

BILL—MINES REGULATION.

Bill withdrawn.

Order of the Day for second reading read.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [10.53]: I move—
That the Bill be withdrawn.

I may explain that by an oversight the wrong title has been given. It is not the title of the Bill I wish to introduce, which provides for an amendment of the Mines Regulation Act, 1906. I therefore desire to withdraw the Bill with a view to introducing one, with the correct title, to-morrow.

Question passed; the Bill withdrawn.

House adjourned at 10.54 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 1st September, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Further report by the Auditor General on State trading accounts under the Trading Concerns Act for the year ended 30th June, 1915.

By the Attorney General: Report of the Senate of the University for the year ended 31st December, 1914.

By the Minister for Works: 1, By-laws of the Cue-Day Dawn roads board. 2, By-laws of the Darling Range roads board (special roll for loan pool).

QUESTION—STATE TIMBER DEPOT, METROPOLITAN AREA.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1, Have the Government yet decided to establish in the metropolitan area a timber depôt for the sale of surplus scantling firewood and coal? 2, If no such step is proposed, why do the Government hesitate to patriotically push local products?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, Depôts will be opened as soon as it is found desirable to do so.

QUESTION—COLLIE COAL.

State Metropolitan Depot.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that coal importers are charging at the rate of £3 12s. a ton for imported coal for domestic use and £2 8s. per ton for Collie coal? 2, Is he also aware that coal costs at the pit's mouth in Collie about 11s. per ton? 3, Seeing the advantages to be derived by both the consumers, the miners, and the State railways, from an increased use of Collie coal, will the Government set apart a metropolitan depôt where householders can get their supplies at a reasonable rate; such depôt to be controlled by the railway or some other department?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, Yes. 3, The establishment of a depôt for the retail of Collie or other coal is a matter for the coal companies or local suppliers.

IMPORTED COAL AND STATE STEAMERS.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1, Is it a fact that the steamers "Kwinana" and "Gorgon" left about the same time recently on a North-West trip, the

former carrying imported coal and the latter local? 2, What special reason does the manager of the State steamship service advance for preference to the imported article?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. Under a recent arrangement the Singapore steamers carry a small quantity, about 300 tons, of Collie coal on each trip. 2, I am unaware of the special reason advanced as the manager of the State steamship service is at present out of the State, but the matter will be further considered upon his return.

QUESTION—COAL, IMPORTED, FOR RAILWAYS AND STEAMERS.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1, What is the price paid by the State Government for imported coal used in the railway and steamship service? 2, Has any increase been granted, and, if so, what amount per ton? 3, What annual rental is paid by Howard Smith Co. to the Railway Department for ground used by the company at Fremantle as a dépôt for imported coal? 4, What amount does the Railway Department receive from the said company in the shape of shunting and other charges?

The PREMIER replied: 1, The prices paid by the Railway Department under present contract for imported locomotive coal are:—Fremantle, 23s. 6d. and 24s. per ton; Albany and Bunbury, 25s. and 25s. 6d. per ton; Geraldton, 28s. and 28s. 6d. per ton (according to pit). The prices paid by the State steamship service, 30s. 6d. per ton, trimmed in the bunkers. 2, Yes. An average of 3s. 2d. per ton as compared with previous contract. This is due to increase in steamer freights (Railway Department). In the case of the steamship service, since the existing contract was entered into last December, there has been an increase of 3d. per ton, caused by a new port rate at Newcastle. 3, £78 per annum. 4, Ex Victoria Quay, 1s. per ton; ex North Wharf, 2s. 6d. per ton.

QUESTION — EXPEDITIONARY FORCES, RETURNED SOLDIERS.

Mr. CARPENTER asked the Premier: In the absence of any organised public action will the Government arrange some means by which the people may express public recognition of the services of our returned soldiers?

The PREMIER replied: I have been in consultation with His Worship the Mayor. We conferred with the Military Commandant and the officer commanding the No. 8 Australian General Hospital, Fremantle. As a result the Mayor of Perth submitted a proposal to the council that a committee might be formed in the metropolitan area consisting of representatives of the Government and various municipalities for the purpose of organising public receptions to returned soldiers. The City Council has approved of this proposition, and a public meeting will be convened for next week with the object of forming a committee.

QUESTION—ROCKY BAY, PROPOSED RAILWAY BRIDGE.

Mr. CARPENTER asked the Minister for Works: What progress has been made to date with the preparatory work in connection with the proposed new bridge at Rocky Bay?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: A survey is in progress to determine the best position for this bridge, and numerous borings have been made to ascertain the nature of the foundations. Further, a cast-iron cylinder is now being manufactured which will be sunk in a suitable spot, by means of which the load that may be safely borne by the substratum may be obtained. Designs for the superstructure have been in progress for some time, and now await the result of foundation tests for completion.

QUESTION — SEWERAGE FILTER BEDS.

Mr. HARDWICK asked the Minister for Water Supply: Is it a fact that the sewage matter is being emptied into the

Swan River before reaching the filter beds?

The PREMIER replied: No.

QUESTION—OVERHEAD RAILWAY BRIDGE, EAST PERTH.

Mr. HARDWICK asked the Premier: Is it the intention of the Government to construct the bridge over the railway line in Summer-street? 2, If so, when will the work be started?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, As soon as funds will permit.

QUESTION—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEALS, ACCRUED PAYMENTS.

Mr. SMITH asked the Premier: 1, Has he given full effect to his promise to pay the civil servants the whole of the accrued amounts due to them under the decision of the Appeal Board? 2, If not, what is the reason for the delay in making the final payments?

The PREMIER replied: 1, The Government have fulfilled their promise to raise all officers to the minimum value of their offices as assessed by the Public Service Appeal Board, and to pay on that basis as from 1st July, 1911. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—LAND RENTS, PAYMENT AFTER HARVEST.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Why is the Lands Department refusing to grant short extensions of time to pay rents after harvest, when applied for by deserving settlers who have managed to carry on without other assistance from the Government? 2, If these small payments of rent are made by the Industries Assistance Board, as insisted by the Lands Department, what is the position of the settler in regard to the disposal of his crop?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, The Government having provided by the medium of the Industries

Assistance Act for the advance of money at a low rate of interest for meeting overdue land rents, selectors are expected to take advantage of the provisions of the Act, but in cases where the amount owing is very small, the question of an extension of time for payment is considered, each case being dealt with on its merits. 2, In cases where the amount of rents due to the Lands Department is advanced by the board, the selector will not be restricted with regard to the disposal of his crop; the advance is made on the security of the land.

QUESTION—MAIZE IMPORTATION AND CUSTOMS DUTY.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Minister for Lands: Have the Government exhausted all efforts to induce the federal authorities to refund the £12,000 customs duty paid by the State Government on maize imported solely to assist farmers in distress?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I would like to make a statement as a reply to the hon. member's question, explaining what has been done in regard to the matter. It will be remembered that some time ago, when it was recognised that we would be short of fodder supplies in this State, the Government determined, on the advice of the expert officers, to import. Inquiries were made and we found we could not get oats at an economical figure in the Commonwealth, or, in fact, from any part of the world, and it was then decided to get a supply of maize, which, it was considered, would take the place of oats as food for poultry, etc. When this was determined upon, inquiries were made throughout Australia to see whether there was any supply of maize available and we found that there was not. We then went oversea and eventually secured a shipment on favourable terms from the Argentine. Just about this time the Commonwealth decided that, in view of the fact that wheat had to be imported, they would take the duty off wheat, and we made representations that the Commonwealth Government should also remove

the duty on maize. We made no progress, but proceeded to settle the purchase, and while the maize was coming to Western Australia, we kept on making representations to the Federal Government through the various members, particularly the member for Fremantle (Mr. Burchell) in the hope of securing the removal of the duty. After the maize arrived we sold it to the farmers and others on the distinct understanding that a certain amount per bushel, speaking from memory, I think it was 9d., was added for duty, and that if the duty was removed a refund of that sum would be made. The representations to the Federal Government in regard to the removal of the duty were renewed by the Premier and the Minister for Works when they were in the Eastern States, and it was pointed out that in view of the fact that the duty had been removed in respect of bran, pollard and wheat, it was only fair that the removal should be extended to maize. Still no progress was made. Then, later on, we discovered that the Commonwealth had even gone to the extent of removing the duty on oats which were imported into Victoria. We had obtained a supply of oats from Tasmania, and we thought it was grossly unfair that we should have to pay duty on maize after having tried to secure it in Australia without success. Consequently, feeling strongly about the matter, I interviewed the Federal members representing W.A. and also saw the Minister for Customs, the Prime Minister and the Attorney General when I was in the Eastern States. I then pointed out the gross injustice to Western Australia, and emphasised the point that we could not get the maize in Australia, and that, consequently, we were forced to go outside, at the same time pointing out that we did get the oats in Australia, and that Victoria, who had gone outside the Commonwealth for oats used for exactly the same purpose as our maize, had succeeded in getting a removal of the duty. I made all these representations, and now I regret to say that only yesterday I received a wire stating that our request had been consid-

ered by the Commonwealth Government, who had declined to remove the duty. I regret that the efforts of our Government in regard to the removal of that duty were not successful.

SELECT COMMITTEE, PERTH-FRE- MANTLE ROAD.

Extension of Time.

On motion by Mr. R. J. STUBBS the time for bringing up the select committee's report was extended to Wednesday, 15th September.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, HORSE-RACING CONTROL.

Extension of Time.

On motion by Mr. BOLTON the time for bringing up the select committee's report was extended to Wednesday, 15th September.

BILL—MARRIAGE ACT AMEND- MENT.

Introduced by Mr. Thomson and read a first time.

PAPERS — PARLIAMENTARY AL- LOWANCES, REDUCTION.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Perth)
[4.48]: 1 move—

That all papers and correspondence in connection with the proposal of the Deputy Premier to members to reduce their Parliamentary allowances by 7.89 per cent. be laid on the table of the House.

There is some uncertainty as to whether members' allowances are being reduced or not. Some members have agreed to the reduction up to 30th June, but on principle have declined to allow their allowances to be reduced since that date, their contention being that the question is one for Parliament and Parliament only, more especially since Parliament has been called together. On the 24th

April, 1915, the Acting Premier wrote to members as follows—

No doubt you are aware the members of the civil service, and Government servants generally, have accepted the proposal of the Government that they should work reduced hours and accept a proportionate reduction in salary, which works out at 7.89 per cent. Having been approached by several members of Parliament who are desirous of falling into line and contributing in a like degree by accepting a similar reduction of their Parliamentary allowance I should be glad if you would intimate to me your wishes in connection with the matter. In order to explain the position taken up by certain members on this side I will read the letter which I sent in reply. Under date 30th April I wrote to the Acting Premier as follows—

I am in receipt of your letter of the 24th inst regarding reduction of hours and payment in the civil service, amounting to 7.89 per cent. You asked to be informed if I am willing to forego a corresponding proportion of my Parliamentary allowance. This seems an unnecessary question to ask me, as surely you have not forgotten that I moved in the House last session that both Ministers' and members' allowances should be reduced by a much greater amount, and which could have been in operation for the past three months had the Government desired it, as it was by their votes and the votes of their supporters that my motion was defeated. I presume that the Government are adopting this course now as Parliament is not in session and it is therefore impossible to obtain legislative sanction to this proposal. In the circumstances I shall be glad to meet the wishes of the Government by forfeiting 7.89 per cent. of my monthly allowance for the remainder of this current financial year. Parliament will necessarily meet immediately afterwards (which Assembly, I need hardly remind you, is the only legitimate body to deal with this matter) and I shall then have much

pleasure in affording the Government my assistance in amending the Payment of Members Act so as to give legal authority for this or a much greater reduction of Ministers' and members' allowances as may be necessary to meet the requirements of the financial year 1915-16.

This letter explains my position and the position of other members, and it is in order that the country may be fully seized of the true position that I am asking the Government to lay the papers on the table. Without those papers the position may be misunderstood, for it would be a half truth to say that certain members who professed to be in favour of a reduction of Parliamentary allowances have not fallen in with the proposal of the Government. It is only on principle that I and others disagreed with the reduction being made after June.

Mr. Bolton: Nonsense ! meanness.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is not nonsense. My letter and a similar letter written by other members show that—

Mr. Bolton: Yours has been read to advertise your generosity.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It would take a lot of reading to advertise the hon. member's generosity, so far at any rate as his Parliamentary allowance is concerned. It is only on principle that I have refused since June, and I want that to be clearly shown to the country. The laying of the papers on the Table will show exactly why certain members consented to the reduction until the 30th June only. It is simply because they wish to maintain the rights of Parliament. Parliamentary allowances are not to be classed with salaries of civil servants, at the will of the Executive, because the Executive have no control over Parliamentary allowances.

Mr. Heitmann: It has never been contended that they have.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I think so, seeing that they opposed a substantial reduction, and then brought in a nominal reduction of less than £2 a month while Parliament was in recess. It

would appear from yesterday's *West Australian* that the Government intend to discontinue this small reduction made in respect to the public service. The newspaper reports that it is the intention of the Government to revert to full time from the 1st October next. Then the Premier was asked by the reporter the reason for the reversion to full time, and the Premier replied that the Government had taken the step owing to continual requests from associations and different sectional unions: The association would probably be the Railway Association, and one can imagine the Premier saying, in answer to Mr. Hunt, the general secretary of that association, "Yes, if it is not suitable to you we will bring it back to the full time"; and to Mr. McCallum, the secretary of the Trades Hall, "We will go back if it is causing you inconvenience." I am only instancing this to show the necessity of impressing on the Government the fact that Parliament and Parliament alone has the right to deal with Parliamentary allowances during war time.

Mr. Bolton: We will give you yours back; it is all right.

Mr. Green: Has the hon. member subscribed anything since 30th June?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: No, on principle I have refused to subscribe since 30th June, but I will gladly consent to a much greater reduction, or even to the entire suspension of Parliamentary allowances, if necessary.

Mr. Green: That is the cloven hoof.

The Minister for Works: He knows he is quite safe.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I think it is wrong for members to draw any allowance during war time.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must discuss the motion. He is pursuing a line of discussion which will lead to still further discussion. I want to check it.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I am only showing my reasons for desiring that these papers should be laid on the Table. They will show that certain members have not contributed at all, while others have contributed up to a point, but

on principle will not contribute further. Is the Premier willing to carry out his suggestion and give Parliament an opportunity of confirming this reduction? Those members who have declined to contribute since the 30th June are perfectly willing to submit to any reduction at all, even to the whole of their salaries, during war time if necessary.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: There is nothing to prevent you doing it if you like.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The request for these papers requires no further argument from me. I have given two reasons why they should be laid on the Table, the first to show who have contributed and the second why other members have not done so.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder [5.0]): The Government have no objection to placing these papers on the Table for the information of the hon. member, or any others who may be interested in the subject. I think members are perfectly well aware of the circumstances under which this reduction was made. During the recess the Government had decided to reduce the salaries of public servants—and their hours as well—by 7.89 per cent., and, whilst doing that, we afforded members an opportunity, if they so desired, to fall into line with the public service. The hon. member seems to infer that there was more or less compulsion in the matter. We know perfectly well that Parliament is the only body authorised to decide whether there should be a reduction or an increase in members' allowances, and in this case the only persons who had authority to decide the matter were the individual members themselves. The Government simply wrote to members and pointed out what had been decided upon in regard to the public service, and gave them an opportunity, if they so desired, to fall into line. In asking for the papers, the hon. member might well have omitted the reference to the return to the full 48 hours per week and also the reference to the Government taking instructions from Mr. Hunt, the secretary of the Railways union, and Mr. McCallum of the Trades Hall.

Mr. Bolton: That was the object of his motion.

Mr. Munsie: He only inferred that they did so. He has no information that they did.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is the usual assumption with some hon. members that the Government go to what is known as head-quarters for instructions. The hon. member is quite wrong in this case as the first intimation that Mr. Hunt, Mr. McCallum, or anyone else had in regard to the matter was when it appeared in the *West Australian* yesterday morning.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: The Premier said it was being done at the request of the associations or unions.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: He did no such thing as take instructions.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: I did not say that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was equivalent to that.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: The Premier said it was at their suggestion.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: He did not.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Perth made reference to this matter when discussing the question but his reference, I took it, was made so that he might draw a comparison with what was done in the case of members of Parliament. The Minister has given a denial and I fear that, if I allow further discussion on the point, it may be extended considerably. The Minister having given the denial, that is all that is necessary.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I, too, think that the discussion might develop. I referred to it only because I thought the hon. member went somewhat out of his way to drag in the names of Mr. Hunt and Mr. McCallum. I am content to leave it with the statement that neither of those gentlemen was aware of the intentions of the Government in regard to the matter.

Mr. Heitmann: It would be dishonourable if they had been.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What is the position to-day? Are you still deducting from members' salaries?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: From those members who have intimated to the Government their willingness to have a reduction made.

Mr. Bolton: Not from the member for Perth.

Hon. Frank Wilson: And yet the civil servants have gone back to full pay?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not till the first of next month.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do you propose to deduct from members' pay after the 1st October?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, not after that date. As I explained, the only desire of the Government was to give members an opportunity to fall into line with public servants. The reduction took effect on the same day as in the public service, and the original position will be reverted to on the same day. As the hon. member said, some members had objections to a reduction being made, and they gave their reasons and the reasons, I suppose, are sufficient for themselves and no doubt will be sufficient for the public as well. The papers will afford the hon. member the information he desires, which information I believe, after all, the country is entitled to have. On that score, the Government have no objection to the papers being made available and laid on the Table.

Question put and passed.

MOTION — DISTRICT SURVEY OFFICES, TO REOPEN.

Debate resumed from the 11th August on the motion by the Hon. J. Mitchell—"That in the opinion of this House, it is advisable that the district survey offices be reopened."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [5.6]: This motion is another protest against economy.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Is it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think on every occasion the hon. member has spoken he has urged economy, and immediately the Government proceed to practise that which he preaches, he protests.

Hon. Frank Wilson: He wants efficiency with it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know of no occasion when we have economised by abolishing an officer, by reducing a staff or in any other way, and have not had a protest from the member for Northam or some other member of the Opposition.

Mr. Munsie: Or a motion for a select committee to find out why.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is true of this Chamber to an extent but it is very true indeed of another place, because members there are not content with entering a protest, but they go to the expense of having a select committee to inquire. One would almost be justified in believing that they wished to go to the utmost extreme in building up the cost of government rather than encourage and assist the Government to reduce it. I am prepared to admit that if all the hon. gentleman's statements were correct, there would be some justification for the retention of the district survey offices. But the hon. member evidently spoke without the book because he read into the responsibilities of the district survey officers all sorts of responsibilities which concern the policy of the Government and the responsibilities of the Minister, and also took away from the Under Secretary in Perth a lot of the duties which he has to carry out. In other words, the hon. member was going to centralise in the district survey offices the policy of the Government in the matter of advances to settlers and the general policy of land settlement. Let us take some pains to follow the hon. member in his arguments when submitting the motion. He said the sale of land was pretty extensive, and I am inclined to think he had his tongue in his cheek when he said that land settlement would go on apace during this year. Members know that is totally incorrect; we cannot expect land settlement to go on apace during the next year. The number of men we are sending away to assist the Empire in its present struggle is an evidence that a lot of our young men, who, the ordinary course of events, would have selected land as they reached matur-

ity, will not be here to do so, and unfortunately quite a number of them will never return. Again, the prospect of getting immigrants is very remote indeed, and will be remote for some years to come. Consequently, we have to depend upon a depleted population in Australia for our increased land settlement, as we cannot look oversea to get any assistance. Yet the hon. member argued that the district survey offices should be retained, because land settlement will go on apace during the next 12 months. The hon. member also said that the survey work was very extensive indeed. In order to show that again the hon. member was speaking without any knowledge—

Hon. J. Mitchell: It was extensive; it is killed now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. gentleman says it is killed now. In other words, he would have us believe that the Government had prevented land settlement.

