

# Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 25th August, 1936.

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

## ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Supply Bill (No. 1), £2,200,000.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. J. Cornell (South) on the ground of ill-health.

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

*Fifth Day.*

Debate resumed from the 13th August.

**HON. G. B. WOOD** (East) [4.35]: Before proceeding with my remarks, I wish to express my appreciation of the many kindnesses extended to me by members on my election to Parliament. Particularly do I appreciate the remarks of Mr. Baxter, Mr. Piesse and Mr. Angelo, and their kindly references to my late father. Not only do I appreciate those remarks, but members of my family have also appreciated them. I wish to refer to one or two matters of vital importance to the province I represent, as well as to the State. I represent a huge province, in which are contained many primary industries. I am naturally concerned about the welfare of the people engaged in those industries. Many of our wheat farmers are producing real wealth for the State, and the State is existing upon it, but they themselves are not in a happy condition as regards comforts, finances, or general prosperity. Many of them are merely existing upon their farms, working long hours, living in inferior houses, their wives and children not receiving the comforts due to them, and they themselves not receiving an adequate reward for their labours. We have the sorry position of being possessed of

2,700 abandoned farms. I say positively we cannot permit that state of affairs to exist indefinitely without making a determined effort to re-occupy some of those that are within the safe rainfall area. I would not suggest re-occupying every abandoned farm, but there are many which we cannot afford to allow to remain as they are at present, breeding grounds for grasshoppers, rabbits, and other vermin. Another task also confronts us. We have to consolidate the position of those who are remaining on their farms. Many of them are sadly in need of assistance for the reconditioning of their machinery and the purchase of more horses. I am opposed to the use of the Rural Relief Fund for either of these purposes. I consider that fund is inadequate for the rehabilitation of the farming industry. Many farmers, particularly in the north-eastern wheatbelt, have lost all their horses, while others have lost half their teams through troubles ensuing upon drought. This State has built up in good times essential transport services to cope with the 53,000,000-bushel yield of some years ago. We cannot afford to carry on these services without considerable retrenchment, especially if our wheat yield this year does not exceed 23,000,000 bushels. The surest way to cope with the situation is to again increase our yield to 53,000,000 bushels. We are all very glad of the assistance the State has received from the goldmining industry. As a result of that, this State is enjoying a certain amount of prosperity, and the going is more or less good. Now is the time to take advantage of that prosperity, and place our other primary industries on a surer foundation. The time has come when we will have to depend upon our wheat and wool to carry us through. We are very grateful, too, for what has been done through the Rural Relief Fund. That, however, is only a drop in the ocean compared with what is required to put the wheat and other industries in a good position. We must have more money for the rehabilitation of our farming industry. The Rural Relief scheme is not for rehabilitation; it is only a debt adjustment scheme, and one that has not done very much good. One can say that 75 per cent. of the wealth of the State comes from our rural industries. Notwithstanding that, those industries have only about 30 per cent. of the representation in Parliament. I appeal to legislators, other than those representing rural interests, for sym-

After viewing the claims of various country towns, it seems to me that Merredin is deserving of favourable consideration when a decision is being reached regarding the site for the new high school. Mention is made in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech of the increased supply of electricity that will be available when the extension of the East Perth power house plant has been completed. It is suggested that all the requirements in that respect will be fulfilled when that work is completed. I hope that that will cover the requirements of the hill districts, and that mains will be extended to Glen Forrest and, if possible, to Mundaring. A large number of people reside in those districts and I am confident that much power will be utilised in fulfilling their requirements and, in consequence, considerably increased revenue will be reaped by the department. In fact, I believe that the service there will be self-supporting. I was disappointed to note that no mention was made in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech regarding the intention of the Government to introduce marketing legislation. It is desirable that the small producers, particularly those who deal in perishable articles, shall be provided with protective legislation, so that their industries may be controlled. I do not suggest price-fixing when I refer to the necessity for marketing legislation, nor have I in mind anything that will conflict in any way with Section 92 of the Constitution. The egg producers and poultry farmers generally require the establishment of a marketing board, and legislation along the lines of the Victorian Act would be most desirable. Under that Act those connected with any individual industry can seek the protection of the legislation and their activities can be controlled by a board of producers, men who know something about the industry concerned. Although there is no reference of that description in the Speech, I hope that the Government will introduce legislation along the lines I have indicated. A serious position confronts certain industries to-day, in respect to supplies and prices for bran and pollard. The millers of Western Australia, in order to provide sufficient bran and pollard for those engaged in the various allied industries, including poultrymen, pig raisers and dairymen, require a certain volume of export trade. Our millers are operating at a distinct disadvantage com-

pared with the millers in the Eastern States, where they have a "through-the-mill" rate. Although our millers did enjoy a similar provision at one time, it was taken away from them in 1914. If our millers had the benefit of that particular rate, it would mean assistance to them to the extent of 8s. per ton. Although that does not seem much, it would place them on a more equitable footing with the producers in the Eastern States. Some time ago the then Premier (Hon. P. Collier), during the course of a broadcasted speech, emphasised the fact that the Government had assisted the timber industry by granting a rebate in respect of railway freights amounting to a large sum. No one would object to that assistance, but I maintain that if the Government could render that help to the timber industry, they could also afford to assist the flour-milling industry. Any sacrifice that might be made in order to render that assistance, would mean that the Government would be more than compensated because of the extra freight that would be received on the State ships in connection with the export of timber to Singapore, while it would mean more wages for the wharf lumpers, more work for the railway men, and advantages in other indirect ways. In addition to that, there would be the increased avenues of employment for mill hands. I hope that, in the interests of all concerned, attention will be given to the milling industry and assistance rendered by the provision of the "through-the-mill" rate. I was surprised that no mention was made in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech of provision for a new building for the Agricultural Department. Anyone acquainted with the condition of the present building must be aware that it constitutes a disgrace to the State. The premises are not fit to house the smallest and least important department, whatever that may be, let alone a department that is the most important in a State of primary production. No fitting laboratory is available to enable the officials to carry out necessary research work. At the present time the presence of toxic paralysis in our stock, and the ravages of the red-legged mite in our pastures, are taking their toll and no reasonable expense should be spared in attempting to find remedies. We cannot expect our doctors and professors to carry out research work in the present dreadful buildings, and I trust that something will

be done in the near future to remedy the existing unsatisfactory state of affairs. Dealing with transport matters, the State Transport Co-ordination Act, while in itself a desirable measure, requires drastic amendment. It operates exceedingly harshly with regard to some of the smaller primary producers. Quite recently some of our apiarists were told that they could not convey clarified honey to Perth, although they could cart crude honey to the works at York where the article was clarified. That honey is not manufactured in York, but merely clarified, and I fail to see why any such restriction should be placed upon the apiarists.

