship. My opinion is that we shall find instead of calling this vessel the "Kangaroo" we shall have to give it its proper name, the "Kookaburra."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would not have said anything on this question but for the remarks of the last speaker who referred to what he called "flapdoodle" spoken by the Honorary Minister. If any flapdoodle has been talked it certainly has come from the member for Murray-Wellington. The hon. member spoke of misrepresentation, but if there has been any, he has seen it with his eyes wide open. The hon. member referred to a cable sent by Sir John Biles. I gave him credit for having read the file and he must be aware of the fact that the reference on that file was to another steamer altogether.

Mr. George: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is a well-known fact that for a considerable time before the purchase of this steamer the Government had under consideration the question of constructing a new vessel for the North-West trade. Mr. Drew, the Colonial Secretary, made a statement to the Press to the effect that instructions had been issued for the preparation of plans and specifications with a view to building a steamer suitable for the North-West trade. That news was scattered broadcast and it was published too before the opening of Parliament. We have been told that the vessel was ordered in a secret manner, but everybody must have seen the announcement which was made in the Press by Mr. Drew. The questions were asked of Mr.

Drew in Parliament some time later. Then I repeated Mr. Drew's remarks at a social which I attended. The cable from Sir John Biles dealing with the ship which he thought would not be suitable referred to the one that he was asked to prepare plans and specifications for. He did not advise the Government to purchase the "Kangaroo" for the North-West trade—that is clear enough on the files. We know well that it would be useless to have a tramp steamer engaged on the North-West trade. For that particular trade we require a specially constructed vessel, one which is suitable for the conveyance of passengers and for the carriage of live stock and cargo as well as frozen meat, and such a vessel must also be of light draught to enable it to enter the various ports. It is very clear, therefore, that the cables to which the hon. member has referred have nothing to do with the steamer about which he has spoken. When making inquiries in regard to that other ship, Sir John Biles drew our attention to this one which we have since purchased, explaining that he had her under offer and that it had to be kept a secret. Here again the hon. member tried to misrepresent the position. He said it was ridiculous for the Government to think of purchasing the steamer for the Wyndham meat works, because it would be 1917 before the works were ready to supply chilled meat. But it is clearly shown on the files that in the meantime the steamer could be used to take our produce to other parts of the world, and that the freights thus obtained would serve to reduce her capital cost; then, when the meat works were ready, the steamer could be insulated for the carrying of chilled meat from Wyndham to oversea markets, and from Wyndham to Fremantle. If the hon. member read the files he must have known that this was the intention of the Government. As for the question of the suitability of the steamer for the trade, we have been advised by Sir John Biles, and in these circumstances it is almost presumption for any hon. member to express an opinion as to the suitability of the vessel. It is ridiculous to say that Sir John Biles,

a man able to advise the British Government in regard to naval architecture, knows nothing at all about a tramp steamer. Surely so high an authority would be competent to express an opinion on a tramp steamer or indeed any other steamer. I think we are justly entitled to rely on the judgment of a man like Sir John Biles, whose high reputation is at stake when he advises any Government as to the purchase of a steamer. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) declared "The Honorary Minister came here and deceived the House." I maintain that what the Honorary Minister said as to the action of the Government in this connection was perfectly correct; the steamer was not purchased until the Government felt that they were justified in making the purchase. The hon. member went on to say that some degree of courtesy and of decency should be shown when a member asks a question. I do not know where we are going to learn courtesy or decency if decency or courtesy are not shown by Ministers in replying to questions. I am confident that more courtesy and decency have been shown by this Government in this regard than by any other Government of which I have had knowledge. Of course one cannot hope to supply an answer that will satisfy every hon. member.

Mr. Thomson: But for reply we get "No. 1, No. No. 2, see answer to No. 1."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What more do you want, if the answer is correct? Every answer given by this Government to a question has been correct.

Mr. Thomson: It has been very evasive. Why should we not have some explanation?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Surely no more than "yes" or "no" is required, so long as it is correct. The addition of an explanation frequently serves to render the answer evasive. A direct "yes" or "no" is better than an evasive explanation. As for the question by the leader of the Opposition, on various occasions during the session the leader of the Opposition has endeavoured

to show that the Premier answered his question incorrectly, indeed, misled him. But any hon. member who takes into consideration the date of the question, the information given in the Press at the time and (the announcement by the Colonial Secretary, can come to no other conclusion than that the answer given by the Premier was correct in every detail. The steamer under consideration at the present time is not the vessel the hon. member asked about.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do not beat the air.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is not beating the air, it is the truth. How can the hon. member say that an attempt was made to mislead him?

Hon. Frank Wilson: You know that it was.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There was no attempt to mislead; the truth was given to the House.

Mr. Allen: The country does not believe it, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This steamer will be beneficial to Western Australia. When the works have been constructed at Wyndham, the steamer will have a tendency to release the Government from the clutches of the shipping combine.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: One ship for the overseas trade!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: One ship will have that tendency. If, without having one steamer suitable for the carriage of chilled or frozen meat from Wyndham, the Government erected meat works there in opposition to the meat trust, the shipping combine would come in to assist the meat ring, and between them they would have the Government in the hollow of their hand. They realise that while the State Government have even one ship suitable for the carrying of meat, if they attempt to squeeze the Government too hard there is the possibility of the Government securing further ships, until the full requirements of the trade are met. We have put in this first shot to avoid trouble in the future. Every endeavour will be made to cripple the

Government meat works at Wyndham, we shall have to fight both the meat ring and the shipping combine, and it behoves us to take every precaution for the provision of shipping facilities. I maintain that in the purchase of the "Kangaroo", the Government have acted wisely.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But not legally.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, and legally too. But I will not go into that question, seeing that the member for Canning (Mr. Robinson) has dealt fully with it.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But he has condemned you.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course, he would condemn us whether we were right or wrong. With his legal ability he can twist an Act any way he requires, and we do not get from him that true legal opinion which, probably, he would give to a client seeking his advice.

Mr. Thomson: You infer that he is wrong?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, and I know it is so. As I say, the purchase of the steamer will be beneficial to the State. With the erection of the meat works, we must provide shipping facilities, for I am confident that for many years to come it will be almost impossible to secure suitable charters for the carrying of meat from the North-West. If we failed to provide those shipping facilities we would be squeezed by the meat trust and the shipping ring to such an extent that it would be almost impossible to maintain the meat works; and the losers would be our own people developing the pastoral areas in the North-West.

Mr. Gilchrist: Will the steamer be used between Wyndham and Fremantle, or between Wyndham and the Old Country?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It will depend on the requirements. There must be other vessels, in addition to this one.

Mr. George: How many others?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That will depend on the prospects. No others have been purchased as yet, but we realise

that we will require more. Three or four years ago the consumption in the metropolitan area was 600 bullocks a week. To-day it is, perhaps, 800 or 900 a week. The requirements of the metropolitan area are increasing almost daily.

Mr. George: This boat should meet the annual output.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But time is required for the boat to come and go. The purchase of this steamer will assist in the development of the North-West. It was necessary to put the member for Murray-Wellington right. If he reads the files, he will find that his statements were wrong.

Mr. George: I find they are absolutely confirmed.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I intend to vote for the amendment to strike the item out. It is not a question of being in favour of or opposed to State steamships. This is not the time to consider that question. We are protesting against the purchase of a certain Diesel engine ship. I support the amendment because I consider the purchase quite illegal and certainly unconstitutional. It was made without the consent of Parliament when the consent of Parliament could have been easily obtained. If one can read common sense into the answers of the Premier to the leader of the Opposition on the 3rd August regarding this matter, the Premier, to put it mildly, was anything but candid. It might be said the questions referred to a steamer to be built, but is not that taking a very fine point when he knew the leader of the Opposition desired certain information? The Premier's answers were not courteous to the House. It has been frequently stated that the unfortunate purchase of the "Western Australia" was made on the recommendation of the Agent General. We are told that the purchase of the "Kangaroo" was made on the recommendation of the Agent General.

The Premier: No.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It has been stated, and it is not correct. According to his cable, he was not asked to make any recommendation, or if he was

he did not make a favourable recommendation.

The Premier: He was never asked for one.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: If the Agent General is not loaded with the responsibility for the purchase of this ship, an attempt is being made by the manager of the State steamship service to saddle him with that responsibility. On page 16 of the file under date 29th July, Mr. Stevens, writing to the Colonial Secretary, said—

On the 27th the following cable was also sent to the Agent General, "Confidential inquire Diesel ship considering purchase but would like to know how it is that such a favourable commercial ship becomes available for sale to us considering state shipping market. Reply promptly please and get Biles hold offer open pending our decision.

No particulars were given in the cable to the Agent General as to the price or the capacity of the ship. The reply stated—

Confidential referring to your cable dated 27th July, as result inquiries made, advise early Diesel steamers not very satisfactory but later built proved satisfactory in every way.

The Agent General was speaking in a general way.

The Premier: You do not think we were fools enough to take that as Sir Newton Moore's personal advice; it was advice someone had given him.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: But when he advises the Government, he accepts the responsibility of cabling the opinions to the Government.

The Premier: That is not the reason why the boat was available to us. We discovered it afterwards.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Agent General replied in a general way that the early Diesel steamers were not satisfactory but lately they were quite satisfactory. He did not say one word in regard to the capacity, draft or suitability to climatic conditions of the "Kangaroo." On these two cables the mana-

ger of the State steamship service wrote to the Colonial Secretary thus—

I submit now that the latter cable should satisfy the Government that the ship offered is in every way satisfactory, and the Government is justified in accepting Sir John Biles's recommendation of her.

There is not a single word in the Agent General's cable that he believed or disbelieved the report and information he received regarding the ship.

The Premier: What point are you making?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: That the manager of the State steamship service is trying to saddle the Agent General with recommending the purchase of this steamer.

The Premier: No.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Mr. Stevens wrote—

I submit now that the latter cable should satisfy the Government that the ship is in every way satisfactory.

The Premier: You cannot convince any of my supporters on that.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: No.

Mr. George: We cannot convince them on anything.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: In Mr. Stevens's report to the Colonial Secretary, a very special reason is put forth why the ship should be purchased, but if it proves anything it is that there was no evidence on which the ship should be purchased. Yet Mr. Stevens built his case on that cable from the Agent General. I am glad to hear that the Government do not attach any responsibility to the Agent General in connection with the purchase of this ship because it would be very unfair. I am reminded of a certain cable sent to Sir Newton Moore in regard to the sale of the "Western Australia." According to the report of the select committee on the Wyndham freezing works, the Agent General was cabled to get an offer for the "Western Australia."

The Minister for Works: What has that to do with this boat?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: A lot. Mr. Stevens went to Watson Bros., the agents of McCaul and Co. who were to sell the "Western Australia," and informed them that a cable had been sent to the Agent General, and Watson Bros. cabled their principals in London thus—

A message has been sent to Moore. Will call upon you. Authorities here anxious he cables Premier accept the proposal.

What an extraordinary position in which to place the Agent General.

The Minister for Works: Do you say Mr. Stevens went there and told them to send that cable?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The evidence shows that Mr. Stevens went there in connection with getting rid of the "Western Australia" in order that the "Kangaroo" might be bought.

The Minister for Works: That has nothing to do with the purchase of the Diesel ship.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It has, Mr. Stevens rang Watson Bros. up to let their principals know that a cable had been sent to the Agent General to try and sell the "Western Australia."

The Minister for Works: It had nothing to do with the purchase of the "Kangaroo."

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It had. After a telephone conversation with Mr. Stevens, Watson Bros. sent a cable to their principals to sell the steamer and to let them understand the Government were anxious he should recommend the sale of this ship. If this is the way the Government get recommendations from the Agent General and then saddle him with the responsibility, it is extremely unfair.

The Minister for Works: I agree with you.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Agent General has had nothing to do with the purchase of the "Kangaroo." I would not like my old friend to be saddled with the responsibility which is not his, as some have saddled him with the responsibility for buying the "Western Australia."

The Minister for Works: It is you who turned dog on your mate.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not think much of Ministers who turn dog on their Agent General and put on him the responsibility for buying the "Western Australia" when he had nothing to do with it.

The Minister for Works: He did have to do with it.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Probably to the extent of forwarding information upon the subject when he was told the Government wanted the ship. The Minister for Works took to task the member for Murray-Wellington for having misquoted the file. I venture to say that anyone looking through the file will be a very clever person if at a mere glance he can detect the fact that there are two steamers being spoken of. No fair-minded person would accuse an hon. member of intentionally misquoting the file when that hon. member stated that only one steamer was dealt with on the file. I have since looked carefully through the file and find that there is reference to another North-West steamer.

The Minister for Works: The hon. member read it out to the Committee.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: A minute appears on the file, written to Cabinet by the Colonial Secretary on the 2nd August. Cabinet approved of the purchase on that date, the day before the question I have referred to was answered in Parliament. The minute reads—

In view of the report of Sir John Biles, the fame of the builders, and the strong case put up by the Acting Manager of the State Steamship Service, I think we should buy this ship, provided that the purchase can be financed in such a way as would not drain our financial resources at a period like this when it is necessary to conserve our public funds. It would be unwise in my opinion to go on with the Wyndham meat works unless provision be made to bring produce down, for without a suitable ship we could not operate the works after their completion.

That is a very plain statement. The Minister for Works said there were two steamers in question. That is admitted, but is he fair in stating that the member

for Murray-Wellington or any other member intentionally misquoted the file?

The Minister for Works: He did not misquote; he only misrepresented.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Colonial Secretary talks about bringing the produce down. That means, of course, from Wyndham to Fremantle. I accept the Minister's statement that the want of recommendation alluded to by the member for Murray-Wellington refers to another steamer. I am going to vote against the item because—

The Premier: Out of pure cussedness.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Anything is pure cussedness that does not suit the Premier. I will vote against it because I am not justified in doing anything else. The purchase is an illegal and unconstitutional one. It is unconstitutional, in my opinion, for the reason that when invited by the leader of the Opposition to take Parliament into his confidence the Premier was not only not candid in his answers to questions on the subject but, to say the least of it, misleading.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I propose to confine the few remarks I have to make to the principle of this transaction. If ever there were grounds for a no-confidence motion in this House and I had the choosing of them I would choose these grounds, the grounds of the purchase of this steamer. The leader of the Opposition, however, and some of his party, chose other grounds. We saw them more from the standard of high principles down to the amendment which suggested something ignoble, or a desire to get on the Treasury benches at any cost. Just as sore as they felt on the question of the Nevanas contract so sore do I feel about the purchase of this steamer.