Mr. Munsie: He killed it and left it for you to bury.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We all know that land settlement has fallen off to a very great extent owing to the wild policy of the hon. member himself. We do not need to go into those details again in connection with this motion, but a lot of the unpopularity of farming to-day is due to the lack of judgment on the part of the hon. member when he was Minister for Lands.

Mr. E. B. Johnston interjected.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As the member for Williams-Narrogin points out, we have to introduce a Bill shortly to try to overcome some of the great difficulties under which the farmers have been struggling, owing, I might say, to the optimism of the member for Northam.

Mr. Green: Maladministration.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You promised it four years ago.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Let us look at what has been done during the last five years in connection with the survey work to which the hon. member referred. In 1910-11, 3,201,000 acres was surveyed in the various districts where district survey offices had been established

at a total cost of £72,652. In 1911-12 the area was 3,024,502 acres at a cost of £92,112. Though there was a decrease in the area surveyed, the cost of the work went up. That, of course, is largely explained because a considerable amount of the money was expended in the more difficult areas such as Bridgetown. In 1912-13 the area decreased to 1,416,005 acres and the cost was £58,839. We were just then beginning to feel the effects of the drought of 1911, which were reflected in the decreased application for land, and the people were beginning to appreciate the difficulties of farming and to realise that it was not so profitable as had been represented during the years of 1909, 1910, and 1911. In 1913-14 there was again a falling-off to 615,174 acres, and the expenditure dropped to £32,005. In 1914-15 the area decreased to 204,933 acres and the total cost to £13,193. It was when I received figures demonstrating the decreased amount of work that I began to realise it had fallen to such an extent that, in the interests of economy, it was necessary to curtail the expenditure in regard to these offices.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You have not been accurate so far. Be careful. I have *Hansard* before me.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am taking every thing from *Hansard*. The hon. member said the district survey officers had to deal with applications and the selector often had to face the Land Board. The district survey officers during the year 1910 and previously, and during 1911 and 1912 certainly had to deal with a good number of applications. This did not, however, apply last year. I do not think we will be justified for the next two years in anticipating the volume of work we have had previously. The work of district survey officers has therefore been reduced almost to a minimum. The hon. member said that the collection of Crown land rents was a matter of serious concern. I do not say that I am using his exact words here.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You never do.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He emphasised the question of the collection of Crown rents. Previous to taking any

action in regard to the closing of district survey offices, I instructed the accountant to get me out a return showing the amount of land rent paid by cheque, by postal note, or by money order, and what amount was paid in cash. My object was to see whether the district survey officers were necessary from the point of view of the collection of land rents. I was of opinion, and I still am of that opinion, that if settlers pay their rents by cheque, postal order, or postal note, they might just as well send that payment to Perth as send it to Northam or any other centre.

Mr. Willmott: You lose the exchange.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not necessarily. Take the man at Kununoppin: he had to send his land rent to Northam, and had to pay the same exchange as he would do if he sent the money to Perth. In a big majority of cases, the settlers in outback districts if they have anything at all to pay with outside the Agricultural Bank, pay with cheques drawn on a Perth bank. To show that a big proportion of settlers paid in cheques, money orders, etc., I would point out that it was found during that period that \$1.91 paid by cheque, and that in only 18 per cent. of the cases was the money paid in cash. From the land rent collection point of view, therefore, there is no justification for the retention of the large expenditure in regard to these districts land offices.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Was that in country offices?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Hon. J. Mitchell: How can they make up returns? It would take years to go through the files.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I simply took a check over the period when land rents would be paid. We know that land rents are paid at given times in the year. I told them, for the purpose of arriving at some estimate of what the value of these offices from this point of view was, to keep a check. They kept a check for the limited period which they had at their disposal when the land rents were being paid.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Do cheques go through the post, or are they handed over the counter?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If a man pays his rent by cheque, it would be extraordinary for him to go from, say, Kununoppin to Northam simply to hand his cheque over. The hon. member said that one justification for the district survey offices was the collection of land rents.

Mr. Heitmann: This 18 per cent. of those who paid in cash may represent the aggregate of the whole of the returns from the offices. There may still be one office where the percentage of those who pay in cash is 90.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It might work out at a little more. I have it in detail. The percentage of cash payments is very small indeed. The average is 18 per cent., and the average on the individual returns is something about the same. The hon. member said that district survey offices were required in connection with the important matter of inspecting improvements. He went on to state that the cost of the necessary improvements upon settlers under the Land Act amounted to £500,000 a year, and that the inspectors could better be controlled from the district offices. It is true that they were attached to the district survey offices, but the whole of the work, in connection with the inspection of improvements, was controlled by the central office. We then had the remarkable position of the head of the inspection branch in Perth sending to the district survey office and asking for an inspection to be made of a certain block. The district surveyor would then instruct an inspector to go out and inspect. The inspector would go out and make an inspection and would come back and tell the district surveyor, and the district surveyor would communicate with the head office in Perth. I said that we would have this system curtailed so that the inspecting would be directed by the inspector working under the office in Perth. I propose to go a little further than that. The hon. member stated that £500,000 had been expended in effecting improvements. The

hon. member could go further and say that possibly two-thirds of the amount was advanced by the State for the purpose of making these improvements. In other words, a big proportion of the money for improvements to the land was advanced per medium of the Agricultural Bank. We arrive at this stage when we have, roughly speaking, four millions of money invested in improvements to the land in our agricultural districts. We find that the main difficulty we have in regard to administration, and watching the thing closely from a land development point of view, is to see that the money advanced by the Agricultural Bank is wisely expended. The question of seeing whether a man is carrying out his improvements according to the Land Act is a very small matter. Yet we found that for years past a system had been perpetuated of having one inspector to go out and see whether a man was carrying out his improvements according to the Land Act, and at the same time have an Agricultural Bank inspector to go out and see whether the improvements had been carried out for the money to be advanced from the Agricultural Bank. It struck me, therefore, that we should combine these two duties. I claim that the big responsibility is that taken by the Agricultural Bank inspector. The four millions of money invested by the bank have been wisely invested, and we want to see that the improvements are of a permanent character. After all, the improvements are the only security we have for the money advanced. The land is no security, and in a big majority of cases the land has never been purchased by the State. Consequently the only security we have for the money advanced from the Agricultural Bank is that represented in the improvements. They want to be watched very carefully. As a matter of fact the only justification we have for advancing, as far as I can judge, from the Agricultural Bank, is when we have a good selector. In other words, we advance money on the individual and not upon the farm. Where the bank have improvements as security they want to get a guarantee that the

improvements are effectively and permanently carried out. That guarantee can only be obtained by having the right man employed to get it. Consequently, when money is advanced the bank authorities are really backing the individual. Therefore, it is necessary for the Agricultural Bank to get into touch with all the selectors, to analyse the individual, and see whether the individual is such a client as would justify the continued confidence of the Agricultural Bank. I looked upon this as such an important matter that quite recently I brought into Perth the whole of the inspectors, both of the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank, and gave them a course of lectures by the various experts, and seized the opportunity of impressing upon the men, more particularly the inspectors of the Agricultural Bank, that grave responsibility rested on their shoulders in regard to these huge investments of State money. As a result of that conference, I believe that these inspectors do go out into the country now, realising that they have to do more detailed work and give more information to the Agricultural Bank than was the case in the past. What I desire more particularly is that in future the one inspector will carry out both sets of duties. I propose to place these inspectors under the Agricultural Bank, because I look upon the bank as the institution carrying the biggest responsibility. They will go out into the districts and carry out inspections for the Agricultural Bank, and do what I claim to be the minor work of inspecting for the Lands Department when necessary. Consequently, we are not only removing the inspectors from the district survey offices, but it is proposed to concentrate the work so as to get greater efficiency and economy by having the work done by the agricultural inspectors for both departments. There is, of course, a chief inspector who checks the work of the individual inspectors. He is a very capable and efficient man. The hon. member stated definitely that, in his opinion, it was better for the inspectors to be under the district survey offices, because, by that means, the work would be better

controlled from the separate offices than from a central office. I differ entirely from the hon. member on this question. A uniform system of inspection cannot be obtained if we are going to have the work done from these different centres. It is essential, and only fair, that we should have a uniform system of inspection. That has been recognised by the department.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What uniformity would there be between Bridgetown and Kellerberrin?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member immediately flies to the ridiculous. I am dealing with, say, Northam and Wagin. I am not dealing with Bridgetown.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Then Albany.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Albany, to a large extent, has control of a wheat area in much the same way as Northam is the centre of a wheat area. Bridgetown, however, is a totally different proposition, and has been dealt with differently. The necessity for centralising and having a uniform system has been recognised, because right through the inspectors have never been directly under the district surveyor. They have been under the central office, and the officer in the central office has looked after all inspections and seen that they were carried out on a uniform basis. The hon. member proceeded to make the extraordinary announcement that district survey offices were necessary to see that consideration was shown to farmers from time to time; in other words, that district survey officers should dictate the policy to the Government. As a matter of fact, what consideration can be extended to the farmers absolutely depends upon the Government. It is for the Government to determine that. It is a responsibility that should only be carried out through the officers of the central administration. No one would say that the question of what consideration should be shown to the settlers should be left to the individual district survey officers controlling these different centres. We should get a lovely position of affairs if we had six

men dealing with an important question like this.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Who advises the Minister?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Under Secretary.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The man who does not know in Perth, but the man who does know in Albany.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The under secretary is advisor in regard to the assistance that may be extended to farmers.

Mr. George: Where does he get his information?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: From those who are able to report from the various centres. If a report is required it is always obtained from an expert officer who is sent to the locality. All this information will be received from the inspectors who will be under the Agricultural Bank. Any assistance extended is usually extended by the Agricultural Bank by the special board appointed for that purpose. The hon. member said that the consideration of settlers had to be determined by the district survey officers in regard to the payment of rent, and also on the question of extension of time for making improvements, and that it was for them to decide as to where reserves should be created, and townsites established. The hon. member knows full well that no Administration would leave questions of that description to district survey officers to determine. Then the hon. member stated what was true, that we had received protests from some 50 roads boards and progress associations. He said I was of the opinion that he was responsible for a number of those protests, and he said that he was not so responsible. I accept his denial. I was of the opinion that if he was not behind those protests, then his colleague and friend, the Hon. H. P. Colebatch, was behind them. There must have been some organisation behind them, because the protests are so similar in their wording. Letter after letter received conveyed the same resolution. The resolution carried at one centre would be identical with a resolution carried by

another centre hundreds of miles away. That, of course, indicates that there was some organisation behind the movement of protest. Again, the resolutions all came in at about the same time.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What about the Northam roads board?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Northam roads board, the Wongan Hills progress association, and the Kunnunopin farmers' and settlers' association all carried identically the same resolution. After receiving one or two of these resolutions I put up a general reply, which was sent to each correspondent, conveying exactly why the Government were taking the action protested against. The general reply reads as follows:—

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of . . . covering a petition from the residents and settlers of your district in regard to the closing of the . . . district survey office, and in reply to state that, owing to the war and the bad seasons that we have experienced during the past three years, which have considerably reduced applications in regard to land selection, it was found that the volume of work at the various district offices—with the exception, possibly, of Bridgetown—together with the convenience to the general public, did not justify the cost of maintaining these offices for the present, and it has, therefore, been decided to close them in the interests of economy.

Quite a number of the protests came simply in the form of a bald resolution; and the resolutions, as I have previously stated, were in many cases exactly similar in text. In many instances I wrote to those who had protested, asking that they would give me some details to show what inconvenience would be caused, and also what expenditure was justified in connection with district survey offices under existing conditions. Only in very few cases did I receive a reply. However, here is one I received from the Mullewa district roads board. Strange to relate, the Mullewa district roads board had protested against the closing

of the Northam lands office. It is true that after writing "Northam" they also included Geraldton; but, still, the Northam lands office was mentioned in the protest from Mullewa. The secretary of the Mullewa district roads board writes under date of the 8th July—

Closing of Northam and Geraldton offices.—Replying to your letter of the 10th ulto., asking the board to submit definite reasons against the closure of the above mentioned offices, I am directed to state that it must be obvious to the department that intending settlers and the public generally will be put to very great inconvenience and unnecessary expense in being compelled to transact all their business through the central office. The board strongly deprecates the action of the department in closing the branch offices referred to, against which there is also a good deal of public feeling.

As the result of my going to the trouble of asking them to give details, they simply repeat that inconvenience will be caused, without giving any definite information on the point.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What did you expect?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was endeavouring to obtain information which would justify the carrying of that resolution, but I could not get it from any of the bodies which protested. The Narrogin residents at a public meeting carried a resolution and forwarded it to the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. E. B. Johnston), who submitted it to me in a letter endorsing the resolution and urging that the district survey office at the centre in question be not closed. The resolution is as follows:—

I beg to inform you that at a public meeting held in the Narrogin town hall on the 7th June the following resolution was unanimously adopted: (a) That this meeting, whilst recognising the need for economy and retrenchment in the public expenditure, views with keen regret and disappointment the decision of the Hon. the Minister for Lands to close the Narrogin district surveyor's office, inasmuch as the work

of that office, as at present conducted, cannot be as efficiently and economically carried out in Perth. (b), That it be pointed out to the Hon. the Minister that, whilst the district surveyor and the whole of the computing staff have been removed, the office as at present controlled by the draftsman-in-charge remains of great value to the residents and settlers and to the various local governing bodies interested, and for the present is fulfilling all requirements at a nominal cost in administrative charges.

The public meeting at Narrogin, therefore, did not protest against the taking away of the district surveyor and the computers. In other words, the Narrogin people did not protest against economy. Their resolution, however, asked that the Government should leave the office as it was; that is to say, with a draftsman-in-charge to conduct the limited amount of business which they recognised was being done.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: They suggested the office might be retained under those conditions.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I quite recognise that. I accept this Narrogin protest as being a very fair protest, and I have read it to show that in some instances the Government did get information. The resolution continues—

(c) That the closing of this office will result in the destruction of a measure of decentralisation that has been carefully thought out and inaugurated at considerable initial expenditure and cost. (d) That this meeting, therefore, strongly urges upon the Hon. the Minister the advisability of keeping the district surveyor's office open under the present satisfactory and economical and serviceable arrangement.

The people of Narrogin, where there was one of the largest and most important lands offices in the State, recognised that the work had fallen off to such an extent as to justify the Government in taking the action they did.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: But you have taken away that draftsman since.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; I eventually took the draftsman away.

Mr. S. Stubbs: That was the last straw.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Now, here is another sample of the kind of protests we received. This is from Wongan Hills—

At the monthly meeting of the Wongan Hills progress association held on Sunday last, the question of the rumoured closure of the Northam lands office came before the association. I have been requested to convey to you the feeling of the settlers in this part of the district served by the Northam office, and to advise that the settlers will be put to a great deal of inconvenience if such rumoured removal is carried out. It is the wish of this association that you permit the Northam office to remain open, and the protest of the Northam roads board is heartily supported. We trust you will not close this office hastily. It is a great convenience to outback settlers, and the removal of this useful office would be keenly felt.

I want to ask, what assistance or what advantage could the Northam lands office be to the back settler in the Wongan Hills district? If the settler were in the habit of going to the lands office for information after he had got his land, then one could understand the necessity for the offices; but one would establish for the benefit of the Wongan Hills settlers an office in a locality nearer to them than Northam is. As a matter of fact, I feel sure I am justified in saying that almost invariably a settler who leaves his home to do business comes to Perth to do it. He does not leave his home to do some pettifogging business in regard to land matters. I read that letter just to point out to hon. members that the Northam lands office cannot possibly be of any more assistance to the Wongan Hills settlers than the Perth office is. I am prepared to admit that during the time the land around Wongan Hills was being selected, before the building of the railway, there was some justification for having the work done from Northam, or that probably it would have been justifiable to

do that work from a place nearer to Wongan Hills than Perth is. But under existing conditions, when the area has been settled, there is no occasion for the settlers to go to the district lands office for information. If they want information, they obtain it by letter. It would be absolutely wrong to encourage a settler to travel all the distance from Wongan Hills to Northam for information.

Mr. Heitmann: I would like his chance of getting information from the lands office in Perth.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member is entitled to his opinion. Before I became Minister for Lands, I heard a great deal about the difficulty of getting information from the lands office, or replies to letters.

Mr. S. Stubbs: My experience of the lands office has been splendid.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: To be fair to the Lands Department, I wish to say that my experience is that I have had less complaint there than in any other department with which I have been associated.

Mr. S. Stubbs: I have no complaint to make against the Lands Department.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: So far as I can judge from a perusal of the Lands Department files, correspondence is dealt with very promptly by that department, and the officers seem to be desirous of giving settlers the fullest possible information. That is apparent from the length of the replies sent to settlers making inquiries. In order to show hon. members to what extent the district survey offices have been built up—and I do not think even the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) with all his optimism ever dreamt that we were going to have such a number of officers attached to them—I will read a minute from the Under Secretary, whom I directed to put up for me a list of the officers employed at the various country offices. The under secretary states—

The staffs of the various offices have varied somewhat, but the following may be taken as an average, viz., 14: district surveyor, draftsman-in-charge,

draftsman, two computers, two examiners, senior clerk (who in sub-agencies is classed as clerk-in-charge), clerk typist, clerk, messenger, one or two staff surveyors, land inspector.

Hon. J. Mitchell: When was that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Quite recently; since I was Minister.

Hon. J. Mitchell: I will engage it dates back to 1911.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At the Northam office on the 26th March, 1915, there was a draftsman-in-charge at £276, a draftsman at £228, a senior clerk at £204, a typist at £204, and a messenger at 17s. 6d. per week. At that time we had taken away Mr. Camm, to act on the Industries Assistance Board. Another clerk had been taken away also.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Two clerks.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That left eight officers employed at the Northam office just at the beginning of this year.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You took them away long before that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course, I have taken them away.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You took them away long before.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This minute which I have read is signed by Mr. Clifton on the 11th June, 1915. He gave that list as the average staff.

Hon. J. Mitchell: He gave you the staff that ought to be employed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; he gave the average. The information which I have given shows conclusively that one would not be justified in perpetuating the existence of the district survey offices.

