

tion of the tubes from the protruding ends in the fire box. This little mistake on the part of the inspector also cost us £70. The same inspector has recently inspected a boiler for the group settlement scheme and passed it for a high working pressure. Inspector Stone inspected the boiler later when it came into his territory and refused to grant a certificate for the pressure allowed, and the result is chaos. Some 12 months or so ago we had a boiler inspected at Fremantle and passed for a certain working pressure. This boiler was later sent to Harvey, where it was found that the front portion of the boiler was practically worn out, and immediately a hammer was applied to a weak part it went straight through. This little mistake on the part of the inspector cost us £12, our profit on the sale of the boiler. In view of these experiences, is it any wonder that the public, or as a matter of fact, users of boilers, are antagonistic to the Inspection of Machinery Department, leaving out altogether the autocratic and bombastic manner in which the Chief Inspector carries out his duties? In the interests of steam power users we trust that you will make reference to some of these matters when the Bill is being considered in the House.

That is about the strongest letter I have seen dealing with the Inspection of Machinery Department. I have here also, dated 25th August, a protest from the Eastern Goldfields Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association, which embraces practically all the firemen on the Eastern Goldfields and a majority of the higher grade engine-drivers; also one from the Kalgoorlie Certificated Engine Drivers' Union. This is what the union says—

The PRESIDENT: Do you think it necessary to read the whole of it?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I will read only a brief extract, as follows:—

The union takes the strongest possible exception to the heavy charges made for certificates, and earnestly hopes that no delay will take place in the ventilation of the grievance.

Originally there were only four grades. These have now been extended to eight, and the fees on application and issue of the certificates have in several instances been increased 50 per cent. To this the men take strong exception, as also to the fee on application and the fee on issue of certificates to firemen. I believe the whole of the reductions made by the department under the altered regulation do not cover more than about £250. When last we were discussing this, the Leader of the House, in defence of the department, pointed out that they wanted an increase of 40 per cent. I showed by my figures that the increase amounted to 90 per cent. The concessions granted are all to the larger type of machinery, of which there is a minimum number, and the amount of money involved is very small. I claim that the

charges are excessive, and that the department has not given the consideration due to the protests made in the House. I hope the regulations will be disallowed.

On motion by the Minister for Education, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.24 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 1st November, 1922.

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

RESIGNATION—Mr. J. J. SIMONS.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the following communication:—

The Hon. the Speaker, Legislative Assembly, Perth.—Sir, Herewith I desire to tender my resignation as member for East Perth in the Legislative Assembly. Yours faithfully, J. J. Simons.

It will be necessary for the Premier to move a motion declaring the seat vacant.

The PREMIER: I move—

That the seat be declared vacant.

Question put and passed.

QUESTION—INDUSTRIAL AWARD, ENGINEERS.

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Are the Government among the respondents to and bound by the award made by the Commonwealth Court of Arbitration on the application of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, dated 26th June, 1922? 2, Have the Government applied the terms of the award to their employees affected? 3, If not,

do the Government intend to do so, and failing such intention what are the reasons for not doing so?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The State contends that the Federal Court has no jurisdiction over State activities, and an appeal on this point to the Privy Council by this and other States is now pending. 2 and 3, Answered by No. 1.

SELECT COMMITTEE—CARL LESCHEN CASE.

To fill vacancy.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [4.49]: In view of the resignation of the member for East Perth, a vacancy has occurred on the select committee appointed to inquire into the case of Carl Leschen. If I am in order, I move—

That the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe (Mr. Lutey) be appointed to fill the vacancy.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is in order.

Question put and passed.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BANK ACT AMENDMENT (PRIVATE.)

Introduced by Hon. T. Walker and read a first time.

Select Committee appointed.

On motion by Hon. T. Walker, Bill referred to a select committee consisting of Messrs. Angwin, Duraek, Stubbs, Willcock and the mover; with power to call for persons and papers, and to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned; to report on Tuesday, the 7th November.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—LIGHT AND AIR ACT AMENDMENT.

Report adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1922-23.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 26th October; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Department of Lands and Repatriation (Hon. Sir James Mitchell), Minister.

Vote—Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Land Settlement:

The CHAIRMAN: The next department to be dealt with in the Estimates is that of the Colonial Treasurer. I would draw the attention of hon. members, however, to the fact that Division No. 17, which is immediately before the Committee, deals with the Agricultural Bank, I.A.B., and Soldiers' Land Settlement. No vote is provided for that division, therefore hon. members cannot deal with items in the Estimates of those departments. It is my intention to intimate later on that if any member desires to refer to matters dealt with in this division he can do so on the general discussion on the vote for the Colonial Treasurer's Department, if that course be acceptable to hon. members.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I must raise an objection to this method of procedure. I recognise that the ruling of the Chairman of Committees conforms, strictly speaking, to the Standing Orders, but I object to the Committee being deprived of the opportunity to discuss items connected with the Agricultural Bank, the I.A.B., and Soldiers' Land Settlement in the usual way. The work performed by the Agricultural Bank and the I.A.B. constitutes the most important in the whole of the administrative offices of the State. This question arose some years ago when the Estimates were prepared so that no vote was disclosed. That means we are deprived of an opportunity to discuss these branches of the Government service. Speaking from memory, a promise was given by the Treasurer of the day, Mr. Gardiner, that this method would not be adopted in presenting Estimates in future. If only a vote of £1 or any small sum were provided, that would enable a discussion to take place in the ordinary way. When the question cropped up on the occasion I refer to, it was agreed in Committee that the discussion on these departments could proceed in the usual way just as if there were a vote provided. It would be preferable to follow that course this year. While it is true that the procedure proposed by the Chairman would allow members to have a full discussion when dealing with the Treasurer's Estimates, still, that prevents us from dealing with items as set out in these Estimates. It is wrong and foreign to the whole principle of discussing such Estimates if departments like these can have their Estimates presented with no vote, thus depriving members of an opportunity to discuss them. I ask that we shall have an opportunity to discuss the departments in the usual way. If not, I shall be compelled to ask that the Estimates be withdrawn and presented in some other form.

The Premier: They cannot be presented in any other form.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has always been done in the past.

The PREMIER: I do not think so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier knows that there has been a general discussion every year. The Estimates have not always been presented in this form. There has been a vote provided in past years and it would be easy to do so again.

The Premier: I do not know why there should not be a general discussion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I cannot see why we should not have it either.

The CHAIRMAN: The trouble is that the Chairman cannot accept any amendment relating to any of the items, because there is no vote.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The position is wrong and absolutely absurd if we cannot move an amendment in connection with these items.

The CHAIRMAN: You cannot do so in the way the Estimates are presented.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am aware of that. I am not saying that your ruling, Mr. Chairman, is wrong, but the Estimates should be presented with a vote. Surely we should have an opportunity of discussing the matter and dealing with the items if necessary. I am disposed to move in the direction of postponing consideration of the Estimates.

The Premier: I have no objection to the vote being discussed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier will see that we should be allowed to discuss these departments in the same way as we do other departments.

The Premier: I have not the slightest objection to that course.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the Chairman says we cannot move any amendments.

The CHAIRMAN: There is nothing to reduce, because the House is not asked to vote any money.

The PREMIER: The Estimates have been presented in this way for some years. In this case, the profits of the Agricultural Bank are used in accordance with the law passed by this House to cover working expenses, and there is no charge against Consolidated Revenue because neither the debts nor the profits come into general revenue.

Hon. P. Collier: Losses made in connection with the I.A.B. are debited somewhere.

The PREMIER: Hon. members will have an opportunity of discussing that aspect and they will have an opportunity of discussing the whole question on the vote for the Lands Department and the Bank, which is really one vote. Shall we not be in a position to discuss the division?

The CHAIRMAN: I will allow a discussion, but I cannot accept any amendment.

The PREMIER: If our Standing Orders will not permit items to be dealt with, then the Standing Orders should be amended, because the method adopted in connection with these Estimates is the proper one, in accordance with the law of the land.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is not in accordance with the law of the land.

The PREMIER: Of course it is.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You cannot spend 6d. unless it is appropriated by Parliament, and no money is appropriated by Parliament in connection with this vote.

Hon. P. Collier: We are not appropriating anything; therefore, there is no sum that we can seek to have amended.

The PREMIER: I have not the slightest objection to a discussion on every item in con-

nection with this department, just as with other items in connection with the Estimates.

The CHAIRMAN: On the understanding that any amendment which may be moved will be ruled out of order.

The PREMIER: The Standing Orders ought to be ruled out of order.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: As the Estimates have been submitted to the House for several years past, this has been the only vote under the Industries Assistance Act. But we really have no vote at all for the purpose of that Act.

The Premier: It is all included.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No; the money is expended without being voted.

Mr. Pickering: Then where does it come from?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Ask me something easier. The Act says, "All advances under this Act shall be made out of such moneys as Parliament may appropriate to the purposes of this Act." When the present Minister for Mines was Treasurer an amount was provided in the Land Act, but from that time there has not been another vote for the purpose of the Act.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [5.5]: I may be permitted to quote a few figures relating to the work of the Industries Assistance Board. Since the Act was passed, the advances to settlers have amounted to £6,101,000. The total amount of bad debts already written off is £48,946. The crop proceeds last year totalled £837,000 and the amount outstanding on the 31st April last was £1,460,000. What I wish to point out to members particularly is that the proceeds received since the board was inaugurated have totalled £5,822,000. Without the Industries Assistance Board a great deal of this wealth would never have been created.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is only supposition.

The PREMIER: It is a tremendous sum when we bear in mind that the people who are responsible for it were almost down and out a few years ago. Apart from all this no fewer than 1,149 men have had their clearances from the board. That is a wonderful achievement. Even if the loss out of the advances be a quarter of a million, it is not a considerable sum. When the board was started it was quite a new thing, and the conditions under which it was worked were not understood by anybody in this State, or indeed anywhere else. The men who were assisted have in many cases made good, and this lesson has been taught, that where men had good land they were able to retrieve their positions. Of course the man who is on poor land will have an uphill fight at any time. A lot of clients merely had their rents advanced in the first year of the board's existence. The institution is now well established and well controlled, and under the system which exists the advances which are made are fairly well protected. The wonder is that so many farmers who were in what seemed to be a hopeless position have been able to make good. Nat-

urally, there are some who will never make good, but 1,149 made good and there are some who are still on the board and who can boast of credit balances. The area cropped this year is 615,000 acres. With the price of wheat as it is there should be a considerable sum paid into the board during the current year.

Hon. M. F. Troy: What is the price of wheat as it is?

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows as well as I do. They were offering 4s. 7d. in Wagin the other day. What it is likely to be I would very much like to know.

Mr. Willcock: We expect 5s. up our way; it is good wheat.

The PREMIER: We have heard a good deal about outside creditors. When the board was established the outside creditors were told they would have to wait for their money. We know that a moratorium was passed, but it no longer protects the debtor if he has assets and will not pay. We sometimes get complaints about men who spend their money foolishly and leave outside creditors lamenting. Unless the man who does that can show very good cause for doing so the board will not treat him with much consideration.

Mr. Willcock: The wife of one of these men bought a motor car the other day for £375.

Hon. P. Collier: Perhaps she did that out of eggs.

The PREMIER: I know neither the man, the wife, nor the motor car.

Mr. Willcock: I know all three, and also the man to whom money is owing, and that makes four.

The PREMIER: Out of a total of £678,000 which was owing, there is now owing £322,000. I have already said that £6,000,000 has been advanced, but in the last six years the business people have enjoyed the result of the expenditure of £5,000,000 in a cash trade with the farmers. If to-day the system in vogue in 1915 were still in operation the outstanding amounts would be considerably more than £322,000. There has been paid to outside creditors on behalf of the farmers under the board a sum of £355,000. My desire has been merely to point out some of the good work which has been done by this board. Of course there will be some losses, but the gain to the community is very considerable. Quite apart from that, £1,011,000 has been paid to the Government, including land rents £394,493, and Agricultural Bank interest £421,226. Therefore, the board have not done badly even though there have been some losses. The activities of the Agricultural Bank have meant a great deal to this State.