Mr. George interjected.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I do not always follow the hon. member in his quiet interjections. I would, however, remind him that the proverb says that it is a wiser thing to be praised by other people than to be praised with one's own lips. Granting that there was a necessity for that urgency which the Honorary Minister (Hon. R. H. Underwood) advanced,

and granting that the Government were getting a bargain, anyone who is in touch with the purchase of steamships at the present juncture or has been in touch with them during the war knows that the price of steamers has gone up to a fabulous amount. Indeed, talking with one of the directors of one of the largest concerns in Western Australia only about three weeks ago, I was told by him that he knew of a boat which was sold just before the war for £65,000, and had been resold since for £165,000. I am granting that. I am granting, too, that the purchase is not illegal, as laid down by the member for Canning. There are funds provided which apparently my hon. friend has no knowledge of. I, therefore, warned him that he was treading on questionable ground. Granting all this, this fact stands out, namely, that Parliament was sitting at the time. Granting as well that the Government had to observe certain forms—I do not want to use the word “secrecy”—of not letting the public know what was stipulated in the contract, if the Government desired to show any sincerity in this House I think the Premier could easily have come round to both the leader of the Opposition and to me as the then leader of the Country party in the matter. Here would have been two men who are known to have borne a great deal of hard criticism for giving promises and for keeping them. I claim for both myself and my fellow members of the Midlands that when we gave a promise we always redeemed it. Here was an opportunity for the Premier of the State to have availed himself of, and to have consulted those people who would religiously have kept his confidence, just as they would have kept, may I say, that of their most secret sin. If he had done this they would have forgotten many of the other things which the Government have done, and would have said that they thought this was a wise purchase, or an unwise purchase. If they had thought it was a wise purchase, when it came before the House they would have risen and defended it with the Government. There would have

been a wonderful amount of force in such an arrangement.

The Premier: Suppose you said on the other hand that you considered the purchase would be unwise, being led by your party views on the question of State steamships, what would you then have expected me to do?

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I might not have said it was an unwise purchase. If the Premier is going to arrogate to himself the right of controlling the purse of this State and to say that whenever he thinks it is right to complete a transaction he will do so, he will be taking a very much bigger risk than if he consulted first with other people.

The Premier: That is not the position.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: That is the position as I view it. I am willing at all times to consider what is best and what is most expedient for this State outside of keeping within the four corners of the constitution. I realise that in an emergency Ministers are given a reserve power. I have not much sympathy with the people who claim on the one hand that the Government of the country must be carried out in a business-like way, and then on the other hand if the Government do treat the matter in a business-like manner and fail, they condemn them for it. If we are going to have business men at the head of affairs, these business men every now and again in the interests of the State are going to take advantage of a bargain just the same as we do in our own business, or they are not fit to be members of the Ministry. I have no sympathy for the piffle I hear talked about business and the business knowledge of this House. I say emphatically that we promised to give this Government every help. On what ground? Largely on the ground of gratitude, so far as I am concerned. I cannot forget that the interests of those men who have sat in this corner of the House have received practically every consideration that could possibly be given to them by this Government, and I have not yet learned to bite the hand that offers me bread, even if it does not give me butter on the bread

when I want it. Behind many of the things I have done and said there is a recognition of the fact that in our extremity such measures were adopted by the Government as have been for the benefit of the State. I confess, however, that I have a feeling of resentment that in these circumstances some, at least, of the members of the House were not consulted before this purchase was completed when Parliament was actually sitting. Now, what am I asked to do? I am asked to strike out this item. I do not wilfully make myself ridiculous. Would it not be ridiculous to strike out an item the money concerned in which we know has been spent? At the same time I enter my protest against a transaction such as this with every power I possess. I care not which side of the House takes such a course. When Parliament is sitting I want to see the rights of Parliament respected, and there is no way in which the rights of Parliament, especially in the Lower House, can be more respected than in connection with the control of the public purse. To strike out an item which I know has been paid does not appeal at all to my sense of fitness.

The PREMIER: I am surprised at the attitude of the leader of the Opposition. According to common knowledge, this is a subject upon which that hon. gentleman and some of the members of the Opposition proposed to launch a vote of want of confidence in the Government.

Hon. Frank Wilson: From whom did you get that information?

The PREMIER: From one of the cave.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You are making an incorrect statement.

Mr. George: The Premier is only fishing.

The PREMIER: The subject is so important, anyhow, that the Opposition have been making preparations in regard to it for some time. The member for Canning obtained information on this matter from me a month or six weeks ago.

Mr. Robinson: Not a word, as the Premier well knows, relating to this subject matter. That referred to quite another subject. I am astonished that the

Premier should make such a statement, because it is not true.

The PREMIER: The hon. member might contain himself. The question has been regarded by our friends opposite as most important. I am prepared to admit that, as the member for Irwin has said, it is one which, from the Opposition point of view, might fairly form the basis of a want of confidence motion against the Government. That being so, the leader of the Opposition is not showing fair consideration either to myself as head of the Government or to the Committee in neglecting the opportunity of making his case, so as to enable me to reply.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You can reply to me. You can speak as often as you like.

The PREMIER: The leader of the Opposition wants me to lay my cards on the table, so that he can choose those which suit him and discard the others.

Mr. George: Why do you object, if you have nothing to fear?

The PREMIER: I have nothing to fear; but it is not cricket. The argument of the member for Canning is merely an appeal to the jury, or a piece of special pleading. The hon. member has given a legal opinion, but we know that conflicting legal opinions are given to the two parties to every lawsuit. The member for Canning said that he had no intention of raising the question whether it was or was not desirable that the State should operate a steamship service. I, too, say that at the moment the question of the establishment of the State Steamship Service is not under consideration, though I have no doubt the leader of the Opposition will again make an attack on the State Steamship Service, as he does on any and every occasion—even when speaking on the Health Department.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Are we not discussing State steamers now, Mr. Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

The PREMIER: I say that the leader of the Opposition, in conformity with

his usual tactics, will attack this question, not from the point of view of the purchase of a new steamer, but from the point of view of the establishment of the State Steamship Service.

Hon. Frank Wilson: And why should I not?

The PREMIER: Because the hon. member leads a party who, in 1911, went to the people and said they would establish a State Steamship Service.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You have used that fifty times, and it is wrong.

The PREMIER: I can produce that statement in the hon. member's published speech.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You cannot.

The PREMIER: The hon. member said he was going to establish a State Steamship Service for the purpose of breaking the meat ring.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I did not say anything about the meat ring.

The PREMIER: The hon. member should look up some of the speeches he has published.

Mr. Robinson: This is a side issue.

The PREMIER: It is not a side issue. It is all-important for the point I want to make. The last Parliament, in which we sat with 34 members on this side out of 50, passed a Loan Bill providing £100,000 for the establishment of the State Steamship Service. Therefore, the Government in starting the service acted quite legally.

Mr. Robinson: No one suggested you did not.

The PREMIER: Then we are in agreement on that point. Now, prior to 1911, there was not a State in the Commonwealth where the expenditure of public money was under such loose control as it was in Western Australia.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Prior to when?

The PREMIER: There was not a State in Australia where public funds were used so loosely as they were by hon. members opposite for making purchases in which their political friends were interested.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Oh!

The PREMIER: And the funds were used without the authority of Parliament.

Mr. Robinson: Why not answer the member for Canning? Two wrongs do not make one right.

The PREMIER: There are no two wrongs so far as the present Government are concerned. Our friends opposite, who attack the Government for having expended money illegally, are the greatest offenders in that respect. I have previously mentioned the purchase of the Avondale estate. Was authority obtained for that?

Mr. Robinson: Was Parliament sitting?

Hon. Frank Wilson: The Government had the authority, and the Premier knows it.

The PREMIER: No. Then there was the purchase of the Dalkeith estate. That question was considered by the then Government while Parliament was actually sitting. The first proposal in connection with the estate was submitted by a gentleman named Vereco. He said he was prepared to negotiate for the sale, and the figure he mentioned was £25,000. This was on the 3rd October, 1910. The proposal was submitted to the department dealing with repurchased estates, and they replied to Mr. Vereco, without reference to anyone, thanking him and saying that the department were not at the time considering the purchase of any more land. That was on the 21st November, 1910. On the 13th December of the same year the then Premier wrote to Mr. S. F. Moore, M.L.A.—

With reference to our conversation yesterday, I have the honour to advise you that Cabinet have carefully considered the proposal that the Government should purchase Gallop's estate, and have decided that they cannot entertain the offer made by you.

On the 7th March, 1911—

Hon. Frank Wilson: Are you quoting from files?

The PREMIER: No; from notes I made years ago.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I should like to have the files.

The PREMIER: I will lay them on the Table when the discussion is over, and the hon. member will find in them a good deal to interest him.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I claim them now, if the Premier is quoting from them now.

The PREMIER: I will place them on the Table. On the 7th March, 1911—two or three months afterwards—Mr. Charles Sommers, not in his personal capacity but as Sommers & Co., writes that he is authorised by the mortgagees to offer the Dalkeith estate for £11,200. He writes that to the Premier, and not to the department handling repurchased estates.

Member: What was the previous price?

The PREMIER: Twenty-five thousand pounds was suggested as a basis for negotiations. The price suggested by Mr. S. F. Moore is not known, there being no particulars of it on the file. On the 10th March, 1911, the Under Secretary for Public Works put up a minute commencing—

As instructed by the hon. the Premier's office, I visited Dalkeith with

Mr. Hall this afternoon.

The minute then sets out the values placed upon the land and improvements, totalling £11,605. On the top of that there is a minute from Mr. Stronach, the then Under Secretary for Works, to Mr. Hall—

Please keep this confidential.

Sitting suspended from 6.17 to 7.30 p.m.

The PREMIER: Prior to the tea adjournment I read a letter by the Under Secretary for Works to the land resumption officer asking him to keep this matter confidential. I want now to inform the Committee what it was that he desired should be kept confidential. I have explained that Mr. Sommers, representing Chas. Sommers & Co., had written to the Premier, Mr. Wilson, offering this estate for £11,200, and that on instructions

from the Premier's office, and not from the Minister for Works, as should have been the case, the Under Secretary for Works and the land resumption officer visited the Dalkeith estate and valued it at £11,605. Some days afterwards Mr. Sommers wrote to Mr. Wilson asking him to deal with the matter on that day, as Cabinet was meeting on that day, and to advise him in the afternoon. On the 14th March, 1911, Cabinet considered the proposition and approved of an offer being made of £10,000. The Premier wrote to Mr. Sommers advising him, and on the 22nd March Mr. Sommers wrote reducing the offer to £11,000, and on the same day Cabinet sat and approved of the purchase.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: What has all this to do with the State steamships?

The PREMIER: It has a lot to do with them, as I will show if the hon. member will follow me in patience. The Under Secretary for Works then wrote to the Secretary to the Premier stating—

I was advised by Mr. Sommers per telephone yesterday afternoon that the Government had purchased the Dalkeith estate for £11,000, and Mr. Sommers asked that settlement be expedited. I shall be glad to receive the Premier's instructions. I would point out that the estate was offered several weeks ago by C. Robson, Fremantle, at the above figure, and it was understood by this department that if any purchase was effected through Chas. Sommers & Co., it would be at a less amount, otherwise Mr. Robson, having first introduced the matter, would possibly claim commission from the vendor.

I am not going into the whole history of the matter, but I just mention this to show that notwithstanding the fact that an offer was made for the sale of this estate to the Government through Robson & Cox of Fremantle at £11,000—

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that so?

The PREMIER: It is so.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Send the file across; I claim it.

The PREMIER: The hon. member can have the file. Chas. Sommers & Co. had

made an offer direct to the Premier, and not to the land resumption department, and the Government purchased at the price at which some weeks before Robson had offered it to the Government. That does not matter very much, but after the purchase was notified to the Treasury—

Hon. Frank Wilson: Had Robson any authority to offer it?

The PREMIER: I am not concerned about that. The fact remains that Robson did offer it. It is all on the file. There are numerous letters from Robson & Cox.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Why did they not get the commission then?

The PREMIER: Because the Government purchased through Sommers & Co.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No, because they had no authority to offer the estate.

The PREMIER: Robson says otherwise. When the Under Treasurer was advised that this purchase had been approved by Cabinet, he wrote this minute—

There are no funds available for the purchase of this estate and therefore I shall be glad to have your approval, as the charging of the amount to Loan Suspense Account is sure to be questioned. It would not be correct to so charge the amount unless it has been arranged that the amount is to be finally provided in a Loan Bill.

Mr. Taylor: That is perfectly correct on the part of the Under Treasurer.

The PREMIER: The Under Treasurer had the matter brought under his notice, and he wanted the acting Colonial Treasurer to take the responsibility of approving of the amount being charged to Loan Suspense, because he said it was sure to be questioned. Mr. Gregory, who was acting Colonial Treasurer, wrote this minute—

Please pay from Loan Suspense; Works and Crown Law to carefully watch Crown's interest.

Afterwards the Government discovered that they had no power of any description to purchase estates other than under the Lands Purchase Act, which deals with

agricultural lands for closer settlement. They could have resumed land for railway or recreation purposes, so in order to make the thing appear to be legal, they put up an Order in Council which I have no hesitation in saying was nothing more or less than a positive fraud. They purchased an orchard and a vineyard for recreation purposes. The amusing part of it is that we have the member for Perth now talking about the illegal actions of the present Government in connection with the purchase of steamers, and he was one of the Ministers who advised the then Government to do this thing. The two members of the Cabinet who were present with the Governor when the matter was fixed up were the present member for Perth (Hon. J. D. Connolly) and Mr. Gregory, who was then acting Colonial Treasurer. The Order in Council, shorn of its formal language, set out that the purchase was "to provide a public recreation ground at Dalkeith in the Swan district." I have no hesitation in repeating that that was an absolute fraud. There was never any mention of a recreation ground when the purchase took place.

Mr. Robinson: Is that the answer you make to the charge against you of illegally purchasing a steamer?

The PREMIER: No. But I want the hon. member to understand what company he finds himself in. That was one of the last acts of the Liberal Administration in 1911, and the hon. member afterwards eulogised that Administration. I want him to know who his friends are.

Mr. Robinson: Why not answer my charge?

The PREMIER: All in good time. The then Premier was desirous of making a road right round the river front to Claremont, and the Colonial Secretary wanted more land for the old men's home. Those were the only two reasons why they purchased the Dalkeith estate for £11,000. Can a public road be called a recreation ground, or can the old men's home be called a recreation ground? They never had any title or right to make the purchase, and as a matter of fact it

required the present Government to legalise that illegal act.

Mr. Smith: But they have something to show for that £11,000; you have nothing to show over Nevanas.

The PREMIER: Yes, we have, columns of the Sunday Times. That is not all. Up to the advent of the present Government, our predecessors had carried on illegally from Loan funds by creating what they termed a Loan Suspense Account. There was no authority for a Loan Suspense Account. Year after year they expended money from Consolidated Revenue without any authority. In fact, I am assured by someone who ought to know that even the great Sir John Forrest, when Treasurer of this State, had to introduce excess Bills to cover the expenditure which was not provided by the Estimates. When we came into power, we had to get legal authority for excess on numerous items, excess expenditure incurred by our friends opposite, and for which they had never obtained authority. We have heard a good deal about secret contracts. I suppose someone would suggest that we should call tenders all over the world for the supply of a suitable steamer. There was only one available; it was on the stocks and we purchased it. Our friends opposite, without any authority, purchased a station in the North-West at a cost of £18,600, and the deposit was actually paid on that just prior to the 30th June, 1910. Parliament sat shortly afterwards and they completed the deal without authority. The member for Canning might also say that two wrongs do not make a right. I am going to show him that with all his legal knowledge he does not understand the question of public finance.