Hon. A. Thomson: Don't you think they were very fortunate to be allowed to cart their crude honey to York?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Perhaps that is so, but these people are being hampered in their activities. They are operating at Manjimup, New Norcia, and other centres, and while they are permitted to convey crude honey, they are not permitted to transport their clarified product. Those apiarists say it is not economical to use the railways, and in those circumstances they will be forced to leave their homes and their operations generally and move to the city. That means enforced centralisation, which is very undesirable. It will also mean increasing the price of their product. Surely to goodness there are troubles enough already without making conditions any harder. I understand that some dairy-men in the South-West have been instructed that they cannot transport their milk supplies; yet people who are within a certain radius of the city are permitted to do so. Why should not the people in the outer country districts be allowed to cart their milk to Perth just as much as those living nearer to the metropolis? I hope that matter will receive consideration too. It is interesting to note that the Government have authorised an inquiry by a special committee into the desirability of removing the lazaret at Wooroloo, and as that matter is being considered now, further comment on my part might be ruled out of order. In passing, however, I might remark that the residents of Wooroloo are anxiously awaiting the findings of the committee. The Government are to be commended upon their action in assisting in

the provision of three hospitals in the country districts. I refer to Gnowangerup, Merredin and Manjimup. While I have not inspected the Gnowangerup and Manjimup hospitals, I can assure the House that the Merredin hospital is a credit to the State. The buildings are remarkably fine. The local people found some of the money necessary for the institution, and the Government rendered assistance as well. I am glad to see that the Flying Doctor Scheme has received assistance from the Government. As a resident of the North-West for many years, I know what a wonderful boon the scheme must be to the people residing in that part of the State. Lately we have heard talk regarding the desirability of recommencing the introduction of assisted migrants to Australia. I hope nothing will be done along those lines until our own youth unemployment problem has been solved and our own people placed on full-time work. Either that, or we should wait until the position has reverted to what it was in pre-depression days. Perhaps something could be done to induce people possessed of a little capital to come out and settle on some of our abandoned farms. I would not be a party even to that unless the properties could be given to the newcomers on extremely favourable terms. I think some of the holdings could, practically speaking, be given away. If any system of migration is embarked upon in the future, I trust that a very careful selection of migrants will be made. Most of our troubles—at any rate with our land schemes, especially the group settlement scheme—have been due to the very poor type of immigrant despatched to Australia. I do not suggest that all the migrants were of an inferior type, but I have had considerable experience with them. In my opinion at least 50 per cent. of them should have been retained in England. Turning to another serious problem, I am very much afraid that we will be confronted by another invasion of locusts in the north-eastern parts of the wheat area. The farmers there are not in a financial position to cope with the pest, and some concrete assistance should be rendered them immediately. I understand that the Beneubbin Road Board is prepared to carry out certain work if the Government will provide some assistance. The Government Entomologist, Mr. Newman, has

visited that district, and I am afraid his policy has in view the protection of the present crop. The problem is far greater than that. It is a State matter, and unless some most determined action is taken in the near future, a very serious position will confront us. I know of one small area where the holdings of about six different farmers are surrounded by abandoned Agricultural Bank holdings comprising some 40,000 acres. Those half dozen settlers are in an impossible position and cannot hope to cope with the locust pest under such conditions. It is realised that the abandoned farms are the breeding grounds for locusts or grasshoppers, and I urgently appeal to the Government to take action in that respect in the near future. If action is not taken, the problem will before long develop into a much more serious one, and conditions may arise under which it will be practically useless to endeavour to cope with it. Before concluding, I desire to touch on a few Federal matters that I consider are of vital importance to Western Australia. I notice that the Federal Aid Roads Grant is to be extended, and that negotiations are to be entered into with the Federal Government. I hope that when negotiations are in progress between the Governments, an understanding will be arrived at in regard to the petrol tax. That tax was imposed some years ago with the idea of making main roads, and we know that only about 3d. a gallon of the tax has been used for that purpose. The remainder has gone into Consolidated Revenue. In the years 1934 and 1935 Western Australia was paid £200,000 less than was taken away in petrol tax, and I do hope that when negotiations are in progress this aspect will be given serious consideration. Touching that £200,000 I think it would have kept on full-time work very many workers who have been and are still being employed on part-time work. Much has been said lately as to the merits and demerits of the Federal Government's action in imposing tariffs on imported foreign goods. It appears to me that the Federal Government had to come to the point of deciding very definitely who was to be given consideration between England and foreign countries. We know that the woolgrowers have been hit the hardest, because Japan appears to be the only country that instituted reprisals. We still have to accept the fact, though, that England is our best customer for wool, and England buys many of our other products

as well—fat lambs, dried fruits, eggs, butter, chilled beef, etc.—which Japan does not buy from us. It behoves us all to take a broad view of the position and look at it, not only from the material but from a sentimental and defence viewpoint, while not forgetting the fact that the standard of living of many of our workers, particularly in the Eastern States, is being undermined by the importation of cheap foreign goods. We have reason to believe that England will trade with us to help us, and Japan will trade with us to help Japan. The findings of the Privy Council Appeal are very disappointing to our producers, particularly those in the dried fruits and dairying industries. It is a matter for surprise to producers that the Government of a primary producing State should have intervened in that case and assisted Mr. James and his friends in his fight against the dried fruits industry. While I am prepared to admit that the Government were not interested in Mr. James, but rather intervened with the idea of maintaining State rights, it seems a great pity that this should be done at the expense of very important primary industries. It took many years to get that legislation through, and it is a great pity that it has all gone by the board. No doubt judging by the trend of events in Europe, and particularly what we hear over the wireless sometimes from foreign countries, many of us will be thinking of something else in the near future rather than of our immediate domestic affairs. For instance, we may have something more to think about than whether we are going to get 4s. for our wheat or 1s. for wool. I refer to the possibility of war. Eastern States Parliamentarians have told me that it seems likely a measure for compulsory military training will be introduced in the Federal House in the near future, although I noticed that Sir Archdale Parkhill denied this. It is our duty as citizens in this State to educate people as to the necessity for the introduction of such legislation, so that when it comes along they will be ready for it, and take it as they should take it. While at this early stage in my Parliamentary career it would be presumptuous of me to criticise the Government, I must admit that I am very disappointed in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech. I was struck by the fact that there is nothing in it to lead us to believe that any assistance will be given to our wheat industry, and other primary industries.