Mr. Harrison: It has kept the wheels of industry moving in all walks of life.

The PREMIER: Yes, and its activities to-day are greater than ever before. We have authorised more clearing in the Wheat Belt. Now that the value of the Wheat

Belt is established it is our duty to clear every acre of good land that we have. We have been advancing at the rate of about £17,500 per week for clearing during the last fourteen weeks. If we can only carry out the necessary fencing on the farms in the Wheat Belt which are not now fenced for sheep, we shall be able to carry at least another million sheep. When fencing becomes cheaper, we shall do our best to add a million sheep to the flocks of the State, and probably two million.

Mr. Harrison: The quicker you do it, the better.

The PREMIER: No doubt the hon. member would say that we should do it to-day, but he must remember that it will take an enormous amount of money to do all that is required to be done.

Mr. Harrison: How long will the present price of wool be maintained?

The PREMIER: I do not know what the future has in store for either wool or wheat.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You hope it continues high.

The PREMIER: Yes, with all my heart. I hope we shall be able to send away ever-increasing quantities of high-priced wheat and high-priced wool. It is very fortunate that our wool and wheat are bringing such good prices, especially when we recollect that the timber trade has slumped tremendously and the gold production has fallen off. We have decentralised the work of the Agricultural Bank and I believe it will be simplified and will be done much more satisfactorily not only to the Government but to the settlers. It is almost impossible to run 15 000 accounts through one office or to undertake the collection of all the repayments of interest and principal, and so we have opened branches at Northam, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock, Geraldton, Katanning, Narrogin, and Bunbury. I am glad that I have had this opportunity to explain the case of the Industries Assistance Board. A select committee is sitting, with the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) at the helm, and we can depend upon getting some very useful information when the report is presented. I am glad that this inquiry is being held. It will do good, and we can be sure that any select committee with which the hon. member is associated will do the work thoroughly.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This is the worst job I have ever had.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [5.20]: It would have been better to postpone these Estimates or hurry on the report of the select committee so that we could have had more information before us. I realise that, with the member for North-East Fremantle at the helm of the select committee, we shall get whatever information can possibly be gathered with the limited resources at the committee's disposal. I would like to ascertain the position of the storekeepers when the ex-

isting moratorium has been lifted. Will the Statute of Limitations then apply?

The Premier: We altered the Act to provide against that.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That applies to people with sufficient assets to pay their liabilities. We are hopeful that some day the I.A.B. will go out of existence.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is not much chance of that.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Every time a Bill has been introduced affecting the operations of the I.A.B., we have been told that it was only a temporary measure. The whole board was of a temporary nature. The Act gives discretionary power to the Minister to do practically as he likes with regard to sustenance.

The Premier: The board do that.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But a Minister who occupied a seat in this House resigned office, because he had a quarrel with the Government as to whether the amount of the sustenance granted by the I.A.B. should be 7s. or 9s. per day. When the board go out of existence or cease operations, will the Statute of Limitations apply, so that the people to whom money is owing will have no recourse at law.

The Premier: I think that was provided against in the Act.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Some of these people have been under the board for seven or eight years and the Statute of Limitations provides that if action is not taken within a certain time, there is no remedy at law.

The Premier: I am sure we altered the Act in that respect.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I think the Act was altered so that any one with sufficient assets could pay his creditors, but those who have a debit with the board have not been affected by that amendment.

The Premier: I think it is provided for.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Everybody knows that there are a certain number of clients of the board who have no possibility of making good. Cannot we get down to a businesslike basis in regard to such people? Political influence has been brought to bear in the interests of people who have no possibility of making good. There are not many such people, for which, in view of the finances of the State, we should be thankful. It is about time we considered this matter and ascertained the position of some of these clients. If they are in a hopeless position, it would be as well to cut the loss instead of trying to carry them on as we have been doing during the last four or five years. The board are continuing to supply sustenance to people whose position is absolutely hopeless.

Mr. Davies: But on whose recommendation?

Mr. WILLCOCK: The sustenance is paid or the recommendation of the board, but the board are subject to political influence. Influence is brought to bear in order that people might be kept on the board.

The Premier: I do not know of that.

Mr. Harrison: That is not correct.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Special pleas have been made in behalf of certain individuals. There is no doubt about that; everyone knows of it. I would not expect members of the Country Party to admit it, but it exists all the same.

Mr. Harrison: I am not anxious that people should be carried if they are not worthy of being carried.

Mr. WILLCOCK: When a certain man is to be put off the board, his representative in Parliament goes to the board and puts up a special plea for him. It has been done time after time. If the hon. member wants particulars of such cases, he can find people whose position is absolutely hopeless and who should not be carried by the board any longer.

Mr. Hickmott: There are cases in which men have asked to be put on better blocks of land.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is quite a legitimate request.

Mr. Harrison: The board decide the cases on their individual merits.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Another point is that when a client goes off the board and abandons his holding, that land is held up because of the impossible impost of capital expenditure advanced by both the Agricultural Bank and the I.A.B. People will not take up such blocks, because they are encumbered to the extent of £2,000 or £3,000, whereas the improvements might be valued at only £500 or £600. This is a matter of common knowledge. We have had an announcement that it is the policy of the Primary Producers' Association to nominate persons to act on the board in an advisory capacity. This means that the political representatives of a party are to be nominated to serve on a Government board and have power to advise.

Mr. Harrison: Have you not asked to be represented on various boards?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, but I do not want any member of a body which is out for political purposes to be able to say to any member, "I am a supporter of the Country Party or the Primary Producers' Association. I have a representative on the I.A.B. and I want him in return for my support to give special consideration to me on the board."

Mr. Harrison: That has not been done by this party.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Minister for Agriculture announced that that policy was to be given effect to.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is on a special board, not the board.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, a special advisory board. If a certain political body are to be represented on a board to give special consideration to persons of their political faith, it is playing the game pretty low down.

Mr. Harrison: It has not been done by the Country Party.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is being done by a political body. I do not know what else the Primary Producers' Association is, if it is not a political body.

Mr. Harrison: It is an industrial body.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a political body, too. It has a political platform.

Mr. Pickering: It is not peculiar in that respect.

Hon. P. Collier: No, but what I object to is that you try to hide the political aspect.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is wrong that any political party should have a right to nominate persons to a board to give special consideration to certain persons.

Hon. P. Collier: Wrong! It is scandalous.

Mr. Pickering: Why?

Mr. WILLCOCK: The hon. member is hopeless if he does not know why.

Hon. P. Collier: If you want to know, it is opening the door to corruption.

Mr. Pickering: We do not know that word.

Mr. Underwood: You will soon learn it.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The hon. member might be unsophisticated, but when he examines the methods of the board and the way in which it can be administered, I think he will agree that it contains a pernicious principle. I enter my protest against the appointment of such people on these advisory boards. The Premier said he hoped there would be any quantity of high-priced wool and high-priced wheat going from our ports. I just hope the opposite. It is time we endeavoured to send high-priced flour out of the State, instead of high-priced wheat.

The Premier: One cannot force the flour trade.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Seven or eight years ago we had a flour mill at Geraldton and the people in charge of it tried to get some trade. They got trade to the extent of £12,000 or £15,000. If that can be done at Geraldton, it can be done elsewhere. The matter is so important that it would be reasonable for the Government to take some action towards securing markets for flour particularly and our produce generally. Let these things leave the State in a manufactured condition.

The Minister for Mines: You can grist all your wheat, but then you cannot sell all your flour. The offal is just as necessary to other countries as it is to us here.

Mr. WILLCOCK: At the present time we have no wheat in the State that we can grist into flour for export purposes. However, we can sell flour instead of wheat if we set our minds to it. The Premier might just as well say we cannot sell wool in the manufactured condition.

The Minister for Mines: That is quite a different proposition. Other countries need wheat in order that they may get offal as well as flour.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Other countries might argue that they must have the raw wool in order to keep going the woollen mills which they have set up at enormous cost. The only way to encourage flour milling is to find a market for the product. There are various mills in this country which could work three shifts a day. Their only trouble is that they have not the necessary market. We are in a good position relatively, but not absolutely, seeing that we export about five-sixths of our wheat in its

raw state. I do not wish this matter to be left to the traders who have not the necessary financial resources to chase this business all over the world. That should be the affair of the Government. It would make a tremendous difference to this State if we had 400 or 500 additional men employed in gristing flour. Two or three thousand pounds would be well spent in achieving that object.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.35]: Every year since I have been a member of this Chamber the same old position has arisen. We have had the operations of the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board submitted to us in the same condition, and every year members have protested.

The Premier: Who protested last session?

Mr. PICKERING: Various members did, and I am protesting this time. Promises are made to effect changes which will enable us to deal with these two institutions; but what happens? Nothing. When next year comes we shall find ourselves in the same position of not being able to discuss anything. The Government should take notice of the Committee's wishes. I am grateful to the Premier for having condescended to make the lengthy and illuminating statement he did concerning the position of the two institutions; but I should like to know who is responsible for the preparation of their Estimates. I also wish to know who is responsible for the position in which we find ourselves with regard to the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank. Is it the Ministry, or Parliament, or the two institutions? If it is the Ministry, I say again they should take notice of the wishes of members. We should be able to discuss and control every sum of money expended through Government offices. As to the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board, we are again without reports, which would throw light upon their operations for the past year. Why cannot we have those reports? To me it is astounding that every year we should protest, and every year the two institutions should fail to respond to our wishes. Surely we have some power in this connection. We ought to be able to enforce our wishes. Let the preparation of the reports be started a little earlier, and if necessary let extra clerks be put on. It seems to me that Parliament beats the air on this subject every year. We now have two select committees inquiring into the operations of the Industries Assistance Board and the Soldier Settlement Scheme. That fact in itself is proof that this House does not think all is right in the state of Denmark. It would have been better had we been able to discuss these votes in the light of the information which will be obtainable by the select committees. There are already rumours that the Soldier Settlement Scheme in close proximity to Perth is experiencing considerable trouble. I believe I am right in saying that that is so in the

electorate represented by the Colonial Secretary. Within a few miles of the head office which controls the scheme, there are cases of excessive cost incurred in clearing land, cost so excessive as will make it utterly impossible for the holders of the land to make good if the full charge is maintained against them. Such being the position of affairs in close proximity to Perth, in a district where the operations should be easily controlled, what is likely to be the position when the scheme is put in operation in remote districts? As regards the Industries Assistance Board, ever since I have been a member of the House I have urged that the benefits of that board should be extended to the South-West; but no notice has been taken of my representations. The benefits continue to be accorded to the wheat areas alone. Why should they not be extended to the South-West? I have made application repeatedly to the Minister concerned, and have asked questions on the subject in this Chamber, and the only reply I have received is that "it is not the policy of the Government."

Mr. O'Loughlen: Do you intend to have that policy altered? Did you bring the matter up at the conference?

Mr. PICKERING: I have made representations to the Government, but my voice has been as that of one crying in the wilderness. If I make any protest against the Government, I am immediately hounded to death by the Opposition.

Mr. Lambert: We have awakened to your blank cartridges. You have an effective way of dealing with the Government if you want to do so.

Mr. PICKERING: At any rate, your party has not afforded us an opportunity to demonstrate whether those cartridges are blank.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The fact is you have never yet voted against the Government on anything that matters.