Mr. Robinson: Do you?

The PREMIER: I am learning as I go along. I do not say I know it thoroughly, but I know sufficient to show the hon. member that he does not understand too much about it. I might also mention that the previous Government also purchased Crawley Park for £15,582. They did not approach Parlia-

ment and ask for authority; they took the responsibility and did it. They had not the slightest right to make that purchase; they did it illegally. I could go on enumerating numbers of similar instances. There has been hardly any Government in this State which have not illegally—according to the member for Canning—drawn money from public accounts for the purpose of doing something for which they had no authority. To those actions Parliament has at times taken exception. At one time there was a secret purchase at Fremantle. The hon. member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) knows something about that. A sum of £47,000 was paid for the purchase of land of which a number of members of Parliament were the previous owners.

Mr. Thomas: Did not the Government consult Parliament?

The PREMIER: Only in an indirect way. They consulted those members of Parliament who were the owners of the land—although afterwards those same members complained that they had not known that the Government were purchasing the land. Now I propose to go back still further. I want to tell the House that although I do not pride myself on being a Lord Beaconsfield, yet here we have an instance in the Mother of Parliaments where the Prime Minister, absolutely off his own bat, without the knowledge of his colleagues, purchased £4,000,000 worth of stock, Suez Canal shares; and he had to stand pretty severe criticism on this action. Yet in the end he was supported on the score that it was a wise action and saved the country. I am not suggesting that the purchase of a ship for £140,000 compares with that purchase of Suez Canal shares for £4,000,000, but I am endeavouring to show that even in the Mother of Parliaments Ministers have exceeded their duty and have afterwards asked Parliament to sanction their action. Lord Beaconsfield's purchase of those shares was made on the 25th November, 1875, and Parliament was not asked to approve of the purchase until the 15th August, 1876—nearly 12 months afterwards.

Mr. George: What does *May* say?

The PREMIER: I do not know that *May* takes any notice of this, any more than he has taken of a previous Government's appointment of a certain Commissioner of Railways without the sanction of Parliament, notwithstanding that that Government had to stand the racket of a no-confidence motion on the strength of it. I do not know that *May* has noted that. Now I have pointed out that almost every Government have done these things, have exceeded their duty in regard to the Constitution Act in connection with the purchase of estates and the expenditure of public moneys in other directions without an Appropriation Bill.

Mr. Thompson: Did you not protest at the time?

The PREMIER: I believe I did; but while I protested, when I afterwards had an opportunity I put things on such a basis that it would not again be necessary for others to protest. The member for Canning (Mr. Robinson) made reference to the Audit Act. After all, I may point out that the control of public funds is principally laid down in the Constitution Act, and the Constitution Act does not provide any method of dealing with Loan Funds, but deals specifically with Consolidated Revenue Funds. The Constitution Act provides, on the other hand, that laws may be made for the purpose of handling public funds. We passed the Audit Act of 1904, which repealed the previous Act of, I think, 1888. In Section 31 the Audit Act provides—

No money shall be drawn from the public accounts—

And that includes all the funds, Consolidated Revenue, Loan and Trust. The Section continues—

Except under an appropriation made by law or by the authority of the Governor.

And the Interpretation Act says that where "the Governor" appears in any Act of Parliament, it shall be interpreted to mean the Governor-in-Council. So the Audit Act, of which I believe the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) is the author, deliberately provides that no

moneys should be drawn from public account except under an appropriation made by law, or by authority of the Governor-in-Council. We have to admit that it does not give *carte blanche* to the Governor-in-Council. He must do these things in accordance with law. He could not draw from public account without reference to Parliament or to any Acts or regulations in operation. He has to do it lawfully. I propose to show how we have done it in accordance with the law. The hon. member referred to Section 60. He says I used Section 60 for the purpose of showing that all conditions applying to Consolidated Revenue apply also to Loan. I say it is so, and under these circumstances, where we have a provision in the Audit Act to excess Consolidated Revenue, we can excess Loan Funds in the same way. I would like to point out that up to the advent of the present Government, year after year the Government introduced the Revenue Estimates upon which they had a division known, in the case of 1911, their last year, as Division No. 22, Advance to Treasurer. This division was worded as follows:—

To enable the Treasurer to make advances to public officers, on account of other Governments, etc.; also to pay expenses of an unforeseen nature, which will be submitted in detail for Parliamentary appropriation during the year 1911-12, £200,000. Deduct Treasurer's advance, £200,000.

It was a perfect farce. There was no vote there; it was never passed as a vote; immediately they passed it they deducted it, and no item was passed at all. When we came into office—this point had been previously discussed—I asked that this should be put on a satisfactory basis. I said I did not want to be responsible for drawing money from public account except in a legal manner. I said I required that some provision should be made by which we could legally draw from public accounts for the purposes provided in the Treasurer's Advance. What did we do? We put up in our Appropriation Bill the following schedule, and added it to the total:—

To be issued, if and when required, from the public account, to enable the Treasurer to make advances to public officers, or for payment of deposits on contracts, or on account of other Governments, etc. Also to pay expenses of an unforeseen nature, also increases of salaries in accordance with the decisions of the Public Service Appeal Board dated 16th December, 1914, chargeable against the Consolidated Revenue Fund or the General Loan Fund; such disbursements to be transferred monthly to the respective votes and services and to be shown as excesses thereon, or as new items. The appropriation may also include expenditure in excess of the provision of any Loan Act pending statutory authority for the raising of such moneys, and such expenditure to be charged to Loan Suspense Account, to be subsequently submitted to Parliament for specific appropriation. The whole amount to be adjusted not later than 30th June, 1916.

I am reading from last year's Bill.

Mr. Robinson: You have not exceeded a Loan Act.

The PREMIER: Let me tell the hon. member that we will not exceed a Loan Act, because we provided a Loan Act for the expenditure; but we made provision there that when an amount provided in a Loan Bill has become exhausted, we can, by the Treasurer's Advance, which is set out in the Appropriation Act, exceed that amount pending an additional appropriation from Parliament under a Loan Bill.

[*Mr. McDowall took the Chair.*]

Mr. Robinson: But you have not done it that way.

The PREMIER: It may be said, of course, that that did not give us power to operate under that during the current year; but the first Supply Bill I introduced this year made provision for £300,000 for Treasurer's Advance, and the Audit Act provides that notwithstanding the expiration of the financial year, the expenditure would continue under Supply Bills until new Estimates were introduced, so long as authority had been granted for expenditure under these items

in the Loan Bill or in the Loan Estimates. In 1912 we submitted to Parliament a Loan Bill upon which we provided £100,000 for State steamships. We did not specify the purchase of any particular boat, but we provided that amount for the establishment of a State Steamship Service.

Hon. Frank Wilson: When was that?

The PREMIER: In 1912.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But you had already bought the steamers.

Mr. Robinson: That is one thing, but this is quite another.

The PREMIER: Of course it is. I am trying to show the hon. member that while it is different from the point of view of one being a Loan Bill providing moneys expended, and another introduced authorising, in conformity with the Loan Bill, the additional expenditure, yet under the arrangement we have made we have legally expended this money. On that Loan Bill of 1912 we had an item, "State Steamships, £100,000." That was a definite item approved by Parliament, just as we have in the past provided for railways and numerous other public works; and before a new Loan Bill is introduced the whole of the loan authorisation has been expended. That happens every year. When the loan money has been expended we do not stop the work and say "We must wait until a new Loan Bill is introduced." We did not do even as our friends opposite did, namely, spend additional money without authority. But we have provided by Act of Parliament that there should be £300,000 available to the Treasurer under "Treasurer's Advance" and that we may temporarily draw under "Treasurer's Advance" until a Loan Bill has been introduced which gives the appropriation. We can exceed an item which is already provided in the Loan Bill. The difference between our action in this connection and the action of our predecessors is that there never was an item for the purchase of the Crawley estate or for the purchase of a cattle station in the North-West. Let me ask: If the item of £100,000 provided for State steamships were to become exhausted, and we

purchased a dinghy for one of our vessels for £16, would hon. members take exception?

Mr. Thompson: There is a slight difference.

The PREMIER: But the principle is the same.

Mr. Robinson: You have not exceeded any item here.

The PREMIER: We have exceeded the item State Steamship Service, for which £100,000 had been previously voted. If we had bought a dinghy for £16 and the vote was exhausted, the same principle would be involved. I have endeavoured to show that we were entitled, even on old-established precedent, to excess an item which had been provided on a Loan Bill for the purpose of carrying on an established service. It would be an entirely different proposition if we had purchased a steamer to establish a new service, but we have bought a new steamer to become part of an established steamship service. We sent the "Western Australia" Home to be sold—we have made a better bargain than by selling her—and we had to replace her and we purchased a new steamer for that purpose. Would the hon. member ask us, in the event of our having exceeded the amount provided in the Loan Bill for the construction of railways in agricultural districts, to close down on such works until we obtained a Loan Bill authorising us to proceed? Will he tell me a single instance where a Government have introduced, while Parliament has been sitting, a special Loan Bill for the purpose of passing expenditure on a single item when there was a Loan Bill before the House to cover all their expenditure? There has never been such a case. I maintain that we have done right. We made provision for a State Steamship Service; we made provision in the Loan Appropriation Act that if the amount provided was expended we could excess it, and we have taken the earliest opportunity to approach Parliament to obtain the necessary appropriation to cover the expenditure. I am not going into the

question of the wisdom of purchasing this steamer. The Honorary Minister has dealt with that. I am merely answering the member for Canning. He urged that we should immediately approach Parliament to obtain authority. The purchase of this steamer was not completed until the trial took place. I do not refer, as the leader of the Country party did, to the run down the slips. I refer to the trial, according to the shipping contract made in the presence of those acting on behalf of the Government, and no better experts could be found. That trial took place on the 22nd October, but in anticipation of the trial being successful and of our being called upon to complete the bargain, I introduced a Loan Bill for the amount on the 19th October, and because the Opposition have introduced no-confidence motions to gain time for their own party purposes the Loan Appropriation Bill has not been passed prior to the completion of the contract. The member for Canning might recognise that point. After all the talk of secrecy, the fact remains that, three days prior to the trial and the completion of the bargain, I introduced a Loan Bill which is now before the House providing for this amount. Yet the hon. member says we have done this thing illegally, and the leader of the Country party says it is quite an unusual practice. It is unusual to this extent, that it has been done in accordance with the law, and that Parliament was approached as soon as practicable; this is unusual in the light of the action of previous Governments.

Mr. Robinson: When did you pay the money?

The PREMIER: We have not paid the money yet, or if we have, only during the last few days.

Mr. Robinson: What was the date of the agreement to purchase?

The PREMIER: As soon as we agreed it was desirable to purchase a steamer, copies of the files were made and laid on the Tables of both Houses.

Mr. Thomson: You never asked the House for authority.

The PREMIER: We could not ask for authority until the contract was completed.

Mr. George: Oh, oh!

Hon. Frank Wilson: You are getting deeper into the mire.

Mr. Robinson: When did the Agent General buy?

The PREMIER: He entered into an arrangement to buy some time previous to the papers being laid on the Table—only a few days.

Mr. Robinson: You authorised him on the 4th August.

The PREMIER: We did not; we told him we approved of the purchase subject to the trial being satisfactory and if the purchase could be arranged on a certain basis.

Mr. Robinson; When did he sign the agreement?

The PREMIER: When it was seen there was a possibility of him accepting that as a direction to complete, we told him not to complete until he had finalised matters and submitted them to us for approval. They were finalised by being passed through Executive Council on the Wednesday and, on the following Tuesday we submitted the files to both Houses of Parliament. What more would the hon. member ask? We prepared our Loan Bill and submitted it to Parliament with that item in it on the 19th October, and part of the arrangement made was that the trial should be satisfactory, and the trial did not take place till the 22nd October, when the Bill asking for authority was before the House. The Opposition have found it to their advantage to hold up the business of Parliament, and I cannot be held responsible for the Loan Bill not having been passed yet.

Mr. Robinson: Why not answer the question? When did the Agent General in fact close the contract with the owners of that ship?

The PREMIER: He did not finally close the deal until after the trial; the trial had to be satisfactory.

Mr. Robinson: When did he make that arrangement?

The PREMIER: Prior to the 22nd October.

Mr. Robinson: Was not it about the 6th or 7th August?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. Robinson: It is not on the file.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! This conversation has proceeded far enough.

The PREMIER: The member for Canning is evidently devoting a good deal of time to looking up authorities on the expenditure of public moneys without considering what we have done. Under the conditions which prevailed prior to the advent of the present Government, such action would have been illegal, but I assert most definitely that, having obtained authority from Parliament to establish a State Steamship Service, and having provided under the Appropriation Act of last year for authority to excess any item on a Loan Bill until a new Loan Bill had been introduced, Parliament had authorised me to continue the State Steamship Service to the extent of buying either a dinghy or a new steamer. Whether the purchase was desirable or not is another question. The member for Irwin suggested that we might have approached the leaders of the two parties, but if we had approached them, that would not have legalised our action. An agreement or arrangement made between the parties of this House would not be an appropriation by this Parliament and, even if they had given me their full concurrence that no exception would be taken, it would not have overcome the objection of the member for Canning that our action was illegal. It might have overcome some criticism, but the member for Irwin will surely admit he would not be likely to go to his opponent and ask for an agreement on a matter to which he knew his opponent was likely to be antagonistic. The leader of the Opposition is antagonistic to the State Steamship Service and to suggest to him that we should add to it, even to the extent of replacing a boat we had on the market for sale, would not have been tolerated by him for a moment. The hon. member would not have listened to such an idea; therefore to ask me to do

something which, on the face of it would be a positive absurdity, is unreasonable. I repeat that we have acted legally in this matter. We did not put up a false Order in Council; we have done what we believed to be the correct thing in the interests of the State. We have done what Parliament permitted us to do when we were allowed to establish the State Steamship Service, namely, to improve that service when the opportunity arose. To say that because I did not consult members of the other parties in opposition was a wrong action on my part is merely a pious expression of opinion. It does not overcome the fact that members on the Government side are responsible to this House and to the country, and we deliberately did this, believing it to be right and I am prepared to take the responsibility for it.

Mr. Thomson: Did the members of your party know of it?

The PREMIER: The hon. member need not worry how we consult the members of our party. I must make passing reference to the criticism of the leader of the Country party, and for the purpose of this debate, I want to refer to him as the member for Nelson rather than as the leader of the Country party, because I think he has not consulted the members of his party on this matter. I believe he expressed a personal opinion; I do not think the members of his party support his remarks. If they could not find better arguments to oppose our action, they are a helpless sort of crowd. The member for Nelson started by protesting against the Government's action because he believed it to be unusual and illegal. I asked him how he arrived at the conclusion that it was unusual and illegal and he answered that that was his opinion. Fancy him making a definite assertion that our action had been unusual and illegal and then admitting that it was merely his opinion!