Mention has been made of future activity in the mining areas, such as a railway at Cue and new pipelines to Norseman and other mining districts. Perth is to have more sewerage, trolley buses, drainage, water supplies, educational facilities and electricity. While we know that all these things are desirable, even in a prosperous city like Perth and for the prosperous mining industry, we are naturally very disappointed that nothing has been said to lead us to believe that any assistance will be given to some of our rural industries. Surely our farming industries from which so much wealth comes, but which in themselves are not very wealthy, are deserving of a little assistance? The Government should have learnt during the recent drought the desirability of a much more adequate water supply in the country than exists at present. I do hope that though these questions are not mentioned in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, the Government will give all the relief that is necessary to the people concerned and the industries that have suffered and are still suffering through no fault of their own. I thank hon. members for the patient and tolerant hearing they have given me.

**HON. L. CRAIG** (South-West) [5.7]: I join in the congratulations to the two new members who have been elected to this House and in condoling with the two unfortunates in their defeat. Two things struck me at the opening of Parliament, which I may be permitted to mention. The first was the dreadful overcrowding. The time has come when the number of invitations should be limited. The opening ceremony has become more like a football match every year, and I do think we should limit the number of people invited to the galleries. I am not talking about the invitations to the floor. That, Sir, is your pigeon and I understand that you bear the expense of it. But it is most difficult to obtain a cup of tea and the scrum that takes place is most undignified.

**Hon. C. B. Williams**: What was the position in the bar?

**Hon. L. CRAIG**: I did not go into the bar. I was not able to get there; it was so crowded. The position was such that I sent my blue tickets to my boys at school. I would certainly not invite ladies to come to the gallery. I sent my tickets to my boys at the school and told them to put on their footy togs if they wanted to get a cup of

tea. Why not limit the number of invitations and allow the proceedings to be a little more dignified and less crushed? One other small thing struck me as out of date, although perhaps I am out of place in mentioning it. I noticed that when the Chief Commissioner was addressing the two Houses, he started off, "Mr. President, Honourable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly." Now that might have been all right a hundred or two hundred years ago, but I think the time has come when our customs should be reviewed. I am a great believer in traditions and customs when they are sensible but not when they are out of date. I noticed that at this particular introduction some of our worthy friends from another place tittered like a lot of schoolboys. It created a lot of mirth and the opening of Parliament is not a place for the creation of mirth. I think the time has come when some of these matters might be reviewed with a view to coming down to our more or less matter of fact days. It is a rather foolish expression, "Honourable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly." At mess dinners in the army, more for a joke than anything else, those present may be addressed as "Gentlemen of the Light Horse and men of other units." That kind of thing creates mirth, and that is just what takes place here at the opening of Parliament where we hear "Hon. gentlemen of the Legislative Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly." I think that is foolish and we should bring this method of addressing members of both Houses to something more reasonable. I do not suggest how it should be done; I leave that to the people who know more about it.

**The Honorary Minister**: Would you call them all "gentlemen."

**Hon. L. CRAIG**: I would say "Hon. members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly." That would be better and certainly would not cause mirth amongst the gentlemen who stand at the back of the Chamber. I am going to touch on another subject which is not popular. I consider the time has arrived when something should be done towards the completion of Parliament House. It is about 35 years since the construction was first begun, and still we find the same projecting pieces of galvanised iron at the end of the walls that were there when I was a boy attending

school. In South Australia the Government are spending no less than £236,000 on completing Parliament House.

Hon. G. Fraser: And they are still using the temporary part.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am not complaining about this part of the building we are now in. I have not seen a better chamber anywhere; but under the Factories and Shops Act we should be liable for compelling the members of the "Hansard" staff to work under trying conditions during the summer months in a galvanised iron structure. It is time we took a stand on this question. A start should be made to complete the building and I hope the Government will not lose sight of the fact that more and better accommodation is required. When the building trade was at a standstill attention should have been paid to the need for completing the structure. At any rate, it is not too late now to make a commencement in the direction of making Parliament House what it should be.

Member: Why not spend something on new buildings for the Agricultural Department?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I know it will be said that the money could better be spent on water schemes for the country and new roads, but that is no reason why something should not be done towards completing this building.

Hon. J. Nicholson: In 1929 a resolution was passed in this House favouring the completion of Parliament House to commemorate the centenary.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Perth is becoming a large and dignified city. We have beautiful schools, and so why should not the city be graced with a better structure for the legislature? At the present time when one enters the corridor the smell of potatoes and cabbage in the process of cooking indicate what one is to have for lunch. Western Australia should have something better than that, and I hope the Government will consider the advisability of having plans prepared for the early completion of the building.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The plans were all prepared, but cash was wanting.

Hon. L. CRAIG: There has been talk of want of cash for 30 years. I should say £40,000 or £50,000 would make this a highly presentable building.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The foundation stone was laid 25 years ago.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is time that we had a dignified and decent-looking place, and that the people who work here had decent conditions to work under. Now I wish to refer to taxation, more particularly to taxation as it affects North-Westerners. Unfortunately, some years assessments have come in at the rate of two annually. This touches me personally, so I do know something about the matter. Like many other people interested in the North-West, I received my income tax assessment for the year 1934-35 in January of 1936, about six months ago. The 1934 year was the best which obtained in the North-West for years. There was a good season with decent prices, and so squatters had reasonably large incomes. Assessments for that good year were received in January of 1936. Consequently the deduction of that amount—and it was a big sum—comes in a year when income is nil, when sheep are dying in thousands and squatters have no income. First of all, squatters have to pay this while the drought is on, and, secondly, the deductions come in a year when one does not want a deduction. Had that income tax assessment been received when it should have been received—that is, in June of 1935—the deduction would have come in when there was income to pay it. Now a large sum has to be paid during a year when there is no income. Again, the assessment for the year ended 30th June, 1935, was received in July. I myself had two assessments in six months. Both those assessments have to be paid, and both of them are substantial. As is well known, there is an emergency tax of 9d., which in itself represents a considerable sum. Those taxes have to be paid during a period of the severest drought the North-West has ever known. And the deductions are quite useless, for in the years ended 30th June, 1936, and 30th June, 1937, there will be no income tax at all to pay. Those two years will be no good to the Treasury. I do not know whether the fault lies with the Government or with the Taxation Department, but the present system is highly disturbing to squatters. These people have either a pretty big income or no income at all. This year two big taxes have to be paid when the squatters can ill-afford the payments. The same thing has happened before. I know I have had a big slug, and many others who are paying more than I do make the same complaints. While