Mr. Willmott: What do you mean by that exactly?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I mean for the time being. The hon. member tried to lead the House to believe that the district survey offices had been closed right up and that the records had been scattered about, and that therefore there would be a great difficulty in re-establishing them when the necessity arose. That is not the case. Definite instructions were issued that all the records of the

various offices were to be carefully put away, so that when the time arrived for the re-opening of the offices, that is to say, when land settlement goes on again as it did a few years ago, it would be a simple matter to put the records back. Until that time arrives, of course, we have to centralise the work and the records to which I have referred will not be interfered with, but will be kept up to date so that the work done in connection with, say the Northam office, will be available when that office is again established.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Are they being kept up to date?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. It will be a light task to keep them up to date because the volume of work is comparatively small.

Mr. Heitmann: What have you done with all the officers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A number of the officers who were brought in from the district survey offices were distributed amongst the various departments of the State. The services of many were utilised in the Lands Department largely to fill vacancies caused by those members of the service who joined the expeditionary forces.

Mr. Heitmann: But the business in the central office, too, would decrease tremendously.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A number of officers of the Lands Department were taken over by the Industries Assistance Board. Then again the other departments which could not cope with the work they had in hand because of their depleted staffs, again owing to enlistments, were given the services of the district officers. Definite instructions were issued that the services of those who were brought in from the district offices were to be utilised in the Lands Department or in some of the other departments of the State. Then the member for Northam stated, and the member for Geraldton was inclined to endorse the statement, that the work of the Industries Assistance Board under centralisation had been so unsatisfactory as to finally determine that centralisation was undesirable.

I do not intend to enter on a defence of that board further than to state that the board has fulfilled the task allotted them by the Government, namely to get the largest area possible under crop. They have done that and they should get some recognition from this Chamber in consequence. Then the member for Northam stated that their work under centralisation had been a failure. I would remind hon. members that we tried decentralisation in connection with the Industries Assistance Board; we established a *dépôt* at Northam with disastrous results. The member for Northam knows how we got on with decentralisation in connection with the Industries Assistance Board.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What had I to do with your stupidity in establishing a *dépôt* at Northam?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am prepared to admit my stupidity in establishing that *dépôt*. If I had kept it in Perth under central control we would not have suffered any loss. In conclusion I would like to say that the letter which I forwarded to the various governing bodies who wrote to me clearly indicated that the offices were to be closed only temporarily because the work had been reduced to such a considerable extent, and there was for the time being no justification for the continuation of the expenditure in connection with them. Hon. members opposite are continually calling upon the Government to economise. Here was a clear instance where it was possible to economise because of the big falling off in the work. Now we are being adversely criticised because we have effected these economies. I think it was the member for West Perth who took us to task a little time ago when he stated that we ought to have our organisations in such a way that as business became less so the staff could be reduced. That was what the hon. member said when he was speaking on some of our trading concerns. The volume of work has fallen off considerably in regard to surveys and land settlement. We have no contract surveyors engaged to-day and the work has decreased to such an extent that we had

to economise and the only way to do that was by closing the district survey offices.

Mr. Heitmann: Will you tell us who is dealing with the work now?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have a permanent staff of district surveyors. The contract surveyors are temporary men whose services have been dispensed with. The permanent officers are now dealing with the work. Three of them have been employed for a month or two on the repricing of land; that work is being done in connection with the Bill which will be introduced very shortly.

Mr. Heitmann: Are they travelling from place to place?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The surveyor is sent wherever there is any work to be done. As has been pointed out by the member for Williams-Narrogin, we have not altogether closed the district land offices. The question of the payment of rent in the various centres can be attended to still. We have representatives of the Lands Department in all those centres where we previously had district survey offices, and people who want information can get it from the officers who are doing some work for other departments, and who are well posted in regard to land matters. These officers can give all the information that is required by intending settlers and they can collect rents and do a number of things which were previously done by the district officers. It is true that we have removed the draftsman in charge at Narrogin because we felt we could get an officer to do the work at a lower salary. Consequently we removed the professional man and sent a clerk down there to attend to the work, and it is now being done as well or better than the draftsman in charge was able to do it. I claim that we ought to get the support and endorsement of the Chamber in practising economy and not merely preaching it constantly as hon. members opposite, and particularly the member for Northam, do.

Mr. WILLMOTT (Nelson) [5.55]: It must be obvious to all at the present time that we cannot expect to have the same number of applications for land as might

reasonably be expected in normal times. Therefore there is some justification for the closing of the district survey offices, providing, of course, it is distinctly understood that the closing of these offices is only for the time being, and that we shall not go back to the old and miserable system of centralisation that we suffered from for so long. The member for Northam said that all the offices had been closed. That is not absolutely correct. I am pleased to say that in the Nelson district we have such splendid land, that even now, in these times of stress, it has been found necessary to keep the office open. It cannot be closed, because the land there is so excellent and the climate is so superb that the volume of business is being well maintained and the officers are being kept busy. The district survey offices in my opinion are absolutely necessary because we should endeavour to avoid delays and relieve congestion in the head office. I myself have waited for an approval of an application for no less a time than two years.

The Minister for Lands: The land was not available.

Mr. WILLMOTT: For some unearthly reason I was never able to get a satisfactory explanation for the delay.

The Minister for Lands: There was a great doubt as to whether you should get that land at all.

Mr. Allen: What party was in power?

Mr. WILLMOTT: In that respect both parties were tarred with the same brush. The only party that cannot be blamed for delays in the past is the Country party. The district surveyors are more directly in touch with applicants by reason of their being on the spot. The Minister for Lands stated that a great deal depends upon the knowledge of the man to whom money is advanced, and as the district surveyor and his staff are more closely in touch with the man on the land, they are therefore in a better position to give reliable information to the Minister than would be the case if officers were located in Perth. By decentralising, delays cannot be hushed up. Each officer's work is made apparent, and the cause of the delay is brought home to the

right man. In Perth, under the old system, it was impossible for the Minister or anyone else to say that such and such a man was directly the cause of a delay. Now under the district survey offices system the cause of the delay can be pointed to at once. The district surveyors should have such control that nothing more than formal approval to the Minister should be necessary after all the information has been forwarded to headquarters.

The Minister for Lands: That is in regard to applications for lands.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Yes. Of course at times matters of policy will crop up and then the head office can step in and deal with the matter, but when it is only an ordinary application for land, a great deal of the delay can be saved and will be saved by following the course I have suggested. All routine work can be dealt with better in the district offices than at the head office. If it is found impossible to open these offices at the present time, the men brought in from these districts should, if possible, be grouped in the Perth head office, and all work relating to their respective districts should be dealt with by them as much as possible, so that when good times come again they will be in a position to pick up all the different threads, and when they go back will be thoroughly *au fait* with all that has taken place in their respective districts during their absence at the head office. If this is done it will save the State many pounds in the future.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot be heard for the conversation that is going on.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Minister for Lands referred to a uniform system of inspection. The State is so vast and the conditions so varied that I very much doubt if the uniform system of inspection can be successfully carried out. Certain general principles, perhaps, can be made uniform, but the conditions vary so much—as for instance, 60 inches of rain in one district and 10 or less in another—that I do not see how we can have a uniform system of inspection.

The Minister for Lands interjected.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Every man is compelled to carry his responsibility. If we have different officers doing it, it will be done in different ways. I very much doubt whether the uniformity suggested by the Minister will be found to be applicable all round.

The Minister for Lands interjected.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The inspectors in the dry areas get certain fixed ideas, and when they are transferred to heavily timbered districts they seem to be absolutely lost, for they try to enforce certain conditions which, justifiable in the dry areas, are absolutely inapplicable to heavily timbered forest country. I doubt whether this uniformity, in detail, will prove to be workable. I am pleased that the Minister recognises this to some extent. I hope that directly times become normal immediate steps will be taken to re-open the district offices and that the old system of centralisation will not be reverted to. We have suffered from it too much in the past to ever want to go back to it again. Decentralisation will relieve the head office of a great deal of the enormous masses of correspondence with which it has now to deal, and I am certain that the Minister will get truer information from officers directly in touch with the people concerned than he could under the old system of centralisation, centralising everything at the head office in Perth.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [6.5]: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added: "On an economical basis during the present period of financial stress, in order to keep the existing district records up to date for the convenience of the settlers concerned."

Probably this amendment will meet the wishes of the Minister and also of others interested. Even the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) will realise that during the last four years it has not been possible, or necessary, to maintain the same staff in the lands and survey offices which were there when we had better seasons and when not so much land had been selected. Ever since the

end of 1911 there has been a gradual process of attrition in regard to the staff employed at each of these district offices. The people have recognised that some reduction was necessary, as is evidenced by the resolution passed at a public meeting at Narrogin and which has been read by the Minister for Lands. In the resolution, realising the big expense of the offices, and the keeping of a complete staff there, they ask the Minister to continue the district survey offices where it can be done for a very small expenditure. I am sorry to say, however, that the statement of the Minister, that the records are being kept up to date in the district offices will not be found to be quite correct. As a matter of fact the district plans and books are not being kept up to date locally. This could be done at very small expense, and if it is done it will mean that, when the office is reopened and the surveyor sent back, everything will be in order. The Minister said the expense of keeping a draftsman in one of these offices amounted to £276 a year. If he is not prepared to do that—and that is all that is necessary to keep the records up to date—I would remind him that we have contract surveyors in all the central country towns who, unfortunately, have practically no work at all to do. Most of these men are draftsmen and would be prepared to work two or three days a week in the district offices, keeping the plans up to date and doing the professional work. This could very easily be arranged. In Narrogin we have a public spirited contract surveyor who would be prepared to do this work for a very moderate remuneration. I think the Minister could arrange this at Narrogin at an expense of probably not more than £150 a year, which would be a very small item as compared with the loss to the people in consequence of these records being closed up and the plans being allowed to get out of date. I ask the Minister to look into the matter and see if this cannot be arranged. I think that before very long we will have a lot of increased applications for land. What is keeping them back at present is the fact that the Land Act Amendment

Bill, which has been promised for the last three or four years, has not been brought down, and the high prices of land have not been reduced. As soon as those prices are reduced in accordance with the promises of the Government, there will be a great deal more work in these land offices; because all over the country people are waiting to apply for small areas adjoining their holdings as soon as improved conditions obtain. I urge the Minister to make better arrangements for keeping the records and plans of the district offices, and I hope the House will accept the amendment with the object of having that done at small expense. When the conditions are improved I may hope, with the leader of the Country party and others, that the full system of decentralisation will be reverted to.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The present Minister does not seem to be very sympathetic in regard to it.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I am afraid the hon. member is correct in that respect. If the records are kept up to date then at any time when the prospects brighten, any Minister who happens to be in power could send the district surveyor back there to take up the ropes, and could give the surveyors far more power than they have previously had. If the Minister accepts this amendment the people will have the benefits of the convenience of the district survey offices as desired by the Narrogin resolution until such time as better conditions obtain.

Mr. S. STUBBS (Wagin) [6.14]: I second the amendment.

On motion by Mr. S. Stubbs debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

MOTION — WYNDHAM FREEZING WORKS, TO INQUIRE.

Debate resumed from the 25th August on the motion by Mr. George—"That a select committee be appointed to make full inquiry into all the circumstances surrounding the inception, letting, and

cancellation of the contract or contracts with Nevanas & Co. in connection with the establishment of freezing works at Wyndham, and report."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [7.30]: I listened particularly carefully to the speech of the hon. member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) and during the course of his utterance I failed to record a note, because it struck me that he was not making any points during his long discourse. Since then I have read his speech very carefully, and I find that it is largely, if not wholly, a repetition of the articles which appeared in the columns of the *West Australian*. While he used that matter to a very great extent to build up a speech, he did not use it very effectively in the direction of making points against the Administration. I much regret to say that while he asked for an inquiry, he seemed to come to his conclusions on the various minutes he was supposed to have read from the departmental files as he proceeded. The articles which appeared in the *West Australian* were written from a bitter party standpoint. The writer evidently did not set out with a determination to give the public all the information available from the departmental file. I will show that in one very salient particular he did not give the file minute but commented on it. Had he given the file minute, the public and Parliament to-day, having read the newspaper articles, would have been in practically full possession of all the facts in regard to this contract. I sincerely regret that the hon. member evidently used the newspaper articles as a brief, and took those articles as the evidence on which he arrived at conclusions as he proceeded. It would have been far better if he himself had gone very carefully through the file.

Mr. George: I did.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is remarkable, then, that the features omitted from the newspaper articles were also omitted by the hon. gentleman. Again, it is remarkable that the hon. member had the newspaper clippings pasted on his notes; it showed that he was speaking

from the newspaper clippings to a great extent, if not wholly.

Mr. George: I told you I did not use the newspaper comments at all. I simply verified everything they had stated as extracts from the file.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so, and I believe the hon. member did. He went to the extent of verifying what appeared in the file, but he did not go to the extent of carefully perusing the file and seeing if the articles dealt with everything that could be obtained from the file.

Mr. George: I went through the whole file.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am afraid I shall be likely to weary the House in outlining all the details regarding this contract. So far as the newspapers are concerned, I quite realise that they are party organs, but while they are party organs, they have, for a considerable time past, been urging that in other parts of the Empire all party bitterness should be set aside and that all parties should endeavour to the utmost of their ability, to pull together and work for the common good. While the newspapers have preached this so far as other portions of the Empire are concerned, they have been endeavouring right through the last year, and particularly of late, to build up a case and to flog members in Opposition to take some drastic action against the Government. One would imagine that they had seized this question of the contract for freezing works at Wyndham as a sort of last straw, and made the most of it by writing article after article, day after day, apparently in the hope that the long articles and the magnitude of the stuff put into their papers would be sufficient to justify inquiry. I regret very much that they convinced the member for Murray-Wellington and that he should have taken those articles as his justification—which he evidently did—for the speech which he delivered.

Mr. George: Then you will not take my word that I did not pay any heed whatever to their comments?

The Premier: Of course we will; thousands would not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not taking the hon. member to task in regard to the newspaper comments. What I object to, and object to strongly, is the limitation of the hon. member's speech in relation to the information contained on the file. There is one particular point I will emphasise during my remarks, to show that the *West Australian* did not fully comment on it, and the hon. member missed it altogether. There is no question that the articles, although they constituted a general condemnation of the Government, were particularly intended to discredit me as much as possible. I, of course, am getting used to this sort of thing, but I would like, if the motion permitted me, which it will not do, to let the House into a knowledge of some of the little details as to the extent to which this newspaper will go in its endeavour to kill a man politically. I will get an opportunity at some time, when I propose to let the House and the public know why this newspaper, and one individual, who has fairly full scope in writing articles, wishes to discredit me politically. If a newspaper could kill a man politically, I would have been dead long ago, but let me tell that paper and the individual who is so anxious to follow me and discredit me that it is a long, long way to Tipperary, and that he will find it so before he catches me.

The Premier: You may catch him on the track; he wants catching badly.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): What is his name?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Without further comments, I propose to give as fully as requisite, though as briefly as I can, all the details in connection with the Government's attitude regarding the establishment of freezing works at Wyndham. In the first place, it is well known that this is part of the Government's policy. It is true, and no doubt will be emphasised during the debate, that at one time I was opposed to this particular project, and wrote to the Government counselling caution in this direction. At that time I could see great difficulties, and I am still satisfied that these great difficulties did exist. I am prepared

to admit that the difficulties to-day are altogether different from what they were at that time. The world's supply of meat is nothing like what it was when I wrote that report. Take America as an example: at that time America was exporting a considerable quantity of meat for the British Army, but to-day America is an importer of meat—a clear indication of the change as affecting that one nation. Again, we know that the meat supply generally throughout the world has decreased in recent years to an extent that the Empire has now found it necessary to appeal to the dominions to assist her to supply this demand. While it is true that at one stage I was very much afraid of touching this project, in the last year or so I have become enthusiastic regarding it, and I quite recognise that the time is now ripe for the Government to embark on the project, and carry it out at the earliest possible moment.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The time is rather late, I think.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is unfortunate that we have not been able to do all we should have liked to do, and this will be explained before I have finished. In accordance with the Government's declared policy to erect freezing works at Wyndham, there is to be said to their credit that, before definitely committing the country to the work by asking Parliament to vote a sum of money for this purpose, they engaged a firm of experts to go to the Kimberleys and investigate the whole question from a meat expert point of view, and advise the Government as to whether it would be an economical and sound proposition for them to invest in. It might be said that the firm of Nevanas & Co., who were selected at that time to report on the matter, were not qualified to undertake this particular contract. That is arguable of course, but I do not think there can be any argument as to their standing in the meat supply circles of the world, and their knowledge of meat distribution generally. They are a recognised firm in the Smithfield market, who have had vast experience in the Argen-

tine, as well as in various parts of Australia, and, when they were selected to prepare a report for the Government, they were chosen because they were recommended to us as a firm who could advise us, and advise us soundly on the proposition. Therefore, Mr. Nevanas went to the Kimberleys, and he went on a definite understanding. The Government asked the firm for a full report on given parts of a project of this description, and outlined exactly what was wanted, and we received a very full and complete report. For that report the firm were paid. At that time there was absolutely no connection between the firm and the Government. The Government merely desired to get an expert firm to advise before proceeding any further with the project. Just at this time, or as a matter of fact, previous to it, it had been pointed out over and over again by departmental officers, and emphasised in Parliament, that one of the great difficulties attending the establishment of freezing works at Wyndham was the water supply. Years ago an effort was made to get an artesian supply; a considerable sum of money was spent in putting down an artesian bore, but without tapping a supply, and that proposition was not further proceeded with. Then we got other reports from the officers of the Water Supply Department. But the Government went into the matter in a more practical and comprehensive manner, inasmuch as we sent two officers to Wyndham with definite instructions to make a proper survey after inspecting the various proposals, and give us a definite report in regard to the possibility of getting an adequate and good supply of water suitable for a project of this description. Mr. Tindale, the engineer for the North-West, and Mr. Babbington, of the Public Works Department, a surveyor of very high standing, were the two officers selected for the purpose. They went to Wyndham and made their investigations and surveys and submitted their report to the Government in regard to water supply, and also supplied valuable data which was required in connection with

the proposals for the construction of a jetty. Having arrived at this stage it became necessary for us, having then determined to proceed with the work, to get the necessary plans prepared for a work capable of coping with the requirements of East Kimberley. Investigations were made as to the possibility of having the work performed by departmental officers. I was of opinion, and am still of that opinion, that we have not got in the Government offices of Western Australia men who have had sufficient experience to give us an up-to-date plan, or who have had sufficient experience, of other works of this description. We decided, therefore, to employ an expert firm to prepare the plans. We had an offer from Messrs. Nevanas & Co., who had contracted through a certain firm of architects and who were contractors in the Eastern States and other parts, to the effect that they were prepared to submit plans for the work to cope with the requirements of East Kimberley on a definite commission.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Where did they erect works in the Eastern States?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Their most recent works were at Shepparton in Victoria.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that Nevanas & Co.?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What was the nature of the work?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Freezing works.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Freezing meat?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Cool storage generally, but principally meat. They have connections in Queensland and New Zealand. The firm is one of very high standing and with a good deal of business connection in Australasia. They have works which they are definitely controlling, and are sending meat away to the markets in the old country. The Minister for Works points out that their engineers have erected other works in different parts of the world.