Mr. Thomson: It is time it was made an unusual one.

The PREMIER: Where is it unusual, except that it is in accordance with the law of the land?

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do ring off, please.

The PREMIER: The statement that it is illegal is absolutely unfounded. This cannot be contradicted in view of the facts I have mentioned. Of course the member for Nelson is an expert on all marine matters. Few men who have been connected all their lives with the shipping industry would be prepared to take up the attitude adopted by the member for Nelson. True, there can always be found in English speaking communities, in particular, people willing and anxious to condemn anything new and satisfied to hang on to old conservative ideas. I might refer to the war; we have been 12 months trying to catch up to some of the nations to whom we have been opposed right through because we thought that nobody's ideas were equal to our own. When the Englishman comes into the field, however, there is no holding him and this is what is saving us. There are a few people in shipping circles who assert that a Diesel oil ship is unsatisfactory because the type has not been operating for a century or more. Ships of a similar type have visited Western Australia in recent months and have proved by voyages, not of a few miles along a coast, but of long distances all over the world, that they are satisfactory from every point of view. And yet the member for Nelson puts himself up as a better authority than a man who has dealt nearly all his life with the question. When the first Diesel engine ship was built some were turned out that proved to be failures, to a certain extent. They have improved upon them now until to-day there is not a steamship afloat that is so satisfactory as the latest type of Diesel engine oil ships.

Mr. Green: There is a fleet of seven in Denmark to-day.

The PREMIER: The member for Nelson in rather a sarcastic manner suggests that Messrs. Harland & Wolff are after all pretty satisfactory as builders.

Mr. Willmott: They are the finest builders in the world.

The PREMIER: There is an admission which I will ask members to note.

This firm has turned us out a brand new ship, and from the point of view of building she is, then, entirely satisfactory. We have a man who has been retained by the Government, in the person of Sir John Biles, to watch over our interests and advise us as to whether the ship was properly built and was a satisfactory ship. Sir John Biles, of course, is only a man who is attached to the Admiralty, advising the Admiralty on the construction of super-dreadnoughts, Queen Elizabeths, and torpedo and submarine boats. To suggest that such an eminent man as this gentleman could advise us on the question of an ocean tramp of 6,000 tons is of course an absurdity. The hon. member, taking that line of argument, might as well suggest that our Engineer-in-Chief, who can advise us on the construction of harbours and other big works, could not give advice upon the best method of crossing a creek in the hon. member's district. But seriously speaking, what sort of an argument is it to say that the man who designs super-dreadnoughts, submarines and other ships in the British navy could not design an ocean going tramp or advise this Government upon the design of an ocean going tramp of 6,000 tons?

Mr. Willmott: What does he know about our local conditions?

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member imagine that our local conditions are of such a nature that an ocean going tramp of 6,000 or 7,000 tons might ply anywhere else in the world but along the Western Australian coast?

Mr. Willmott: Why did Sir John Biles say she was not a satisfactory ship?

The PREMIER: Not an entirely satisfactory ship. I will explain that. Sir John Biles had been advised some months previously all about the local conditions so far as the service along our North-West coast was concerned. We were then negotiating with him to design a steamer to trade from Fremantle, calling at all ports up to Wyndham. He was given complete data with regard to the conditions necessary for trade on this coast. When he advised us that the ship

was available, he said she was not entirely suitable for that work, but when we pointed out that we required the ship to run direct from Wyndham to Fremantle, or from Wyndham to London, he said that she was entirely satisfactory. The hon. member might argue that we could not operate from Wyndham just yet, that it is only a subterfuge to say that the vessel was purchased for that purpose. I say, however, that there was no such subterfuge. The vessel has been purchased definitely and distinctly for the purpose of operating between Wyndham and Fremantle, and if necessary between Wyndham and London. Will the hon. member ask us to refuse an opportunity of this nature, and to obtain such a vessel when we had been definitely and distinctly advised that we could not get a steamer of the nature we desired until one year after the war had ended? We do not know when the war will end, though we hope it will end very speedily. We do know, however, that if we are not very much out in our calculations the Wyndham Freezing Works will be operating in time for the season of 1917. We want to be in a position to meet the trade, otherwise where is the use of establishing these works? There is no steamship service in Australia which is capable of providing us with the necessary shipping accommodation. There is no shipping company in Australia that can get ships built to-day any more readily than this Government can. Here was a magnificent opportunity of obtaining a ship which would reduce our capital outlay in connection with her, and of obtaining a vessel which would be entirely suitable for the purposes of this trade. I hope the hon. member has now obtained all the information he is seeking. I will say, moreover, that, irrespective of whether the hon. member believes it or not, this ship has been reported on by authorities which are higher than those which he himself quoted. We asked him who his authority was and he answered, "I am the authority." Even the hon. member could not claim to be a shipping expert, although

possibly he has shipped away a few cases of apples. Nevertheless, he gets up in this Chamber and dilates upon the question of the construction and operation of steamers, and upon the management of the State Steamship Service, and that being so, he should have been manly enough to produce his authorities, so that we could have compared his authorities with the management of the State Steamship Service or the advice of Sir John Biles. I assume that the information, if we can call it so, which he gave to the Committee was something which he received by way of correspondence from someone interested in some steamship service which is already operating in Western Australia.

Mr. Willmott: Quite incorrect; my information came from England.

The PREMIER: Those gentlemen who are connected with steamers which are plying to-day along the North-West coast recognise that with the introduction of oil steamers they are going to be undermined in their business, and that it will be so dangerous to their interests that they would move heaven and earth to prevent it. Oil fuel boats are ideal for the North-West trade.

Mr. Willmott: Oil fuel vessels and Diesel engine vessels are very different.

The PREMIER: Does the hon. member know the difference? The Honorary Minister, I think, pointed out that there is probably no coast in the world where coal is so expensive as it is on the North-West coast. The great difficulty is that steamers running between Fremantle and Port Darwin have to take on sufficient coal at Fremantle to take them there and back with safety. That is a journey equal to travelling from Fremantle to Sydney and back. Coal at Fremantle is of such a price, and so much bunkering space is occupied on a ship, that it becomes an expensive operation to run any steamer on the North-West coast. It becomes a question of all coal and no cargo. Moreover, there are difficulties in regard to firemen. We have experienced some of those difficulties since we have been trading on the

North-West coast. There is also a tremendous rise and fall in tide, and steamers have to go in to a port on the tide and come out on it. It is quite an easy matter for our competitors to so arrange matters that we do not catch the tide either going in or coming out. It is a pretty expensive proposition, especially when the hostility is so great towards the State Steamship Service as it is here. If we could dispense with firemen and the necessity for carrying huge quantities of coal instead of cargo, we shall be cutting in very severely on our friends who are now operating along that coast. I might point out, further, that Wyndham will be a depôt for oil supplies, and that oil will be purchaseable in Wyndham as cheaply as anywhere else in Australia and most parts of the world, America excepted. With a depôt established at Wyndham for oil supplies at a satisfactory price and another at Fremantle, there is no steamer operating on the oceans of the world to-day which will be able to compete, on even terms, with the State service operating as it will be with Diesel oil engine ships. That is a definite statement which will be proved or disproved in the years to come. Speaking of the authorities which have been quoted, I may say that I have received a letter from a person writing from England. He said—

I visited Glasgow two days ago and thoroughly inspected the vessel with Sir John Biles, and I am of opinion that she is the finest cargo boat that has been in an Australian berth. I am sure you will be extremely pleased when you see her.

Mr. Willmott: I am glad to hear it.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Who is the individual?

The PREMIER: The letter is from Mr. Phil Davies. Some question has arisen with regard to this boat being available to the Government, and not being taken over by the steamship company which had ordered her and contracted for her supply. Hon. members should know that the British Admiralty

has not permitted any company to build ships for any foreign company, and that no ship built on the British stocks to-day can be disposed of except in some part of the British Dominions. When approached on the question the Chancellor of the Exchequer never hesitated to give his authority for the purchase of this steamer by this Government, and furthermore gave his authority for the raising of the money to complete the deal. It was, of course, desired that the question should not be discussed until the deal had been finalised. We had practically to seal our lips until we had completed the deal, but the moment we did complete it, we gave Parliament all information regarding it. The member for Irwin made one remark to which I desire to reply. He said in rather a heated way that if I was going to abrogate to myself the right to use the State purse just as I thought fit, then it was time that Parliament took a stand. I have never abrogated any such right to myself. I have not expended the funds of the State without first obtaining the authority of Parliament. I did what our predecessors neglected to do, that was to get authority for excess loan expenditure. They had done it illegally by creating a loan suspense account. I obtained the authority of Parliament to excess the item by a Loan Bill pending Parliament's passing a Bill to authorise the expenditure. Now I am condemned because Parliament in its wisdom gave me authority to do this thing, to establish a steamship service, to maintain that service by reason of the fact that Parliament permitted these words to be used in the Appropriation Bill of last year. Will the member for Canning now admit that so far as the legal aspect is concerned, irrespective of whether he agrees with the wisdom of our action or not, we acted legally?

Mr. Robinson: You have not done it in that way.

The PREMIER: The hon. member will insist that we have not done it in that way. I know what the hon. member is speaking about, namely that in the in-

structions to the Agent General we were raising a loan under the previous Loan Act. Does he not know that we cannot raise money under the Appropriation Act, Treasurer's advances? These Treasurer's advances do not give permission to raise money. He will connect the raising of money with the spending of it. The two things are entirely different. A Loan Bill is authority to raise money, and on the 30th June I had authority to raise one million pounds and no one can question my action for doing so. It so happened that the insurance company were finding the money for this specific purpose. The authority to raise the money is in the Loan Act. The authority is the advance to the Treasurer, pending the introduction of a Loan Bill to legalise the expenditure on the State Steamship Service. A Loan Bill does not authorise the spending of money; the Loan Estimates do that. All Governments have spent money in directions not provided by the Loan Estimates, and have had to come to Parliament to validate such expenditure. The action of the present Government was entirely within the law, was legal in every essence, and compares favourably with the action of our predecessors, who are now so virtuous, but who did little except what was illegal in the expenditure of loan moneys. Hon. members opposite would now condemn the Government if they spent even a few shillings, except by formal appropriation. If that is the view of those hon. members, they should take the responsibility of amending the law relative to advances to the Treasurer. Apparently that would mean the ceasing of loan works, if loan authorisations on them were exhausted. Having authority to establish the State Steamship Service, and having authority to spend out of the Treasurer's advance account, the Government carried out the transaction, which is entirely right and legal, whether our friends opposite like it or not.

Mr. ROBINSON: The Premier says, in effect, that he was justified in making this expenditure because he had merely exceeded the Loan Act of 1912 for the purchase of steamers. But the Loan Act

of 1912 had fulfilled its mission in the world long ago.

The Premier: You are quite wrong.

Mr. ROBINSON: The money had been used.

The Premier: No. We have not raised it all yet.

Mr. ROBINSON: The money passed for State steamers had been entirely exhausted. If the Premier wanted to do what he says, then his minute to Executive Council would have read "Under Treasurer's Advance Account, it is desirable to exceed the Loan Act of 1912 and utilise funds for some other purpose." That is, utilise money for the purchase of this steamer. But the Premier has done nothing of the kind. The minute he passed to Executive Council was that out of the £2,850,000 authorised to be raised under the Loan Act of 1915 the sum of £175,000 be raised in London by the issue of Western Australian Government inscribed stock. That is quite a different thing. The Premier has put up a certain set of arguments, and has answered them; but he has not answered one of my arguments. I still say, on that minute, that the Premier has done an illegal act. Given the set of circumstances he has stated, I am not prepared to say—in view of the confused way in which they have been related to the Committee—whether the act would be legal or illegal; but I see a vast difference between exceeding an existing Act and taking the money from a Loan Act which is appropriated for totally different purposes. In the Loan Act of 1915 there is not a word relating to steamers. The Government have taken the money from that Act, and not used money as exceeding the Loan Act of 1912. The building or the purchase of a Diesel ship was never in contemplation in 1912. Therefore the Loan Act of 1912 was not exceeded, and it is only owing to the fertile imagination of the Premier, when hard driven for answers to the propositions I have put forward, that he first of all brings up half a dozen wrongs which he alleges against the late Administration, and which the leader of

the Opposition no doubt will deal with in due course—

The Premier: No, he will not.

Mr. ROBINSON: I am not sufficiently conversant with political matters of that date to deal with them myself. However, even 49 wrongs do not make a right.

The Premier: There is no wrong in this case.

Mr. ROBINSON: If there was no wrong, why was not Parliament consulted? However, the Premier has not answered my charge that he has used the moneys voted for specific purposes in the Loan Act of 1915 for the purchase of a State steamer which is not authorised by this or by any other House of Parliament.

The PREMIER: Has the member for Canning read the provisions relating to the Treasurer's Advance Account in the Appropriation Act?

Mr. Robinson: Yes.

The PREMIER: That Act says—

Appropriation may also include expenditure in excess of the provision of any Loan Act.

Mr. Robinson: But this is not excess expenditure at all. It is absolutely brand new expenditure.

The PREMIER: How absurd! The instances I have quoted represented brand new expenditure, but this is not new expenditure. This is expenditure on an established service, to keep it going.

Mr. Robinson: No. To extend the service.

The PREMIER: I am speaking of the action being a legal one. We have in the Appropriation Act power to—

include expenditure in excess of the provision of any Loan Act, pending statutory authority for the raising of such money—

Not for the spending, but for the raising. Such expenditure to be charged to a Loan Suspense Account, and to be subsequently submitted to Parliament for specific appropriation.

Mr. Robinson: But you have not charged the expenditure to a Loan Suspense Account.

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows perfectly well the expenditure must be charged in the Treasury to a Loan Suspense Account. It is part of the Treasurer's advance. It cannot be charged to any other account. Parliament has authorised me to do this thing. Whether hon. members agree with what I have done or not, is an entirely different proposition. The legality of the thing, however, is as clear as possible to anyone who wishes to understand.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: When the Premier is driven into a corner and does not know how to escape, he immediately charges his opponents with unfair tactics and proceeds to make false accusations. I do not know to what extent the Premier may be familiar with the game of cricket, but he accused me of not playing fair cricket. I acknowledge that the Premier knows something about football, and, according to his idea of the game of football, I was on sure ground.