on the question of taxation, I do hope a new taxing measure will be introduced, because the present Act is utterly out of date. A large proportion of the incomes on which we are now paying taxation represents increase of stock which has subsequently died. In making out assessments, one has to allow for increase of stock. For the purposes of Federal taxation one can more or less fix one's own price for a lamb or a calf. But for State taxation one has to allow 10s. for a sheep, £4 for a calf, and £3 for a horse. One can imagine a dairy farmer starting off with 20 cows and getting 20 calves; the day the calves are dropped he has to show an income of £80 for them. Certainly many of the people affected are knocking those calves on the head. I myself have done so, whether the calf was a heifer or a bull. I am not showing the value of those calves, but the small dairy farmer who rears his calves does. In the dairy areas calves are mostly born between April and the end of June, and for each of those calves he has to show a net income of £4, whereas the true value is not 10s. The position is most unjust. There is not a sheep in the North-West worth 10s. to-day. Lately we have been selling a lot of sheep, and have netted about 6s. on them. However, on the day a lamb is dropped, it is assessed for State taxation purposes at 10s. The horse has an assessed value of £3—£1 less than a calf. The whole thing is ridiculous. I do hope that the Bill which is to be introduced will fix reasonable values for increase of stock.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The Bill to be introduced is really a unifying measure with the Commonwealth Act.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The present position is most unjust, and makes it quite impossible to keep one's books properly and in accordance with the requirements of the Taxation Department. For my part, I try to do so. The differences between State values and Commonwealth values cause one's books to go all astray. I hope the Government will resist the clamour which is bound to be made for the raising of exemption from financial emergency tax to the level of the basic wage or even higher. Western Australia is going to suffer considerably by reduced taxation during the next few years. It will take many years to bring the squatting fraternity back to an income tax paying basis. Many stations which shored 20,000 sheep last year are now

down to 5,000 or 6,000. To restore the numbers will take many years. On the averaging system, income tax is averaged over a period of five years.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The rate is averaged over three years.

Hon. L. CRAIG: In my case, it is five years. There will be a definite shortage of income tax from that source, a source which yielded rather plentifully. The Government will require all the extra tax money that is available. It must not be forgotten that people to-day on the basic wage are not the poor people. I hold in principle that everyone should pay taxation in times of crisis or emergency. The fact of having a financial emergency tax in force suggests that we still live in a period of emergency. It would be a shame to keep on raising the exemption as the basic wage rises, because such exemption would include a good many people who do not live on wages only. The time has come when all persons on the basic wage or above it should pay something towards the cost of governing the country. This would operate harshly, I believe, in the South-West Division, where basic wage earners have received an increase of 1s. 3d. whereas the taxation would amount to 1s. 4d., so that such people would be a penny a week worse off than before. I do hope, though, that such people will not be altogether exempt from taxation. There is a hardy annual of mine which I must repeat, not having had a reply to my question, although I have been asking it for three years. Why is it necessary to charge settlers on repurchased estates 6 per cent. interest? The bank rate has risen to 5¼ per cent. for overdrafts, but it was down to five per cent. Returned soldiers settled on repurchased estates are paying 4½ per cent. But the poor individual who has bought a farm on a repurchased estate is still paying six per cent. to the Government. I have not yet had a reply from the Government as to why that is necessary. It has been said that the money for the purchase of the estates was borrowed at a higher rate. Well, we have borrowed millions of money at higher rates and written them off. If it is necessary to have legislation restricting the rights of mortgagees and controlling rates, surely some of that legislation, in some form, should apply to the Govern-

ment. No reduction whatever has been made in the rate of interest charged in connection with repurchased estates. Mr. Wood touched on a point which I desire to mention—the intervention of the Government in the James case. That intervention was most uncalled for and quite unnecessary, though I do not believe that it had anything to do with the result. Our Government was bluffed into it. Astute little Tasmania, with nothing to lose and everything to gain by a decision in favour of James, induced our Government to put up money belonging to our people for the purpose of fighting the case, and greatly to the detriment of Western Australia. Tasmania neither produced dried fruits nor exported butter. We in this State produce large quantities of dried fruit and are exporters of butter. The decision may have a serious effect on Western Australian producers. The result has not been felt yet, because voluntary agreements are still maintaining prices; but this marketing control may break down at any time. For the benefit of hon. members generally, I wish to point out what has taken place in the dried fruits industry since marketing control has been in vogue; and this applies to the butter industry as well. When control first came into force, the dried fruits industry was on the point of collapse, and something had to be done. First of all, it must be clearly understood that the dried fruits industry is an export industry; 85 per cent. of the production is exported, home consumption accounting for only 15 per cent. The trade in Great Britain at that time was chaotic. To-day in Britain there is an orderly system of marketing. With New Zealand and Canada very little trade was done. Nowadays those two countries are buying nearly 18,000 tons annually. Shipping freights, prior to control of the industry, were 70s. per cubic ton. Those rates have now been reduced to 50s. per ton. I am trying to point out that these improvements were all due to the fact that the industry speaks with one voice, instead of the condition of the industry being chaotic and each State fighting for itself; for instance, goods from Western Australia being sent over to the Eastern States—

Hon. G. W. Miles: Dried fruits are coming here from the Eastern States now, I believe.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Only in very small quantities, I understand. Since the decision in the James case, there is nothing to prevent the whole of Western Australia's requirements in the form of dried fruits being dumped here from the East, and our own product having to be sent oversea for sale at world prices. I wish to point out how an industry speaking with one voice has the power to get something, whereas an industry divided against itself never secures anything, never gets anywhere. With control, the Australian industry has been able to reduce shipping freights from 70s. to 50s. per cubic ton. Storage in Great Britain was cheapened and marketing trouble was controlled. At the time previous to marketing control, there was no preference, either in Canada or in New Zealand for Commonwealth goods such as dried fruits, whereas to-day there is preference in Canada to the extent of £18 13s. 4d. per ton of Australian dried fruits, and in New Zealand a preference of £9 6s. 8d. per ton. Preference in Great Britain was at that time one-sixth of £7 per ton on sultanas, one-sixth of £2 on currants. To-day the preference is £10 10s. per ton on sultanas and £2 per ton on currants, and so on. I have a lot of matter here, for the control board examined the method of marketing sales all over Britain and elsewhere. Under the James case, all that is broken down, and James, a merchant, can buy from anyone he likes, and dump the whole of the stuff in Western Australia. Our Government, at considerable expense, financed counsel in London to fight the case for James against the Commonwealth, for fear of the powers the Commonwealth might have. But the Commonwealth have had those powers for a long time and have never abused them, and surely something else might have been done to allow the system to go on under the control the Commonwealth have, and then alter the powers of the Commonwealth Government, or fix those powers to those industries. Now it is suggested that we have a referendum to give the Commonwealth Government limited powers. But we know there is no possible chance of that being agreed to by the States, that is, by a majority of the people in the majority of the States. The only other thing is an excise duty. That may have the desired effect for the whole of Australia, but it is going to be detrimental to Western Australia. To begin with, in Western Australia we were producing our