Mr. George: Are they engineers or sub-contractors?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There may be a difference of opinion in regard to that. It is true that, although I do not think Nevanas is an engineer, he is a capable man. I do not think that any one would say that he was an engineer in the sense that he could prepare definite plans or drawings for work of this description, but he has had vast experience in the management and control of works of this nature. He could give a general outline and sketch of the class of work wanted, and then employ a competent firm in Melbourne to prepare plans under his general supervision. That is what the Government had to pay for. It may be asked, "Why did you employ Nevanas: why did you not, seeing that they were not themselves preparing the plans, go to the firm of architects they were employing to do so?" I would point out that this would be no advantage to the Government. We only paid Nevanas the Institute of Architect's fees. That was definitely understood. That was fixed before ever the order was given for the plans to be prepared.

Mr. Heitmann: Nevanas is not an architect, is he?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was just explaining that point. Nevanas employed a firm of architects or draftsmen to prepare his plans. If we had given the contract to this firm of architects we would have had to supply them with the data upon which to draw the plans.

Mr. Robinson: Is that disclosed on the file?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. Robinson: About these people preparing these plans for Nevanas?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Mr. Robinson: It is news to me.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not sure that they engaged anybody else. If they did, as the man in the street asserts they did, it is no disadvantage to this Government. We did not pay a double fee.

Mr. Robinson: I am not questioning that. I only want to know if it is on the file.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think it could be; it was not brought under the notice of the Government; it was no concern of the Government. We wanted to see up-to-date plans, for which we would pay the ordinary Institute of Architects' fees.

Mr. Taylor interjected.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We engaged Nevanas as an expert in connection with what was required in the direction of freezing works and all the details in regard to economic construction.

Mr. Robinson: Is there anything on the file to show an agreement to pay him the usual architect's fees?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know whether it is on the file. I am inclined to think it is not. I saw the agreement which has been fulfilled in regard to paying the 3 per cent., which was outlined as the Institute of Architects' fees—3 per cent. on the estimated cost of the work.

Mr. Robinson: That should be on the file.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It should be on the file. I undoubtedly saw it. It was either a wire or a letter which I perused in that regard. The Premier points out that there were many difficulties in regard to this matter. The reason for that is that a great deal of work was done by the Crown Law Department, there was work done by the Agricultural Department, and a certain amount done by the Public Works Department, and consequently we are not in a position to say that the whole of the papers are on that file. There may be other papers on the Crown Law file, or some other file. But we say that this file contains all the salient features in regard to the letting and ultimate cancellation of the contract.

Mr. Robinson: And all the others could be made available.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, if desired.

Mr. Bolton: The select committee will get them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: After arriving at an agreement as to what

should be paid for the preparation of the plans we agreed to make available for the experts the data that was in the possession of the Government departments—that is, the information that had been gathered by Mr. Tindale and Mr. Babbington in regard to the water supply and jetty. The jetty investigations were not full and complete, but the water supply investigations were. That data was supplied to Mr. Nevanas to enable him to have the details prepared. All the information that was in the possession of the Agricultural Department was also supplied. It has been insinuated, if not definitely stated, that there were certain plans in the possession of the Agricultural Department or the Public Works Department which were made available to Nevanas. That is not so. There were certain pencil sketches on the proposed method of laying out the suggested works at Wyndham. These had been roughly prepared by Mr. Cairns of the Agricultural Department, but no one could gather from these sketches any data that would enable him to prepare plans unless there was an expert behind them. It was purely a rough sketch and could not, in any sense of the word, be called a plan.

Mr. George: You would say they were of little value?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Practically of no value.

The Minister for Works: Worth nothing.

Mr. George. What did they cost us?

The Minister for Works: They would have cost us much more if the works had been built on them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Having supplied this data, Nevanas & Co. were prepared to get their plans ready, and ultimately supplied the Government with the plans of the building and machinery. These plans are working drawings with full plans and specifications. On receipt of the plans a board was appointed. At this time I was acting Minister for Works, the hon. Mr. Angwin being away in the Eastern States, and I selected what I considered to be the most capable men in the Government

service to go through the plans so that we might have a guarantee from our expert officers that we had up-to-date plans and something that would meet the requirements. These officers were Mr. Beasley and Mr. Birtwistle, of the Public Works Department. It is true that we would have selected Mr. Beasley and Mr. Hardwick, but Mr. Hardwick had been sent to the Eastern States by the Government to make investigations in regard to the proposed erection of cool storage works at West Perth, in order to enable the present works near William-street to be demolished as the area was required by the Railway Department.

Mr. Male: Why not the Engineer-in-Chief?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will deal with that. Messrs. Beasley and Birtwistle were appointed to represent the architectural branch of the Public Works Department, Mr. Cairns and Mr. Dundas were appointed as experts with some knowledge of freezing works from the Agricultural Department. Mr. Pearce, the chief draftsman of the Public Works Department, and Mr. Tindale, the engineer for the North-West, were appointed from the engineering branch of the Public Works Department; and Mr. Bone, the chief draftsman of the Water Supply Department was appointed from that department. There we had the experts in connection with buildings, in connection with the lay-out, the engineers in connection with the jetty and water supply, and Mr. Bone, of the Water Supply Department to go into the details of water supply. I venture the opinion that one would not be able to get a more competent board in the State than this board to deal with a question of this description. It has been emphasised that after this question was submitted to the board, complaint was made that they had not sufficient time to deal with it. That complaint was made by Mr. Tindale, the engineer for the North-West. It is, however, easily explained. That officer had made special arrangements to go to the North-West in connection with his duties as engineer, and he was timed to

sail by boat at a given date. Consequently, he had to rush through the work a little bit faster than the others. He found that the time at his disposal was too short and he put his comments on the subject on paper. That did not apply to the general board. Although Mr. Tindale went away we still had the other officers on the board to go into the matter. I do not think it is fair to say that the board were unduly rushed. It is fair to say that at least one officer complained that, owing to his having to go to other duties, he had not the time to put into the work that he would like to have had.

Mr. Robinson: How long did they have altogether?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The file will disclose that. They put in an interim report and later on submitted a full report in regard to the plans. When the board was appointed I wrote to every member of it and gave each one a copy of a minute which I had prepared for them. They met me at the office and I outlined exactly the position of affairs as they stood at the time. I told them what I wanted from them and that we would first discuss the matter, and that I would answer any question they put to me, and then put on paper in the shape of a minute exactly what the Government required them to do. This is what I wrote to the members of the board—

As verbally arranged at the interview this morning I now give an outline (as per list attached) of the items in connection with what the Government desire the board to give their attention to in regard to the proposed freezing works at Wyndham. The questions on which the board are to investigate and report are:—1, Estimate of total cost of works, with as much detail as possible: 2, Whether construction of the works, comprising jetty, water supply and buildings, should be carried out by contract or departmentally; or, if neither contract nor departmental system is desirable in its entirety, what part of the work should be carried out by each system, time being regarded as essence of con-

tract; 3, What earliest date can the works be ready for operation, having regard separately to—(a) buildings and machinery, (b) jetty, (c) water supply; 4, Suitability of materials, construction and design proposed from—(a) economic view, (b) climatic conditions view, (c) strength view, (d) location view, (e) operative view; 5, Capacity of water scheme and suitability of design; 6, General lay of machinery and plant for handling and economic working; 7, Estimate of capacity of plant. Note.—The Government desire an interim report, and would be pleased for you to begin to deal with items 2, 4, and 6 first.

Items 2, 4, and 6 are in connection with the suitability of the building and its economical laying out. Consequently, there we have a competent board appointed with very definite and complete instructions as to what the Government required from the board. The board went into the question, and recommended the acceptance of the plans. The general construction and laying out of the building were approved, though it is true that the board made certain comments on the strength of the building and other details.

Mr. George: What is the date of your letter, and what is the date of the board's report?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS. The hon. member can look the dates up for himself.

Mr. George: You have the file there, have you not?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This appears on page 31 of the file.

Mr. George: Your minute is dated the 17th March, and the reply is given on the 18th March.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I could not say. The position was that the question was submitted to the board and that the board submitted their report. It may be argued—I can see that the hon. member is trying to make this point—that the reviewing of the plans and generally the getting of matters into working order as regards this proposed

undertaking were unduly expedited. The hon. member no doubt wants to know the reason of the expedition—why the Government were in such haste over the matter. That point is easily explained. We had received from the Imperial Government a special request, which was sent to the various Dominions, that everything possible should be done to assist them in regard to their meat supply. Unfortunately, Western Australia at this stage was unable to do anything. As a matter of fact, we are able to do very little at the present time. But other parts of Australia, especially Queensland, came to the rescue of the Mother Land, and the whole of their meat supplies were made available for that purpose. Consequently, having received this appeal from the Home Government, and knowing that the world's supply was considerably reduced and by no means commensurate with the demands, we decided to expedite the work as much as we possibly could, the object being, of course, to get a start that year, so that the works might be in going order for the 1916 season, which would start about April. Therefore I wished if possible to have the works going by April of 1916. There was only one way in which that could be accomplished, and that was to rush along the preliminaries and get a start on the works, so that by the rainy season of this year, about November, we should have the walls of the buildings up and the roof on. The walls being up and covered in when the wet season began, the men could go on with the internal work under conditions which would make the heat less oppressive. In that way it was expected we would be ready with the works about April, 1916. Again, there was another consideration which moved us to hasten the construction of the works. That consideration was that the Australian market had been, let us say, rushed by the big meat combinations of the world. Hon. members will remember that an investigation was conducted by a Supreme Court judge of New South Wales into the operations of the supposed meat trust. The report of the learned judge

is of very great interest indeed. We know that unfortunately it is only too true that this combination had made a great deal of progress in the Northern Territory, and, to a certain extent, had also tackled East Kimberley. The Government were anxious to checkmate that move to the utmost of their ability, because we feared that unless we rushed along and demonstrated to the pastoralists operating in East Kimberley our determination to erect freezing works at Wyndham, they might follow the example of others who had sold their supplies to this combination. Consequently, there were very many reasons indeed impelling the Government to push on the works with the utmost possible despatch. In the same connection it was pointed out that one of the biggest jobs that we had to tackle, and one of the most difficult, was the erection of a jetty at Wyndham. In order not to delay matters, and in view of the fact that we had not complete drawings, although we had a general outline, of the jetty submitted to us by Messrs. Nevanas & Co., we decided to send men to Wyndham for the purpose of opening up a quarry, because the whole of the work was to be done in reinforced concrete. The idea was that the men would open up a quarry and get stone ready, and also get sand ready, and make all preliminary arrangements so that a flying start could be obtained with the work as soon as the full working drawings were prepared.

Member: Where did you expect to get your sand?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is difficult to obtain sand in the Kimberleys, but we found it could be got at King river. It would have to be brought down by pumps, and that would be expensive of course. However, that is one of the difficulties up there. The men were sent up for that purpose. In the meantime Messrs. Nevanas & Co. had submitted an offer to supervise the construction of the whole of these works, and they proposed to give a guarantee that they would construct the whole of the works within £180,000. Now, their tender and their

offer in connection with the building we could check, because in regard to this matter we had definite plans and specifications. We could also check their estimate in regard to the cost of water supply, because we had certain data on that subject. But we could not check the cost of the work they proposed to do as regards the jetty. There were certain investigations which we had to make in order to find out what sort of foundation we could get.

Mr. Heitmann: Had Nevanas made those investigations?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; but his tender was subject to the condition that he would have to drive piles only 15 feet. In view of the special difficulties existing at Cambridge Gulf it was considered that the Government could not limit themselves to that extent: it might have been sufficient, or it might not. Consequently, having fixed himself up so far as the foundation was concerned, Nevanas then submitted an estimate of what he could do the work for. But, as I stated, the data that we had available were so limited, and the portion of the work that he proposed to do was so difficult, that we decided not to go on with it until we had been furnished with definite plans. Still, in order not to delay the work, as I have stated, we said to Nevanas, "We will go on with the preliminaries, and within a month the plans must be ready. If at the end of the month you can give us a tender to do the jetty for the price you say it can be done for, we are prepared to consider the tender. If we approve of the tender, then you can take over the preliminary work, and the plant that we have sent along; and those matters will become part and parcel of your contract. But if when we get the plans at the end of the month, we are not satisfied, we will go ahead and continue the work departmentally." This action was taken with the general idea that the Government had to push on the work with the utmost despatch.

Mr. George: Were those men public works men?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The man in charge was not a public works officer, but the supervisor was a Government man. The supervision was under the Government, but the actual work was carried out by a practical man experienced in reinforced concrete work, and especially experienced in reinforced jetty work. That man was obtained from the Eastern States.

Mr. George: If you did not go on with the contract, then the work was to go on by day labour?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We were going to review the whole position after a month's time. I think the man lasted a month. He did not last after the month. He carried out the condition made with the Government of continuing for a month. The departmental officers were, as is outlined in the instructions given regarding departmental boards, asked to give an estimate of the cost of the works; and we had a figure given to us at this time, or about this time, that the whole thing could be done for £180,000. But the departmental estimate was very much in excess of that figure, and we were at a loss to know exactly the true position. During the discussion as to what was best to be done, it was generally recognised by all concerned, including the board, that if we were going to do the work by contract it would be better to let it all by one contract, because, it was pointed out, there would be a considerable amount of overlapping if the work were let out in more than one contract. The general opinion was that the thing should be done either wholly by day work departmentally, or else wholly by contract. During this time Messrs. Nevanas & Co. came along—because we were not prepared to accept their offer to supervise the work on a definite understanding that they guaranteed to do it for £180,000—with a further offer to make us a definite tender for that portion of the work on which we were prepared to negotiate, or with regard to which we were prepared to recognise that we could talk business. That is the portion of the building and machinery for which we had definite

plans, and also the water supply, regarding which we had definite and complete data. Messrs. Nevanas & Co. at this stage submitted a definite tender. Their tender for the building, the machinery, and the water supply was I think £155,125. In addition to giving us a definite tender and specific details of what they were prepared to carry out, they also gave us a definite time within which they could complete the work; and their time for completion was in accordance with the desire of the Government. We wanted the work done by April, and Nevanas & Co. undertook to complete it by the 1st May. Now, it has been said that Messrs. Nevanas & Co.'s tender for the water supply was purely a pot shot; that they could not possibly have made a definite tender, because they had not obtained sufficient data. That, however, cannot be correct, inasmuch as the departmental officers had given a definite figure for which that work could be done; and that was rendered possible because Messrs. Tindale and Babington, to whom I have referred previously, had visited the locality and collected the data. No very elaborate plans and specifications are necessary for a water supply. The question of the size of pipe being settled, and also the distance over which the pipes have to be laid, one has the main factors.

Mr. George: What about the dam?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The water, of course, was in the King river. The only points which were reserved for further consideration were the question of the service reservoir at Wyndham, which was intended to hold 1,000,000 gallons, and the pumping station on the King river. These were small items compared with the general water supply contract. Messrs. Nevanas & Co. submitted a definite tender for the reinforced concrete tank which it was proposed to construct at Wyndham, and for the pumps and pumping buildings to be placed on the King river, and for the 5-inch galvanised iron pipe line proposed to be laid between the King river and Wyndham, a distance of 20 miles. Therefore Nevanas & Co. were in exactly the same posi-

tion and had ample data to enable them to arrive at a definite tender for the water supply.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Had not you officers in the department who knew all about water supply?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is difficult for me if members will not follow me. I have already explained that point.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Were not those officers capable of supplying the plans instead of having to send to Nevanas & Co. for them?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The question of plans in connection with the water supply is a very small item.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Some £40,000 odd.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The main expense in connection with water works is the cost of cast iron pipes. For instance, 20 miles of pipes would run into a big figure. Then the question of the storage reservoir was one in regard to which I was not prepared to accept the views of the departmental officers as against those of Nevanas & Co.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: But they got three per cent. on the plans.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They supplied data and plans in connection with the water supply. But the point I am trying to make is that at the time Nevanas submitted his tender he only had the same information as the officers of the department when they prepared their estimate. Later, further detailed drawings were given in connection with the pumping station and pumps at King river and the surface reservoir at Wyndham. Those drawings were not up to the requirements of the Public Works Department, and I understand that they in some way altered them. I regret that very much because I am inclined to think when we are getting on to reinforced concrete work, the department is too extravagant in their ideas. The tender then having been received from Nevanas & Co., it was sent to the board for their views, and in a letter to the board I wrote as follows:—

I enclose herewith a tender with certain conditions of contract in addition to those imposed by the State which has been submitted by Messrs. Nevanas & Co., Ltd., for the erection of buildings for freezing works and also water supply for same at Wyndham, and Cabinet would be pleased if you would immediately give consideration to the question as to whether, in view of the board's estimate, you are prepared to agree to this tender being accepted according to the plans and specifications as reported on by the board. Under ordinary circumstances public tenders would be called, but time is the essence of this contract and the calling of public tenders, which would necessitate advertising throughout the Commonwealth, would cause serious delay. Again, the freight and material markets are very unsettled with a present upward tendency; therefore Cabinet would, having these special conditions in view, like the opinion of the board as to whether this tender could be accepted. Please let me have the board's views at the earliest possible moment.

Then the board dealt with the tender and with the special conditions that were attached to the tender, imposed by Nevanas & Co. They took the conditions seriatim and gave to Cabinet their views as to what should or should not be done. The board recommended that the tender be accepted, and on page 69 of the file there will be found in a letter, a recommendation in regard to the tender in which they state—

We are of opinion that the tender of £155,150 is a low tender for the work proposed to be completed by 1st May, 1916, and we advise that it be accepted with the usual safeguard of deposit and bond, as recommended below. We understand that it is the intention of the Government to refer the items on which we have expressed adverse opinions to experts in the Eastern States.