Mr. PICKERING: Although there are some excellent officers in the departments under consideration, yet we are asking those officers to do more than they are capable of doing. I have never heard even one voice raised against the general manager or managing trustee of the Agricultural Bank. Yet that gentleman should not have responsibilities thrown upon him in addition to those which attach to his position in the Agricultural Bank. If the operations of that institution are of the magnitude we are told, their supervision must be as much as he can undertake. Nevertheless we find that he is called upon to act on all sorts of boards. This must react disadvantageously to the institution which he is supposed to control. In his case, one man one job would be an excellent policy. In these votes we find items relating to a great many officers of importance into whose duties we cannot inquire. Therefore we cannot move amendments to these particular votes. I hope the Premier will take into considera-

tion the advisability of extending to the South-West the privileges extended to the wheat areas. There are in the South-West industries as greatly in need of assistance as those in any other part of the State, and I protest against this continued refusal by the Government to extend the benefits of the I.A.B. to that portion of the State which I represent.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I wish I could see a way to abolish the board altogether.

Mr. PICKERING: But after the careful investigation you have been making through the select committee, you ought to be realising that it is necessary to continue it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Not necessary, compulsory.

Mr. PICKERING: Still, while it is there its operations ought to be widened.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is a good advertisement for the South-West that they have been able to get through without it.

Mr. PICKERING: Yes, but without the assistance of the board, development is a lengthy process.

Mr. Johnston: They are getting a fair amount of State assistance down there.

Mr. PICKERING: But under a special scheme, the group settlement scheme. It may have no connection with the I.A.B., but the principle is almost identical.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.48]: I had hoped that the select committee on the I.A.B. would have concluded its report before these Estimates were dealt with. However, there is a possibility that we shall find in the Loan Estimates something which will allow us to discuss this subject later. I see in the Estimates before us no item which justifies the payment of a guinea a day travelling expenses to members of the boards appointed to advise the I.A.B. in respect of accounts. Two members of the new boards were nominated by the Primary Producers' Association. They are appointed in the interests of the creditors, although the creditors have no say in their appointment. I cannot see what good these boards are to achieve. Indeed I was very much surprised at the members of the I.A.B. retaining their seats in face of the appointment of the boards, amounting to a vote of want of confidence in the I.A.B.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It was a conference decision.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The boards have to examine the securities, not of the I.A.B., but of the Agricultural Bank; because in a large number of instances the Agricultural Bank has the land security, while the I.A.B. deals in what I might call a gamble.

Mr. Harrison: All farming is a gamble.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The I.A.B. has a lien over the goods and chattels, and over the crop, if any.

The Premier: And the equity of the land.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But that, we are told, is very little. By the time the mortgagees are paid off there is nothing left.

The Premier: Nonsense!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Government can have no confidence in the I.A.B., or they would not have agreed to the appointment of the new boards.

The Premier: We have the utmost confidence.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Then why appoint other boards to scrutinise the work of the I.A.B. It is unnecessary and, as I say, I am surprised that the members of the I.A.B. should have continued to hold office.

The Premier: They agreed to the appointment.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Were they consulted prior to its being made?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course, the I.A.B. have the legal authority in the long run.

Mr. Harrison: The I.A.B. cannot have technical knowledge of every part of the State.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But they have officers with that knowledge to guide them, and they have district officers as well. The appointment of the boards puts the I.A.B. in a very awkward position. Suppose the I.A.B. has closed an account. Along comes a new board, with no statutory authority, and says, "Start the man again on different lines, and carry him on a little longer." If the I.A.B. refuse to adopt that recommendation, they are up against a big political organisation.

The Premier: Don't you believe it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is quite clear. The two men who are scrutinising the actions of the I.A.B. have been furnished by that very political organisation.

The Minister for Agriculture: They are not scrutinising the board's actions, but are only making valuations of the whole of the board's propositions.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Then they are quite unnecessary, and might as well be wiped out. However, there is no item in these Estimates to provide for the boards. Members of the House are under a wrong impression in respect of the Industries Assistance Act. In 1917 an amendment went through, exempting Part III. of the Act from the administration of the I.A.B. It means that under Part III. of the Industries Assistance Act the Government have been advancing money without the consent of Parliament. The Government cannot advance a shilling under the Industries Assistance Act without its first being appropriated by Parliament. All the factories and other industries which have been assisted under Part III. of the Act have been assisted without the money first being appropriated by Parliament.

Hon. P. Collier: Without Parliament, knowing nothing about it!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This has been done on the advice of the council of industrial development, a body with no legal authority.

Mr. Harrison: Then it is not the poor farmer this time.

Hon. P. Collier: Part III. does not deal with the farmer.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Government have power to lend trust moneys placed with them for investment, but no other grant can be made to an industry without its first being appropriated by Parliament. Advances have been made to jam factories, freezing works, and other industries, but the money so advanced has not been placed on the Loan Estimates. The council of industrial development is an advisory board without statutory standing.

Mr. Davies: But they do advance money.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Without statutory authority. They recommend the Treasurer to advance money. We have been under the impression that the Industries Assistance Act was administered by the I.A.B.

The Premier: You passed the Act yourself.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes, and the amending Bill of 1917 exempted Part III. of the Act from the administration of the board. Since then the whole of the grants made have been made on the advice of this outside body with which Parliament has nothing to do. Yet this outside body have greater powers than have members of the House, because members are not even asked to vote the money recommended for a loan. That system is wrong. I intend to watch closely the items that appear on the Estimates. Since 1915 nothing at all has appeared in this connection, and the money used has been advanced illegally. I admit the board has a difficult job to carry out.

Mr. Pickering: It has done very well.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is doing the best it can. If the board has erred at all it has been on the side of benefiting the man on the land. It has been very considerate and sympathetic towards him. Possibly its sympathy has been extended in certain cases to the detriment of the finances of the State. It has to put up with a great deal of abuse. No doubt the special boards have been appointed because of that fact. On the Loan Estimates we may have an opportunity of dealing further with this question. During one session we were not allowed to discuss these bodies at all on the Estimates. The Agricultural Bank is the largest gainer through the I.A.B. The board has kept up the security of the bank.

Hon. P. Collier: Paying the interest and so on.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But for the board the bank might be in a worse position than it is to-day.

Mr. Harrison: It would have been.

Mr. Johnston: And so would Western Australia.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The sooner the board ceases its operations the better.

Mr. Latham: It will not be able to do so for some time.

The Premier: You are seldom wrong, but you are wrong in this case.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The client of the board possesses neither body nor soul.

The Premier: Yes, he does.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: He cannot move hand or foot. He cannot carry on his bus-

inasmuch as he would do if he had a free hand, because of his indebtedness to the board.

Mr. Harrison: It is a good thing for some of them.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The board is really the financial manager for the farmers. There are over 2,000 clients, and I have heard it is possible that 1,500 more will become clients after the harvest.

Mr. Pickering: I hope that is not so.

Mr. Harrison: I am afraid the number will be increased.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This will extend the operations of the board, and the Government will shortly be running the whole show.

Mr. Latham: They will not take on new men.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I regret the Estimates are not submitted in a form that will permit members to discuss the various items. This is public money, and represents transfers from one account to the other.

The Premier: That is all.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We may thus be approving of transfers without knowing to what use the money will be put.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [6.7]: I endorse the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle. We are called upon to discuss the operations of this department in circumstances that are not at all satisfactory. We do not know the real workings of either the I.A.B. or the Agricultural Bank unless we get the reports. The Industries Assistance Act states that the printed report and audited balance sheet shall be presented to Parliament by the 30th September in each year, but this year these papers have not yet been placed before us. It is unfair to ask members to deal with these departments without their being able to peruse the annual report.

Mr. Pickering: We also want the Auditor General's report.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. Surely the report of the Auditor General should be made available to members four months after the financial year closes. There are, of course, obstacles which prevent him from furnishing his report early in the year, but such obstacles do not appertain with respect to the departments under consideration. I hope the Estimates will be presented in a different form next year. I desire to move that an item be reduced with a view to calling attention to the administration of the Industries Assistance Act, but I cannot do that owing to the manner in which the Estimates are presented. It would almost appear that the reports to which I have referred have been deliberately held back so that members may not peruse them before they discuss these Estimates. I was under the impression that Part III. of the 1915 Act operated in regard to other industries besides the agricultural industry. We now learn that the Colonial Treasurer has an absolutely free hand. I do not care how well meaning the members of the Council of Industrial Development may be, they have no statutory authority and no standing so

far as Parliament is concerned. They have extraordinary powers. In matters which affect various industries they can recommend to the Government that assistance should be granted or withheld as the case may be. It is wrong that such a body of men should be allowed to remain in this position year after year without their duties and functions being defined by an Act of Parliament. I shall refuse to vote one penny for the continued existence of this council until such a Bill is brought down. We must know upon what basis the council exists and carries out its duties. I understand that applications are made to the Government for assistance running into many thousands of pounds, and referred to the council for advice. This council is responsible to no one except the Minister concerned, and yet it is dealing with the finances of the State in this way. Further than this, we have a political organisation which, by its power, interferes with the administration of departments to the extent of being able to set aside the decisions of officers who are responsible to the Government and to Parliament for the management of their departments, and for the expenditure and control of public funds.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Before the tea adjournment I was dealing with the question of political influence exercised by an outside organisation upon the administration of these departments. I have no information as to the details, but I understand that the Government have appointed boards whose duty it will be to review all cases where assistance has been reduced or stopped by the Industries Assistance Board. I am speaking without knowledge of the details and I hope Ministers will give us those details as to the reason for the appointment of the boards and the functions they are expected to carry out. From what I have read in the Press during the past few months, I know that a request was made to the Government by the executive of the Primary Producers' Association that these boards should be appointed. When it was announced early in the year that the Industries Assistance Board had decided to cease giving assistance in particular cases which were considered to be doubtful, representations were made that a board consisting of an inspector or officer of the board and two farmers in the districts concerned, should be appointed to examine the security or, in effect, to review the decision of the Industries Assistance Board regarding the assistance to be rendered. From what I can gather, the two farmers to be appointed by the Government were not to be appointed as in connection with other boards, but the various branches of the Primary Producers' Association were to be asked to select two men in their district who would be appointed to the boards. If I am correct in that statement, it seems to me an outrageous thing

to hand over to a political organisation the right of selection of two members to sit on a board to review the actions and decisions of responsible officers of Government departments in connection with the disposal or administration of public funds. That is what has been done.

Mr. Munsie: What chance would a known Labourite have of getting assistance if he put in an application for it?

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Government considered it would be of advantage to have experienced farmers with local knowledge of the districts affected appointed to these boards, there might not be any serious objection if the appointment were made by the Government, but to hand over the right to a purely political organisation to select those men is an entirely different matter. Why could not the Government make the appointments direct in the various country districts affected, irrespective of whether or not the men selected were members of the Primary Producers' Association? Why hand over to the branches of that political organisation the right to make such a selection? There are any number of farmers well qualified to advise and assist the I.A.B. in these matters, who are not members of the Primary Producers' Association. So far as my knowledge goes, these appointments are limited to members of that organisation. I have read in the Press that the central executive of the association has written to the various branches asking them to select men to be recommended for appointment on these boards. I have read some of these details in the columns of the "Primary Producer," because practically nothing has appeared in the daily Press dealing with this question. I will not only protest, but I will go to the extreme length in exercising the powers I possess in this House to prevent a political body exercising functions of this nature. The I.A.B. have been able to get along since 1915, during which time millions of pounds of public funds have been advanced to settlers, and over five million pounds have been repaid by the clients of the board, and it was only when, in the exercise of their discretion and judgment, the board considered it was not a business proposition to assist certain clients on their books with any further funds, that action was taken accordingly. When that decision was made known, the executive of the Primary Producers' Association immediately got to work. They sent a deputation to the Minister for Agriculture and asked for the appointment of these boards which were to consist of local men. As the result of that action being pressed home by the executive and approved, I think, by a subsequent conference of the association, the boards were appointed.

Mr. Davies: Would the local men be members of the Primary Producers' Association?

The Premier: Not necessarily.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The local branches are to make the selection and therefore it

is likely that those selected will be members of the organisation.

Mr. McCallum: They are not likely to select men who are not members of their own organisation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The point is that the right of selection is confined to the branches of this political body. If that is not political interference with the administration of an important public department, I do not know what is. Where are we drifting to, when men without any responsibility whatever, simply because they are members of a political organisation, have the right to elect a board that will step in and review or set aside the matured judgment and decisions of highly placed and experienced departmental officers.