own butter and dried fruits, and had our own control scheme. Under excise, we will contribute heavily to the producers in the other States. According to the figures for two years ago, consumers in Western Australia in that year would have contributed £40,000 to the producers in the other States. That was because 1s. 3d. was fixed in Australia as the selling price, while the price in London was about 9d. per lb. So the Eastern States butter may come into Western Australia, and be sold at 1s. 3d. a lb., while Western Australian butter, which may not be quite up to the standard of the Eastern States product, will be exported to London and sold at 9d. per lb. So the producer in Western Australia may receive an average of 9d. per lb. for a great quantity of butter, while the producer in the Eastern States may get 1s. 3d. per lb., the difference being paid for by the consumers of Western Australia. Thus the Western Australian consumer will be again paying through the neck and, instead of the extra money being paid to the Western Australian producer, it will go to the Eastern States. This is what, in all likelihood, we shall have as a result of the James case, whereas we have had our market left alone to the extent of as much butter as we ourselves can produce, and there was sent over from the Eastern States only sufficient to make up the local shortage. All that is now gone since this unfortunate James case. I understand we have a voluntary agreement which will maintain the present position; but it only requires one man to break away, and there will be a wild, helter-skelter by each producer to sell as much as he can. It was very inconsiderate indeed for the Government of Western Australia to spend money to fight a case against the producers of Western Australia. Now I wish to say a few words on the subject of the proposed 40-hour week. I am not speaking as one with a great deal of knowledge, but it seems to me to be wrong that in a huge State like Western Australia we should talk about reducing hours to 40 per week. I as well as other members, perhaps more than most, would like to see reasonable hours worked, and it may be necessary in some industries, I mean secondary industries, to reduce hours. For instance, I understand that an operative in a boot factory, by means of a modern machine, can make three times as many pairs of boots as he could have made ten years ago. That may be so, but in Western Australia there are thousands of

miles of road to make and millions of acres of land to develop, so we should not agree to a general reduction in hours because a few secondary industries desire it. Surely 44 hours per week is not too much to expect a man to work! The cheapening of production in secondary industries or, at all events, the bulk of it, should go to cheapen the cost of commodities to the people. I do not see that the 40-hour week in secondary industries is going to help the State, and on the other hand I am sure it will have a very prejudicial effect on other industries. This sort of legislation seems to be going on from year to year. The basic wage has been increased, hours of labour have been shortened for all those in secondary industries. It has happened in other countries of the world, highly industrialised countries, where the agricultural industry has become no more than a peasants' industry. We do not want that sort of thing here.

Hon. V. Hamersley: We shall be wanting a coolie industry next.

Hon. L. CRAIG: What we want is an enlightened and happy industry. The Government should give this latest proposal very serious consideration before acquiescing in it. We cannot expect farmers to work the long hours they do when other men are to work only 40 hours per week. Yet the long hours worked by the farmer are quite necessary; if he is to be successful with sheep and cattle, he must work on Saturdays and on Sundays. This gradual shortening of hours is raising the standard of living in the cities and lowering it in the country. It is an appalling state of affairs, this shortening of the working week for a few when others have to work far too long, because we have a huge area of country to develop, and unending work to be done with so few willing to do it.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.40]: I have carefully read His Excellency's Speech, and I appreciate and endorse its kindly references to the late King George V., and also its reference to King Edward the VIII. Whilst we in local politics may differ, it is generally recognised in this country that when we refer to King and Empire, we all speak with one mind and one voice. I desire to refer to the loss sustained by the House in the defeat of Mr. R. G. Moore and Mr. H. J. Yelland at the last elections. They were with us for some time and they both fulfilled their duties to the best of their

ability. I am afraid the electors of this country are not as generous as were the electors in America when, during a religious revival at one time, there proved to be more churches than organists, and some radicals posted up a notice reading "Don't shoot the organist; he's doing his best." Those two gentlemen I have named honestly did their best in this House, but the electors have thought otherwise. Nevertheless, I desire to place on record my appreciation of their services. Also I desire to welcome the Hon. E. M. Heenan and the Hon. G. B. Wood, and to congratulate them on their advent to this Chamber. I am certain they will live up to the traditions of the past and will have a better appreciation of this House now they are inside it than they had when they were outside. I can assure them that when they are prepared to bring forward anything for the betterment of the community they, or either of them, will have the support of a substantial majority of the Chamber. I am sorry I did not speak in time to make reference to Mr. Wood's father, whom I knew as a boy many years ago. Like other speakers, I desire to couple the hon. member's name with that of his father. I should like to assure Mr. Craig that his fears of what may result from the introduction of a 40-hour week are not likely to be fulfilled. I think Queensland leads the van in the industrial legislation of Australia. Only the other day I picked up the following statement by the Industrial Commissioner of Queensland, Mr. Webb, and his colleagues:

No Thirty-hour Week.

In Queensland the combined industrial unions have asked the State Industrial Court to fix a working week of 30 hours. Their advocate spoke for an entire day. He contended that greater employment would result, but the question of how industry could carry the burden of a 30-hour week at 48-hour wages—an integral part of the application—he did not touch upon.

Hon. E. H. Gray: What paper is that from?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The paragraph continues—

It was hardly necessary for wage-payers to state their side of the case. President Webb, for himself and his colleagues, pointed out that to grant the application would "paralyse industry"; the cane-sugar industry, for one, would be destroyed—as is plain as a pikestaff. He added that the 30-hour week was just about as practicable as a one-hour day, and told the unions that "unchallengeable facts" were against them.

So it will be seen that thinking men, controlling the Arbitration Court, have declared that industry would be paralysed if this scheme for a 30-hour week were brought into practice.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Quote the recommendations of Geneva.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Speech contained very little, except what members could obtain from departmental files. True, it contained a boast that we finished the year with a surplus of £88,000. That looked very well in the Speech, but when we analyse the financial position, I do not think it will be found to be at all satisfactory. I have made an analysis in order that we may know exactly how we stand. Quite a number of facts need to be considered. First of all, the revenue last year was £10,033,000, or £702,000 more than in the previous year. To get £702,000 more of revenue than in the previous year, and finish with a surplus of only £88,000, is, to my mind, no justification for the Government's throwing bouquets at themselves. As to special State grants received from the Commonwealth, I give the following figures:—

	£		
1931-32	..	..	300,000
1932-33	..	..	500,000
1933-34	..	..	600,000
1934-35	..	..	733,000
1935-36	..	..	835,000