The board went carefully into the question as to whether that tender should be accepted and there is no doubt about the board's opinion as just read, but there were conditions in con-

nection with the contract, and I have taken the three main points commented on by the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George). In the first place a good deal was made of the condition agreed to that any increase or decrease in freight on material that took place after the 1st March should apply to either increasing or reducing the amount of the contract. That was explained by Nevanas & Co. and fully appreciated by the board, as also by the Government, that Nevanas & Co. had prepared their estimate and tender on the material quoted to them, and the freight as on the 1st March. It was on the 25th March that the tender was submitted, and they had got this information to enable them to give the Government that estimate of £180,000 that they said the work could be done for if they had the supervision of it. That did not appeal to the Government, but then, having the data of the 25th March, they gave a definite tender, and they made it perfectly clear that the tender was based on the cost of material and freight which had been quoted to them on the 1st March, and any alteration would automatically apply to the tender. We all know full well that freight and cost of building material have gone up considerably, and the proposal was reasonable under the circumstances. In regard to building material, such things as steel and corrugated iron have gone up enormously in price since the 1st March of this year. On account of the war we were working under special circumstances and we were therefore justified in giving reasonable and fair consideration to the suggestion made in the contract. Then the question was raised in regard to the proposal to advance 85 per cent. on the material. That was due to the special circumstances surrounding the erection of works at Wyndham. It was pointed out to the Advisory Board and to the Government that to get the work going at Wyndham, and to complete it in the time allowed in the contract, the contractor would have to rush an enormous amount of material to Wyndham. If such a work was being carried out at, say, Fremantle, the material could be brought

in as it was required; it could be brought from the Eastern States by the weekly boats, but when we are dealing with a place like Wyndham which has a service of only one boat a month, it is a question of rushing as great a quantity of material as possible to the place, so that the work may be carried on expeditiously and economically. Wyndham is one of the most difficult places in the State at which to carry out any kind of work, and the Government recognised that the material would have to go there promptly, and that once it got there it could not be used for any other purpose. Again, in a place like Fremantle it would be possible to use cement, for instance, on works other than those for which the article might have been intended, but that could not be done at Wyndham. Realising the special circumstances, and the special difficulties, and the necessity for carrying an enormous amount of material, we agreed that after the stuff was duly landed at Wyndham and passed by the departmental officers as being up to standard, we would advance 85 per cent. of the cost. We kept in hand 15 per cent. The other point that has been made a good deal of is the special refusal, in the acceptance of the contract, for taking responsibility in connection with the carriage of material on the State steamers. In the terms of the contract Nevanas wanted us to agree to carry material on the State steamers at the rate of 30s. per ton. That in the opinion of the Government, could not be done and we rubbed out that consideration and said that we would not take any responsibility in connection with freight. I want hon. members to bear that in mind because I intend later on to deal with that phase of the question which was raised by the member for Murray-Wellington.

Mr. George: Was there any undertaking given to Nevanas as to freight?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: None at all at that stage. There was no responsibility taken in connection with freight and we refused absolutely to take any, and we struck it out of the contract. At that stage we had no undertaking in any shape or form in regard

to the carriage of material. The board, having reported on the matter, it was submitted to Cabinet, but the Premier being away in the country, Cabinet decided that they would not consider the matter until he returned. Then the board having reported that a special contract should be prepared in regard to this proposal, I instructed the Crown Law Department to prepare the special contract, so that on the return of the Premier, Cabinet would have it before them with the conditions set out. We could then go into it having a full knowledge of all the circumstances. The Crown solicitor prepared a draft contract and that was taken into consideration when the tender was submitted to Cabinet. Then again—and this is where I consider the Press have been grossly unfair in the matter, and where the member for Murray-Wellington neglected to do full justice to it, seeing that he had the departmental file—in addition to sending this contract to the departmental board, it was decided to take the special precaution, inasmuch as the contract dealt with machinery and plant, of referring it to the Tender Board. In doing that I wrote to the Tender Board as follows:—

The Government having under consideration the question of providing meat freezing works, etc., at Wyndham, have received a tender for the erection and equipment of same. This contract covers works of an important character, including buildings of special design and construction, the supply and installation of machinery, etc. It has been decided, before proceeding further, to submit to the Tender Board the file covering the negotiations up to date, with a general summary of what has been done, what is proposed, and what is now in progress, with a request that the board give the matter early consideration, and report as to whether it is considered that the State's interests will be adequately protected by proceeding on the lines indicated on the file, or whether the board considered any further or other course is advisable. In addition to the papers dealing with

the proposed contract, I forward for confidential information the replies received from the Agent General as to the standing of the firm of S. V. Nevanas & Co., Ltd., also despatches received from the British Government concerning supplies which—in addition to the local necessities of food and development point of view—is influencing the Government in an endeavour to get the works operating at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Huftmann: What had the despatches received from the British Government to do with it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We thought the board should understand exactly why the Government was proceeding with the works, and the despatches undoubtedly influenced the Government in their determination to push on with the work. Therefore we gave the Tender Board full information. I will read the general summary which was submitted:—

The Government having decided, after having received a special report, to erect freezing, chilling, and canning works at Wyndham, obtained Parliamentary authorisation for the expenditure on this year's Loan Estimates. A firm of experts were commissioned to prepare complete plans and specifications for the necessary buildings, plans, etc. Certain investigations were also made and data obtained in regard to chilling conveniences and water supply. These plans and data were recently submitted to a departmental board for investigation and report. The firm under whose directions the plans were prepared—

Mr. George: You say "directions." It is "instructions" here, which is very different from "directions."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: You must have read it from the newspaper.

Mr. George: No, this is a copy of the file.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, it is "directions" in my copy. Let me resume—

The firm under whose directions the plans were prepared made an offer to

take the contract for the erection and completion of the whole of the necessary work, including buildings, machinery, water supply and jetty. No working drawings or specifications being available for the jetty, and there being special features of construction at this particular centre, the Government would not entertain any offer on this item until complete plans, etc., were submitted. It being represented that the whole of the work should be completed by April, 1916, if an immediate start was made, it was agreed under certain conditions, to allow preliminary work connected with the jetty to proceed, pending submission of plans. In regard to buildings, machinery, and water supply a tender was received. This was sent on to the investigation board for consideration and report. The board, when the plans were first submitted, and again when the tender was sent on, offered some comments and criticism in regard to weight and strength of materials. These comments are being sent to the Hon. Mr. Angwin, who is now in the Eastern States, with a request that he seek the assistance of the Commonwealth Government in selecting a competent engineer to advise on points of difference raised. This investigation will also extend to jetty plans and plans for service reservoir in connection with the water supply. The proposed contract has been sent to the Crown Law Department for preparation, and certain tentative decisions have been given on questions raised by the board on deposit, bond, etc.

Had that minute, which is on the departmental file, been published in extenso in the newspaper, the public of Western Australia would have had full details in regard to the negotiations respecting this contract. But the newspaper simply commented very briefly on that exhaustive minute, which deals with the whole of the negotiations, and then proceeded to criticise the Government. The miserable cur who wrote it knew full well that if he gave the minute in full, he could not proceed with his criticism of the Govern-

ment. So he simply took portions of it, and refrained from publishing the full minute, so that the public would not be in complete possession of the details. Thus he gave rise to the necessity for this speech to-night, and to a large extent was responsible for the action taken by the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George). And the part I resent is that the member for Murray-Wellington did not quote this minute, which gives all the details as to what had been done up to that time. The newspaper suppressed it, and so too, to a large extent, did the hon. member, who referred to it even less fully than did the newspaper.

Mr. George: What was the reply of the Tender Board?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was to the effect that the special departmental board having gone into the question and reported, they felt there was no necessity for them to go into the question. They pointed out in addition that they thought it was beyond their jurisdiction. However, we were of opinion, seeing that the Tender Board invariably deals with machinery and plant contracts, that it was within their scope to deal with this question; indeed, it was because of the machinery and certain plant having been included that we submitted the question to the Tender Board. The report having been received from the departmental board, and the rough outline of the contract having been prepared by the Crown Law Department, and a reply having been received from the Tender Board, the question was submitted to Cabinet by my recommending the acceptance of the tender. That recommendation was made by me after reading through rough notes which I had written at my own home, following on a careful perusal of the facts. After I had made the recommendation and Cabinet had discussed it, it was agreed to by Cabinet, who decided to accept the contract. But, my notes having been roughly written at home, I afterwards took them to my clerk in the Lands Department with instructions that he should

type them, so that they might be placed on the departmental file. My recommendation was as follows:—

As requested, I have carefully considered the report of the expert officers who were appointed to investigate the plans, specifications, and proposals in regard to the erection of freezing works at Wyndham. It having been already decided to permit certain preliminary work to proceed in regard to the jetty construction under certain conditions, and on the distinct understanding that complete plans and specifications and tender is to be submitted within a month as per letter handed to Nevanas on the 22nd March last, there is no need to deal further with this portion of the work until the expiration of the term mentioned. For the remaining portion, namely the erection of buildings, the supply and installation of machinery, and the construction and equipment of a water supply, a combined tender of £155,150 has been received. This tender, with conditions attached, has been reviewed by the investigation board, and the board recommended, owing to the lowness of the price tendered and the undertaking to complete the work by May next year, that the tender be accepted. For the work included in the tender the board's estimate of cost, leaving out all allowances for contingencies, supervision, etc., is as follows:—Buildings (deleting portions not included in tender) £101,000, machinery £60,500, water supply £39,000; total £200,500.

In regard to that, I found on review that I had made a mistake of £5,000 in connection with water supply. I was of opinion that when the departmental officers submitted their price they allowed for a 6-inch main. The difference between the cost of a 5in. and a 6in. main was £5,000, and I deducted from the amount of their estimate £5,000, because I thought it was a 6in. main. I did not read their recommendation carefully. I should have added £5,000, because their estimate was for a 5in. main and not for a 6in. main. So I went on and said—

So, taking the bare estimated cost without the allowance of £14,000 which the board have added to cover supervision and contingencies, the tender is £45,350 below the estimate.

Those figures, as I have explained, should be £50,350, allowing for the difference in cost of the main. My recommendation continued—

In regard to the time of completion, the contractor has set himself a big task, but in view of the representations made by the Home Government in regard to meat supplies, and the shortness of supply on the world's markets generally, the early completion becomes an important part of the contract. In view of the circumstances outlined above, I recommend that the tender of Nevanas & Co. be accepted, subject to (a) The penalty for non-completion in the contract time being increased to £100 per week.

Nevanas had proposed £10 per week. The recommendation continues—

(b) That the contractor supply and only use fresh water in the mixing of concrete; (c) That the fluctuation of prices of material or freight be added to or deducted from the contract price; (d) That a surety, to be approved, of £6,000 for the performance of the contract be imposed; (e) That the Government or State take no responsibility in regard to the Steamship Service carriage of material; (f) That all the points raised and expressed in regard to weights and strengths of materials specified for the building be submitted by the Hon. Mr. Angwin, now in the Eastern States, to some expert recommended by the Federal or State Governments for decision; should any alteration of plans result, extra cost entailed should be added to contract price, and (g) That the design of the service and storage reservoir be submitted to the same authority for advice.

After I had made that recommendation to Cabinet, as I have said, I handed my notes to my clerk at the Lands Department, with instructions to type them ready to be put on the file. The clerk

did not type the notes immediately. He held them for some time, and I do not think I handed to him the date of the Cabinet meeting, because I do not think I returned to my office that day. When the clerk finished typing the notes, he dated them the day he finished, namely, the 15th April, some days after the Cabinet decision. A lot has been made out of the fact that the date was altered. It was altered for the reason that, when the clerk handed me the typewritten copy, I did not notice the date at all on that typed copy. I took it over to Mr. Shapecott, the Premier's secretary, and instructed him to get Cabinet's decision recorded on the minute to be placed on the papers in the Premier's room. Mr. Shapecott drew my attention to the fact that the date of Cabinet's decision was not the 15th, remarking "We will have to alter that." I said, "All right, alter it to the date on which Cabinet accepted the tender." The date of the 15th was thereupon rubbed out, and the 9th was put in. But the copy retained in my office was not altered at all, and that is the reason why we have on the file the Cabinet minute with the Cabinet record dated the 9th, while the copy in my office is dated the 15th.

Mr. George: When was the date of Cabinet's approval put on your typed copy?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On the 15th.

Mr. George: Yet it bears the date of the 9th.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Cabinet's decision was given on the 9th, and the Cabinet record was made on the 9th, but I did not want to put it on my copy, for I am a bad writer, and it was on rough paper.

Mr. George: Rather loose, was it not?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is constantly done. You rub out the record, and it is typed in afterwards. It was recorded as the day Cabinet gave its decision. That is exactly the explanation, that the tender might be definitely accepted by Cabinet on the date recorded, namely, 9th April. The member for

Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) will bear me out when I say that repeatedly a verbal recommendation is made, or one rubs out a written recommendation to Cabinet, and afterwards has it typed in. Instructions are usually given to do it on the day of the Cabinet decision. We failed to do that, and it was dated on the day it was typed and not on the day the record was made.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You would not do that in regard to a proposal of this magnitude?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is more reasonable that it should be done in connection with a proposal of some magnitude. It was because of the magnitude of the proposal that the Cabinet record was typed. It would have been better if I had had more time and could have got it all typed at once. The work, however, was done in my own home; I wrote it out myself and did not have time before the Cabinet meeting to get it properly typed. The matter was typed afterwards and placed on record.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That was your busy day.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Was Mr Beasley informed on the 8th that Cabinet had decided to accept this tender?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The file shows it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Cabinet decision was on the 9th April. Mr. Nevanas was notified that his tender had been accepted, and later on the conditions of contract and everything connected with it were properly drawn up by the Crown Law Department and the tender was accepted conditional on certain things which have already been referred to, being done. The contract was signed, that is, the interim acceptance was signed, and Mr. Nevanas's acceptance of the modifications in regard to his tender is on the file. The Crown Law Department prepared a letter outlining the acceptance and Mr. Nevanas had typed at the bottom an acceptance which he signed. On the 9th April the tender was accepted and the contract was prepared by the Crown Law Department and ulti-

mately signed by myself on behalf of the Government and by Mr. Nevanas accepting it as the contractor.

The Minister for Works: That is what I termed the interim agreement.

Mr. George: Has the Crown Law contract been signed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, the acceptance of the interim agreement was signed. I wish to emphasise that, previous to this, there was nothing between Nevanas & Co. and the Government—I have dealt with another letter that passed later on—but there was no agreement or contract or understanding arrived at with Nevanas & Co., Ltd., when they submitted their tender. Nothing was done until their tender was accepted by Cabinet. On the 9th April the documents were drawn up by the Crown Law Department and signed. Prior to that there was no arrangement whatever with Nevanas & Co., Ltd. After the signing, the Government started to prepare to comply with the conditions imposed by the contract, and no doubt Nevanas started to get his plant and material together.

Hon. J. Mitchell: He had plant at Wynham on the 5th April.

The Minister for Works: No.

Hon. J. Mitchell: That is on the file.

The Minister for Works: Plant in connection with the jetty. That was not his but the Government's.

Mr. Munsie: Try to find another loophole now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The comments of the departmental officers in regard to the strengths and weights of material, etc., led to an agreement to submit the question to an expert in the Eastern States before a definite conclusion was arrived at. Nevanas & Co., having prepared plans for material of certain weights and strengths, and those weights and strengths having been adversely commented on by the officers of the Works Department, it was decided that the difference of opinion should be submitted to an expert in the Eastern States. Each officer of the department was called upon to prepare his comments in regard to the various phases of the works. These were prepared and sent to the Minister for

Works who was in the Eastern States to get one of the best experts to consider them. One point, of which a good deal has been made, is in regard to my letter conveying this information to the Minister for Works. I said I did not want the departmental officers' criticism to be taken too seriously. I did that deliberately and because I am strongly of opinion—

The Minister for Works: I did not tell the expert that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, it was purely for the information of the Minister for Works. It was supplied by me in my private letter to the Minister.

The Premier: That had no right to be on the file.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: For years past I have been of opinion, and have heard it expressed by members in this Chamber, that we waste a considerable amount of material in the construction of our public works, that our buildings are unduly strong, that our jetty works are unduly heavy, and that in connection with our public works generally, the Government err on the side of too much strength, and consequently our buildings are too extravagantly constructed and too costly. While that applies particularly to the ordinary buildings constructed of our local timbers and to jetty construction, it applies very forcibly to reinforced concrete work. I am strongly of opinion that our officers in this State are not up to date in regard to modern systems of construction. Hon. members have only to go to Woorooloo and inspect the building there. It is erected with reinforced concrete and the size of the walls is enormous. I venture the opinion that if one took an expert there and told him it was reinforced concrete work, he would be alarmed because it appears to be absolute concrete without any reinforcement at all. I wanted to get the most modern system of construction for the Wyndham freezing works. I knew that our officers were not up to date in this particular and I was specially pleased that the questions of weights and strengths of material had

been raised so that we could settle once for all by outside expert advice whether our officers were unduly extravagant in their construction of reinforced concrete work. In connection with the reinforcement itself, there is any amount of material suitable for the purpose. Reinforcing is done with wire netting, it is done with ordinary expanded metal, and it is done, as was proposed in connection with these freezing works, with steel reinforcements. If it is intended to increase the standard of the reinforcement, the size of the walls must be less. I was of opinion that our officers did not fully appreciate that we were going to use the most modern reinforcement material and that they were not allowing for the reduced size of the walls; in other words, that they were putting too much concrete into the work in view of the fact that we were using a reinforcement of a higher standard. I did not want an officer inexperienced in the work to decide it, but wanted the point dealt with by an expert who had wide experience of this class of work in the Eastern States where reinforced concrete is used to a far greater extent than here. There was a difficulty and it was one of the things that influenced me, that I feared the Minister for Works would be advised to get some departmental officer to consider the points raised. As a matter of fact he was informed that the best expert in Victoria was a Government man. I was afraid that there might be some professional etiquette between the two departments and that our officers, having recommended an increased strength in the material specified by the contractors, the officer in the Eastern States would say—"I will not differ from the Western Australian officers. They are of that opinion and I will let it go at that." I wanted to get it settled, not only in connection with this contract, but in connection with all other buildings as to what strength of material was required, seeing that we had introduced a better class of reinforcement than had been adopted here previously and that Western Australia had not had a great deal of experience in reinforced concrete work.

Mr. Heitmann: It does not say much for our officers if they are not prepared to keep themselves up to date.

Member: They have not had an opportunity.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not reflecting in any shape or form on our departmental officers. I have too high an opinion of the engineering and architectural branches of the Works Departments to do anything of the sort. It is a mistake that we do not give our officers sufficient opportunity to travel and see for themselves the different systems of construction adopted in other parts of the world. It would be better if some of our officers were allowed to see what is going on elsewhere instead of keeping them here where they have no opportunity to keep themselves fully posted in the various methods of economical construction practised in other parts of the world.

Mr. Robinson: That is a good idea.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If we were a little more generous in regard to the departmental officers we would give them wider scope in this respect and that would make them better men. With the present limitations, they compare more than favourably with similar officers in other parts of Australia. I would not hear anyone reflect discreditably upon these officers. They have not had the opportunity to study these questions and my desire was to obtain expert advice.

Mr. Heitmann: Various engineering firms deal with it exhaustively.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: How will you carry out these works without a water supply?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That was part of the contract; it was recognised that the water supply was the first essential in connection with freezing works at Wyndham.

The Premier: The member for Northam put up a scheme to spend £60,000 on freezing works, £58,000 of which was to be absorbed on the water supply.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The questions were then submitted to the expert and generally speaking the strengths of material, as outlined in the contract,

were endorsed by him. This only goes to show that the plans were prepared by people who had had more practical knowledge of reinforced concrete work than our Public Works officers.