Mr. Pickering: The Primary Producers' Association is the only recognised organisation of the farmers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know that, but what would the member for Sussex say if the members of the Parliamentary Labour Party, a purely political organisation, at the time when Labour was in office, had the right to appoint members to a board to review the actions and decisions of responsible officers of the Government?

Mr. Latham: I believe they would give us a fair deal.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the principle is wrong. I am not making any accusation against these individuals. I have no doubt that in the main they would desire to do what was best in the interests of the State, but I contend it is vicious for a party political organisation to have the right to appoint men to a board, and have a say in the disposal of public funds voted by Parliament.

Mr. Johnstone: The board would only advise.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course, but I would be sorry for the lives of the Government officers who would refuse to carry out the recommendations of these boards. Some months ago a paragraph appeared in the "West Australian" pointing out that members of Parliament were interfering with the work of Government departments. I think the writer of that paragraph had in mind—I am not making any reflection upon hon. members—the attitude adopted by some members of the Primary Producers' Association. In an excess of zeal on behalf of their constituents, those members were importunate in their demands upon officers of the Government in order to secure assistance for their people. I am correct in saying that the paragraph referred to officers entrusted with the responsibility of administering the Industries Assistance Act and the Agricultural Bank Act. When the trustees of the bank and these officers, in the exercise of their duty and their discretion, decided that they could not make any further advances in different parts of the State, representatives of those farmers immediately attempted to bring pressure on the board and on these officers to induce them to reverse their decisions.

Mr. Pickering: I do not know that you are right in drawing that inference. Why confine it to the Country Party?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am speaking with a knowledge of the subject, and I know the Agricultural Bank officers and the I.A.B. officers were the men whom the writer of the paragraph had in mind. I know, too, that those responsible officers have felt on more than one occasion very much embarrassed because of the importuning attitude of some members of Parliament. So much was this the case that some officers found their official lives almost intolerable because of these requests to act contrary to their judgment. This article is worth quoting—

The reference in our leading columns yesterday to the necessity for legislation to prevent private members of Parliament from directly approaching departmental officials on matters of their constituents' affairs has excited much comment. From what can be gathered the nuisance has alarmingly developed of recent years, and threatens, unless stopped, to become a grave evil. That it would be unjust to include all, or even a majority of the members in the reproach that they push the interests of their constituents to the extent of haunting departments, is the opinion in qualified circles. But undoubtedly some members with an assiduity that does not always pause to examine the merits of case, embarrass the official lives of public servants particularly in those departments associated with land settlement.

I know that it is the Agricultural Bank that is referred to. We can see justification for this criticism in the appointment of those members of the Primary Producers' Association to sit in judgment as a court of appeal, irresponsible men as they are, on the decisions of highly paid officers of the department. I ask the Premier and the Minister for Works whether they realise that by consenting to a political organisation having power to select its members to act in such a matter, the Government are embarking upon what is a vicious principle? It is only a matter of degree, and where is it going to stop if the Industries Assistance Board should refuse to give effect to the recommendations of this other irresponsible board to grant assistance to men whom the Industries Assistance Board had previously turned down? Is it not human nature to expect that members of the Primary Producers' Association, or the executive of that body, would immediately bring pressure to bear, as they already have done in connection with the appointment of the board? Of course they would. The principal is bad because, whilst it is an admission of the right of a political party to exercise control over the distribution or allocation of Government funds, it may be confined to the Industries Assistance Board to-day, and it may be the Agricultural Bank to-morrow or perhaps the Mines Department, or some other department, on the next day, and so on until we shall have the whole of

our departments honeycombed with political influence. It is only another step to saying that when a local authority asks for the appointment of a local committee, they may also ask what grant the Works Department will make for the construction of a main road.

The Minister for Works: They have not tried it yet.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It would be an extension of the principle. Where will it stop? I have here an extract from the proceedings of the Primary Producers' conference which was held a month or two ago and which shows what the desire of the executive of that association is. It is a desire to extend the principle of control over departments, a control by that political organisation which represents the farmers. This extract says—

The executive's recommendation's that local men should assist I.A.B. inspectors was supported and the executive was urged to take immediate action to complete the board's affairs.

Mr. Latham: Very valuable assistance, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am surprised at the hon. member supporting political interference of that description. It has never been done before. I challenge any hon. member to give an instance where any political party or organisation has had such power. To say that this is valuable assistance—interfering with the administration of the department and the work of responsible officers, and interfering with the decisions of the Government and Ministers themselves—is absurd. To use a vulgar term, the principle is rotten, and I am not going to countenance it. If this Parliament is so lost to its sense of public duty as to allow the initiation of a principle of this kind without attempting to scotch it at the very outset, the sooner members of Parliament are kicked out the better it will be for the State. Then a Parliament may be elected which will protect those who are charged with the administration of affairs. The extract goes on—

The following motions were also passed:—

That conference urges the Government to establish a permanent board in each district on the same basis as those now to be formed to investigate the doubtful I.A.B. clients: only for the purpose of Agricultural Bank clients who challenge the opinion of a singular inspector, whose opinion may be open to be challenged, and who is more likely to an error of judgment than practical men on the land; we also venture the opinion that by singular inspector too much power is vested in the hands of one man.

These resolutions were passed at the conference. We have conceded to the executive the right of the appointment of a board to deal with I.A.B. clients, and the conference says that the executive shall take up the matter of asking for the appointment of a similar board to deal with clients of the Agricultural Bank. What right has this political

body to step in and demand a say in the administration of the Agricultural Bank?

The Premier: Of course they cannot.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Or the administration of public funds, because it is nothing else. The function of the board is for no other purpose. But even if the Government thought that it would be of advantage to have the experience of local men to advise or to assist, then the Government should have made a free and untrammelled choice and should not have handed over their power to a political organisation to make the selection.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Three members of the I.A.B. are practical farmers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They have no right to be occupying their positions if they are not. But we know that they are highly qualified for their posts, and that there is no need to call in the aid of local political aspirants. If there were such need the members of the board would not be fit for their position.

The Premier: They are thoroughly capable men.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course, and that is why I am protesting against any court of appeal. This whole matter arises from the fact that the Industries Assistance Board refused to grant assistance in some instances. Representations were made to the Board to recede from their attitude, but they refused to do so. Then a deputation went to the Minister, and as a result of the refusal of the Board to do what in their judgment they were not entitled to do, this other board has been created. If this new board is not for the purpose of reviewing the decisions of the Industries Assistance Board, and compelling the granting of assistance in certain cases, then for what has it been appointed? It has been appointed for no other reason than that which I have described. It is a scandalous thing that the Government should write to a political party and ask them to elect members on a board to deal with matters such as these. In many instances where farmers have been refused further assistance this new board will sit in review of the decisions of the Industries Assistance Board. The board is composed of local men. If Brown in a farming district is appointed to this board, and he is asked to review the case of one of his neighbours, who is a client of the board and who has been refused further assistance, is it not human nature to expect that Brown, who has lived in close association with that neighbour, and who may have an eye to the future, will be influenced by personal consideration? Will his judgment not be coloured by past association with the man in question?

Mr. Pickering: That argument will apply in any case.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course and that is the danger. There is no need to go outside responsible officers. The I.A.B. employs inspectors to travel all round the country, and those inspectors should be as well qualified as local men to give decisions.

Mr. Latham: We know they are not.

[Mr. Munsie took the Chair.]

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course every time an inspector does not agree to do what is requested of him, he must be wrong. There may be mistakes made; there always will be mistakes made, but it is far better to have a board acting in some cases without knowledge of local affairs and so perhaps unwittingly doing injustice to a few clients than to have established a vicious principle of permitting an outside political organisation to deal with the matter. I hope the Committee will take a determined stand. I appeal to members on the cross benches to take a broad view of the matter, and to realise that whilst it may be their turn to-morrow, it may be some other political body's turn later on. I think I am safe in saying that this same executive, which has secured the appointment of the political board I have described, are in communication with the Minister for Mines, if not with the Treasurer on behalf of an individual who is a mine owner in this State. A mine owner, too, is a man who is carrying on a private business. In this particular instance application has been made for assistance to the extent of a considerable sum, running into five figures, I believe. Instead of that gentleman representing to the Minister for Mines the case on its merits, or representing it to an officer of the department, he is putting his application through the executive of the Primary Producers' Association, a body which knows nothing at all about the matter.

The Minister for Mines: I do not know of it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is a fact nevertheless. Representations have been made to the Government for assistance on behalf of this individual who himself is a member of the executive.

The Minister for Mines: I do not know of it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will tell the Minister the man's name. It is Shalleross. Has he made application for assistance?

The Minister for Mines: He has, but the amount is not in five figures.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I should like to know whether the executive have made any recommendations to the Minister with regard to Mr. Shalleross.

The Premier: I have not heard of it or of any other application.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am credibly informed it is so.

Mr. Pickering: The mere fact of his being on the executive would not deprive him of the right to apply for assistance.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course not.

The Minister for Mines: His case would stand on its merits.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But it is entirely improper to invoke the aid of the executive on a personal matter. I am not saying the executive would influence the final decision, but the principle is wrong.

The Minister for Mines: As you said before, it is rotten.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We should not override the mature experience of members of the board.

The Premier: They have statutory authority and no one can interfere with them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is why the board are called an advisory board. It must be very embarrassing for officers to know that the advisory board are the appointees of a political organisation and that Ministers under whom they serve are members of the organisation. Is it fair that, after an officer has refused further assistance to certain clients, he should be put in the position of knowing that a political organisation is making recommendations to over-ride his decision and that the Minister is a member of the same political organisation? He is between the devil and the deep sea. He has always the fear that, if he refuses to take notice of the recommendations of the board, he will be offending his Minister.

The Premier: No, not in this case. It is under me and I am not a member of the organisation.

Mr. O'Loghlen: I think you are, *ex officio*.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The executive would go to the Premier's second in command, the Minister for Agriculture, and make him the bearer of a message to the Premier. The Minister for Agriculture is leader of the party, and he would have to convey a message or instruction to the Premier. How could he be free and independent and loyal to his party and, being at the same time second in command of the Government, be loyal to his chief, who might take an opposite view?

The Minister for Agriculture: He is not complaining.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the people are complaining. The Minister for Agriculture was very successful in the demand he made to his chief recently. He secured all the executive asked for.

Mr. McCallum: Although the paper said the chief had had a great victory.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Politically things are getting putrid through interference of this kind.

The Minister for Mines: Hence the retirement of the member for East Perth.

Mr. Underwood: He had the decency to retire. That is more than you fellows have.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Mines faced the electors, but he did not do so voluntarily. He took office and could not avoid it.

The Minister for Mines: Well, I did it, anyhow.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, because there was a position of £1,300 a year hanging to it. The Minister was not nearly so courageous as he would have us believe. I protest also that we have not had the report of the I.A.B. I assume they were unable to get out their report by the 30th September as provided in the Act, because they have been hampered by this outside appeal board. The position disclosed by the report is that things are not

so well with the I.A.B. as they might be. Last year's report stated—

The revenue account, after providing £4,026 interest on bad and doubtful accounts and £2,682 interest waived on advances to certain Ongerup settlers, shows a net loss for the year of £10,912, but only ascertained losses on actual realisations have been brought into the account. This backward movement of the account is attributable to loss of earning power and to increased cost of administration.

This year under the same heading the report states—

The revenue account after providing £2,191 interest on bad accounts, £965 interest waived on advances to certain Ongerup settlers, and £33,954 written off to bad debts account, shows a loss of £39,640.

The Premier: The bad accounts are an accumulation of the years since the board started.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, it is not to say that these amounts have been incurred during the year. The board consider that they could be written off. Last year's report stated the number of abandoned properties on the hands of the board on the 30th June as 144, carrying an indebtedness of £96,721.