That is a matter which I suggest the Dominion League would not mention, but it is a fact nevertheless that we have had those amounts by way of special grants for this State. Now turn to the financial emergency tax. In 1933 other items were included, but the tax produced £202,346. In 1934 other taxes were again included and the amount received was £411,716. In 1935 the total received from financial emergency tax was £681,979, and last year it was £827,118. It is interesting to note that in 1934 this tax produced £200,000 more than in 1933; in 1935 it produced £473,000 more than in 1933; and in 1936, £624,000 more than in 1933. Yet the Government claim that they have not increased taxation. If they have not increased taxation, the question arises, where did the £624,000 come from? Considering all these credits, coupled with the fact that the Government received £702,000 more revenue last year than in the previous year, I do not think they have much to boast about. We should remember also that there was a general adjustment of the

finances between the Commonwealth and the States at the 30th June, 1927. The whole matter was straightened up and the States were given a clear start. Part of the undertaking was that the States should pay 4 per cent. per annum sinking fund on the deficits, as they occurred. That was quite a reasonable proposition because there was no asset to represent the deficits. If money be borrowed to build a railway, there is an asset, but there is no asset for deficits. This Parliament passed legislation providing for 4 per cent. sinking fund on money used for deficit purposes, and that 4 per cent. was to be a definite charge on the revenue from year to year. Nine years have elapsed since that arrangement was made and we have not yet paid a penny towards that sinking fund.

Hon. L. Craig: And are not likely to.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I do not know about that. We should pay our debts.

Hon. L. Craig: Of course we should.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I hope to convince the House that if we do not meet that obligation, we may find ourselves in serious trouble. During the nine years we have built up a deficit of  $5\frac{1}{4}$  millions, and we should be paying 4 per cent. on that amount. Had we begun to make payments only last year, the sinking fund would have amounted to at least £200,000 chargeable against the revenue for last year. That in itself would wipe out the surplus of £88,000 of which the Government boast. If we calculate the amount of sinking fund owing since the arrangement was made with the Commonwealth, we find that the total is £1,140,000. If the Commonwealth Government made a demand to-morrow upon this State for that £1,140,000 to be paid out of our revenue, where should we get it?

Hon. L. Craig: From the Commonwealth, of course.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Borrow more money for that purpose! The longer we neglect this obligation, the more complicated the matter becomes. We talk about balancing the Budget. We have been dodging balancing for the last nine years and sooner or later a day of reckoning must come. The sooner we face the position, the better. What stage are we reaching in politics in this country? If we, in good faith, pass legislation and undertake to do a certain thing, and then set the matter at defiance for nine years, what can we expect from the men working under awards of the

Arbitration Court? When they set the law of the country at defiance, we criticise their action, but what about Parliament, after giving an undertaking, making no effort to honour it? One is inclined to ask, what is the matter with the nations of the world to-day? What is the matter with the Commonwealth? What is the matter with the State? What is the matter with the individual? Have they all reached the stage when they consider that might is right? Are we in this Parliament to disregard right and wrong; to say in effect, "Never mind what we agreed to do, might is right; we have the numbers behind us and will do as we please"? Those are not my ideas of what should be expected from Parliament. A few weeks ago the Prime Minister of Australia, speaking in Sydney, boasted that the Commonwealth during the last year had paid off £10,000,000, and that the States were reducing their deficits and that everything was right. Certainly Australia did pay off £10,000,000, but the Commonwealth Government, on behalf of the States, borrowed £21,400,000, and the States borrowed £1,987,000, a total of £23,387,000. Thus, after paying off £10,000,000, we were £13,387,000 further in debt at the end of the year as compared with the beginning. Coming to the Financial Agreement, I find that the Commonwealth, since 1927, has borrowed, on behalf of the States to finance State deficits, £67,340,000. There is no asset to represent that £67,340,000. Men in public positions should not tell only one side of the story. They are the servants of the public, who are entitled to hear both sides. Under the Financial Agreement the States as a whole should be paying £2,700,000 a year into the sinking fund. This State has not paid a penny during the nine years. Neither has South Australia.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That is in respect to deficits?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes. New South Wales has paid £463,202; Victoria £13,276; Queensland £16,383; and Tasmania £3,900. Thus £496,761 has been paid by four States in nine years, whereas in the last year alone £2,700,000 should have been paid.

The Honorary Minister: Where did you get your figures?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: These are figures for which I wrote. I read the Prime Min-

ister's statement in the Press and then submitted a series of questions in order to get the other side of the story. I am too old a parliamentarian to quote anything that I cannot substantiate.

Hon. G. Fraser: Or to give a direct answer.

The Honorary Minister: Will you give a guarantee that the figures are official?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes. Under the Financial Agreement money has to be borrowed for deficit purposes, on which 4 per cent. sinking fund is payable annually out of the State's revenue. The fact remains that this State obtained five and a quarter million pounds from somewhere to finance the revenue account. If it was money borrowed for railway construction, bridges, public schools and the like, and it had been used to square the deficit account, this may be called political honesty, but it is not commercial honesty.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Have we not passed railway Bills to enable the Government to borrow more money?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Everything is done to assist the State to square the ledger. The policy has been one of borrow and spend. Before the Financial Agreement was passed, thanks to the wise heads of this State, a compulsory sinking fund of 10s. per cent. on every pound borrowed was established.

Hon. L. Craig: The sinking fund had to be kept up.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes. When we got into difficulties and wanted to square up things, and get a fresh start, the Commonwealth Government brought forth the Financial Agreement. Under that agreement the sinking fund was reduced from 10s. per cent. to 7s. 6d. per cent. The Commonwealth Government agreed to pay 2s. 6d. per cent., and the State paid 5s. per cent., and so obtained an advantage of 5s. per cent. which should be reflected in the balance sheet, because the sinking fund is a charge upon Revenue. With regard to new loans, the Financial Agreement provided for a 10s. per cent. sinking fund, the Commonwealth to provide 5s., and the State 5s. There again the State was let off 5s. per cent. These reductions should reflect in the balances from year to year, but do not appear to show there. When I looked up the tabulated returns showing the rates of interest, I found that in 1931 the rate was 4.55 per cent., and in 1935 it was 3.62 per

cent., representing a reduction of nearly 1 per cent. in interest. If we take our loan indebtedness and apply that 1 per cent. reduction in interest, it works out at an amount approximating £200,000 per annum. Why is that reduction of interest not reflected in the balances to a greater extent than the £88,000 to which I have referred? All this money has been extracted from the public. Everything has been done to assist the State to meet its obligations, but we are drifting from bad to worse all the time. I have looked up financial authorities to find out what per capita indebtedness a country such as ours can carry. Those authorities claim that for a community to live in reasonable comfort the per capita indebtedness should not exceed £100. I find, however, that the State indebtedness comes to nearly £200 per head, so close to that figure as not to make any difference. On top of that, there is the £50 liability representing our quota of the Federal debt. This State, therefore, is asked to carry on with a per capita indebtedness of £250, when the financial experts of the world say that £100 per head is all that a community can carry and live on in reasonable comfort. In view of these facts, I cannot throw any bouquets at Ministers responsible for conducting the affairs of the State. They should have done a great deal better; anyone who has analysed the figures will admit that it has been more or less a jamboree. Governments have spent every penny they could get hold of, and dodged paying every penny of debt they could avoid. That is as clear as the nose on my face. Where is such a policy going to end? It seems to me that no one cares. I said to one man the other day, "You don't seem to mind about the position. So long as you may participate in the plunder, sell galvanised iron or bar-iron, you do not care how much we borrow or spend, or where the money is to come from to repay that which is borrowed. It is political dishonesty."