Mr. Bolton: He kicked a goal against you.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I do not know why the Premier should be wroth because I gave way to him, leaving him to reply to the charge of the member for Canning before I spoke. We are in Committee, and the hon. gentleman has the opportunity of replying to every individual speaker if he so desires. Therefore the Premier's charge of unfairness falls to the ground. In replying to the member for Canning, the hon. gentleman has drawn the usual red herring across the trail. He paints us on this side in all the vile colours he can imagine, and draws attention to the acts of my administration in purchasing the Crawley and Dalkeith estates and a station for the aborigines. In doing so, he does not refrain from casting some mud. Let me remind the Committee that this is not the first occasion by a long way that the Premier has indulged in the same criticism in the same language. If we have heard this yarn of his once, we have heard it a full score of times during the past four years. On referring to *Hansard* I find that on divers occasions, starting in 1911, the Premier has spun

the same old yarn as to the purchase of those properties.

The Premier: You will not find a speech of yours for the past four years that does not touch on State steamers.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am not ashamed of my remarks on the State steamers. First, I wish to disabuse the minds of new members, at all events, as to there having been anything wrong in the purchase of the Dalkeith estate.

The Premier: I did not say there was.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, the Premier did.

The Premier: I said it was an illegal purchase.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Premier said there was a wrong done to a certain firm, and that wrong was done in order to benefit a certain party.

Mr. Bolton: I make that statement now, that there was a wrong done to a small firm.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The hon. member can listen now.

Mr. Bolton: I know the individual. I would not take your word.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I do not expect the hon. member to take my word. I do not trust him, and I would not give twopence for his opinion of me or of my integrity and honour. I do value my honour and integrity, however; and I leave it to the people outside to judge between us on all these occasions. The Premier accused me of going behind the backs of a firm of Fremantle land agents, Robson & Cox. The hon. member behind the Premier has reiterated that charge by his interjection just now. On a previous occasion, I have explained, with regard to the Dalkeith purchase, that I had never heard of Robson & Cox in the transaction when Mr. Sommers submitted the estate to me. So far as I can gather, from glancing through the file, the firm have no claim on the Government, and have made no claim on the Government, or substantiated it one iota.

Mr. Allen: They would not claim on the Government, but on the seller.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: They could have put in a protest saying that they were not considered. There is nothing on

this file to show that they ever made an offer of the Crawley estate to the Works Department.

The Premier: What about the Under Secretary's statement?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Let the Premier take his gruel quietly. He has had an opportunity of stewing these files; he started right away as soon as he assumed office with a secret service so as to try and fasten the blame for many things on the previous administration, and after all these years of searching and stewing through the files, he has not been able to discover one sin on the part of the administration of which I was the head. The first document on this file is dated the 4th October, 1910. It is written by Mr. Verco as agent for James Gallop, offering Dalkeith estate at £25,000. Then we go along until we find a letter signed by the under secretary turning down that offer and saying that the department was not considering the purchase of any more land at the present time. Now we have it from the Premier that Robson & Cox of Fremantle placed this land under offer to the Government, but the next document on the file is a letter from Mr. Chas. Sommers, written in March, 1911, saying that he is authorised by the mortgagees to sell Gallop's estate at £11,200, and asking me to place the matter before Cabinet, which I did. Then we find on the 11th March a memo. initialed by myself saying that Cabinet had approved of £10,000 being offered for the estate. We were in for getting it at a low price. After that offer was made, Mr. Sommers came along and stated that they would not take a penny less than £11,000. I went straight into Cabinet and the Minister for Works was present, and it was agreed that I should make the offer of £11,000. Cabinet minute is there, and the offer was accepted. There is nothing from Robson & Cox on this file until—

The Premier: Have a look at what the under secretary had to say about it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: This is what the under secretary had to say—

I was advised by Mr. Sommers per telephone yesterday afternoon that the Government had purchased Dalkeith estate for £11,000, and Mr. Sommers asked that settlement be expedited. I shall be glad to receive the Premier's instructions. I would point out that the estate was offered several weeks ago by C. Robson, Fremantle, at the above figure, and it was understood by this department that if any purchase was effected through Chas. Sommers & Co. it would have been at a less amount, otherwise Mr. Robson, having first introduced the matter, would possibly claim commission from the vendor.

That is the first intimation I had that there was anyone else negotiating, and when I put the question I found that it had only been a verbal intimation from Robson & Cox.

Mr. Allen: Why did they not sue for commission if they thought they were entitled to it?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Exactly. Do hon. members think that these people would have sat still if they thought they could have claimed compensation? Five weeks previously Mr. Sommers had been negotiating for the sale of this estate. The first written communication from Robson & Cox is dated the 6th May. They say in that that five months before they opened up negotiations with the land resumption office with reference to the Dalkeith estate. How did they open up negotiations with that office? There is not a scrap of written evidence on any file to show that they offered this estate to the lands purchase department. There was a verbal communication five months before, when Mr. Verco was offering it to the Government through the department.

The Minister for Lands: At the same figure?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: There was no talk about taking £11,000 five months previously; the mortgagees had not foreclosed. There was no hard and fast offer from Robson or anyone else.

The Minister for Lands: Robson went to the right channel. He submitted it to

the lands purchase department, instead of to Cabinet.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: When it is a question of steamers it does not even go to Cabinet; it goes straight to Executive Council, but when it is a matter of a few acres of land, then members opposite say it must go through a department. Robson's letter goes on to say that Mr. Hall met him at Claremont station and together they inspected the estate. He adds that Mr. Gallop was quite unaware of the capacity in which Mr. Hall was acting. The sum quoted at that time was £26,000, but later on the price was reduced to £17,000, and after that time the property passed into the hands of the mortgagees. Then after the foreclosure, Mr. Robson interviewed Mr. Moore, one of the executors, and after several interviews the property was offered to the Government for £11,000. That letter was written long after the event.

Mr. Bolton: The Under Secretary says differently.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The letter was written after the purchase of the estate, and it was written to build up a case for commission. To show that that is true, one of the directors of the W.A. Bank came to me himself and offered me the estate for £18,000, the price they were asking at that time. I said we would not dream of paying any such figure, but as soon as we had a definite offer of £11,000 we snapped it up as being an excellent transaction.

Mr. Bolton: The Under Secretary says there was a definite offer.

[*Mr. Holman resumed the Chair.*]

Hon. FRANK WILSON: There was never a definite offer. The minute of the Under Secretary was written after the purchase was made, and so was Robson's letter.

The Minister for Lands: Do you say that the Under Secretary did not convey that offer to the then Minister for Works?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I do not, but the Minister for Works was at Cabinet and he approved of the purchase. Anyhow, I did not worry as to who got the

commission. We got the estate, and we got it at a reasonable figure, and, as I said at that time, if Parliament was not satisfied with the deal, I would be glad to take it off their hands. That holds good to-day. Let me answer the insinuation that we have done someone out of a commission. The commission was never earned by Robson & Cox, and they never claimed it. If individuals think they are entitled to commission, they would certainly make a claim for it. The next thing the Premier held up as a terrible example of our administration was the purchase of Crawley estate. That was exactly on all fours with the purchase of Dalkeith. Both these estates were purchased for public utility, and it is perfectly right to buy estates of that description. Under the Public Works Act, we can purchase estates of that kind, and those estates were so purchased, and the actions were supported by Parliament.

The Minister for Lands: You had no legal authority to buy.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, we had. Then we come to the aborigines station. That, too, was purchased for public utility. The object was to carry on a policy of concentrating the natives on the one station and enabling them to raise cattle, and be fed and protected, and also stop the depredations which had been carried on at neighbouring stations. All those transactions were carried out under the Public Works Act, and they were afterwards endorsed by Parliament. The Premier is always casting up these three matters into our teeth as being on a par with the illegal acts he has perpetrated during his four years of office. The Premier knows that Parliament was well aware exactly what we were about in regard to those estates. If hon. members will turn up *Hansard* of the 1st February, 1911, they will there find outlined the purchase of the Crawley estate, and also an intimation that we intended to run a road through the Dalkeith estate. Here are my words—

The next item on the "Sundries" (of the Loan Estimates) is the purchase of the Crawley Park estate, a deal which requires very little comment by me. I

feel very proud of that purchase, for I was able to acquire that estate for £15,500, and as it is well known to hon. members, it is needless to emphasise the great boon to the citizens of Perth and surrounding districts which the acquirement of that property means. To have a stretch of foreshore, as we have there, running past Crawley, round the point and extending towards Nedlands, free of access to the citizens of Western Australia and used, as no doubt hon. members have seen it used during the recent holiday season, is an advantage and a boon that cannot be overlooked.

That was the reason why we purchased Crawley, namely, to get possession of the foreshore, and that was the reason, too, for the Dalkeith purchase. There was an interjection by the member for Murray-Wellington, who asked, "Are you going to purchase Gallop's property?" in reply to which I said—

My purpose is briefly this: I have been trying to purchase Gallop's property, but I do not think that the State need incur an expenditure of £18,000 or £19,000, as the case may be, for the sake of getting a track on the low-lying land beside the water. I have given instructions to have a survey of it made going right to the back of Crawley House, keeping as far back from the beach as possible. We can get four or five jetties there between the road and the beach, giving the public the use of them. The idea is for a road to be cleared behind a lake, or a swamp which may be converted into a lake by and by, and coming out into Nedlands. The road to this property has already been acquired by the Subiaco council and the Claremont municipal council. Therefore the public will have a road right around to Gallop's fence, coming out behind the Nedlands hotel and then behind Gallop's homestead right through until it strikes the Old Men's Dépôt, having, I think, a view of the water all the way, at any rate most of the way, going on to the road past the Old Men's Dépôt and into Claremont. By this ac-

quisition we shall have a water frontage drive extending to the Causeway. When we get the reclamation completed—and the wall is as far as the Causeway now—we shall have a water frontage drive right through from the Causeway to Claremont. I am only sorry that our predecessors had not the forethought or the foresight to see that the water frontages were retained for the people of the State for all time on both sides of the river Swan.

There we had the whole thing outlined 12 months before any action was taken. We have had an analogy made between these transactions and what, undoubtedly, has been a violation of all Parliamentary procedure, of all constitutional government, an illegal act on the part of this Government. They first started to flout Parliament and to take the law into their own hands very shortly after assuming office. Steamers were purchased without authority early in 1912. Notwithstanding that negotiations had been going on for some time, and whilst Parliament was sitting, those negotiations were completed only after Parliament went into recess. There we had the commencement of this policy. The purchase of the "Western Australia" for £39,000—she has since cost at least another £30,000—was made without the authority of Parliament. We took exception to it, but of course the majority ruled us out and the purchase was condoned and confirmed by Parliament. And now the Premier has the audacity to come here to-night and ask the House to agree with his contention that this purchase of the "Kangaroo" for £144,000 is only an excess of the vote of £100,000 which was passed at that time for the purchase of steamers. If he is right, there is no limit to what the Government can do without authority. If it is right that we can excess the votes of years gone by, we can keep on excessing votes of the past 20 years. The thing is childish. It cannot be an excess of a vote passed four years ago. The same thing applies to the commencement of all State enterprises. The sawmills were started without a vote of Parliament and so, too, were the brickyards, the State Implement

Works, and every State enterprise entered upon; all were started without the authority of Parliament. If we are to accept such a bald, paltry excuse as the Premier has put up, after having utilised valuable time in trying to throw mud at members of the Opposition, if we are to accept his paltry excuse, there is no limit to the power the Government have, and they can go on buying a whole fleet of steamers. They might just as well dispense with Parliament altogether. There is another aspect: The Premier says, "Oh yes, but we are entitled to depart even from the constitutional view, and in an emergency to purchase a steamer or anything else, and trust to Parliament to confirm the expenditure." To some extent he is on firmer ground there. Occasions arise when Governments must exercise their responsibility. But such emergencies arise more particularly in connection with works already authorised. To compare this transaction with the continuation of a public work, such as the construction of a harbour or of a big line of railway, is absurd. We cannot say that the purchase of this steamer was a matter of urgency. One might say that it was a matter of urgency to provide harbour facilities for shipping away the wheat—as we had to do on one occasion, when we sanctioned the expenditure of £80,000 against Loan Suspense Account, just before Parliament met—but where was the urgency in connection with the purchase of this steamer? We have the same old cry by the Premier, "A magnificent steamer; it was our opportunity, and we had to take it." I remember the same remarks being made in regard to the "Western Australia." We then pointed out the dangers of the purchase and the unsuitability of the steamer, but we were jeered at for our pains. Now, however, whenever I get on my feet Ministers are afraid I am going to talk steamers.

Mr. McDowall: You invariably do.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Because they are sticking out of every act of the Government; we cannot get away from them. We were told at one time that the Adelaide Steamship Company were try-

ing to secure the "Western Australia." We know now they would not have had her at any price. Year after year she was run by a stupid, obstinate Government who were losing to the tune of £20,000 a year in the operation. And we have this illuminative description of her by the present manager of the State Steamship Service, "Decrepit, obsolete old vessel, only fit for the scrapheap." This latest purchase, of course, is going to be all right. Notwithstanding the experience of the past we have rushed in once more, but this time it will be all right. And they have entered on a new departure in respect to the steamers. They tell us now it is the oversea trade they are catering for. Although eventually this vessel will run between Wyndham and Fremantle, in the meantime the steamer is to run between Wyndham and London when the freezing works are established. Let us hope that those works will be established before the steamer becomes obsolete, although I have my doubts about it. For the present the high freight market is the temptation, and the Government expect to earn a good profit. Mr. Stevens points out that £57,000 should be the earnings for the first year, while the cost of running the vessel will be £32,000, leaving a profit of £25,000 or, with wool or partly wool and wheat back, the earnings, he calculates, will be greater. This, he urges, is a favourable proposition, especially seeing that in the figures provision is made for the payment of all expenses and charges, including redemption of the actual cost of the ship. Steamship owners of experience do not, as a rule, rush in on top of the market to add to their fleets. That we are on the top of the market at present is undoubted, as witness the illustration the Premier gave us of a vessel which had cost some £60,000 and which was sold for £168,000. Moreover, there has been no evidence of a rush on the part of other Governments to obtain this vessel, notwithstanding that the Premier has emphasised the point that other States are in difficulties in regard to tonnage for carrying their produce to the markets of the world. None of them—and bar Victoria they are all

Labour Governments—have rushed in after this boat, even as the “Western Australia” which was sold to this country by the same East Asiatic Company four years ago, was not run after and snapped up by any one but the Government of inexperience which we have in Western Australia. Anyone who knows anything about steamships is aware that the full value of this ship in normal times would not exceed £60,000 to £70,000, and we are paying £140,000 for her or double her value. I admit the market is abnormal and we have struck the top of it.

Mr. Carpenter: Whose valuation are you quoting?

Mr. George: Eleven pounds a ton is a fair calculation.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am not quoting the hon. member's valuation. I know the price of steamers.

Mr. Carpenter: A mere opinion of your own.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is my actual knowledge of the value of steamers of this description based on sales made and purchases completed. The Government made the initial mistake when they acquired this steamer at the top of the market and they cannot make her pay unless the excessive freights brought about by the war continue. Where does the philanthropy of the Government come in? They are going to help the settlers to get their produce to market, and how will they assist them? By claiming the full freight for her the same as private shipowners are claiming and receiving for carrying wheat for all the States of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Harrison: Would you advocate selling her at once if the Government could realise a profit?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, I would turn her into cash to-morrow. We are on a bad wicket; if we could get our money back, we would be wise to let her go.