The Premier: Some of them have been got rid of since.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This year the number of abandoned properties remaining on the books of the board was 182 on which the amount owing was £95,320. The number of abandoned properties on the hands of the board therefore showed an increase of 36: Of course they do not altogether represent bad debts. Men have become failures in this calling and their properties have been taken up by others. There must be a percentage of failures, and there must inevitably be a considerable loss incurred in administering an Act of this kind. The report just tabled shows that insurance has produced very profitable business to the insurance companies since the commencement of the Act. It is here where the Government might well amend the Act and allow the board to effect its own insurances to the benefit of the Government and the clients of the board. The report states—

The board's agreement with the Fire Underwriters' Association was the same as obtained during the preceding year. The acreage covered by fire insurance was 478,493, and the values for insurance of the crops were—

The various figures are then given, but it is not necessary to repeat them.

The companies allow the board for its services a commission of 15 per cent. on fire and 5 per cent. on hail premiums. Since its inception the board has paid in premiums the sum of £141,728 plus stamp duty, and recovered in losses £48,442.

In other words the insurance companies have made a profit during the period of seven years of £91,000.

Mr. Latham: What profit did the board make out of commission?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Fifteen per cent. As a matter of fact the board do the whole of the work.

Mr. Latham: That is not so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Then what do they get the 15 per cent. for?

Mr. Latham: Handling the business.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The report goes on to say—

The board is of opinion that legislative authority to carry its own risks is necessary as affording a source of profit from which to provide a reserve to meet the losses which the liquidation of its bad accounts is now entailing. Proposals are at present obtained by the inspectors, and the additional handling cost to the board would be relatively small.

Mr. Latham: They fill in a form, that is all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What else is to be done?

Mr. Latham: They draw 15 per cent. for filling in that form.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The point is that this amount of £91,000 would, if the board had been able to carry their own risks, have been saved either to the board or the clients of the board. It seems to me we are absolutely neglecting our duty in allowing this money to be paid out year after year. The most profitable business in Australia to-day is the insurance business. Insurance companies are springing up like mushrooms. Men without special experience are appointed at high salaries to manage these concerns, so that they must be extremely remunerative. I shall return to the subject of the politically appointed committees when we come to the items.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. H. K. Maley—Greenough) [8.18]: The Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that the Industries Assistance Board are vested with certain statutory powers, and that with these powers there can be no interference by any outside body whatsoever. It has frequently been stated here that the matter of assistance to settlers in whose case it has been going on for years, ought to have been reviewed. It has been contended that the continual doling out of sustenance should be terminated. The proposed local committees have no power whatever but to advise the Minister regarding valuations, and certainly they have no power to recommend with regard to rate of sustenance.

Hon. P. Collier: The rate of sustenance depends on valuations.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No. The question of sustenance received attention when the Industries Assistance Board were reviewing the rates to be allowed the farmers for this particular season. The whole facts of the matter with regard to the local committees are that a

deputation from the Chamber of Commerce, and one from the Primary Producers' Association, together with the members and officers of the Industries Assistance Board, came to see me as acting Minister in the absence of the Premier, who was in England. The conclusion was arrived at that it would be a good thing to have a kind of stocktaking in order to determine whether it would not be better in the case of some clients who were in an absolutely hopeless position to make a valuation of their properties and release those clients from the control of the board. It was merely a matter of recurring millstones of interest charges being written up against those clients in respect of hopeless propositions. The functions of the district committees, two members of which are local farmers, not necessarily members of the Primary Producers' Association—

Hon. P. Collier: But elected by that association.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have not followed the matter closely of late, being concerned with the affairs of other departments; but I have noticed that some of the men elected to the district committees have not been members of the Primary Producers' Association.

Hon. P. Collier: But the association have elected them. Why ask a political body to elect men to such positions?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: After all, the emoluments attaching to the position are very little, consisting merely of small travelling allowances. The recommendations of the local committees are purely matters of advice to the Minister, and their advice can be accepted or rejected. The committees will perform a very useful function.

Hon. P. Collier: But why ask a political body to elect them?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Is there any other body in the State that could do it? Throughout the inspections the board will be protected by the reports of their own inspectors. The Leader of the Opposition has drawn a lurid picture of the destruction of responsible government in this connection. I think the Industries Assistance Board are to be commended for obtaining, at very slight cost, valuations which will enable them to determine how properties should be written down with a view to giving release to hopeless clients. I know that it was said I as a Minister had no right to receive deputations from the Primary Producers' Association.

Hon. P. Collier: I did not say that. It is better that the deputations should take place in public, instead of deputations being received in private and the results being made known weeks later in the "Primary Producer."

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is not justified. I have made statements in the Press—

Hon. P. Collier: To receive a deputation at a meeting open to the Press is a different thing from receiving a deputation privately and making a statement to the Press afterwards.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In connection with the proceedings of the Industries Assistance Board, the hon. member would not desire full Press publicity. The Leader of the Opposition is making a little political capital out of the matter.

Hon. P. Collier: If that were my object, I would have had a good deal more to say. I would not have sat down while you were trotting backwards and forwards between your executive and Cabinet.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: During the forthcoming political campaign the hon. member will be able to give his imagination free rein.

Hon. P. Collier: I hope you will be there.
THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I hope the hon. member will come out of the contest as clean as we have emerged.

Hon. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [8.26]: The Minister denied in this Chamber some time ago that he had ever been approached by the Primary Producers' Association for the purpose of appointing farmers as advisers to the Industries Assistance Board.

Point of Order.

The Minister for Agriculture: I challenge the member for Mt. Magnet to substantiate that statement. I take exception to the statement, and I ask the hon. member to withdraw it.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I will not withdraw it, because it is a statement of fact. The hon. member has no right to ask me to withdraw, because I have not made a statement which is offensive.

The Minister for Agriculture: I regard the hon. member's statement as offensive, and I ask for its withdrawal.

The Chairman: The Minister is taking exception to the statement, and has asked for a withdrawal. If the Minister considers the statement distasteful, I must ask the hon. member to withdraw it.

Dissent from Chairman's Ruling.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I cannot accept your ruling, Mr. Chairman. I must move—

That the Committee dissents from the Chairman's ruling.

I do so on the ground that the Chairman is the person who is competent to say whether a remark is offensive or otherwise. If an honourable member takes exception to a statement made here in the course of debate, and says he deems it offensive, and asks for a withdrawal on that ground, then everything one says may be termed offensive, and thus anything calculated to express the truth must be withdrawn. This is a House where one has the right and the privilege of speaking the truth. If I said the Minister was a scoundrel, or a liar, or a coward, or that he was

utterly unscrupulous, I would be saying something which was offensive; but I have made a statement which in my opinion is a statement of fact.

Hon. P. Collier: And the Minister can refute it afterwards.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Yes; he can refute it at any time.

The Minister for Agriculture: A similar demand was put forward by the member for Sussex only a week ago with regard to a statement made by me. The member for Sussex considered that statement to be offensive, and I was ordered by the Chairman to withdraw it. Therefore I still ask you, Mr. Chairman, to require the member for Mt. Magnet to withdraw.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I remember the remark to which exception was taken by the member for Sussex. In my opinion the Chairman was not correct in demanding a withdrawal on that occasion, and I expressed that opinion immediately the withdrawal was demanded. However, I did not rise to question the Chairman's ruling. It was the place of the member called upon to withdraw to do that.

The Minister for Agriculture: I was not given any option.

Hon. M. F. Troy: It is not right that you, Sir, should observe that precedent. I would be stultified, and the House would be stultified, if I allowed my self to be compelled to withdraw a remark made in the ordinary course of debate which is not personal, and not offensive, and which I believe to be a statement of fact.

The Chairman: If my memory serves me rightly, there has not been one instance in this Chamber when a member, being called upon by either the Chairman of Committees or the Speaker to withdraw a remark to which another member had taken exception as being offensive to him, has refused to do so. With regard to the statement of the member for Mt. Magnet that it is the Chairman's duty to decide whether a statement is offensive or not, I must say I disagree with that view. I do not intend to give a ruling as to whether in my opinion the statement was offensive or not. It is optional for any member to take exception to a statement and ask for a withdrawal; and it has always been the custom, at all events since I have been a member of this Chamber, to withdraw upon such a request being made.

Hon. M. F. Troy: That is all right. I have a recollection of—

The Chairman: Before you prolong the matter, Mr. Troy, let me point out that if you wish to disagree with my ruling you have a certain course laid down. I have asked for a withdrawal. The Minister for Agriculture has taken exception to your statement as being offensive, and has asked for it to be withdrawn. Therefore I have asked you to withdraw the remark.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I regret having been compelled, Sir, to move that your ruling be disagreed with on the ground that my remark was not offensive under the rules of this Chamber.

The Premier: A remark has been taken as being offensive.

Hon. P. Collier: But this was not a personal remark at all.

The Premier: The hon. member has been in the House a long time and he knows, as we all know, that when a withdrawal is asked for, it is conceded. I hope the hon. member will withdraw the remark.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Munsie having reported the dissent,

Hon. M. F. Troy: In speaking to the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture I said the Minister for Agriculture had denied that he had agreed to the representation of the farmers on the I.A.B. The Minister said that statement was offensive, and asked for a withdrawal. I claim that I am entitled to make a statement which I believe to be a statement of fact. It is not offensive. It is a statement which may be denied if not correct. An offensive statement is a statement by which I impute bad motives, a statement of misrepresentation, an accusation of falsehood, of fraud, of corruption, of cowardice, a statement in contemptuous or insulting language—all these things would be offensive, but a statement of fact, which is within the rights of every member and within the common rules of debate, cannot be offensive. I refused to withdraw, not because I objected to the Chairman asking me to withdraw, but because I felt that my withdrawal would create a bad precedent. The Minister for Agriculture has drawn attention to the fact that a few weeks ago he was compelled to withdraw a statement he made regarding the member for Sussex. I remember the occasion well. The Minister was asked by the Chairman to withdraw, but in my opinion, the member for Sussex was not entitled to a withdrawal, and I expressed that opinion immediately to my colleague in the next chair. It was not my duty to interfere, it was not my business. But if the Minister for Agriculture is justified in demanding that I shall withdraw a statement which any hon. member ought to make if he feels it to be true, all free discussion will be stifled. The remark I made was not personally offensive, and therefore I cannot be compelled to withdraw it. Standing Order 146 provides that any member having used objectionable language, and not explaining or retracting it or offering apologies to the member offended, shall be censured or otherwise dealt with as the House may think fit. But I have not used objectionable language. I have not said anything personal regarding the Minister's character or his integrity or his manhood. I have merely made a statement regarding his Ministerial actions, and therefore it cannot be called offensive. "May" states that the House shall insist upon all offensive words being withdrawn and ample apologies made to the satisfaction of the member to whom the offence has been given. It further states that the imputation of all motives, misrepresentation, or

accusations charging a member with duplicity, deceit or contemptuous or insulting language, are unparliamentary, and call for prompt interference. But I have merely made the statement that the Minister said certain things. If I am incorrect, the Minister has the right to say so, but he has not the right to demand that my liberty of speech shall be curtailed. The Premier has appealed on the ground that it is the custom to withdraw. I say it has not been the custom. Frequently during my term as Speaker I refused to call an hon. member to order for making such remarks as I made to-night. I always asked what was the objection, and frequently did I rule that the remark was not unparliamentary or offensive. My remark to-night was not unparliamentary or personally offensive. It was merely made in the course of discussion, and it could have been replied to in the ordinary way by the Minister. If I had said he told lies or was given to misrepresentation, he might properly have demanded a withdrawal; but my remark was merely that he had made certain statements which he now says he did not make. What I said was correct. In his opinion it was not correct. He is perfectly justified in telling the House that I was wrong, and I am equally justified in saying that I was right. If he were to say that I am wrong, could I call his denial personally offensive? I could not do so, because he would not mean the remark personally, but would be merely denying my statement. Yet because I make a statement which he says is not correct, he declares it to be personally offensive. I regret that in the circumstances I cannot accept the Chairman's ruling.