Mr. George: It was a question of doctors differing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the fact remains that no alteration was made, which shows that the plans were prepared on up-to-date lines. Certain alterations were suggested by the expert, for instance, a canopy roof. These alterations were adopted by the Government and were eventually made to the plans, so that to-day we have in our possession plans, working drawing and specifications of what I claim—and I say this having the opinion of experts in South Australia and an expert in Victoria who saw the plans—will be one of the most up-to-date freezing, chilling and canning works in Australasia. Certain information and plans were submitted by Nevanas & Co. in connection with the water supply and these are also in the possession of the Public Works Department. They are not full and complete, and have not been adopted in the sense that the buildings and machinery have been adopted. Nevertheless, they are plans which the Public Works Department are making some slight alteration in, and will be adopted and utilised in connection with the water supply which is now in course of being laid out at Wyndham. The jetty plan has not been completed and is being attended to now by the Public Works Department. We only have in our possession the water supply building and machinery plans. As the hon. member pointed out, we only pay for the plans we have, namely buildings, machinery, and water supply. It was about this time that the Government began to realise that Nevanas was getting into trouble with regard to this particular contract. He began to realise that he was going to have difficulty in connection with financing the work. I think that Nevanas, at the time he submitted his tender, had certain understandings with financial institutions in regard to financing the concern. The finances have changed so much

of late, however, that forces came into being over which he had no control, and over which no one had any control, unless it was the Kaiser. In view of these difficulties he approached the Government to ask us to do certain things that we were not called upon to do under the contract, and which consequently we refused to do. We then began to realise as a Government that Messrs. Nevanas & Co. were not likely to be able to finish the contract within the time specified. There is a possibility also that Nevanas was handicapped to a certain extent in regard to shipping freight. I want to explain at this stage the circumstances which have been made a good deal of in regard to this contract. I have already stated definitely and distinctly that we took no responsibility in connection with freights in the original contract.

Mr. George: That is the contract which was accepted on the 9th April.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. During that time we had an offer submitted to us for the purchase of the steamer "Western Australia." As hon. members know we have been particularly anxious to sell that vessel because she is unsuitable for the North-West trade.

Mr. George: That is a nice way of putting it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Having accepted that tender it was necessary for us to look round and get another boat to take her place. We had a mail contract, of course, to carry out at the same time. We got information that there was an interned German vessel lying at Brisbane which would be likely to fulfil our requirement on that coast in the meantime. We opened up negotiations with the Commonwealth Government to see whether we could get this vessel—the "Prinz Sigismund"—to take the place of the "Western Australia."

Mr. George: Is that the N2?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. We were successful in our negotiations. We sent officers up to inspect her and go into every detail, and we were successful in arriving at an agreement with the Commonwealth Government for us to take this boat. Just at the time we were get-

ting these matters fixed up, however, the offer for the "Western Australia" was withdrawn, and we were in the unfortunate position of having her on our hands as well as the "Prinz Sigismund." In our dilemma to know what ought to be done in the matter Nevanas heard that we had got the "Prinz Sigismund," and we learned that he had been after her himself for the purpose of using her to carry his freight. He made representations to us and asked us, seeing that we had the boat, if we would arrange to carry his material for him. In the first representation he made he wanted us to carry his materials up the coast if we were going to operate the "Prinz Sigismund" instead of the "Western Australia." He afterwards found that we had both boats on our hands. He then made a suggestion to us that we should carry his material on the "Prinz Sigismund." We decided as a Cabinet that it would be better for us to hand the "Prinz Sigismund" over to him and allow him to operate her and carry his own material on her. In the meantime he had proceeded on his way to Melbourne, and we sent a wireless message stating that we were prepared to hand over to him the "Prinz Sigismund" so that he could arrange for the carriage of his material. The Premier wishes me to give a little more detail of what happened before we did this. We sent officers of the State steamship service to Brisbane to inspect the boat. They came back and met Cabinet. There was the manager of the State steamship service, one of the engineers of the principal boats, and Captain Ulbrich. After discussing the matter with Cabinet they said it would be a good idea for us to get Nevanas to take the boat over for the purpose of carrying their material to Wyndham, provided that he would agree to our putting our own men on board the vessel. They pointed out that if we could get Nevanas to carry his material on the boat and we could put our own officers into her we would be able to find out at the same time whether she was suitable for us, and what alterations would be necessary to make

her suitable for the trade. Then, if we got another offer for the "Western Australia"—and we had her advertised throughout the world—we would know exactly how the "Prinz Sigismund" would suit us. As a matter of fact, as a result of the conference between the officers of the State steamship service and the Captain of the "Western Australia" a message was sent to Nevanas as I have stated.

The Premier: Mr. Stevens drafted the wire.

Mr. Male: Have you the right to sublet the steamer?

The Premier: That is the mysterious wire.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We had power to do as we liked with her, provided we carried out the conditions imposed by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. George: That is not on the file.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That has nothing whatever to do with the contract. There is no connection between the two. As I have said Nevanas then went to the Eastern States. It appears that he had bought a considerable amount of material. He made arrangements to get certain men to take positions as foremen etc., in regard to the various parts of the work. When the matter was fixed up we received a cable through the Agent General from one of the biggest brokers in London stating that if we could get the "Western Australia" away for London immediately we would get a fair price for her. I am not going to mention the price; it was considerably more than the original tender which led us to take over the "Prinz Sigismund."

Mr. Male: Has it come off?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We were in the position that we had another offer for the "Western Australia." At this stage the Premier was away in the Eastern States, where he was laid up. Cabinet went into the question and we wanted to know exactly what we could do. We were anxious to get the "Western Australia" away and to get this price for her. The only way we could do this was to get hold of the "Prinz Sigismund,"

which had been handed over to Mr. Nevanas. We got hold of the Crown Solicitor and asked him how we would stand in regard to this interned vessel. He said, "You have entered into an undertaking to hand the boat over to him and if you take her away you may make a breach of contract." We then consulted the officers of the State steamship service and asked them if they could form an opinion as to what penalty we would have to pay if we cancelled the contract in connection with the "Prinz Sigismund." They said that we could not be asked to pay more than from £3,000 to £5,000. Cabinet immediately turned round and said, "If it is only a matter of paying a penalty of £3,000 to £5,000 we could effect the sale of the "Western Australia" which the Agent General said was possible; let us break the contract with our eyes open and we will pay the penalty." That was done deliberately. We wired to the Eastern States informing Nevanas that we were going to take over the "Prinz Sigismund" again. We wired to the officers that we had put on the "Prinz Sigismund," and instructed them not to work under Nevanas but to work under the directions of the State steamship service. Nevanas protested, and we communicated with the Premier's secretary in Melbourne outlining what we had done so that Nevanas would know. It may have been an injustice to Nevanas, but it was doing a small injustice to him when we consider what an advantage would accrue to the State.

Mr. George: You advised Nevanas?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; we did it all fairly and squarely.

The Minister for Works: I do not think we told him that damages could be claimed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I would not tell him now, but for the fact that the whole thing has been fixed up. We found that in the meantime Nevanas had brought a certain amount of his material on the "Prinz Sigismund" and had unloaded it at Fremantle. That further action made it extremely difficult for Nevanas, and it is only fair to him and the country that this should be explained.

A lot of his material running into tens of thousands of pounds had to be paid for within a given period. Instead of his being able to land his material by means of the "Prinz Sigismund" at Wyndham, as he had arranged, and drawing his 85 per cent. he could not get his material up to Wyndham by that vessel in the time specified, and therefore could not draw his 85 per cent. from the Government.

Mr. George: Is it usual to pay 85 per cent. on material as soon as it is landed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As soon as it is landed at Wyndham and passed. We have an officer there to check it. Having landed his material at Fremantle, however, Nevanas came to the Government and explained the position he was in. At this stage we could see that he was going to have great difficulty in regard to the contract. We said we were prepared provided the material was right and the price was right, to take this over, which we did. But his explanation in regard to how we came to arrange with the "Prinz Sigismund" had nothing to do with the freightage at the time we accepted the tender. The conditions of the contract specified first that Nevanas must satisfy the Government or the Crown Law Department, the expert officers, that they were capable of doing the work under their articles of association. Nevanas, by his legal advisers, had assured the Government that he had the power. We were not too sure about him however, and wanted to be perfectly certain that we were dealing with the company and that the company had the power to do the work, and we made it a condition that he must satisfy the Crown Law Department that he had this power.

Mr. Heitmann: It was pretty late to inquire.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, it was his risk not ours. Before he proceeded he had to satisfy the Crown Law Department; but he was unable to do so. Had he wanted any money on the contract other than for the material we would have turned round and said, "Before we pay you any money at all you have to satisfy us on the points raised in the contract." He had never approached

us in that regard and we had no responsibilities. The Minister for Works called upon him to satisfy the Crown Law Department in regard to his power under the articles of association. There was a difference of opinion.

Mr. George: Surely you would not contend that he should be paid for material before the contract was signed or a bond deposited?

The Minister for Works: The material was worth very much more than he paid for it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The position is this. A lot of the material brought to Fremantle was corrugated iron. Between the time when the material was purchased and its arrival in Western Australia I venture the opinion that it had increased in value to about £10 a ton.

Mr. George: But you could not seize it, if it was not delivered to you. Where was your guarantee if you had not got the contract?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This only goes to show that the hon. member will not be fair in regard to this matter. I have already stated that Nevanas brought that material to Fremantle. Nevanas was not in a position to pay for it. He came to the Government and said, "I have got a lot of material there which has been bought cheaply, and I am prepared to hand it over to the Government if they will take it off my hands." He could not pay for it. If we had not taken it over, firms in Perth would have rushed it and made an enormous profit out of it. Consequently, I say that transaction had nothing to do with the contract at all. Nevanas had at Fremantle certain material which was of value to the State, which it would be an advantage to the State to have for other work, quite apart from this undertaking. Therefore, we said from a business point of view to Nevanas, "You have certain material, and we are prepared to buy it if the material is good and the price is right." This had no connection with the Wyndham contract at all. It was simply a purchase of material

which was good and cheap. Nevanas could not satisfy the Crown Law Department that the articles of association of his company permitted him to proceed with the Wyndham contract. Again, he had not put up the bond which he was called upon to furnish as a guarantee that he would carry out the contract. Then there were certain details in regard to the plans, which at that stage had not been settled. They have been settled since. Accordingly, those points were emphasised, and the Minister for Works began to discuss with Nevanas & Co. their neglect in these respects, and began to urge them to get along with the contract. Mr. Nevanas took the attitude of the Government during these negotiations as an indication that we did not want him to go on with the contract, that as there had been a certain amount of comment to the effect that the contract should not have been let, as we were pledged to day labour, we would seize the opportunity of cancelling the contract and making him get out. We were not after that at all. All we wanted was to get the work going, so that we might have it finished within the time specified. We conveyed to him that all we wanted was that the contract should be carried out in accordance with the conditions imposed in the interim agreement signed on the 9th April. After some negotiations it was eventually agreed that he should withdraw from the matter altogether. He admitted that he could not proceed, that certain difficulties were in the way; and the Government then agreed that he could get out of the contract and that we would ourselves take over the responsibility of the erection of these works.

Mr. Heitmann: You lost three or four months, and in the meantime you never satisfied yourselves that he was financially in a position to carry out the work.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is only half truth.

Mr. Heitmann: Surely before you negotiate with a man and give him a contract, you would make him put up a bond?

The Premier: But Nevanas never got a contract.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member again is biased in regard to this matter.

Mr. Heitmann: Why should I be biased?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will show that. In fact the hon. member's very interjection shows that he is biased. I have already told the House that Mr. Nevanas said that certain alterations in the plans had affected him. The Government had only an interim agreement with him. But when those difficulties had been overcome, when the experts had decided what the plans should be and what alterations were necessary, then, having a definite plan by which to do the work, the Government were on Nevanas to put up a bond. Up to that stage we could not ask the man to put up a bond in respect of work for which there was no agreement.

Mr. Heitmann: And yet he was ready to purchase material.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He was satisfied to do so.

Mr. Heitmann: He was satisfied that that he had the contract.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is true that the firm had a contract—

Mr. Heitmann: Yes; and that you had no bond.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: And no plans except skeleton plans.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We did not have merely skeleton plans. I have already told the hon. member that from the outset we had complete working drawings and complete working specifications. The alterations were merely a double roof, a canopy roof, and certain verandahs on the sunny side. The alterations made in the plans were very small indeed, but they might have been large.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Did not you say a little while ago that you were waiting for detailed plans, and yet you let a contract for £155,000?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We were waiting for the detailed specifications of the experts. The experts dif-

fered with the Public Works Department officers in regard to extra strength of material. However, they said "You will get better results by having a canopy roof and by building certain verandahs." It was those details that we wanted. We had to get them out, and we had to estimate their cost, to be added to the contract, before we got the contract signed, so that we might have a complete understanding with the contractor. When that had been done, we would call upon him to put up a bond and get to work. In the meantime he was satisfied that he was going to be paid for any extras. He was satisfied that if further conditions were imposed on him, he would be paid in respect of them under the contract. He was satisfied also that he could convince the Crown Law Department that he had the power to proceed with the contract. He was satisfied, further, that he could put up the £6,000 deposit. He was satisfied from his point of view, and he consequently went ahead at the earliest possible moment to get his material, knowing full well that the price of material was going up every day. It is true that he rushed in and got his material, because he was satisfied in his own mind that he could carry out the contract. Of the difficulties in connection with his financing I have already told the House. Those difficulties so upset his calculations that he could not proceed, and it was at this stage we came to the conclusion that, having the details all fixed up and everything in readiness, we should call upon him to convince the Crown Law Department that under his company's articles of association he could deal with the contract; call upon him to put up the £6,000 deposit; and call upon him to go ahead with the work.

Mr. Male: Why did you negotiate at all with a firm whose articles of association would not allow them to carry out the work?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have already stated that one of the principal legal firms of Perth had stated on behalf of Nevanas & Co. that they had the power. The Crown Law Department

disagreed. To this day I do not know which is right. We have the two legal opinions, and I suppose we would have to go before a Supreme Court judge to learn which is right. However, the Government stuck to the Crown Law Department. We said, "The Crown Law Department have to be satisfied, and if you cannot satisfy the Crown Law Department we are not prepared to accept any other legal opinion on the point."

Mr. Male: Why did you negotiate at all until you had got that point settled? It was only waste of time.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Even the hon. member must realise that if the contractor had gone on, it would have been on his own responsibility. We were not paying the contractor anything. We had not advanced anything in connection with the contract, nor had we accepted any financial responsibility. We would not accept any responsibility until we were satisfied on the point I have mentioned. As a matter of fact, those points were specially mentioned in the contract. The contract, however, was only an interim agreement. Nevanas was prepared to go on under that interim agreement, and it was not our concern to know exactly what he was doing on that agreement. It was his own responsibility.

Mr. Heitmann: But you have stated all along that time was the essence of the contract.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so.

Mr. Heitmann: And yet you allowed the matter to drag on for three or four months, without knowing whether the man was capable of carrying out the contract.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: For a big contract of this description, certain materials had to be obtained; and it was not a matter of waiting two or three months to obtain those materials, because in the meantime certain works were going on. Besides, we had arranged to continue work a little longer on the jetty, provided Nevanas accepted certain responsibilities. Consequently, the work was not delayed while these negotiations

were going on. I am prepared to admit there was a certain amount of delay, but that was due to our desire to have everything in proper order before making any advance against the contract.

Mr. Robinson: Why did the Premier telegraph over asking for an advance of £12,000 before this definite contract was signed?

The Premier: I did not do anything of the sort.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In any case, Nevanas found that owing to the altered conditions of the money market he could not make financial arrangements for the contract as he had expected to do at the time he entered into it. It was because we had his measure in that regard we realised he was not likely to complete his contract. That was the first intimation we had of the likelihood of there being any difficulty in regard to that matter.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Mr. Beasley reported that the Government would have to finance Nevanas.

Mr. Heitmann: It seems to me Nevanas's financial arrangement was for the Government to finance him.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. We only financed his material, and I have already stated why that was done. The usual thing is 50 per cent., and I have explained to the House why we went to the extent of 85 per cent. I have to point out that we did not do that without the advice of the departmental expert officers. Now in regard to the settlement At this stage, of course, Mr. Nevanas admitted that he could not finish the contract. Then it was necessary for us to settle up with Mr. Nevanas and wind the matter up so far as he was concerned, and proceed with it in another form. In regard to the plans, I have already stated that we instructed Nevanas to prepare plans. We instructed him to prepare those plans on a definite rate of commission. That was definite and distinct.

Mr. George: You had an agreement for that, I suppose?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There was a definite understanding. It is remarkable how members will forget. I have already stated that there was a wire or a letter to that effect. It will very likely be in the Crown Law Department.

Mr. James Gardiner: There are certain recognised fees on which an architect prepares plans.

Mr. George: You agreed to pay him? That is all I ask you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have already told the hon. member that we agreed to pay three per cent., the architect's fee—no more, no less. We have in our possession definite plans, complete working drawings, of the whole of the building, details of the machinery, and complete specifications. We have got that information, not only as regards the plans originally submitted by Mr. Nevanas, but also as regards the alterations which have been made. They are only slight alterations, comparatively speaking, made since the submission of the plans to the experts by the Minister for Works. Having got those plans for the building, and the plans in connection with the water supply, we had to pay Nevanas three per cent. on the amount of the estimated cost.

Mr. Willmott: Who paid for the criticism of those plans by experts?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government, because, naturally, the deficiencies were claimed by the Government officers, with whom Mr. Nevanas of course disagreed. The question was then submitted to the experts: and the experts, by the way, did not agree with the departmental officers. The points in regard to canopy roof and verandahs had not been raised by the departmental officers, but by the experts, outside the criticism submitted from Western Australia. Nevanas agreed with the expert view regarding the canopy roof and verandahs. Of course, for that work this State paid the officers borrowed from the Commonwealth and the Victorian State Government.

The Minister for Works interjected.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am informed that we did not pay the experts.

I say we should have paid them. They did work for the State.

Mr. Robinson: Did you consult the Crown Law Department before entering into what you call the interim agreement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They prepared that agreement.

Mr. Robinson: They prepared it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. It was prepared by Mr. Sayer.

Mr. Robinson: When did the Crown Solicitor take the point as to the articles of association?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At the time of the interim agreement.

Mr. Robinson: At the same stage?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We had, therefore, agreed to pay Nevanas three per cent. on the plans. We have got the complete plans, and we have paid the three per cent. On that account we have paid £4,650. Now, I want to disabuse the minds of hon. members if they have an idea that the Government paid £4,650 for plans that the Government never got. If we had consulted any expert in Australia for the preparation of the same plans, we would have had to pay the same amount. The amount that we paid was three per cent., as agreed; and that is the amount which we would have had to pay to anyone else preparing the plans. Consequently, we gave no bonus or special consideration to Nevanas & Co. when we paid them £4,650 for the preparation of those plans.

Mr. Robinson: Are they proper working plans on which you can go ahead with any other contractor?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They are absolutely proper complete working drawings. There are several sheets of them, and they do credit to those responsible for their production. Then we paid a sum of £63,890.

Mr. Heitmann: When were these complete plans in the hands of your officers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some time after we got reports from the Eastern States.

Mr. Heitmann: Which plans were placed before your board?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The complete plans. The experts had the alterations made.