The Minister for Lands: You are opposed to State steamers.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: All the more reason why the Government should not have made this secret purchase. If all hon. members agreed with the Government, as I knew they did when I pur-

chased the Dalkeith estate, the Government would have been justified in going ahead. I knew there was no opposition; it was the view of hon. members which I had gathered previously and, therefore, I could take the responsibility; but when the Government know that an important section of the House is against them, their action is to be condemned if they complete a transaction of this sort without consulting Parliament. The Government were entiled to get a vote of Parliament upon it. The initial mistake was in buying this steamer at the present abnormal price. We do not buy steamers of this sort for the term of the war, which might be one year, two years, or three years; we buy such a steamer for the term of her natural life—20 years—and we certainly cannot expect a boat of this description to pay when freights come back again to one-half of what is being asked and received at the present time.

Mr. McDowall: Supposing we get three years of good freights, what then?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Supposing we do, the Government are going to take that out of the very pockets of the men they are professing to assist. If ever there was an illustration of high-handed robbery on the part of the Government, powerful because they happen to occupy the Treasury bench, on an innocent, numerically weak party like the farmers and settlers, we have it exemplified in this act, and the suggestion that they are going to run this steamer on top freights for the next two or three years.

The Minister for Lands: I do not think you are interested whether we get ships to take away their wheat or not.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am against the Minister every time. The Government are buying steamers and will meet with disaster even as they did with regard to the “Western Australia” and her sister vessels, as it was pointed out they would, four years ago. The Government cannot hope to make this vessel pay during her life time, because as soon as the war ends and freights revert to the normal, she

will be a non-paying proposition and will have to be laid up. This is the history of shipping throughout the world from time immemorial. Vessels run and make a good profit and gradually become obsolete; freights rise as the supply of tonnage decreases through losses and sales to foreign companies and other causes, and as freights rise the obsolete ships, which have had to be laid up because they could not be run at a profit, are brought out and run again, but when freights go down these vessels have to be laid up because they cannot be made to pay their way. This is the history of shipping year in and year out and has been ever since I could take an intelligent interest in business of this sort, a matter of 40 years. As soon as ever we have a relapse in the freight market, the "Kangaroo" will have to be laid up, or the Government will have to repeat the experience of the "Western Australia" and run her at a loss.

Mr. Green: Why should not she pay as well as any other ship?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: She cannot when she has cost twice as much as she should have. We have the evidence of Mr. Stevens, the manager of the State Steamship Service, that he sees a great prospect of success with such a ship in oversea work, as the service would have a chance of participating in the extraordinarily high freights now being earned by oversea shipowners. He blows the argument of the Government to smithereens. There is the recommendation on which the Government purchased; on that recommendation, forsooth, Ministers have taken the law into their own hands and have plunged the country into a purchase involving £140,000, which might be a payable proposition for a year or two, but must ultimately end in a very serious loss to the State which they are supposed to administer fairly to the advantage of all concerned. The Premier told us that, with previous Governments, it was a habit to have excess expenditure. That was perfectly true, but it does not apply in this case. When we have Estimates

of revenue and expenditure or loan funds authorised and passed by the House, we have the principle of certain works established by those Estimates and, naturally, if the works cost more or less there will be an excess or a credit on the amount voted, and for the excess in connection with the cost of carrying out works, the Government are justly entitled to come to Parliament and ask them to endorse it even if the expenditure has been made. This has been the uniform custom and, while I agree that Sir John Forrest on one occasion had to bring in a large excess Bill approaching one million, the State was then passing through abnormal times. He was developing the goldfields, giving communication and a water supply throughout the length and breadth of the goldfields which just then had been discovered, and he had enormous unforeseen expenditure, the principle of which had already been endorsed by Parliament. When I first took charge of the Treasury, I forget whether it was five or seven years excess Bills for previous Administrations I had to pass, including an excess Bill of a previous Labour Administration, so it is idle to say that because excess Bills have been passed in former years, it condones a transaction of this sort. Excess expenditure is supposed to have already received a foundation upon which the items are put and, if it is necessary to expend a little more money, the Government come to Parliament subsequently to get it endorsed. Of course we have had the usual charge in regard to the Avondale estate. I have replied to that on previous occasions, and do not propose to go into the matter again at this stage. The Avondale estate was a legitimate purchase made under an Act of Parliament—the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act—and whether the price paid was high or low it was paid on the direct representation and recommendation of a properly constituted board to advise the Government. The estate was then cut up for sale and it was left to our successors, the present Government, I am sorry to think largely

on political grounds, to withdraw that estate from sale and hang it up all these years and do practically nothing with it, as they have admitted. There was nothing illegal about it; there was nothing unwise about it, and there is not a scintilla of evidence to connect any party with any underhand transaction in the purchase, because the owner happened to be a Liberal and not a Labour member of this Chamber. The charge of the Premier that the cave—he did not explain the personnel of it—had decided to make this a no-confidence motion, is on a par with all such charges he is apt to let drop in his wrath on similar occasions. He also again opened the vials of his wrath upon the Press—a bitter hostile party Press, as he termed it. I do not know whether he really honestly considers he is justified in everlastingly talking about a bitter, hostile party Press or not. I will leave that to other members who are not so prominently connected with either party as I am, but I think it is bad form for him to be constantly making charges in this Chamber against the Press which, whatever it might say as its policy in its leading articles, certainly cannot be accused by the Premier or any of his colleagues of having cut down the reports of their public pronouncements. If there is a body of gentlemen who ought to be full of gratitude to the Press of any State, they are the present occupants of the Treasury bench.

The Minister for Lands: Ring off!

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The most utter drivel they indulge in from time to time in different centres to advance their own party interests is fully reported in the Press, whereas the opinions and speeches of members on this side do not receive that same treatment at the hands of the Press.

The Minister for Lands: Ring off!

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is just about time the Minister did ring off; he will be rung out very shortly if all we hear is true. The Premier proceeded to refer to my policy speech. He said I was going to indulge in State steamers. On

many occasions, I have corrected the hon. gentleman in regard to this accusation, and I have pointed out that I would never be above utilising the State to establish State enterprises which were for a specific object, that is to fulfil the wants and requirements of the State itself, but my policy had a clear line of demarcation, namely, that the Government could not enter into competition with the people of the State from whom we derived the income to establish these different industries. The policy of the Government was to establish freezing works at Wyndham and cold storage works at Fremantle and to have specially adapted ships, not tramps like the "Kangaroo," that would fill the requirements of the passenger traffic, and contain sufficient cold storage accommodation to bring down chilled meat from Wyndham to Fremantle, to be held at the latter place in cold storage until distributed to the consumers. I said that if it was necessary to get that class of steamer I would not hesitate to buy one and put it on myself in order to bring about a connecting link between the freezing works and the cold storage works.

Mr. Heitmann: You ran the "Julia Percy"?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No. I think I saw her on the rocks at Dongarra on one occasion.

Mr. Heitmann: She sank alongside the jetty.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I never ran any steamer except the usual Government boats like the "Penguin," for Government service. As an adjunct to a policy of establishing freezing works at Wyndham and cold storage accommodation in Fremantle, and as a connecting link between the two, if I could not get the steamer I wanted I would certainly purchase one for that purpose, and that purpose only. That explains at once my attitude with regard to steamships so far as the State is concerned. I distinctly said, and I have been twitted on many occasions with regard to it, that if necessary I will put on a steamer in order to couple up these works. We now have the

Premier and the Minister for Works, and no doubt will have the Minister for Lands to follow on—

The Minister for Lands: I have heard nothing to reply to yet.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Then the Minister can leave the matter alone. We also have had the Honorary Minister, who with his colleagues was airing his eloquence on the question and telling us that the boat was going to run between Wyndham and Fremantle. They have discovered that the draft of the vessel was too great to permit of her calling at the different ports along the North-West, and that she is now to run direct from Wyndham to Fremantle. I ask hon. members to think whether they choose to believe that a vessel which has cost £140,000 already, and will probably require another £30,000 spent on her in order to fit her out completely for the frozen meat trade, making a total of £170,000, with a draft half-loaded of 23 feet, with no passenger accommodation and with only a speed of 11 knots, is going to pay in a trade of that description.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: She was never bought for that purpose and is not going on in that trade.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Premier says she is.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: We are buying two other ships for that.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The manager of the State Steamship Service says so in his report.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: He does not.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: He says she can be utilised in that trade after she has been properly fitted up.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: In the freezing works trade, not the North-West trade.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Let hon. members consider whether this boat can be a success in this trade.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: She is not going into that trade.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Are we going to run the steamer direct from Wyndham to Fremantle—

Hon. R. H. Underwood: We are running one to-day.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: For no other purpose than to bring frozen meat down to the principal port? This is just as preposterous a transaction as all the other transactions of the Government. The explanation of Ministers is just as preposterous as their previous explanations. If they are going to run that vessel successfully between Wyndham and Fremantle, she must be fitted for the purpose, she must have a superior and full passenger accommodation, a speed of at least 17 knots and cold storage accommodation. She should be a vessel of the latest design, and have such a draft as would enable her to call at every port en route. She should be able to carry goods also to a certain extent and to bring down chilled meat in continual supplies to meet the requirements, and then only will she be a successful venture. So long as the Government live they will never convert an unholy tramp of this description, size, and speed into a successful proposition for the trade between Wyndham and Fremantle direct. I am always, I fear, too frank in giving friendly advice to the Government. Up to the present they have very largely refrained from acting on that advice.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: The electors did not take your advice.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If the Government would only give them the chance of taking my advice I feel quite satisfied that the Honorary Minister would not be given an opportunity of enjoying any more political life. Unfortunately the temperament of Ministers is such, that whilst they are clamouring for advice they simply "pooh pooh" it when they get it, and go on in their fell way making further disastrous bargains on account of the State.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: We would have been very foolish if we had acted on your advice.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Of course the Honorary Minister is always foolish. It does not matter whether he follows the

advice or not, he is still foolish. He says the business is going to be done in the usual way in regard to this steamer.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: So it is.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I think I have shown that the business was not done in the usual way, that it was an arbitrary act of self-elected dictators, an act performed without any submission to Parliament which ought to control the finances of the State. The Premier says something about the purchase of this boat on the grounds that the "Western Australia" has left the coast and that this vessel was to take her place. We have threshed that point out on one or two occasions, more especially when we debated the Nevanas contract. It was shown on that occasion that there was no need for the "Western Australia" to be sent off the coast. The argument was that the Government had cancelled the contract they had entered into with Nevanas with regard to the "Prinz Sigismund" because they had decided to send the "Western Australia" off the coast to the Old Country in order to have brought about a very advantageous sale. The sale did not come off, however, but they got a charter for her at any rate, which will keep her employed for some time without the State losing money on her, and to that extent the Government are to be congratulated. I contrast the attitude taken upon that occasion with the attitude taken up to-night. To-night we find that the "Kangaroo" has been purchased because the "Western Australia" has been sent to the Old Country. The other night we heard that the "Prinz Sigismund" was taken away from a man who had the contract for the use of her because the "Western Australia" was sent Home. The Government chop and change with any wind that blows. Whom are we to believe? What we must believe, if we believe the evidence of our own senses, and the figures which have been placed before us—it does not matter which is the true explanation in connection with the "Western Australia," which is decrepit and obsolete according to the Government's own words—

Hon. R. H. Underwood: That is another wild statement.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Is that this new vessel is going to end in disaster for the State. We have paid through the nose with regard to the error made over the Nevanas contract, and we are going to pay through the nose for this second error, the purchase of the "Kangaroo." We had a long discourse from the Minister for Works, and had the Premier acting in his usual way, more like a mountebank than a dignified occupant of such an important position as that which he holds.

Mr. Heitmann: He gets there all the same.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Minister for Works waxed pretty tedious in his argument that they had made a good deal. We had the Honorary Minister charging us with having used the Legislative Council to defeat the intentions of the Constitution. He left it to the imagination of members to discover what the intentions of the Constitution were. No matter how hon. members may wriggle—and they are champion contortionists on that side of the House—to get out of the illegal position which they have found themselves in, or how much they may think they have got out of it, hon. members must believe with me that the intention of the Constitution is, and was, that transactions of this sort should not be perpetrated. The Honorary Minister then passed away to the Baltic Exchange, and argued that it was composed of men who were robbers, and who were putting up freights against our own selves. He brought in the famous quotation of Nero fiddling while Rome burned. I could not help thinking that the hon. gentleman and his colleagues were very good imitations of the Emperor Nero fiddling while Rome was burning. They fiddled on. They did not care twopence what the requirements of the State were. They know that our settlers are begging for railways in order to get their produce to market.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: And ships to take their wheat to England.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: They are gambling on the freight market, in order to get what they think will be something in excess of their needs for a year or two, at all events in excess of what they will require while they are in office. The Honorary Minister has just as much right to condemn the Baltic Exchange as he has to condemn the Stock Exchange. There are of course individual members of both exchanges who can be condemned.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: They are thieves, every one of them.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I would like the Honorary Minister to say that outside the Chamber.

Hon. R. H. Underwood: Of the Baltic Exchange?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Let the Honorary Minister say that outside. To condemn an institution of this sort, which controls the freight markets, an institution like the Stock Exchange which controls dealings in stocks, or an institution like the Metal Exchange created by the Prime Minister, Mr. Hughes, which will control the metals of Australia, is an extraordinary thing for any man to do.

Mr. Green: It is in the hands of the Germans.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The interjector thinks that the Baltic Exchange is in the Baltic, and that therefore it is a German institution. He should study his geography more closely. To condemn an exchange of this description because it happens to have a name which conveys to the hon. gentleman that it is somewhere in the midst of the Baltic Sea—

Hon. R. H. Underwood: The Germans are well into it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Is to say something which he cannot prove. He cannot even prove that the Germans are well in it. However, this is the sort of argument we are supposed to accept. We are also asked to accept the statement that the Government were not in a position to consult Parliament. The Government knew that at any rate the

Opposition were dead against any extension of the State Steamship Service. And so are a number of the people. Yet the Government say, "We could not come to Parliament for authority because we were pledged to secrecy." Who pledged them? The seller, of course, wanted to complete his deal; but was there any reason why the Government could not come to Parliament for authority to extend the fleet and enter into overseas shipping? They need not have mentioned names. I say the Government could easily have consulted Parliament. Then there is a red herring drawn across the trail by the statement that there are certain members of the community like the people who batten on the blood of soldiers killed on the battlefield, because they put up freights. But that is exactly what the Government are going to do; they are going to run this steamer on the high war freights; that is their justification for purchasing her at a high price. Further, we have the marvellous argument that this new boat will break up the meat ring, and that the first shot has been put in by this very plausible and laudable action of the Government. Again, we have a difference of opinion, because one end of the Government says that the meat ring has been broken up long since, while the other end maintains that the purchase of this boat is the first shot. In my opinion, the end nearer the door is perhaps right as against the other end. However, when the "Western Australia" was purchased, we were told that that would break up the meat ring.