The Minister for Agriculture: I did not say that the remarks of the hon. member were incorrect. I simply said I had not made the statement attributed to me. I defy him to get a proof of the speech on the Lands Department vote and find any such statement in regard to the Industries Assistance Board. If I did not make the statement, it must be an offensive remark to say I did make it. That is the only logical deduction to be drawn. If the remark had been made in part, I could understand the hon. member's attitude, but if I did not make the statement, and the statement is attributed to me by the hon. member as having been made, it must be regarded as offensive to say I did make it.

Mr. Speaker: The Chairman of Committees has ruled that the member for Mount Magnet should have withdrawn the statement. The hon. member supports himself in his attitude by quoting Standing Order 146. Standing Order 131 bears more closely on the subject. No. 146 reads—

Any member having used objectionable words, and not explaining or retracting the same, or offering apologies for the use thereof to the satisfaction of the House, shall be censured, or otherwise dealt with as the House may think fit; and any member called to order shall sit down, unless permitted to explain.

No. 131 reads—

No member shall use offensive or unbecoming words in reference to any member of the House.

The words used by the member for Mount Magnet were considered by the Minister for Agriculture to be offensive.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Who is the judge in this case?

The Speaker: I believe the hon. member will bear with me when I say that the man against whom a statement is made should be the judge as to whether that statement is offensive or not. The Minister held that the words were offensive, and said he did not make the statement attributed to him. He contends that this is putting words into his mouth that he did not use. That must be offensive. In the circumstances I must support the ruling of the Chairman of Committees.

Hon. M. F. Troy: What is your ruling?

Mr. Speaker: I support the ruling of the Chairman.

Dissent from Speaker's ruling.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I move—

That the House dissents from Mr. Speaker's ruling.

The Minister for Mines: What about going to the Privy Council?

Hon. M. F. Troy: You, Sir, have delegated your authority to the Minister for Agriculture. It is for you to say whether a remark is offensive or not. You have decided that it is offensive, without even hearing the remark. You did not call for "Hansard" to ascertain what words were used. I did not appeal to your ruling in order that you might decide upon the determination of the Minister for Agriculture as to whether the words were offensive or not. I appealed to you as Speaker of the House. It creates a new order of things here when the Speaker delegates his authority to the aggrieved person.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member is not quite right in making that statement.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I take the statement as you made it. You did not hear and you have not seen a copy of my remarks. You do not know what words were used. You have simply said that because the Minister for Agriculture claims he did not make the statement, and deems it to be offensive, it is offensive. We have come to this, that I am being judged now in the mind of the Minister for Agriculture and not, as I thought, in the mind of the Speaker. I appealed to you to decide this question by the rules of the House. I did not appeal to you to decide on what was in the mind of the Minister. If that were so I would never have appealed to you. You based your decision on Standing Order 131 which reads—

No member shall use offensive or unbecoming words in reference to any member of the House.

Do you know what offensive words were used? Have you got them? Have you them written out? On what do you base your decision? You do not know what they are, and so you cannot decide whether the words are offensive or otherwise. But you have decided that they are offensive because the Minister says they are. I thought when I appealed to you, you would decide on what is called offensive in the Parliamentary Code. I am asked to withdraw, not because the Speaker knows I ought to do so, nor because he has heard or seen the words used, but merely because the Minister says I must withdraw. What are we coming to in this institution? An appeal to Caesar is not an appeal to him but one to the aggrieved person.

Hon. P. Collier: What objection is there to the words used?

The Minister for Agriculture: I am made out to be a liar.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The Minister says I made an offensive statement and the Speaker supports him because the Minister says it is offensive. If it is offensive on my part to say that the Minister made a certain statement when he says he did not make it, it is equally offensive for him to say I am wrong in saying what I did. He claims I said he was guilty of lying, and he now says I am guilty of lying when I made the statement I did. If the Minister is injured because I made that statement, which I deemed to be a fact, I am equally injured because he denies my statement. I call that denial equally offensive.

Hon. P. Collier: It is an assertion that you are not telling the truth.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Do you demand a withdrawal?

Hon. M. F. Troy: I ask for a withdrawal also. I have here a list of offensive expressions.

Mr. Pickering: How many are there?

Hon. M. F. Troy: About 500, but not one is of the character referred to by the Minister. The Speaker does not know what I said, but he knows I am guilty.

The Minister for Mines: He knows the ground on which you disagreed with the ruling of the Chairman.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I moved that the Chairman's ruling be disagreed with on the ground that the remark I made was not personally offensive under the rules of the House.

The Minister for Mines: You objected to the ruling on the ground that he did not decide that the words were offensive.

Hon. M. F. Troy: On the ground that the remark I made was not personally offensive, and the Speaker has decided that it is offensive without knowing what words were used. I am not going to submit to that position. I have said nothing about the Minister personally or about his personal character or integrity, or about his Ministerial actions. I have imputed no motives. He claims that I said he was a liar. I may equally claim that he is one, when he says

I have made a false statement. The following instances are given of expressions of language made use of in the House of Commons which are held to be unparliamentary, irregular and not permitted in debate. One is—

To charge a Minister with an injurious intention in introducing a clause into a Bill.

I have not done that.

To impute motives.

I have not done that. I have not said the Minister has done certain things at the dictation of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, or that he has done this because he was compelled to do it on the motion of Alee Monger, Esq.

To make personal observations reflecting upon a Minister's character.

I have not done that.

To make use of expressions calculated to reflect on a class.

I have not done that.

To make use of strong terms even though not addressed to a particular member.

I have not done that.

The Colonial Secretary: Don't you think they were strong?

Hon. M. F. Troy: I did expect, anyhow, that when dealing with a question of this character, there would be a little responsibility shown on the part of Ministers.

Hon. P. Collier: Everything is a joke now with some Ministers.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They are expected to uphold the traditions of this Chamber and this is how they do it!

Hon. P. Collier: Even the disposal of public funds is a joke!

Hon. M. F. Troy: At any rate, it is offensive to say—

That a member has been returned by the refuse of a large constituency.

I did not say that.

To make a direct contradiction.

I did not say that; but the Minister did so.

Hon. P. Collier: He did it first.

Hon. M. F. Troy: He contradicted a statement of mine and that is offensive. Again—

To attempt to throw ridicule on a member by referring to him as "hon. and reverend."

I did not do that.

Member: You could not do that in this instance!

Hon. M. F. Troy: Again—

To speak of the state of the House as corrupt.

I have not done that.

To charge a member with having been detected in the grossest practice of corruption.

I have not done that.

To allege that a member would give an offensive answer to a question.

I have not done that.

To assert that a member's action has been dictated by spite.

I have not done that.

To speak of any member as "not independent."

I have not said that.

To say that an hon. member "and those with him would shrink from nothing, however illegal and unconstitutional."

I have not done that.

To charge a Minister with advocating an unworthy cause.

I have not done that.

The Premier: Are you going right through all those things?

Hon. M. F. Troy: Yes. I will not allow the Minister for Agriculture to determine what is offensive in this Chamber!

To express an opinion that it is not honourable for a member to pursue a certain course.

I have not done that.

To impute to members that their allegiance is only conditional.

I have not done that.

The Premier: You have not been accused of all those things.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I have not accused the Minister of them. I am accused of breaking the rules of this Chamber and I am proving up to the hilt that I have not done so.

The Minister for Works: Are you giving us all these things seriatim?

Hon. M. F. Troy: Again—

To charge a member with going about the country telling deliberate lies.

I have not done that.

To charge a member with insulting a member.

I have not done that.

To refer to a Bill as having had its passing "secured by stealth."

I have not done that.

To charge a member with appealing to outrage and murder.

I have not done that.

To say that a member has left undone what he should do as a man of honour.

I have not done that.

To charge the Government with conduct approaching to trickery and unworthy proceedings.

To imply that a member says things without thinking.

To impute wilful obstruction.

To say that members do not act according to their conscience or that a member was not actuated by the feelings of a gentleman.

To impute want of straightforwardness or courage.

To affirm that a member's manner is usually insulting.

The Minister for Mines: What about "uncouth"?

Hon. M. F. Troy: The Minister is not a judge of that. The Minister has referred to the expression "uncouth." The hon. member remembers the incident. A string of such words were used, including "uncouth," and the hon. member appealed to me and I had to stop the member concerned otherwise there would have been a scene.

The Minister for Mines: Oh, no!

Hon. M. F. Troy: There would have been a scene. I could see the look in the hon. member's eye!

The Minister for Agriculture: I did not know you were as clever as that other gentleman.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I can tell the House that that hon. member said "If you allow that hon. member to go on like this, I can go one better"—and I can tell the House that he could!

The Minister for Works: He has gone off now, anyhow.

Mr. Speaker: Order! Will the hon. member keep to the point at issue.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I will, Mr. Speaker, so far as you will allow members to permit me—

To impute that the House has lost its character as a deliberative Assembly.

To imply that bad language is used in the House by members.

To impute disloyalty to any member.

The Premier: You have not been accused of that.

Hon. M. F. Troy: If the Premier intends to allow this sort of thing to go on I must proceed.

The Premier: What did you say?

Hon. M. F. Troy: I said that the Minister for Agriculture—I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to get the words from "Hansard"—made certain remarks which he denied having made.

The Minister for Agriculture: I said I did not make them.

Hon. M. F. Troy: And the Minister for Agriculture infers now that when I said that, I accused him of lying.

Hon. P. Collier: His was an accusation against you.

Hon. M. F. Troy: His accusation was that I told a lie. That is where the position rests now. I will proceed.

The Minister for Works: But those statements were made in a Pickwickian sense.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Why then has time been taken up with this discussion?

Hon. P. Collier: It is only in a Pickwickian sense that you are down a grade or two in Cabinet.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The Minister for Works, who has had an honourable connection with the House for many years, says the words were used in a Pickwickian sense! If they were used in that sense, they were jocular and being a joke, they could not be regarded as offensive! Yet the Minister would support the ruling that I was offensive!

The Minister for Works: I wanted to find out what all the bother was about.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members must keep order.

Hon. P. Collier: Has the Minister for Works got to the bottom of that little bother of his own?

Hon. M. F. Troy: However, I will proceed with these remarks that are set out as offensive—

To speak of a member's public acts as "of a most damnable character."

To charge a member with "a legal quibble worthy of the hon. member from whom it proceeded."

To impute that "to gain political ends some members would rejoice in the diplomatic failure of the Government and even in a military disaster."

To impute misconduct to members and to state that "time is wasted in unseemly personal squabbles," such reflections implying neglect on the part of the Speaker or Chairman who should check such conduct.

To say in commenting upon a despatch "the thing appears to have been done merely to see how many falsehoods could be put in a despatch" if such an observation is intended to apply to any member of the House.

To apply to any body of members language imputing insulting conduct on their part to foreign Governments.

To accuse a member of "inciting to break the law."

To apply the terms "brutal majority" to any section of the House.

To say that members "are on the side of atheism, irreligion and immorality."

To refer to a member as "an infidel, blasphemous, or an offensive representative of atheism."

To characterise a speech as "contrary to the decencies of society."

To say that a member will "by persisting in his present course, lose all claim to our respect as the guardian of the rights of minorities."

To impute unworthy motives to members or the Government collectively, as, ex.gr., to charge the Government with doing anything on a pretence.

The Colonial Secretary interjected.

Hon. M. F. Troy: As the Minister is an approved parrot, he will be able to use those charges? Is that offensive?

The Colonial Secretary: I will not accept it as offensive, so go ahead.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I will proceed:—

To imply that a member has acted as a "traitor to his sovereign."

To charge members with being "under improper influences" or with "rebellion."

To characterise a statement as "a deliberate untruth."

To assert "that liberty and regard of private right are lost to the House" and that a Minister "had transferred himself from a constitutional Minister to a tyrant."

To impute to a member of the House "that he had inspired an hon. member in a disorderly course which had brought down the censure of the House."