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Another matter is troubling me. There is one set of conditions in this State for the North, and another set for the South. It seems to me that those who have the biggest pull get the most done for them. In the far flung North, which

has not too many representatives in Parliament, things are allowed to go on for 25 years that would not be tolerated in the South for 25 days. The only explanation I can offer for this is the policy of might against right. We know that in the Legislative Assembly the North is represented by four members against 46 for the South; and in this House we have three members for the North and 27 for the South.

Hon. L. Craig: The North is well represented.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The hon. member would not say that if he took a trip to the North and saw what goes on there.

The Honorary Minister: Look at the quality of the representation.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: We are entitled to be referred to as honourable members of the Legislative Council. I will give one illustration. Leprosy is likely to become a menace in the North. The trouble has been going on for 25 years, but no one seems to have done very much in connection with it. All Governments are to blame for this. The disease has been spreading in the North for the last 25 years, until the position has become alarming. Recently in the South a few cases were reported, and immediately a special committee of four Government officers was appointed to segregate the patients and keep them away from the public. For the last 25 years the lepers in the North have been allowed to mix with other people, but it seems impossible to get anything done. The position became so bad in Broome that I spent eight days there investigating it. I compiled a report founded on fact. It seemed desirable that this report should be published, but when it was prepared it was considered to be so alarming that it was deemed desirable not to publish it. On the 6th June last I sent copies of the report to the Minister for Health, the Minister for the North-West, and the Minister in charge of Aborigines. The people of the North are still restless and want to know what is going to be done. They know about the appointment of the special committee to deal with the few cases in the South, and they want to know what is to be done in the North.

Hon. A. Thomson: Tenders have been called for a leprosarium in the North?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes, to provide for 100 patients. The Chief Protector of Aborigines informed the Minister for the North-West the other day that the doctor

who had been sent out to investigate found 21 cases. The Chief Protector did not tell the public through the Minister that there are 70 cases of leprosy at Derby now waiting to go into hospital, and 20 at Beagle Bay. The Bishop there told me he was alarmed to think what might happen when the authorities began to number the leprosy cases amongst the respective tribes. Even with the leprosy area provided for 100 cases it would be filled as soon as completed.

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

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: When we adjourned for tea, I had pointed out that provision is now being made to accommodate 100 lepers. The position regarding leprosy has become so serious that I can touch only on the fringe of the trouble. It is so alarming that the public would be aroused if they knew the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I admit that all Governments for the last 25 years have been more or less responsible for the present situation, and I am not therefore blaming the present Government in particular. I am endeavouring to face the facts. Before tea I mentioned the leprosarium that will accommodate 100 lepers and I understand that at present there are 70 lepers at Derby and about 20 at Beagle Bay. Although Dr. Cook was brought here 12 years ago to deal with this problem, it is only within the last year that anything has been done. Dr. Cook is an authority on leprosy and I think he is at present the Commonwealth officer who deals with that disease throughout the Commonwealth territory and not State territory. In 1924 Dr. Cook submitted a report at the request of the State Government, in which he had the following to say:—

Be it first remembered that leprosy is one of the most terrible diseases to which the human race is susceptible. If a community is entitled to protect itself from the ravages of disease, certainly leprosy is one that should claim immediate attention. There are long incubation periods, say, from two to five, or even, 20 years before there are any recognised signs. Leprosy is a dangerous disease inasmuch as whilst in its latter stage it is a very distressing malady, it is capable of spreading from patient to contacts and thus perpetuating its existence in our midst. To those conversant with the conditions in the North-West, the desirability of immediate action against the spread of leprosy is made more apparent by the following facts: Leprosy has spread

amongst the blacks and is already amongst the whites, and even if matters are remedied immediately, further cases must be expected to appear.

That was 12 years ago. I understand that at that time the lepers in the North could be counted on the fingers of one's hands; to-day I am afraid to say how many lepers there are estimated to be up there. Twelve years ago Dr. Cook recommended that a special doctor should be appointed to examine the aborigines to ascertain the extent of the disease, but 11 years elapsed before any such appointment was made. Twelve months ago Dr. Davis was appointed and he is now out amongst the natives endeavouring to ascertain how many lepers there are amongst them. The annoying part is that while there are at the outside half a dozen lepers,—these may have come from the North—down south, a special committee has been appointed at once to deal with the segregation of those sufferers. In the North this state of affairs has gone on for 25 years until now the disease has spread to an alarming extent. Down here the few lepers have to be specially catered for and year in year out the Principal Medical Officer has claimed that the hospital grounds in the respective towns up North should be the places where the lepers should be held. The hospital grounds are surrounded by wire fences, but these are broken down for the greater part of the time. Gates are open and the lepers can wander in and out as they think fit. However, that is the view that I understand the Principal Medical Officer takes regarding leprosy. On one occasion, I think, he stated that in Europe the authorities did not isolate lepers at all, but that assertion was combated by another medical officer who said that there were 20,000 leprosy hospitals in Europe dealing with the segregation of individuals suffering from that disease. Those in charge of the Beagle Bay Mission have done wonderful work amongst the aborigines and recently they brought out a man and his wife—both are doctors and the wife has had experience in East Africa amongst the lepers there—to deal with this particular phase of native life, and Bishop Raible, who is in charge of the mission, told me that at Beagle Bay not only do the doctors segregate the leper patients from other aborigines, but they segregate the children of those suffering from leprosy

from the other native children. Members will see that we have a high public officer insisting upon what is necessary is to treat the lepers in the hospital grounds up North and at the same time we have special provision made in the South to deal with the half dozen cases that have cropped up here. On top of that, we find the latest medical importations treating the disease by means of isolation, together with the isolation of the progeny. In view of these facts, it is time someone woke up and took notice. It is time we solved this problem. It cannot go on as it has for the last 24 years. Bishop Raible told me he was alarmed regarding the number of aborigines who might be found to be suffering from leprosy. That lends point to the statement that this leprosy problem has been neglected too long. While I declined to publish the report because of the alarming conditions disclosed, I have waited for 24 months for some answer from the Government as to what they propose to do, but so far no answer has been forthcoming. Apart from anything else, we owe a duty to the aborigines. When this State was granted responsible Government, the Imperial authorities imposed an obligation upon us to look after the interests of the aborigines while there was one living within the State. One obligation was that there should be a Chief Protector of Aborigines as a statutory appointee to see that the aborigines were properly cared for. In recent years I do not think there has been any attempt to fulfil that obligation. The question has now cropped up as to when an aboriginal ceases to be an aboriginal. It appears that under some departmental arrangement between the Aborigines Department and the Health Department, when a native becomes a leper he ceases to be an aboriginal and is supposed to be controlled by the Health Department. The responsibility imposed upon us by the Imperial authorities was to see that the natives were properly cared for and I do not think that responsibility should be side-tracked as between one department and another.