The Minister for Lands: It did, too.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: When purchasing the "Western Australia" the Government said they were going to reduce freights on the North-West coast.

The Minister for Lands: So they did.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That they were going to help the small pastoralist.

The Minister for Lands: So they did.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: And then the Government chartered the boat to the great pastoralists. Three firms, Holmes Bros., Connor, Doberty & Durack, and

Gooch, monopolised the "Western Australia." And who can forget the scandal when the Royal Commission sat and the poor under-paid manager, who had taken on more than he could possibly handle, was hounded out?

Mr. Bolton: By whom?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: By the Government, who allowed him to be made a scapegoat, and paid him no retiring allowance, and nearly ruined him. The Government have played into the hands of the squatter kings all the time. They went to the meat sales and bid for cattle, and so put up the price on the small butchers, ruining numbers of them. They have started meat stalls, which have not reduced the cost of meat to anyone in the State, but have ruined many small butchers, who previously could earn a living. That is what the Government call breaking up the meat ring. Are we going to believe now that the "Kangaroo" is going to do what the "Western Australia" failed absolutely to do? The "Western Australia" since her purchase has cost all her value and more. We have lost more than the value of the "Western Australia" in the running of her. What has Queensland, with all its numerous freezing works and its tremendous meat export, been doing for the last 25 years? What have New South Wales and New Zealand been doing in the same connection? When I was in Queensland 25 years ago, huge freezing works had been erected at Brisbane and Townsville and elsewhere on the coast. Since then many hundreds of thousands of pounds have been expended in freezing works at Rockhampton and Townsville. Queensland has no difficulty in getting its meat shipped to foreign markets. We do not hear of State Steamship Services being established in Eastern Australia. Steamers are chartered for the purpose of transporting the frozen meat. Many of the foreign vessels which are now prizes were utilised in connection with the freezing industry. How is one steamer, which could not make more than one or at the outside two trips in a season, going to help the export of our harvest of 15 or 16 million bushels? But any argument,

apparently, is good enough to defend one's action when one is in the wrong. The arguments used by the Government to-night will not hold water, and will not carry conviction to one single member of this Chamber. The member for Irwin graciously accused me of desiring to get on the Treasury bench at any cost. He said that in his opinion this matter afforded better ground than the Nevanas contract for a want of confidence motion. The marvellous thing is that after expressing such an opinion, and after having voted against the Government on the other motion, the hon. member announced his intention of voting with the Government on the present occasion. That is consistency. Ever since I have been leader of the Opposition I have challenged the acts of the Government. Some two years ago I challenged the Government in connection with their illegal acts. This side endeavoured to amend the Address-in-reply, and the amendment was accepted by the Government as a want of confidence motion. No matter what construction the member for Irwin may place on my actions, I shall still continue to follow consistently the path of what I consider my duty. I have not the slightest desire to undertake the responsibility of clearing out the Augean stable which hon. members opposite have allowed to get into such a state of financial filth. I have not the slightest wish to undertake the straightening out of the finances, with a deficit of 1½ millions. But I am not going to shirk my duty; and when I find the Government, with at best a majority of only one, perpetrating these acts, spending large sums of money on enterprises which will of necessity prove a loss to the State sooner or later, when I find Ministers failing to profit by experience and continuing to perpetrate stupid blunders, then I intend, at any cost and at any inconvenience to myself, to turn the Government out of office and take charge with my friends whenever I can get a majority to endorse my motion. The Premier has said that there was not a single occasion when a special Appropriation Bill was brought down for a public work. His memory must be very

short, or it would have carried him back to the time when I was Premier and he was leader of the Opposition, and when I brought down a Bill for the construction of the Bullfinch railway. The House passed the measure. There was some opposition, but a large majority on both sides were in favour of the construction of the line. I was asked how I was going to finance the work. I said I would charge it up to Loan Suspense Account, adding that the Loan Estimates would be down in a few days time, and that I would provide for the work on those Loan Estimates, going on with it in the meantime. The then Opposition would not hear of it. They spent a whole night condemning me, and the present Premier was especially emphatic on the point. His criticism on that occasion was possibly even scathing. He pointed out that in his opinion I would not be acting legally in charging the work to Loan Suspense Account, notwithstanding that Loan Estimates were then in preparation and were to be submitted to the Chamber in the course of a few days. I said, "Very well, I will bring down an Appropriation Bill to-morrow;" and I did so, and the measure is on the statute-book—"An Act to apply from the Loan Suspense Account a sum of £40,000 for the construction of the Southern Cross-Bullfinch Railway." I brought that measure down the next day, with a special Message from the Governor, and put the Bill through all its stages. Yet to-night the Premier says it would be an absolute farce to bring down a Bill for such a purpose, and that there is no occasion whatever to bring down a special Appropriation Bill when the expenditure is provided on the Loan Estimates. Of course the procedure was a farce under the circumstances I have mentioned; but, still, the then Opposition were loud in their denunciation of my original proposal, and to meet the Opposition I gracefully gave way and brought in that Bill. I would have constructed the railway even without consulting Parliament, but I did not do as the hon. gentleman is always doing,

keep the matter secret, and it had not to be dragged out of me as many matters have had to be dragged out of him.

The Minister for Lands: You let it slip out at a dinner that you were going to build this railway.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It was in my Budget speech.

The Minister for Lands: It slipped out when the wine was in.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Nothing of the kind has ever happened with me. That is another of the Minister for Lands' delicate insinuations. He is a past master in the art. If such had been the case, I guarantee that the Minister could never have offered such an excuse for all the acts that he has been guilty of in the past four years, and they have been numerous. He cannot possibly say that he has been influenced by a glass of wine; he has carried out these transactions in secret because he knew that to make them public would probably damn the execution of his wishes. The result has been disastrous to the State. Figures prove it and no amount of sophistry on the part of the Premier or the Minister for Works or even the Minister for Lands himself will convince the majority of members of this Chamber, and the majority of electors of the State that their actions are other than detrimental to the best interests of Western Australia.

Mr. GILCHRIST: I only rise to enter my protest against a part of the speech delivered by the Premier in which he dealt with the acts of the last Ministry in purchasing the Dalkeith and Avondale estates. I contend that the Premier wasted the time of this House for the deliberate purpose—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in stating that the time of the House has been wasted.

Mr. GILCHRIST: I withdraw that, and state that the Premier made these references for the purposes of covering up his own acts with regard to the purchase of this steamer. I well remember in the good old days when my father held a stick over my head, I always told him of what my brother had done. We on this

side of the House are not concerned about the sins of the Wilson Government or of any other Government. All we want to have decided is the question whether the purchase of this particular steamer was constitutional, and also whether the purchase was justified at the present time. I do not think it was right on the part of the Premier to wash other people's linen that by so doing he might wash his own. It is a peculiar line of argument which seems to be quite traditional in this House, that the shortcomings and mistakes of previous Administrations are a justification for the shortcomings of the Ministry of the day. I am also much surprised at the remarks of the member for Irwin, for whom I have much respect. He said that the Liberal party last week descended from their high principles when they did not rest satisfied with the first vote, but moved a second amendment with regard to secret contracts in general, and he put forward the suggestion, which I say was quite unworthy of him, that the amendment was moved with no other object than to gain the Treasury bench. The decision in the first case was definite. We knew it could not possibly be altered, and the amendment was only moved in order to follow up the remark made by the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) and by members on this side of the House—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is not in order in referring to a previous debate which has already been determined.

Mr. GILCHRIST: I am new to the proceedings of the House and I hope I will be forgiven for any lapse in that direction. The second amendment was quite justified, because it declared a general principle which we had already spoken against. The hon. member then went on to say there was no action of the Government during the past four years that was so deserving of censure as the action in purchasing the "Kangaroo." Yet he voted in favour of the second amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition, an amendment which he now condemns. He says he is going to

vote against the amendment to strike out the item which is now being debated, and with which he is in accord, in so far as it is an emphatic protest, even if it is not carried, against the action of the Government in regard to this matter. If the amendment by any means is carried—and we know it will not be carried—then of course the amount would be re-voted when the change of Government came about. But if the amendment is defeated, we shall have entered an impressive protest against the action of the Government. If the member for Irwin is going to be consistent with his action of last week he must vote for the amendment. Last week there was the instance where he received his orders from a body.

Mr. James Gardiner: He did not receive his orders from any body. Don't you worry, young man.

Mr. GILCHRIST: Yet he voted with the Opposition.

Mr. James Gardiner: Yes, and you brought your principles down to the lowest form that has ever been done in the Chamber; the amendment was the lowest grab I have ever seen.

Mr. GILCHRIST: The hon. member says that he was not instructed by the executive and by his party to vote for the motion and the amendment and yet he was found voting with us for the very amendment which, he now says, was on the lowest principle it was possible for a party to get down to.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in referring to a debate which is past. He must confine himself to the particular item before the Committee.

Mr. GILCHRIST: We understand that up to a certain stage the negotiations with Sir John Biles were simply for the purpose of replacing the "Western Australia" for the North-West trade. I gathered from an interjection by the Honorary Minister that I was elected last year as a supporter of the State Steamship Service. That is absolutely incorrect. When the proposition was first brought before the North-West

people I signed the petition, and I would sign it again to-day. The reasons given in that petition were that there was a shipping combine which was raising the fares inordinately, and raising the prices of foodstuffs in that town. And for that reason I signed the petition. But I do not support the actions the Government have taken in instituting a service to relieve the position in the North-West, because I have found that the Government purchased more steamers than were necessary, and have used the service primarily to cheapen the price of meat in Perth instead of to help the small settlers and townspeople of the North-West.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: You will oppose them at the next election?

Mr. GILCHRIST: I will certainly oppose the methods adopted by the Ministry, as I intend to oppose the purchase of this steamer. The State Steamship Service has in its train a series of disasters, and it has wrecked the reputation of more than one.

The Minister for Lands: Tell us one.

Mr. GILCHRIST: Your own, and also that of the first manager. The State Steamship Service had a prominent place in the Labour policy when Ministers went before the electors, and rightly or wrongly it was endorsed by the people. Therefore, if the purchase of this steamer was for the replacing of the vessel that was doing the passenger trade of the "Koombana," or other Adelaide S.S. Company's vessel that was crowded out by the advent of the State Steamship Service, I would support it or even the building of such a steamer at reasonable cost, and I think that in such case the excessing of the Loan Bill would be justified. However, we find that both Sir John Biles and Mr. Stevens advised the Government that this vessel was unsuitable for that purpose. An entirely new undertaking was then entered upon. The Government propose to cater for the oversea trade. The Premier said that if the purchase had been for the purpose of starting a new service it would have been a differ-

ent proposition altogether, but as a matter of fact it was for the purpose of carrying on an old established service. But from his further statements, and the statements of the Minister for Works and others, we find that it is a new undertaking, that it is for the purpose of carrying on oversea trade. The Honorary Minister and the Minister for Works were hardly in accord with the Premier in regard to the purpose underlying the purchase of this steamer. According to the Premier the purchase was justified because vessels were not forthcoming for the Wyndham trade, but according to the Honorary Minister and the Minister for Works this steamer is being purchased in order to fight the shipping ring.

The Minister for Works: I never said so.

Mr. GILCHRIST: Well, the Honorary Minister said it, and emphasised it. We have already seen a quixotic crusade on the part of the Ministers against the meat combine, a crusade that has been conducted by selling sausages across three or four counters. Now we are to have a similarly quixotic crusade against this shipping combine, and probably with equal success. But why is there this new conversion of the Labour party to a crusade against the shipping combine? The present Prime Minister of Australia is reported to have told a Sydney audience this—

Prices of half the things we ate, drank, and wore to-day were regulated by an arrangement between combines, trusts, and rings in the country. He did not condemn that. He had no criticism for it; it was an inevitable stage in industrial and social development of the baby. Rings, trusts, were as much a consequence of modern progression as man was really a development of the baby. Rings, trusts, and combines were not all evil, and in some respects had been instruments of good.

And then, soon afterwards, the same hon. gentleman wrote for the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* a series of articles en-

titled "The Case for Labour." In one of these he said—

It is not only illogical and unfair to complain about the trust, it is also very foolish. For the trust is really a labour saving device and the latest and most effective. The anti-socialists who wish to destroy trusts are like the old Luddites who wished to destroy machinery.

Mr. Green: Did Mr. Hughes stop at that?

Mr. GILCHRIST: No, there is any amount more.

Mr. Green: See how unfair the hon. member is!

Mr. GILCHRIST: Not at all. If the hon. member likes I will give him the reference and he can turn it up.

Mr. Green: No thank you, I have read the lot.

Mr. GILCHRIST: Then Senator Henderson has a very interesting side-light on this contention of the Honorary Minister's that the shipping combine is doing a great deal of harm to Australia by raising freights against the people. This is what Senator Henderson said in the Senate in 1906 (Commonwealth *Hansard*, page 627) about the Coal Vend—

It has materially increased, not only its selling price, which I candidly believe it was entitled to do, but also the wages paid to the men engaged in producing coal. The coal combine has been of very great service up to the present moment—

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: What book are you quoting from?

Mr. GILCHRIST: What I have here is a series of extracts from a speech by W. E. Johnson, a member of the Federal Parliament. He quoted *Hansard* to the effect I have given, and he gave the page. You can look it up. Now with regard to the shipping combine itself. Here is the Federal *Hansard* for the 25th September, 1907, in which Senator Lynch is reported to have said—

I can quite realise that in Australia there has been such a thing as suicidal competition among companies engaged in carrying on industries. No doubt that competition has been carried on

to the absolute detriment of the people engaged in the industry, especially to the workers. I can remember the competition which prevailed in the maritime carrying trade 15 years ago. The shipping companies were running against each other in every direction, contending in an unfair and unwarrantable way for a small trade. Ultimately they were forced to reduce wages. Our standing counsel to them was to wipe out the suicidal competition. They could not do that unless they combined. I can quite understand circumstances arising which would warrant the formation of a combination of mill owners for the purpose of putting an end to suicidal competition. That brings me to the point that if combination among the workers is necessary and justifiable it is equally necessary and justifiable so far as employers are concerned. In season and out of season it was pointed out that in the maritime carrying trade it was owing to the suicidal competition that steamship companies were unable to pay a decent living wage. We urged them to combine, and they were very tardy in taking our advice. I do not care if certain persons wonder at my remarks. I quite see as great a necessity for combination amongst employers as amongst employees.

Now, what are we to do with this Labour party, which is introducing referendum proposals in order to deal with trusts and combines, Mr. . Facing Both Ways? Are they introducing the State Steamship Service in order to fight an iniquitous shipping combine, or are they purchasing this new steamer merely in order to add dignity to the service by reaching its tentacles out to the far ports of the world?