To impute that a member has stated that which he knew not to be correct.

To charge a member with "wasting the time of the House wantonly and unjustifiably."

To speak of members as "colleagues in atheism."

To charge a member with sheltering himself behind a "miserable subterfuge."

To charge, even hypothetically, members with "being cowards who dared not go among their constituents to deliver their speeches."

To say that a member "has not kept his word," or is of "remarkably fragile honour," or is guilty of "disorderly conduct and rebellious action."

To refer to any section of members as "steeped in treason."

To charge a member with "pandering to treason."

To speak of the House as consisting of foreigners.

To impute to the Government "intentional deceit" or imply that they were "only humbugging."

The Minister for Works interjected.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The Minister can do with that, God knows!

Mr. Pickering: What about withdrawing that expression?

The Minister for Works: I do not mind it.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The following words have been ruled as unparliamentary when applied to the conduct, actions or language of members:—

"Ungentlemanlike and dishonourable; impertinent; insolent and scornful terms; entirely false and without foundation; inconsistent with his character; knowingly unfounded statement; dodge; factious opposition; calumnious; false; cowardly; malicious and calumnious; hypocritical pretence; poltroon; mendacious; not credible; bloodthirsty."

The Minister for Works: They were particular in those days!

Hon. M. F. Troy: I have gone through the whole calendar of offensive words recorded in connection with Parliamentary procedure and I have not used one of them. You, Mr. Speaker, without saying or knowing what words I used, say I am guilty. It is absolutely remarkable! A member of the House appeals to the Speaker and the Speaker decides against another member without knowing what has been said! On that he accuses a member of making an offensive statement. If that is to be established as a precedent, exception can be taken to anything that any hon. member may say in this House and then free discussion will be gone for good. You, Mr. Speaker, have ruled that my remark is offensive; I have read out all the words known in the Parliamentary calendar which are classed as offensive and my remark is not included in any one of them. I made a statement that the Minister for Agriculture said certain things which, he said, he did not say. I say he did; he says he did not. He says I am offensive; I say he is offensive. I do not know whether you will reverse your judgment—I doubt it. I do not care whether your judgment is reversed or otherwise. You take the extraordinary course of deciding what is Parliament-

ary language without knowing the remark, or without having heard the remark. I appealed to you not because someone had ruled in a certain direction but because I required an interpretation by the Speaker of what is Parliamentary language and inasmuch as you have not heard the language, you cannot be correct.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. member move to dissent from my ruling?

Hon. M. F. Troy: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Mt. Magnet has indeed made a very strong point from his viewpoint, in that he said I did not hear the remark. In answer to that I will say that had I heard the remark, the hon. member thinks I would have been more competent to decide on this question than the deputy Chairman of Committees who heard the remark. Having heard the remark, the Minister for Agriculture complained of it and said the hon. member put words into his mouth he did not make use of. That being so the hon. member was asked to withdraw. The hon. member knows well that when a statement is made and it is considered to be objectionable by the member to whom it was directed, it must be withdrawn. The Speaker or Chairman is not required to know whether the statement is correct or incorrect; he simply asks whether a withdrawal is desired, and the member making the statement invariably complies with the request for the withdrawal. If the request is met with a refusal, I am bound by the Standing Orders to support the ruling of the Chairman. The question is now, that the ruling of the Speaker be dissented from.

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

Ayes	13
Noes	20

Majority against .. 7

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Chesson	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Collier	Mr. Troy
Mr. Heron	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Lutey	Mr. Corboy
Mr. Marshall	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Broun	Mr. Mann
Mr. Carter	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Davies	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Durack	Mr. Plesse
Mr. George	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Johnston	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Latham	Mr. Underwood
Mr. H. K. Maley	Mr. Mullany
	(Teller.)

Motion thus negatived.

Committee resumed.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Regarding the appointment of the advisory board, I have read in the Press recently that the Minister for Agriculture has approved of the representatives of farmers on this board. I protest against that course being followed because in my opinion it is not going to be to the best advantage of the board, and neither will it be in the interests of the Government. The Minister has not done the proper thing in appointing two local farmers as members of this advisory board, because local farmers in every instance must be influenced by the fact that they live in the district amongst the people whose claims they will be called upon to decide. The Minister has put the local farmers in a very unpleasant position, because any man, living in the country amongst other farmers who are his neighbours, will find it very hard to turn down any application those farmers may make. Hon. members will appreciate my point. I regret the Minister has adopted this course. It shows a decided weakness which is not in the best interests of the State.

Item, Trustees and Board member £636:

Hon. P. COLLIER: As the general debate has been concluded I wish to speak on this item. We have listened to the defence made by the Minister for Agriculture of the action of the Government in appointing a political board to administer public funds. His explanation consisted of a wave of the arm and saying "You will have plenty of opportunity at East Perth during next week." The Minister very unworthily and very unjustifiably accuses me of trying to make political capital out of this, and for what reason? Because I consider it my duty to draw attention to a departure in the administration of our public affairs which I consider to be vicious in principle, and which I think ought to be condemned and would be condemned by the Minister if he had any sense of public morality or any sense of public rectitude. I have sat in this House night after night, and had I been desirous of making political capital out of matters, I could have held up the work of the House on many occasions. In fact I consider I would have been doing a public duty had I, day after day, called attention to the manner in which there has been this insidious interference with the administration of State affairs. But because I for once consider that it is my duty to deal with a matter of this kind, I am accused by the Minister for Agriculture of being actuated by no other motive than that of trying to make political capital.

Hon. M. F. Troy: And that is an offensive remark.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But if I were as thin skinned as the hon member, knowing that he had no defence, that he was obliged to have recourse to the protection of the Chair, I should have taken exception to his remark. He was certainly imputing motives. The hon. member imputed motives to me in my criticism, motives of desiring to make political

capital out of this matter. And this is the Minister's sense of what is right and wrong in the administration of public affairs! He did not attempt to deny the charge I made that branches of a political organisation, selected or elected members of this party. Instead of attempting to justify that he has recourse to the miserable subterfuge of saying that I am actuated by a desire to make political capital out of it, and he waved his arms towards East Perth saying "You can give full vent to your imagination there next week." We are asked to hand it over to a political organisation to make a selection and the same organisation, encouraged by their success in this direction, are asking for a board to deal with the clients of the Agricultural Bank in the same way. See the principle of the thing!

The Premier: I have not heard of that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I read earlier in the evening the resolution carried at the conference of the Primary Producers' Association in which they ask their executive to make representations to the Government or the appointment of a board on similar lines to deal with the advances by the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And they will get it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course they will.

The Premier: Wait and see.

Mr. McCallum: It will be another of those victories for the Premier where he gives away everything.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The executive in this matter are like the tiger on whom the girl went for a ride—

They returned from the ride with the lady inside

And a smile on the face of the tiger.

The Minister for Works: But she had the ride.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister made this statement—

Several conferences between members and officers of the I.A.B. and representatives of the executive of the Primary Producers' Association have been held to determine a basis upon which the position of clients of the board, whose accounts are in an unsatisfactory position, may be capable of adjustment.

It must not be forgotten that prior to this the board had dealt with every one of those clients, and had decided upon a course of action. In some cases they had decided to withhold any further assistance and, because of the action of the board, the executive of the Primary Producers' Association came into the matter. No doubt representations were made through country branches that Government assistance had been stopped and the executive made representations to the Minister. There was nothing wrong in the executive approaching the Minister in a public matter of that kind. The Minister's statement proceeded—

The following tentative basis was agreed upon—subject of course, to approval of

Cabinet and the passing of amending legislation:—(1) That in the case of all assisted settlers whose position is regarded by the board as hopeless, a valuation be made of their land and other assets with a view to writing down their indebtedness to such an extent as may be deemed advisable. (2) The committee to consist of the district inspector or other departmental representative, and two qualified local farmers in each inspectorial district. The members of each committee to be nominated by the Primary Producers' Association and to be approved by the Minister. Such members not to be assisted settlers. (3) The duties of the committee to be: (a) To make a valuation of the property and assets; (b) To advise the best methods of carrying on the farm; (c) To report on the personal equation; and (d) To make such other recommendations as they may deem advisable. A request was made by the Chamber of Commerce to be given an opportunity to express their view, and on Tuesday a deputation from that body waited on the Acting Minister for Lands (Hon. H. K. Maley) with the general manager of the Agricultural Bank (Mr. E. A. McLarty) in attendance. After full discussion it was agreed that a necessary preliminary would be a complete investigation of the accounts by a committee. Those in an insolvent condition could be re-valued on the basis suggested above, and creditors claims surrendered and written off, and later, an amendment of the Act secured to discharge them without resort to the Bankruptcy Act. An examination would then be made of those accounts warranting some basis being arranged to compromise with the outside creditors' claims by an acceptance of Treasury bonds in full satisfaction thereof. This scheme has, of course, yet to be submitted by the Minister for consideration in Cabinet before any action can be taken.

It has since been approved.

The Premier: It has not been approved in that shape. I have not got the papers with me, but I shall bring them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Agriculture, who has handled the matter a good deal, has not denied the accuracy of any of the statements I have made. Certainly the point of my complaint is not disputed—the handing over to a political party of the selection of the members of this board. They will sit in judgment upon the position of their fellow members of the same political organisation.

Mr. McCallum: And God help them if they are not members of the organisation!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Government have endorsed the right of a political party to sit in judgment on their fellow members with regard to the disposal of Government funds, with regard to assistance, with regard to the writing down of their indebtedness, and with a view to wiping it off altogether without recourse to the Bankruptcy Act. That is absolutely wrong.

The Premier: I think you should see just what happened before you go on. I shall bring the papers up.

Hon. P. COLLIER: My chief complaint is with regard to the power given to this political organisation and that is not in dispute. I have seen it mentioned over and over again in the "Primary Producer's" reports of country branches that correspondence had been received from the executive requesting them to make the necessary selection of two members to comprise the board in the various districts. Members on the cross benches will agree that this is correct.

Mr. Johnston: The local inspector to be the third member.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The branches of the Primary Producers' Association to select the other two.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Does that mean the district inspector?

Mr. Latham: Yes.

Mr. McCallum: You are getting the information from the cross benches and not from the Government.

The Premier: We are not allowed to interject.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Agriculture endorses that, but because a member should venture to condemn the scheme, he is accused of being actuated by a desire to make political capital out of it. If this is to be the view taken by Ministers, it matters not what one might bring forward or what line of argument one might pursue on any division or item of the Estimates, he will be met with the objection that he is only desirous of making political capital out of it. That is a nice defence to come from a Minister. No attempt is made to defend the action of the Government.

Mr. Heron: He could not defend it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course not. I protest against the form in which these Estimates are presented. Our hands are tied. We are not in a position to deal with these questions. There is no question which will come forward during the discussion on the Estimates on which I would be more earnestly desirous of taking a vote of the House in order to have recorded whether the action of the Government was endorsed or vetoed than this one. We should have it recorded whether members generally are prepared to adopt a policy of this kind. Yet, because of the form in which the Estimates are presented, I am not able to do this. I would like to know now whether the boards have started operations, what salaries they are to get, the names of some of the members appointed, and how many boards have been appointed in pursuance of this policy. These particulars would enable us to judge more accurately the degree of political influence likely to creep into any recommendations the board might make. I hope the Premier will tell us whether the boards have yet dealt with the cases of any clients. It must not be overlooked that the Government are placing very great power in the hands of boards on a matter of the utmost importance.

A large sum of money is involved. Public funds to the extent of £90,000 or more have been advanced and it will depend largely on the board whether the amounts shall be written down, or entirely written off, or whether assistance shall be rendered that clients may continue as in the past or be permitted to embark upon some other method of farming. These boards have no standing whatever under the Act. This matter should have been brought forward by way of an amendment to the Act so that the House could have dealt with it, instead of its being handed over through the executive of a political organisation to the country branches of that organisation. The Premier must see that he is embarking upon a policy which is going to lead to no end of trouble. It is opening the door to political influence and interference in the administration of departments, the end of which no member can foresee. I know perfectly well what would have been said of any Labour Government who had handed over such power to the political branches of their organisation, and rightly so. During the time Labour were in office, though they never attempted to do anything of this nature, there was a perfect hail of criticism and condemnation of actions not one-thousandth part as deserving of condemnation as is the action of the Government in this matter.