Mr. Heitmann: Did the board not complain of insufficient information?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Before the plans were submitted to the experts. To-day the expert officers are perfectly satisfied that the plans are complete working drawings. As I was about to state, we undertook to pay £63,890 for material which Nevanas had ordered.

Mr. George: Was all that stuff ordered?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and some of it is here. This question of taking over the material was submitted to Mr. Beasley, and he wrote—

In accordance with my previous report, I consider that he has purchased most favourably, and I estimate that prices would be increased by from ten per cent. to 33 per cent., if the materials, plant, etc., were purchased as on the 1st July inst. Approximate the saving thus effected would be £13,000.

In other words, by taking over this material we made a direct saving to the State on the prices then ruling, a saving running into some £13,000. We paid £4,650 for the plans. Then we took over this material, and the contracts which were entered into at the prices at which he purchased. The material ran into £63,890 and Mr. Beasley, in his report on the 1st July, stated that that material would have cost at that particular time £13,000 more.

Mr. James Gardiner: Then you will get £76,000 for something for which you paid £63,000?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Roughly speaking, we shall get £76,000 for what Nevanas gave £63,000. We paid a commission to Nevanas of £3,194, and we have to deduct that from the £13,000 and add the difference to the £63,000 and hon. members will see exactly what we paid.

Mr. James Gardiner: You are paying £4,650, and £3,194, and you are getting as against that a profit of £13,000.

The Premier: The £4,650 has nothing to do with the taking over of the material.

Mr. James Gardiner: Let us take the whole lot together.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I want hon. members to understand this thoroughly. On the plans we paid £4,650. We had to do that in any case. We had to enter into the contracts for the purchase of materials, and Nevanas had purchased material of the value of £63,890. The Chief Architect points out that the value of that material on the 1st July was £13,000 more than Nevanas paid for it, consequently we are getting £13,000 more than was given for it at the time it was purchased. We paid Nevanas & Co. commission on this, the only amount we paid them outside services rendered, of £3,194. Hon. members will ask why did we pay that £3,194. The explanation is, as I have already told the House, that we had entered into arrangements to give Nevanas the "Sigismund," and he said he was entitled to commission for having bought so favourably. He made a far bigger claim, £6,000 or £7,000, but Mr. Beasley went into it with him, and the Minister for Works was ultimately able to complete the whole thing, to wipe out the claim with regard to the "Sigismund," and get the whole of the material and the use of his time for £3,194. I leave it to hon. members to ask themselves whether the deal was not a very favourable one from the State point of view, and one which reflected a great deal of credit on those responsible for the negotiations.

Mr. James Gardiner: You made a profit then on the deal of £9,800.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is exactly the position.

Mr. Robinson: In that calculation, has the Chief Architect taken into consideration the value of the material at the place at which Nevanas took it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He valued it on the invoice prices.

Mr. Robinson: Was it delivered here?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If it was delivered here it was on the price here. If in Melbourne, it was on the price in Melbourne.

Mr. Robinson: Had all that material been ordered or purchased by Nevanas?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He had definite contracts in regard to the material.

Mr. Robinson: Has it since been delivered?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some has been delivered, and some will be delivered in due course. We do not pay until the material is delivered. We have satisfied ourselves that the contracts have been made with reputable firms who will fulfil them.

Mr. James Gardiner: At those prices?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. Some of the material which has been obtained has gone to Wyndham, and to-day we have a staff of men working there and they have made good progress in regard to the water supply. Hon. members will be pleased to learn that a considerable portion of the pipe line has already been laid, and at the pace at which we are working we shall go a long way towards getting this work ready, not in 1916, but before the season of 1917 begins.

Mr. Robinson: Have you started the freezing works?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have a crushing plant up there, and we have made arrangements about getting the sand. Of course we cannot start mixing until we get the water.

Mr. Robinson: Then it is proposed to do the work departmentally?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is the question now as to whether we should enter into negotiations for a contract for the erection of the buildings. Certain representations have already been made by a firm with vast experience in regard to reinforced concrete work, and departmental officers are going into it. I do not think that the Minister for Works has yet any definite information which he can furnish. We have no experts in Western Australia in regard to reinforced concrete works, and if we can get experts to undertake it, it will be better to enter into arrangements with them. Our desire is to get the best at the cheapest rates.

Mr. Robinson: Having got the complete plans and specifications, why not call for public tenders?

The Minister for Works: There is no one in the State who can do it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members will agree that it is a special class of work, which requires special knowledge, and it will be far better to enter into negotiations with those who know something about it than to call tenders publicly and take the risk of some one coming along and making a mess of it.

Mr. Robinson: You could compel them to complete the works. If the plans and specifications are accurate, the works will have to be handed over in running order.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But we must have experts to carry out an undertaking of this kind. Then again, hon. members must agree that we want to get the very best up there. It is a very difficult place to operate, and we want to be careful how the building is constructed. We have no one in the service at the present time who is experienced in the laying out and general working of up-to-date freezing works.

Mr. Robinson: The people with whom you are now negotiating may be estimable, but if you call for tenders some other estimable people may come along.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government will take the responsibility. The point I want to make is whether the department should go on with the works and complete them. We have had a little bit of a set-back, I am prepared to admit, but we are as enthusiastic as ever in getting the work done at the earliest possible moment, and the speedy completion of the undertaking will be for the benefit of the State and the Empire.

Mr. Robinson: Assuming the works are completed by the end of the year, will you have the stock?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have already pointed out that we have made exhaustive inquiries. We have an officer now going through the East Kimberleys reporting as to whether the East Kimberley pastoralists are prepared to give their stock to us under a guarantee

that we will treat it at Wyndham. We are convinced from all the evidence received that there is ample stock in East Kimberley to keep these works fully employed. Again, we have there a tremendous extent of pastoral country unoccupied, and this is being taken up in anticipation of the works. When the works are erected there will be a very big increase of the pastoral country in the Kimberleys. One other point I ought to explain, of which a good deal has been made. I refer to a letter put in by Nevanas and Coy. stating that I accepted the tender on 26th March, and that owing to the acceptance of that tender he had purchased certain material. The letter states that I accepted the tender 14 days before Cabinet gave consideration to it, but the letter showing that I had accepted the tender has not been produced. Mr. Nevanas accuses me of accepting the tender on 26th March. Actually on 27th March I wrote to the board pointing out that Cabinet had decided not to consider the tender until the Premier returned. So I could not possibly have accepted the tender on the date named. But the insinuation right through is that Johnson accepted the tender on 26th March, and because of his acceptance, Nevanas bought certain material, in consequence of which Cabinet was absolutely forced to accept the tender on 9th April. In other words, that they were compelled to endorse what I had done on 26th March. To show that that is not the position, I may say that on 26th June Nevanas wrote to the Minister for Works as follows—

Referring to our interview with you yesterday, as we pointed out to you in view of the questions which have been raised as to the validity or otherwise of the contract contained in our tender of 26th March, and the acceptance by the Minister for Lands and Agriculture on 9th April—

Previously they said that I had accepted it on 26th March, but on 26th June they wrote referring to the acceptance by the Minister for Lands and Agriculture on 9th April. The letter continues—

which has been entered into by the Government with us, we have come to the conclusion that the Government itself is desirous of undertaking the construction of the whole of the works at Wyndham and for that reason wishes us to cancel the above contract. I have read this to show that in that letter of the 26th June they told the Minister for Works that I had accepted the tender on 9th April. Then they continue—

You will appreciate our position when we point out that as soon as our tender was accepted it was necessary that orders for material, plant, and machinery should be placed, as it is well known that the market was rising. Some explanation is required in regard to that letter. I do not believe that Nevanas and Coy. would wilfully put in a letter of that description for dishonest purposes. There has been some misunderstanding. I say definitely and distinctly that I did not accept the tender on that date.

Mr. George: Did you have those letters?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Mr. Willmott: You must have done it on the date you had the political truce with me.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think this is what happened: On 25th March Nevanas submitted the tender. On the 27th it was sent to the board, and the board recommended its acceptance. Nevanas evidently ascertained that the board had recommended its acceptance and, anticipating that the Cabinet was going to accept, he wrote that letter. But Cabinet did not accept, and consequently the letter was never sent. When subsequently, the tender was accepted, Nevanas was duly notified. Then, for some reason, he produces that letter and declares it had been sent to me, forgetting, evidently, that it had never been sent at all. That is my opinion of how the thing has been misunderstood. His memory served him badly, and when he sent in that letter he was of opinion that it had been sent to me, although, as a matter of fact, it never was.

Mr. George: At all events you never received it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Absolutely no, and there was no acceptance of the tender. There is no other point to clear up. I have tried to go into a lot of detail in order that hon. members should thoroughly understand exactly why we rushed this contract, what was influencing us in doing so, how we finally settled it, and what responsibility the State has taken in regard to it. All the criticism was started in the first place because Opposition members were of opinion that we had cancelled the contract in consequence of the Trades Hall or Labour organisations adversely criticising us for having entered into a contract. They have since found that that was wrong, and still we are being criticised by members of the Opposition, notwithstanding that they favour contract work. I could understand the criticism coming from this side, seeing that it is not in accordance with the generally accepted policy of the Government to accept contracts, but I cannot understand the criticism from the Opposition, particularly when they know that we were struggling to get the work done at the earliest possible moment, and were in a fair way of getting it done for £50,000 less than the estimated cost prepared by the departmental officers. Instead of being criticised for our activity we ought to be commended for it. All the negotiations were carried out most successfully. The Crown Law officers were in constant attendance throughout the negotiations in regard as well to the letting of the contract as to its cancellation. The departmental officers knew exactly what was going on. We had the best advice and we went straight ahead, with the one fixed determination to get the work done at the earliest possible moment and on the cheapest terms. It is because of this that we are being criticised. If we had refused to accept the tender, the criticism we are getting from the Opposition would have been comprehensible and the journalistic bloodhound writing in the columns of the *West Australian* could have waxed still more eloquent. If he could

write five columns because we accepted a tender showing a saving of £50,000, what could he not have written if I had neglected to recommend its acceptance to the Government? The criticism of the Press is decidedly and distinctly unfair. The published report is not a full report of the file, and I regret very much that the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) did not quote more fully from the file than he chose to do. I sincerely regret from the Kimberley, the State and the Empire points of view that we were not more successful in our honest effort to do the best for our country and the Empire. The Premier wishes me to announce that the Government are prepared to grant the select committee. But I venture to say that hon. members should look closely into the matter and ask whether the country ought to be put to the expense of this investigation, in view of the fact that the whole of the details have been recited to-night, as will be borne out by an unprejudiced perusal of the files.

Mr. WILLMOTT (Nelson) [9.55]: While admitting that considerable light has been thrown on this question by the Minister, I am still of opinion that a select committee ought to be appointed to go fully into the matter. The file on the Table is undoubtedly a skeleton file. Several matters have been cleared up by the Minister, but, considering the incompleteness of that file, in justice to the Government it is only right that a select committee should be appointed to thoroughly investigate the matter and peruse those other files that have been mentioned by the Minister.

The Minister for Works: That is the only file dealing with the contract for the building.

Mr. WILLMOTT: But other files will throw other light on the question. After a perusal of the file—I did not read the leader in the *West Australian*, because I wanted to go into this with an unbiassed mind—I came to the conclusion that the file showed us too much or too little, according to the way we wished to read it. If I wished to condemn the Government on the file I could do so, while, if I wished

to applaud them, then, by ignoring certain matters on the file, I could applaud. That was the conclusion I arrived at.

Mr. Munsie: If you wanted to take the lot into consideration you would say they had not done too badly after all.

Mr. WILLMOTT: If I wanted to take the lot into consideration I would require a lot more information than the file gives. I do not wish to prejudge the Government in regard to this contract. I wish to judge them on the report of the select committee which I hope will be appointed.

The Attorney General: On the evidence taken by the select committee, not on its report.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I have too much faith in hon. members to think that any of them would endeavour to bring in a biased report.

The Attorney General: They may do so without being conscious of it.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I hope they will not lose consciousness to that extent. About the general principle involved there can be no two opinions. Secret contracts or agreements should be avoided. Any Government which indulges in such things must expect to be criticised. They may have done so in the interests of the State; they may prove conclusively that the contract was entered into in the best interests of the State, but until that is conclusively proved they must expect to be criticised, fairly criticised but criticised. It strikes me that there are three questions which must be answered by the finding of the select committee. Firstly, did the Government enter into this contract with a view of honestly saving State money and getting these works erected in the quickest possible time? Secondly—and this is the point which I think the whole of the State is anxious to be thoroughly convinced upon—has the action of the Government been absolutely clean in this matter? Thirdly what loss, if any, has the State made over this transaction from beginning to end? According to the figures given by the Minister for Lands to-night and worked out in my own way the State has saved £5,000.

Mr. McDowall: You are putting in the £4,000 for plans.

Mr. WILLMOTT: If that amount has been paid for plans, why not?

Mr. McDowall: They are wanted, anyhow.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I have my own way of arriving at these figures. They might not suit the hon. member for figures, I was going to term him.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member for Coolgardie.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I beg pardon, I should have said Coolgardie. If the answer in every case is "No," well and good. I would like to ask the Government why it is that this information had to be dragged out of them.

The Attorney General: Nonsense!

Mr. WILLMOTT: Would not it have been better to have come here and voluntarily produced this information?

Mr. George: That is what we want.

Mr. WILLMOTT: It would have obviated all this criticism.

The Minister for Works: I offered to let members see the file and only one member came along.

The Attorney General: Anyone can see it.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Any unbiassed man must admit that this would have been the proper course to adopt.

The Attorney General: You want us to shovel every file into the Chamber.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Not at all. I know from my experience of the service and the way one paper gets on one file and another paper on another file that the Table of this House could not hold all the files connected with this matter.

The Attorney General: We have a file but do not know that you want to see it.

Mr. WILLMOTT: All the more reason why there should be a select committee to inquire into this matter.

The Attorney General: There is no objection to the appointment of a select committee.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I am glad to hear that because it indicates that the Government do not fear the finding of such a committee and that they have nothing to

hide. I hope this will prove to be the case.

The Premier: The Opposition knew before the motion was moved that we had agreed to a select committee.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I did not know.

The Premier: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Whip knew it.

Mr. George: If I had known it I would not have moved the motion at such length.

Hon. H. B. Lefroy: I did not know it.

The Premier: You should have known; the information was sent over.

Mr. WILLMOTT: In spite of everything which has been said by the member for Murray-Wellington and the Minister for Lands, I am not satisfied in my own mind, and I want to know exactly how this matter has affected the finances of the State. For this reason I hope a select committee will thoroughly investigate the matter and probe it to the bottom so that the people of the State may know that the Government of the present day are doing their duty and that the whole of the transactions in connection with the Nevanas contract are clean. That is the whole point.

Mr. Munsie: If the newspapers published the speech of the Minister to-night, the public would be thoroughly satisfied.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam; [10.5]: The thanks of the community are due to the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George)—

The Premier: Hear, hear, and duly recorded.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: And to the *West Australian*.

The Premier: Oh!

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The hon. member put his case in a very moderate fashion. There has been no suggestion of anything but mismanagement and I think we are entitled to suggest mismanagement. On the part of the *West Australian*, there has been absolute fairness. The position has been so fairly stated that it hardly needs to be stated here further, and I regret that the Minister for Lands thought fit to make an unfair and unwarranted attack upon an officer of that paper who cannot reply

here. Why did the Minister object to publicity in regard to the matter? When the papers were asked for, they were produced by the Premier. The Minister for Lands was absent and does not know what happened. There was no motion. If there had been a motion for the papers, I venture to say we could have complained about the state of the file. As there was no motion, we were bound to accept the file as comprising all the papers in connection with the transaction.

The Minister for Works: It is all there.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We believe that all the papers necessary are not on that file. We know that the numbers of the pages have been altered and that about 30 pages have been taken out. I admit that it might be advisable on occasions to remove papers from a file but when a Minister does so he ought to put in something to explain to the member inquiring what has been done.

The Minister for Works: I removed none from the file until the time that Mr. Nevanas left the State. I have added to it but have removed none from it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am not accusing the Minister for Works.

The Attorney General: Are you accusing any other Minister.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am not accusing any other Minister but it is quite obvious that all the papers which were on the file are not there now.

The Attorney General: All that ever were on the file are there now.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then the file must have been very carelessly put together. The file was first numbered by a machine and the figures were then struck out and pencil ones substituted.

The Minister for Works: No, the machine figures were put over the pencil ones.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Not at all. I think the reply of the Minister for Lands shows that the member for Murray-Wellington was fully justified in all he said. It is most unfortunate that we are called upon to discuss a question of this

kind. This is one of those ugly acts of government indulged in so often by the present Ministry. There have been secret agreements on secret agreements; one thing has led to another; they have gone step by step on the downward path and now know the result of it. If the Minister for Works had not been supporting the Government he would have had a great deal to say on the subject. I have before me *Hansard* of 1909. The Minister will remember that he was in opposition in that year and that he waxed indignant because a man named Berteaux was paid £100 for sinking a shaft.

Mr. Foley: He was paid £100 for doing nothing.

The Minister for Works: Can you find a line I ever spoke on that?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, I mean the late Minister for Works, the present Minister for Lands. The then Minister for Mines had agreed to make an advance of I think £2 10s. a foot for sinking a shaft to a man named Berteaux. Some officer of the department made a mistake of 43 feet in the measurement, and it was thought by members then in Opposition that the payment of £100 was sufficient to justify a no-confidence motion in the ex-Minister for Mines, Mr. Gregory. The no-confidence motion was moved by the then leader of the Opposition, Mr. Bath. The present Minister for Lands, in discussing the motion, referred to the fact that the then Minister for Mines had acted without consulting his officials, pointed out amendments of the Mining Act which had been passed, and then quoted the *West Australian* as supporting his contention that Ministers should not act without first consulting the departmental officials. Now we find that the Minister, returned to office, does not consult the departmental officials.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, in every detail.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Not he; he instructed the present Minister for Works not to pay any regard to the representations of the departmental officers. There is a most interesting letter on the file, a portion of which reads—

I have looked through the points raised by the different officers, and my opinion is that they have gone to the utmost extremes in trying to build up the costs of these works, and I do not want them to be taken very seriously. All we require is a guarantee that the works, as designed, are capable of carrying out the purpose for which they were erected, or if alterations are necessary that they be kept down to a minimum. You will observe that Mr. Hardwick has commented generally on the lay-out of the buildings in addition to other points raised but of course the general lay-out has been adopted, and unless the contractor thinks the comments of Mr. Hardwick are worthy of consideration there is no need for this part of his report to be investigated further.

This is the Minister who in 1909 slated the then Minister for Mines for having acted without consulting his officers. If the hour were not so late it would afford me pleasure to read what he said on that occasion. The present Treasurer said—

As pointed out by the member for Guildford, the Minister is in the position of a trustee of public funds, and he is responsible for the proper expenditure of that money.