The Honorary Minister: Would you suggest that the Medical Department and the Aborigines Department should both deal with the question of leprosy?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I take it that the Principal Medical Officer is responsible for the health of the white section of the community and the Aborigines Department is responsible for the care of the natives. The

Aborigines Department should see that the officials of the Health Department are carrying out their obligation to the native. We are told that there is no money available for such purposes. That has been the excuse in the past. It may not be either the Principal Medical Officer or the Chief Protector of Aborigines who is at fault, but the fact remains that the position of the natives has been neglected for many years.

Hon. A. Thomson: Is it intended to accommodate the white lepers in the same compound as the aborigines?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am not clear on that point. I do not know whether there is any separate arrangement for them. There may be at the new hospital at Derby.

Hon. A. Thomson: It is to be hoped that there is.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The excuse has been given that no money can be set apart for this purpose, but even there I can point to one set of conditions for the North and another for the South. One can take a motor run to Fremantle and traverse Stirling Highway. There one will find that the tram lines were pulled up, moved to one side and put down again at considerable expense. Just about the time that work was completed we were told that trolley buses were to be provided for the run over that section. We know that trolley buses do not run on tram rails. Then there is that enormous school building at East Perth. It may or may not be justified, but the fact remains that the Government can find money for works of that description, but tell us that no money is available for the care of the aborigines who at one time owned this country. The British Government recognised that fact and imposed conditions that we were to carry out respecting the natives.

Hon. A. Thomson: The £80,000 spent on trolley buses could have been better expended in the North.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: I agree with you, and so do the residents there.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Private enterprise has already provided a motor bus service over that route that would be a credit to a city in any part of the world. The Government can find money to go in and push them off the road but they cannot find money for the care of the aborigines who at one time owned this country. I do not propose to say any more on the subject of leprosy. I regret to have to refer to it at all. I

tried to get something done without letting the public know the full facts. I have only just touched upon the fringe of it in the hope that the subject will be dealt with. I notice in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech that £500 has been set aside for the subsidy of the flying doctor service for the North. I think very few people, except those who visit the North, have any conception of what that service means to the North. When it is realised that the pioneers who go hundreds of miles out-back with their wives and children now know that if a doctor is urgently required he will go out and give immediate attention, or will take them into hospital where they will be properly accommodated, I do not think that £500 a year provided by the Government is adequate. I notice also in His Excellency's Speech the following paragraph:—

Relief measures because of the drought in the north-eastern portion of the wheat belt have involved considerable expenditure which must be continued during the present financial year.

The next paragraph reads—

As the pastoral areas have also been seriously affected by a shortage of rain, the wool-clip may be substantially reduced.

I am sorry to think that the reduced wool clip is the only consideration in the minds of the Government. I do hope that they will realise that the North is up against one of the most serious droughts ever experienced. In the North there are stations which it has taken 50 years to establish. They have built up wonderful flocks of sheep. These sheep have been shorn every year perhaps for the last 40 or 49 years, but this year some of the stations will not be able to muster their sheep. The sheep are not in a condition to be mustered. When we remember what we owe to the pastoral industry which has been more or less established with private money, and remember that the agricultural industry has been financed by the Government to the extent of 30 millions of money and is still being financed, because the men threaten to walk off their holdings—

Hon. A. Thomson: Thirty millions, did you say?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am speaking from memory. I understand it is £15,000,000 from the Agricultural Bank and £15,000,000 from other sources. When we remember that these people threaten to

walk off unless they get more money, and that the people in the North are not threatening to walk off, but are prepared to battle on, I hope that the present Government will take the position of the North into consideration.

Hon. A. Thomson: I presume they are getting enough to eat.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: When I was at Carnarvon three months ago sheep were being shipped from Geraldton, having been fattened in the southern areas, carried by steamer to Carnarvon and in Carnarvon were slaughtered by the butcher for domestic purposes. Beef was being brought from Wyndham in the State steamers' freezers, landed at Carnarvon, and distributed amongst the stations over a radius of 100 miles. That is the position these men find themselves in after battling for so many years. All I ask is that members individually and collectively see that everybody has a fair deal. That is all we want, but I do not think we have had it. I am hoping for better things from the Government and shall be disappointed if they do not give some assistance to the people of the North.

The Honorary Minister: What kind of assistance are you anticipating?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I have seen a suggestion in the Press that the rents should be reduced. Half a loaf is better than no bread.

The Honorary Minister: I think the pastoralists are well satisfied with the way this Government has treated them.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: They are not complaining now; but is the pastoral industry to go out of existence for want of support? Is the agricultural industry to be spoon-fed because the men threaten to walk off their holdings if they do not get assistance? On the other hand because the squatter goes battling on and makes no complaint, is his side of the question not to be considered at all? I ask members to see that all sections of the community get a fair deal.

The Honorary Minister: You must realise that every request which has been made by the pastoralists in a reasonable and decent sort of way has been considered and dealt with by this Government.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The question is what decision did the Government arrive at? I have raised these points simply in

order that the Honorary Minister may tell us when he replies what the Government propose to do to assist these people. The Lieut.-Governor's speech concluded with an expression of hope that Providence might bless our labours. If this Government and Parliament will see that each and every section of the community get a fair deal, surely we may expect that Providence will bless our labours.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Wittenoom debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 8.11 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Tuesday, 25th August, 1936.*

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

### QUESTION—QUEENSLAND FORESTS, LTD.

Mr. WATTS asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that a large number of West Australian citizens are shareholders in Queensland Forests, Limited, a company registered in New South Wales? 2, Has he noticed the statements regarding that company and its associated corporations made by Mr. John Ness, member for Dulwich Hill in the New South Wales House of Assembly, as reported in the "West Australian" newspaper in June? 3, As these statements, if true, indicate that there is considerable risk of loss and hardship being inflicted on a large number of persons in this State, will he give consideration to associating the Western Australian Government with a request being made to the Federal Government for a Royal Commission to inquire into the activities of the company mentioned?