Mr. THOMSON: On the 29th September of this year, speaking in the House I gave my views in reference to the provision of loan moneys to the extent of £426,729 against expenditure which had been incurred without the authority of the House. I said then I was opposed to Parliament

being flouted. I feel just as strongly about this item of £145,000 for the purchase of a steamer being placed on the Estimates without the House having been consulted. To be consistent in my actions I am going to vote against this item.

Mr. Bolton: We know that; it is a party vote.

Mr. THOMSON: It is not. I resent that remark. The member for Geraldton declared that the Labour party were pledged to reform. I have also heard other Labour members remark that if the Liberals, when in power, had done what the present Government have done it would have been decried from one end of the country to another, and I say rightly so.

The Minister for Works: Where did you hear that?

Mr. THOMSON: Members on the Government side have made that remark privately; I am not at liberty to mention their names. It has been said that this House represents the people. If that is so—and I think we can safely claim that to a great extent it is—the people's representatives should have a say in matters of finance. The Honorary Minister told us why this purchase was made secretly—he admitted it was a secret purchase; the reason was that another place would not have given the Government an opportunity to flout the voice of the people. In times of stress such as the present, this steamer according to the Honorary Minister, was brought in the interests of the struggling settler and pastoralist who have to get their wheat and wool to market and who are being strangled by the Baltic Exchange. I wish to show how absurd that contention is. On the Honorary Minister's own showing, the holding capacity of the "Kangaroo" is 6,700 tons. If we export 14,000,000 bushels of wheat, it will represent roughly 375,000 tons dead weight and this steamer, which has been purchased to get our wheat and wool to market, would have to make a trip to the Old country and back in less than a week because it would take 56 trips to move the wheat surplus

alone. This is a herring which Ministers are drawing across the track.

Mr. Heitmann: Why not a barracouta?

Mr. THOMSON: It is very smelly at any rate.

The Minister for Works: What is smelly?

Mr. THOMSON: The statement that this steamer was purchased to initiate bulk handling of wheat.

Mr. Foley: No one said that.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister for Lands, when at Beverley, said the main object in purchasing this steamer was to place our produce on the Home markets so that our farmers would be able to enter into competition—

The Minister for Lands: I said nothing of the sort.

Mr. THOMSON: Then the Minister was mis-reported.

The Minister for Lands: I said we should do it.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister said that was the main object of the Government in purchasing the steamer.

The Minister for Lands: You quote the report.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not intend to discuss the merits of the steamer or whether she should be propelled by steam or oil. Members however, should give their reasons for voting on this matter and my reason for supporting the amendment is—

Mr. McDowall: Because your party are.

Mr. THOMSON: No.

Mr. Foley: Are you in the cave?

Hon. J. Mitchell: The member for Leonora is in the bag.

Mr. THOMSON: I am voting against the item on principle. The Premier makes one feel disgusted at the standard of politics in this House. He stated that, when the Liberals were in power, they purchased estates from their friends simply because they were Liberals. I deprecate suggestions of that kind.

The Minister for Works: That is only spoils to the victors.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Your policy.

Mr. THOMSON: Assuming that the previous Government had been guilty

of such actions—and I am pleased for the credit of politics in this State that the leader of the Opposition refuted the Premier's statement in regard to the Dalkeith Estate—that would be no excuse for members of the present Government doing likewise.

Mr. Bolton : He did not refute it.

Hon. J. Mitchell : He did, satisfactorily to every right thinking man.

Mr. THOMSON : We should rise above such tactics and endeavour to keep our politics clean.

The Minister for Works : Set an example.

Mr. THOMSON : I have never cast any innuendoes in this House ; most of them have come from the Government side. It is regrettable that the Premier should endeavour to excuse his actions by the plea—"You did it." That is no justification. To quote the member for Canning, two wrongs do not make a right. The member for Irwin said the amendment discussed the other night was one of the lowest grabs for office possible. The leader of the Opposition was quite justified in tabling the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN : Order ! The hon. member was in the Chamber when I called attention to the fact that members must not discuss a matter already debated this session. Standing Order 123 states definitely, and the hon. member should realise it, that no member shall allude to any debate of the same session.

Mr. THOMSON : I have to plead the same ignorance as the member for Gascoyne.

The CHAIRMAN : The hon. member should not be in a position to plead to the same fault because he was in the Chamber at the time.

Mr. THOMSON : I had no intention to transgress the rules of the House. A remark made by the member for Mount Margaret on page 242 of *Hansard*—

The CHAIRMAN : The hon. member is not in order in quoting from the debates of this session.

Mr. THOMSON : I am prepared to give the Government credit and to vote

for them when their actions are in the right direction.

Mr. Bolton : You have never voted for us yet.

Mr. THOMSON : I will refer the hon. member to *Hansard*.

Mr. Bolton : What, on a party question ?

Mr. THOMSON : Party is the curse of politics in Australia to-day. We have had evidence of that recently, where members voted contrary to their inclinations in order to save their party. The Premier stated that he had himself protested most emphatically against the action of the then Liberal Government in purchasing these various estates without authority, and I say he was justified in so protesting. As a member of the Opposition and of this Chamber, and representing some 4,000 electors, I have the right to voice my protest against the action of the Government in purchasing a steamer at a time like this. They can finance a steamer because it is their own pet policy and their own scheme. Yet we find settlers in various portions of the country, who have been induced to go out on the land 30 miles from a railway station, who have absolutely no hope of farming successfully and carrying on at a profit. We have railways authorised, the money for which was passed during last session, but we find that this money has been earmarked for other purposes. We have no money with which to build railways and yet the Government can find money for the purchase of this vessel.

Mr. Green : To carry your wheat.

Mr. THOMSON : That is just my argument. I want the wheat that is grown in my district and in other districts of the State carried to the port.

Mr. Green : You want it carried from the port.

Mr. THOMSON : It would take 67 boats of the capacity of the "Kangaroo" to remove all the wheat from Western Australia. The hon. member tells me that this boat was purchased in order to carry the wheat from the port to

the world's markets. We want first of all to get it to the port.

Mr. Green: And to get it away.

Mr. THOMSON: We will get it away all right.

Mr. Green: You had to go down on your knees to "Billy" Hughes.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. I never went down on my knees to "Billy" Hughes, as he calls him, to ask him to take wheat away from Australia.

Mr. Green: You are depending on him now.

Mr. THOMSON: Did the farmers of the State ask how to do this? What are they protesting against now? They are protesting because they were never consulted, and only at the 11th hour was it decided to accept representation from the farmers and settlers. The hon. member wants it to go forth that the Labour Government have come to the assistance of the farmer. This wheat question is giving me great anxiety. What have the Government done in Western Australia so far as looking after the farmer is concerned? I have a letter in my pocket, showing that a farmer actually bought chaff at £6 10s. per ton from his neighbour and made all arrangements for the deal, having the authority of the Farmers' Assistance Board. To-day he gets an account for £10 10s. per ton.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must deal with item 76. It is useless for him to get away from the question in this manner. I cannot allow him to go on in that vein. He is taking undue advantage of the license which has been given to him.

Mr. THOMSON: I am sorry to have been drawn off the path by the member for Kalgoorlie.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member should not have allowed himself to have been drawn off the track.

Mr. THOMSON: I stated on the 29th September what my intentions were, and I see no reason to change them. I am going to vote for the amendment.

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

Ayes	15
Noes	£..	..	20

Majority against .. 5

Ayes.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Robinson
Mr. Connolly	Mr. Smith
Mr. George	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Gilchrist
Mr. Nairn	(Teller).

Noes.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Collier	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Foley	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Green	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Heilmann	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Johnson	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. McDowall	Mr. Bolton
	(Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

Item—State Fish Supply, £600.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: How is this money to be spent? We were told the other day that the Government intended to close down the State fish supply.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This item represents expenditure incurred in fitting up the "Una," in supplying ice boxes for storing fish, and in fitting up another boat—the "Torrens," I think. It also includes expenditure in connection with the fishing station at Shark Bay.

Item—Sawmills, £1,509.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I thought the State sawmills were practically closed down. At any rate, it is time we stopped spending on mills that are doing nothing.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is for machinery in connection with flooring boards.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Who is going to sell the boards for you?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is an unlimited demand for flooring boards.

Hon. Frank Wilson : For karri flooring boards ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : Yes. We have a large quantity of them well seasoned, and there is a shortage of flooring boards. These boards will be powellised, and there will be a good market for them.

Hon. J. D. Connolly : Does karri make good flooring ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : Yes ; splendid flooring.

Hon. Frank Wilson : No.

Item—State Hotels and Tourists' Resorts, £10,663.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : Do the Government contemplate using loan moneys for tourists' resorts ? How much of this item is to be spent on State hotels ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : The item includes Bolgart State hotel erection and furniture, Corrigin hotel erection and furniture, a small amount for the Kwollyin hotel, £400 for the reservoir at Rottnest, and small amount outstanding for the Wongan Hills hotel.

Hon. J. D. Connolly : That is £400 for tourists' resorts ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : State hotels and tourists' resorts are under the same department, and therefore appear together.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : Surely it is unusual to buy furniture from Loan funds.

The Premier : In the first instance, the furniture is bought from Loan funds.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : It is strange to find £10,000 provided for State hotels when developmental works are starved.

The Premier : We were pledged to this expenditure by the licensing boards.

Hon. J. MITCHELL : The buildings might have been postponed. I know the hotel at Bolgart is going to be a white elephant.

Vote put and passed.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

BILL—SUPPLEMENTARY LOAN, £1,300,000.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 19th October.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [11.2] : I do not intend to keep the House any time in connection with this Bill because the passing of the Estimates practically settles the question of the Loan Bill authorisation. This Bill is governed by the Loan Estimates which we have just passed, but I do want to point out that the Government could well reduce the total pretty considerably.

The Premier : It is really to cover the estimated expenditure to March, 1917.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : I think the Premier will want this money to cover his deficit. He could reduce many of the items if he tried to do so, and I do not think he need provide for much beyond the end of the financial year, because we shall have to meet again before the 30th June to review the situation. The finances are in such a parlous condition that it will be necessary to consult Parliament. Therefore, I anticipate Parliament will be called together before the close of the financial year. In the Schedule I can see items which could well be reduced to the tune of half a million of money. I want the Premier to restrain his propensity for raising money for public works.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

Mr. Holman in the Chair, the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 6—agreed to.

First Schedule :

Hon. FRANK WILSON : I do not propose to bother about the items except that relating to the steamships. The House has decided that the purchase of the steamer "Kangaroo" shall be made, but there is an item of £200,000 for steamships and the cost of the "Kangaroo" is £140,000. I want an assurance from the Premier that Parliament will be consulted before he enters into

a further contract for the purchase of steamers.

The PREMIER: This is not an authority to spend; it is an authority to raise the money, and the actual amount we have raised for the purchase of the "Kangaroo" is £175,000, because we have had to borrow it at 4 per cent. The £200,000 is an additional amount which may be required before March, 1917. It may be necessary to make alterations to the "Kangaroo" to meet the changed conditions which we expect may occur, and also pay the instalment on the new steamer, but that cannot be done until we approach Parliament on the Loan Estimates. I shall give an assurance that if we have to purchase a new steamer we will come to Parliament with the Loan Estimates for the purpose of doing so. There is no intention of spending this money. As a matter of fact, we cannot spend it until we introduce the Loan Estimates for the purpose.

Mr. Robinson: You will not buy another steamer without consulting Parliament?

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You will not enter into a contract?

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I want that on record because the Premier's explanation is so contrary to his previous attitude. I want it clearly understood that he will not enter into a contract or buy another steamer until Parliament has had an opportunity of discussing the matter.

The PREMIER: I will give that undertaking, and I am exceedingly delighted to hear the hon. member ask that I should do so, because it is evidence that he appreciates the fact that I will be here until 1917. There is no intention of purchasing a new steamer without first consulting Parliament. In fact we could not get a contract for the building of a new steamer until 12 months after the conclusion of the war.

Mr. Robinson: Besides, this ship can carry all the wheat.

The PREMIER: However that may be, I will give an undertaking that if and

when it is intended to purchase a new steamer we will come to Parliament before proceeding in the matter.

Schedule put and passed.

Second and third schedules—agreed to.

[*The Speaker resumed the Chair.*]

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

All Stages.

Message from the Governor's Deputy received and read, recommending appropriation in connection with the Bill.

In accordance with the resolutions adopted in Committees of Supply and Ways and Means leave obtained to introduce the Appropriation Bill, which was read a first and a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

Mr. McDowall in the Chair, the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Application of moneys:

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Will the Treasurer say whether this covers the excess expenditure of last year?

The PREMIER: Yes, the Bill appropriates excess expenditure to the various items shown on the Estimates. There is an increase in the item Advance to Treasurer, because it is estimated that almost immediately we shall have to overdraw the amount provided on the Loan Estimates. It was originally estimated at £50,000, but now I am informed it will be very much above that if we are to continue to provide stores and other requirements to settlers until they get the returns from their crops. In order to conform with what we consider to be the law as advised by the Auditor General and Solicitor General, we have also provided that advances under this schedule might be made in like manner out of the Government Property Sales Fund, even if the amount is only £1, instead of making an adjustment between divisions. Previously, if one was exceeded and another under-drawn, we could set one

against the other, but to get better control I have instructed that all items of excess must be approved by the Treasurer and charged against the Treasurer's advance and then submitted to Parliament in this Bill. The excess items are on all fours with those on the Revenue and Loan Estimates which have been discussed.

Clause put and passed.

Schedules A, B, C, D, and E.—agreed to.

Schedule F:

Mr. GEORGE: The Premier is asking for contingencies £30,000 more for the State Implement Works and £110,000 more for the State Sawmills.

The Premier: That was overdrawn last year.

Mr. GEORGE: It would be more satisfactory if we had the balance sheet. We have to pass this money, but it is neither satisfactory nor businesslike to have to pass such excesses with no particulars before us.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have been trying for six weeks to get the balance sheet for the State Sawmills and I hope to be in possession of it to-morrow.

Mr. GEORGE: The trouble is we are asked to vote £110,000 without having the balance sheet.

The Minister for Works: You voted that on the Estimates.

Mr. GEORGE: If the Minister has been trying to get the balance sheet for six weeks, how can these enterprises be considered to be in a satisfactory condition?

Schedule put and passed.

Schedule G, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor's Deputy received and read notifying assent to the Industries Assistance Act Amendment Bill.

QUESTION—COMMONWEALTH CONSTITUTION REFERENDUMS.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (without notice) asked the Premier: What are the intentions of the Government with regard to the referendum proposals; is it intended to introduce a Bill before the close of this session?

The PREMIER: So far we have received only telegraphic communication from Melbourne and I cannot be expected to introduce a Bill on all fours with the measures in other States until they send me a draft of the measure. I am waiting for the draft, but I do not propose to hold up Parliament pending the receipt of the draft.

Mr. George: What is going to happen then?

The PREMIER: The Minister for Lands now informs me that the draft is here. I suggest that the matter be allowed to stand over until to-morrow, when I shall make an announcement on the question.

House adjourned at 11.29 p.m.