The Attorney General who, in opposition, was particularly active, made a very eloquent speech in denunciation of the then Minister. He said—

I cannot understand that this matter should be treated lightly and glossed over. The issue of Parliamentary Government is at stake, and we might as well shut up Parliament and let Ministers do as they like if we are to tolerate this kind of thing and allow them to tell us what they please, because the House has been, as I am warranted in saying, misled by a Minister of the Crown. It does not do to apologise by saying there are those on the other side who should have taken steps sooner. It is no excuse that the member for Boulder was not always at the Minister's elbow to remind him that he might do more What

are the Ministers in office for but to fulfil the whole of the duties placed upon them when they take charge of a portfolio. If every member of this House were to go to sleep and forget every vestige of his duty, the Ministers must keep awake. Ministers must be deserving of trust. Are they to be dogged at the heels by members in order to get common honesty from them, for that is what it means if we have not descended in politics to the lowest stage of depravity and degradation.

I do not propose to discuss the matter at any great length. Hon. members may go to their card rooms or their billiard tables, wherever they choose, but we shall have an opportunity when the select committee reports of moving another motion. I hope it will be a motion that will make even the Premier feel a little more serious in regard to this matter. The other day, when the Premier dealt with this question, as usual he attacked the previous Liberal Administration. He said we were prepared to advance a sum of money to some persons—he did not know whom—and having advanced this money that we were prepared to let them do as they liked in connection with this great question in the Kimberley district. He must know that we merely made an offer that we would advance pound for pound against the erection of the works, subject to certain conditions which would protect the small man. The Premier knows that full well, and knew it at the time he made the statement the other night. Yet, he had the audacity to make the statement that we were prepared to give a large sum of money in order that certain people might have absolute control over the capital produced in the North-West. It is, of course, not a fact. What we did do was to offer to make advances under certain conditions which would be entirely favourable to everybody. The Minister for Lands has discussed the file to-night, but he has not given us the information that he might have given us. He has told us that it is usual to discuss matters of this important nature in Cabinet, without first preparing a Cabinet minute. So far as my experience goes it is usual to discuss

proposals in Cabinet before the Minister himself gets down to finality, or sufficiently near it to get definite Cabinet approval. But never in my life have I heard of Cabinet discussing a matter without first having a definite proposal before it. We have got to remember that there were no plans in existence as supplied by Nevanas, on the 9th April. I think it is some little time later in June that the Solicitor General refers to the fact that plans and specifications are still not prepared. Yet the Minister says that he went to Cabinet with a proposal some time in April, and that Cabinet approved. We know from the file that Cabinet is supposed to have approved on the 9th on a minute written on the 15th. The Minister does not deny that it was written on the 15th. His explanation in regard to this matter cannot be accepted by anyone who has had any experience of the methods employed by Cabinet. It may be that the Minister himself and probably the Premier knew of the proposal. It is quite possible that no other member of Cabinet did know. If I read anything into the file I read that all that happened was known to the Premier and the present Minister for Lands, and that little indeed was known by their colleagues. It is perfectly evident that the present Minister for Works did not know what had happened in his absence in Melbourne, or that a definite contract had been signed by Nevanas. The present Minister for Works refers to this as an interim agreement. In a weak moment he did this and the term has been seized upon by the Minister for Lands. There never was an interim agreement; there was a definite agreement to build works at Wyndham and the agreement was made before the plans were completed. Nevanas was engaged by the Government to do this work. So far as we know Nevanas was a meat dealer. It was proposed to take his advice on engineering rather than that of the highly-paid and capable Government officer, the Engineer-in-Chief. When it comes to the question of freezing works and abattoirs, the controller of abattoirs is not consulted. The advice of Nevanas was to be followed. Again, when it came

to a question of legal advice Mr. Sayer was not in it with Mr. Nevanas. It seems to me that Nevanas had a commission to build these works, and in doing so could do just what he pleased. The Minister says there was no contract, but we are told that Nevanas sublet the contract.

Mr. James Gardiner: Do you want a select committee?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We are told that Nevanas sublet the contract.

Mr. James Gardiner: If you want a select committee why do you desire to prejudge the case here?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We are told that Nevanas—

Mr. James Gardiner: If you want a select committee—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Will the hon. member keep quiet. We are told that Nevanas sublet this contract and that he sublet it for £18,000 less than the price which was to be paid by the Government. If that is so I think the principle that tenders should first be called has been well established. If sufficient plans had been prepared and tenders invited, we should certainly have got our work done very much cheaper.

Mr. James Gardiner: Will you answer my question?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is not for the hon. member to decide what we shall do. We have a perfect right to discuss the matter even if we are to have a select committee.

Mr. James Gardiner: If you want a select committee why do you prejudge the case? Let us have a select committee and be done with it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Let the hon. member mind his own business.

Mr. James Gardiner: It is utterly impossible with you.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If the hon. member has finished I will proceed. We are to have a select committee.

Mr. James Gardiner: Then let them judge it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: That select committee will not be allowed to judge it. We shall judge it on the evidence produced

to the select committee. If the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) knows anything he knows that if the select committee is appointed, three hon. members will be taken from the other side of the House and two from this side. He knows that we shall get the evidence and the report, and that if we care to move when we get the report of the evidence, it will be open for us to do so. In the meantime, we can discuss the matters affecting the contract. I suppose the discussion may even have a helpful influence upon the select committee. We shall have I suppose, five members as wise as the hon. member for Irwin. The Minister for Works, the present Minister for Lands, became very active on the 9th April. By interjection I pointed out to him that he advised on the 8th April that the contract had been let. This is an important point, I think, in connection with this matter. All along the officers of the department, those men in whom the Minister has so little confidence, advised caution. Mr. Sayer on the 31st March said that too much care could not be exercised in specifying precisely what the contractor was required to do. The contractor was never required to do more, according to the Minister, than provide works capable of killing and freezing beasts.

The Premier: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Then the file, as we read it, refers to an agreement to manage the works. I asked if there were more agreements in existence and the Minister said no. I should like to know if this matter will be inquired into, namely whether Nevanas was ever engaged to manage the works at Wyndham. The Minister for Works referred to the Tender Board. When the Minister had got tangled up in this business, which had been going on for some 12 months, he sent the file to the Tender Board. This board would not commit themselves and would not help the Government to get out of the tangle they were in. The plan was then submitted to a special board and the same thing happened. The special board was appointed to inquire into the plans which, however, did not

then exist in a complete form. They were given 24 hours to report but the report was not satisfactory. Another 24 hours was given to them to consider the matter and they reported that the Minister might accept the tender.

Mr. O'Loughlen: If you were tried you would get seven days, not 24 hours.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am quite sure the hon. member who made the interjection has deserved it many a time without getting it.

Mr. O'Loughlen: None of us get what we deserve. At all events we do not deserve this.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: As late as the 14th June the Solicitor General says the plans do not exist. Yet we are told tonight that the plans were in existence in complete form on the 9th April. We do know that Nevanas has done very well out of this job. He has drawn something like £9,000 from the Government and the Government in exchange for that have got plans of the buildings, and plans of the water scheme which they propose to alter. They have also got a report which advocates action under certain conditions.

The Premier: The plans must be kept in a private drawer somewhere: I have never seen them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is strange, in connection with the jetty contract, that Nevanas never supplied either plans or tender. He was told to go north and take material and plant and men, and so on. He was told to prepare for the works and the Government undertook to pay him his out of pocket expenses, and in addition pay him for the plans and specifications and for his tender. Was anything more extraordinary ever undertaken by a Government than this contract for a jetty? There is nothing to show that any engineer accompanied Nevanas, or that he knew anything about engineering. Apparently he knew something about reinforced concrete, and therefore was given authority not only to prepare plans but to build the jetty. I should like to refer to the matter of the steamship service. How was it that this boat—the N2—was handed over to

Nevanas? It is quite clear that the explanation of the Minister could have been made more explicit.

The Premier: You did not hear it; you were asleep.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I heard that the Premier had missed this chance of selling the "Western Australia." This boat was apparently loaned to the Premier by the Federal Government without payment, unless it be the docking charge for the purpose of trading in the North-West. I suppose if he had been allowed to take up the materials Nevanas would have run in competition with the cattle trade on the Premier's boats. I think that the member for Mount Margaret when he moved his motion did quite the right thing.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: But he did not move it.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: He did the right thing when he gave notice of motion. He did the wrong thing when he withdrew. I can quite understand that the hon. member withdrew under pressure.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That is a lie.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must withdraw.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The statement is absolutely incorrect, and the hon. member knows it.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member will rise in his place and withdraw.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I withdraw the remark.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member will make no further remark.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I cannot understand why the member for Mount Margaret withdrew his motion unless pressure was brought to bear on him by someone. I do not suggest pressure was brought to bear on him by the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen).

Mr. O'Loughlen: What do you infer? By whom was pressure brought to bear?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The member for Mount Margaret did withdraw his motion, and in withdrawing it he occasioned very considerable disappointment. If the hon. member had withdrawn only with a proviso that ultimately he would

move a motion for the purpose of dealing with the officer or the Minister responsible for the bungling that has occurred in connection with this matter, one could understand it. Knowing the hon. member as I do, I was indeed surprised when he backed down. There have been many propositions and many agreements similar to the one which forms the subject of this motion, and I am not sure that we ought not to amend the motion of the member for Murray-Wellington by instructing the select committee to inquire into many other contracts, such as the powellising and the milling contracts. However, I suppose this one matter will be sufficient for any ordinary committee if they are to report before the House prorogues. I understand the Premier is going away to the Eastern States in a very few days, of course on important public business; but at any rate I hope that the committee will report before the prorogation, because unless they do the matter will be left in a very unsatisfactory state. I do not know how long the session is to last, but there are signs that it will not last very long. The committee, if to be appointed at all, should be appointed at once, and should get to work at once. If possible, the committee should sit in the open. If possible, the committee should take evidence on oath. I do not know whether the House can order that point, or whether it is a matter for the committee. I would like to point out that officials giving evidence should be protected. I think the committee might reasonably ask this. I wonder if the Premier would agree to have the committee sitting in the open, and agree that evidence given by public officials be given on oath. I am indeed glad that the Ministry have agreed to the appointment of the committee. Ministers must expect to be criticised. They exercise to the full their right to criticise other people. Yet they resent the slightest criticism, and their supporters resent the slightest criticism. If we criticise, they say, "What right have you to discuss the matter at all? We are going to give you a select committee." How-

ever, we have a perfect right to criticise. Hon. members opposite exercised their right to the fullest extent when we were in office. No one who saw the Premier sitting here but must have admired the manner in which he dealt with the acts of those who were then on the Treasury bench. He never spared himself. He never said, "I am going out, I will leave you to it." He did his duty, and I propose as far as I am able to do my duty. I should be very pleased if the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) could be persuaded that it was his duty to discuss this question. It is no unimportant matter. It is a question involving the expenditure of £155,000. Every detail in connection with the work up to date has been bungled. Nothing has been done that we are not inclined to take exception to. And yet hon. members say, "Wait for a select committee." I will wait for a select committee. I am perfectly willing to wait. If the select committee's report is such as I expect it will be, I shall have something more to say in regard to the matter.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore) [10.35]: The member for Murray-Wellington has asked the House to agree to a select committee. He moved his motion, he marshalled his facts, and he drew his inferences, with no inconsiderable skill. The Minister for Lands has replied at great length. The Government have agreed to the appointment of the select committee. It appears to me that under the circumstances the House should be prepared to accept at once the Ministerial approval of the motion. Further, it appears to me that if we discuss the matter now here, there will be no work for the select committee to do at all. Personally, I do not think it is right that after the Government have agreed to a select committee we should proceed to judge the case ourselves.

Mr. James Gardiner: There is such a thing as British fairplay.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY: I think that although we may be political opponents, as far as I am concerned I shall endeavour to see that from this side of the

House there is, at any rate, a certain measure of courtesy extended to those opposite. In my long experience of Parliamentary life, I have always understood that when the Government had agreed to the appointment of a select committee, the matter was then for the time being done with. The object of the motion of the member for Murray-Wellington has so far been accomplished, and, in view of that, I am sure the hon. member himself will agree that he does not desire any further discussion to take place at the present time. I trust that, the Government having agreed to the appointment of the select committee, that committee's work will be not only useful to the House but satisfactory to the country at large. Having read the select committee's report and the evidence, the House will be able to judge the question on the merits which will then be placed before us. For my part I hope—and I am sure hon. members on this side will follow me in this respect—that the debate will now close as soon as possible, and that we will proceed to appoint the select committee which this House desires and which the Government have approved.

An incident—Press representative excluded from the Gallery.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [10.37]: I do not propose to discuss the motion before the Chamber further than to say that I personally—and I think every member of this House, and in particular my colleagues, will join me in this—appreciate the few remarks made by the deputy leader of the Opposition. They were fair, and, above everything, they sounded a high principle; and, in the circumstances, in my position as leader of the House I appreciate them very much as coming from the deputy leader of the Opposition. There is one matter which I feel in duty bound, though with great regret, to bring under your notice, Mr. Speaker. While the Minister for Lands was addressing himself to this question, a note was handed down from the Press gallery and brought to me by a messen-

ger, together with an instruction that I was to deliver the note to Mr. Johnson when he had finished his speech. I opened the note for the purpose of seeing what it contained, and I found it contained the following:—

W. D. Johnson. You doubly miserable cur and liar. J. C. Morrison.
I think this is a matter which I am in duty bound to bring under your notice, Sir, as Speaker of the House.

Mr. SPEAKER [10.39]: The note which was sent down from the Press gallery, and which the Premier has brought under the notice of the House, is, in my opinion, decidedly improper and offensive; and, coming from the source from which it did, and being directed to a member of this House, it deserves the attention of all hon. members. As Speaker I have the power to deal with the writer of the note, who occupies a position in the Press gallery not by any inherent right, not because of any Press privilege, but by permission of the Speaker. I could order his expulsion from the Press gallery; but, since the offence is also a breach of the Parliamentary Privileges Act, I prefer that this House shall take action. I consider it a most insulting reference to be made to any member, and I think the House ought to be unanimous in a matter of this kind. I invite the House to take whatever course it thinks proper and necessary. This being a matter of special importance, I ask the House to decide it. I want to quote a reference from the Parliamentary Privileges Act as applied to this particular offence. The House is empowered to punish as for contempt any person "assaulting, obstructing, or insulting any member in his coming to or going from the House, or on account of his behaviour in Parliament." Apparently this reference from a member of the Press to the Minister for Lands is the result of some remarks which the Minister made in the House and the person who wrote the note is guilty of contempt.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [10.41]: I move—

That the writer of the offensive note, J. C. Morrison, is guilty of contempt

and that he be excluded from the Press gallery until he withdraws the offensive remarks and apologises to this House and to the Minister.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore) [10.42]

I second the motion.

Question passed.

Debate resumed.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [10.43]: I have listened with great pleasure to the remarks of the Minister for Lands. I do not propose to traverse them because I should have to express an opinion which I am desirous of not forming until I have all the evidence before me. The Government having agreed to the appointment of a select committee, my object has been attained, and I hope the labours of that committee will result in the clearing up, if there is any clearing up to be done, of this matter.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER (Irwin) [10.45]: Before the motion is put I would like to say a few words. Like everyone else in the House I was pleased to hear the remarks of the deputy leader of the Opposition. If we are going to have select committees it is an unwise thing for us to prejudge anything that is to be brought before such committees. I do hope this select committee will not seek for the littleness in this thing, that they will honestly try to see that the Government were actuated by a desire to save the country £50,000. One must admit that they were placed in a peculiar position. If they had not accepted this tender I venture to say that the very people who are rushing round saying there is something wrong in the Government accepting it would have been the first to have said—"You had a contract for £50,000 less than your officers' estimate and you were not prepared to accept it."

Hon. J. D. Connolly, I thought you said we should not prejudge the matter.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I am not saying anything about prejudging this, and when I have so small an outlook as the member for Perth, I will not continue

to remain a member of this House. Another reason why I welcome this select committee is that the streets of the city of Perth, to its degradation be it said, have become nothing less than sewers. When people are not busy publishing false reports about the war, which give a great deal of anxiety, they are attacking the characters of their public men. They spit the filthiness of their minds into the streets of the city and make them sewers.

The Attorney General: Perfectly true.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I would just remind those sewer rats—no other word can possibly designate them—that imputation is but self-reflection, and that dishonest motive which one man imputes to another is the very dishonest act he himself would commit if he were in that man's place. When it comes to a question of honour, be it said for the politicians of Australia, every man who has taken up public life has gone out of it purse poor, and the man who is mostly remembered is the honourable man. It is becoming a disgrace and a degradation to this State of ours that every man seems to think that, if one tries to do those things which are right and which are in the public interest and which sometimes may be failures, dishonest and corrupt motives are imputed. If I found any Minister of this House personally corrupt no man would be rougher on him than myself, and I am sure that no man in this party would be rougher on him than the individual members of it. I believe Ministers of the Crown, as they occupy those positions to-day, are as honest as I would be in them. That is the standard I put up. They may make mistakes. Personally I always have sympathy for the man who tries to do things and makes mistakes. But I say it is a disgrace to the State that people can go round town as they have done in this City and say this man's hands are being greased and that man's hands are being greased. Where is their standard of citizenship, and what sort of Parliament do they think they have here if members and Ministers can be bought? It is a crying shame and a disgrace, and I welcome the

select committee in this particular, because it will stifle for all times such accusations as these.

Question put and passed.

Ballot taken and a select committee appointed consisting of Messrs. Mullany, Munsie, Taylor, Willmott, and the mover (Mr. George) with power to call for persons, papers and records, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, and to report on this day three weeks.

House adjourned at 11.4 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 2nd September, 1915.

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

QUESTION—COLLIE COAL, RAILWAY SUPPLIES.

Mr. ROBINSON asked the Minister for Railways: What was the tonnage of Collie coal supplied to the Government railways—(a) Midland Workshops, (b) Midland Loco. Depôt, (c) West Perth Loco. Depôt, during the year ending 30th June, 1915?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: The following Collie coal was consumed at the depôts mentioned during the year ended 30th June, 1915:—(a) 9,448 tons, (b) 14,530 tons, (c) 39,724 tons.

QUESTIONS (2)—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD.

Flat Rate for Farmers.

Mr. HARRISON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it a fact that the Government have decided that a flat rate shall be charged to farmers securing chaff through the Industries Assistance Board, such rate to include charges for administrative expenses?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: Yes.

Defalcations at Northam.

Mr. HARRISON asked the Minister for Agriculture: Is it the intention of the Government to treat the defalcations at Northam as a charge to administration?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: No.

QUESTION—LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL, INTRODUCTION.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Lands: In reference to the Land Act Amendment Bill promised last session, and forecasted again in the Governor's Speech for this session, will he indicate how soon this important measure will be submitted for the consideration of the House?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: Within a fortnight or so.

QUESTION—BRAN IMPORTATION, LOSS ON SALE.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Lands: In reference to the bran, etc., imported from the Argentine, which is now being sold at a considerable loss per ton, will he state to whom this loss will be charged—to the assisted farmer or to the general taxpayer?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: Owing to it being necessary, in the interests of the general community, for the Government to import for the