Mr. LATHAM: I wish to say a word or two in defence of the organisation to which I belong. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will consider why it was necessary to ask the Government to appoint local men to act on local boards. It was not for the purpose of controlling or in any way taking away the powers given to the board by statutory authority.

The Premier: Such powers could not be taken away.

Mr. LATHAM: And nothing of the kind was ever intended. In 1915 the Government, in their anxiety to assist settlers, advanced money to everybody who came along. The money was advanced on properties which could not be expected to carry the indebtedness consequent on the high prices of chaff and of seed, and the store accounts. Thanks to the high price of wheat, many farmers have been able to clear themselves, but those farmers who have not cleared themselves to-day never will, and that is the reason why these boards were asked for.

Mr. O'Loughlen: How many are there?

Mr. LATHAM: I do not believe any have been appointed.

Mr. O'Loughlen: But how many farmers are there who have not cleared themselves and who never will?

Mr. LATHAM: I am referring to the 144 farmers quoted by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They were men who abandoned their farms.

Mr. LATHAM: They abandoned their holdings for this reason. The I.A.B. found it impossible to go on financing them. The people had put in 10 years on their farms and they

did not like to get the dirty kick-out even by the Government. They therefore did the next best thing; they implored their organisation to assist them to retain their holdings on which they had done years of hard work and from which they had got nothing. The whole of the money derived from these farms is paid to the credit of the I.A.B. Many of these people owed a lot of money to merchants when they started, but the merchants were prepared to forego it, and asked that the State should make some concession to the farmers in order that they might have an opportunity of doing something else than grow wheat. It was suggested that nominations should come from the primary producers' branches. That is the only organisation in existence in these districts.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Could not the local inspectors nominate members?

Mr. LATHAM: The best men can be obtained by these means. It was left to the discretion of the Premier to say whether the nominations should be accepted or not.

Mr. O'Loughlen: But he does not know the nominees.

Mr. LATHAM: He can get the information.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Who is a reliable man through whom to obtain that information?

Mr. LATHAM: He could refer the matter to the district inspector, who in turn might ask his sub-inspector to nominate someone. The trouble is that we cannot get the best class of man to act as inspector under the I.A.B. We must have a successful farmer for the job, but the successful farmer will not work for the Government for £1 a day when he may be making £3 or £4 a day. He is not a philanthropist. Unfortunately the man who has been selected for the job of inspector has often had to learn from the successful farmers in the district in which he is operating. Many of the inspectors have been successful farmers. When such a man is put in charge of a non-paying proposition he is not able to advise the farmer how to meet his financial difficulties. It was suggested that two of the most successful farmers in the district concerned should come forward, not to sit in judgment, but to offer suggestions whereby the land could be put to better use and the occupant given a better opportunity of obtaining a living. Some of the clients of the board owe £3,000, on which they have to pay 7 per cent. interest. It was suggested that the members of the board should value the assets, improvements and equipment, and see if it were not possible by writing off the account to enable these settlers to make a living off their land on which they had spent some ten years of their lives. Nearly everyone who has selected land since 1914 has made a success of his farming operations. If a man failed during the last three or four years, what future has he before him? A member opposite interjected "Fancy these people dealing with an ex-labourite." I am quite willing to place myself in the hands of a labourite and feel

sure I would get a fair deal from him. I am equally sure that the labourite could count upon a fair deal from the farmer.

Mr. Chesson: We always do give the farmer a fair deal.

Mr. LATHAM: Not one man in a hundred would refuse to give a fair deal to another man. The board is not there to dictate to the inspectors or to the Government. It is there to assist the Government and the man who has been unfortunate enough to be unable to make a living on the land. That is only reasonable and fair. Statements have been made that pressure has been brought to bear upon the Agricultural Bank and the officials of the I.A.B. by members of Parliament. I object to that statement and hope the Premier will make an investigation, ascertain if this has actually occurred, and find out who was responsible. It is an insult to the people who represent the farming community that such statements should be published in the Press.

Mr. Mann: You can only speak for yourself.

Mr. LATHAM: It is wrong. If a member of Parliament finds it necessary to go to one of these departments, he does so. Some of the settlers have waited three or four weeks for replies to their letters, and the only way they can get them is for their representative to have the file turned up and a reply sent.

Hon. P. Collier: Asking for expedition is a different thing from endeavouring to influence the decision of officials.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope the Premier will make an investigation into these charges, and let members know the result of it. I doubt if any member is more often at the Agricultural Bank than I am, but I go there only to assist those who are less fortunate than myself. I object to the suggestion that I, or any other member would try to influence the board. So far as I know, this has not occurred.

Hon. P. Collier: But the statement has been made in the Press.

Mr. LATHAM: Half the time the Press is in dreamland, and says these things in order to fill up space. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will be more kindly disposed towards these farmers who are out to do the State a good turn, and not an injury to anyone who does not belong to their political faith.

Progress reported.

BILL—ATTORNEY GENERAL (VACANCY IN OFFICE).

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—MARRIED WOMEN'S PROTECTION.

Returned from the Council with an amendment.

BILL—THE PERPETUAL TRUSTEES EXECUTORS AND AGENCY CO. (W.A.) LIMITED (PRIVATE).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 25th October.

Hon. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [9.55]: I oppose the Bill in the interests of the public good. There has been no demand for the measure, and the interests of the public have never been consulted. The Bill serves no good purpose except to confer upon the people comprising the company the privilege of exploiting money, which is entrusted to them, for the purpose of personal profit. I have often pointed out the utter absence of public spirit in our leading citizens. Their view of the State is that State activities must be considered from the point of view of their own welfare and advancement, and that their duty to the State means getting as much out of it as they can for their own personal gain. During the war I read an article in which the Germans were derided because of their system of education. This system put the State before the people and insisted that the individual must think of the State as well as himself. Under our system the individual is placed before the State. He thinks he must utilise the State as far as he can to his own advantage. Whilst I think it is desirable to encourage every useful enterprise, I hold that all such enterprises should be subordinated to the welfare of the State and the general community. That is the only way to cultivate an honest patriotism. If the people were consulted in regard to this Bill I feel sure that they would prefer that such operations should be conducted by the Government, and that any profits to be derived from the administration of the trust funds concerned should go into Consolidated Revenue. If ever there was a time in the history of the State when the minds of our public men should be bent upon relieving the people of their burdens, and at the same time increasing the revenue by opening up other channels for the State Treasury, it is now. Our deficit is nearly £6,000,000. The month just concluded has resulted in a heavy loss, and the State badly requires money with which to extend its operations to assist the settler, and all people who are carrying on the various industries in our midst. Money is also required to pay the interest bill on the moneys due. If the private member who fathers this Bill had any regard for the interests of the State, he would not have brought it forward. I hope the Treasurer and Ministers generally will not give their support to the formation and encouragement of an institution, whose object is to perform work which is plainly the perquisite and function of the State. The advantage which the State could secure by doing the work outlined in this Bill would be considerable. In Great Britain the Public Trusteehip is a function and perquisite of the State. Millions of pounds are invested and utilised

by the State, on behalf of those whose money is entrusted to the Public Trustee, and the State reaps a large amount of revenue in consequence. In New Zealand and all the States of Australia except Victoria and Western Australia, the functions provided in this Bill are functions of the State.

Mr. Mann: They have private companies as well.

Hon. M. F. TROY: In New Zealand there is the Public Trustee Act under which the State has control of these funds, which are held under the administration of the Colonial Treasurer by the Public Trustee. In 1917 the amount held in trust funds was £8,058,886; but, as showing the confidence of the New Zealand people in the Public Trustee, that amount increased in 1921 to £13,918,906, an advance of £5,000,000 in four years. This report of the operations of the Public Trustee in New Zealand is instructive. The total value of the assets under his control on the 31st March, 1921, exceeded 22 millions sterling. Hon. members will realise what that figure means when the Treasurer of New Zealand has such an amount to expend in the development of his State. The report further says that the rate of interest allowed on amounts held in the common fund on behalf of the beneficiaries in the State was increased in 1921, the additional sum required under this heading being over £40,000. The cash balance at the credit of the fund now amounts to some 22 millions, an increase of two millions on the amount held on the 31st March, 1921. For the past four years the amounts at credit have been:—1918, nine millions; 1919, ten millions; 1920, eleven millions; and 1921, thirteen millions—I am giving the figures to the nearest million. The total of assets, realised and unrealised, under the control of the Public Trustee on the 31st March, 1921, was £22,364,319, being an increase of 1½ millions over the preceding year. This vast sum is being utilised by the New Zealand Treasurer for the purpose of development of the land and the industries of the Dominion. The New Zealand Treasurer has in his hands that large sum of money, which he is enabled to loan out to municipal councils, road boards, and local governing bodies, to invest for the purchase of lands, and for the establishment of all those factors which encourage industries.

Mr. Mann: These companies do the same.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Their purpose is profit, which goes to the shareholders. In New Zealand, however, the money is lent out in the following manner:—Borough councils and town boards £376,221, county councils and road boards £176,850, harbour boards £240,500, hospital and charitable aid boards £38,400, electric power boards £147,750, making a total of £979,721. Further I find from the report that—

Advances have also been made in certain cases to beneficiaries against their estates.

These advances are made without interest, to enable the beneficiaries to pay off debts. Again, advances have been made for the purchase of land under the soldier settlement scheme. I will ask the member for Perth to note that the rate of interest charged to common borrowers from the fund was 5½ per cent. Do the local trustee company here lend money at that low rate of interest?

Mr. Mann: Yes. They lent money to the Subiaco Council at very little more than that.

Hon. M. F. TROY: In 1912 the total value of estates in the Public Trustee's office was £9,493,959, and in 1919 it was £19,242,347, and in 1921 £22,364,319. I find that the total profits which have been paid into the Consolidated Revenue of New Zealand by the Public Trustee over the term of years from 1912 to 1921 amounted to no less a sum than £447,865. That is the record of the Public Trusteeship of New Zealand. Here in Western Australia, where the people, as we are told by the Country Party, are taxed beyond endurance, here in Western Australia, where our revenue shows a loss month by month, where every year we have increasing deficits, the Government propose to allow, by this measure, the handing over to a private company of the means by which they can secure large sums for the development of our lands, our railways, our mines, and our other industries. They propose to allow the control of that money to be handed over to a private body whose only business will be to make a profit to go into the pockets of the shareholders. The business will be a feature of the share market, on which men will gamble; and the State Treasury, which wants the money, will go begging for loans in the foreign market, and paying 6 per cent. for them. I ask the members of the Country Party, who tell us they are interested in the development of Western Australia, who are always urging grants of money for roads and railways and land development, are they not aware that one of the great sources of development is the State Savings Bank, where the people's money is invested? Are they not aware that for years the Agricultural Bank was financed by the State Savings Bank? Up to the time of the war a farmer could get an advance from the Agricultural Bank at 5 per cent., because of the fact that money was lent to the Savings Bank by our people at 3 per cent. In New Zealand, when the banks were charging 8 per cent., the Public Trustee was able to loan money at 5 per cent., and this during the worst time of the history of New Zealand; and from the millions lent at that rate a profit was reaped every year. The Western Australian Government have to go to the money markets in London and elsewhere in order to raise funds at high rates of interest, and yet they are handing over this opportunity to a few shareholders in the city, whose only object is to make a profit out of the people of this country. Let me again turn to the Country Party, whose support I think we ought to get in defeating the Bill. The Country Party, we are told, stand, not for the middleman, but for the producer in the

country. So they profess. Let us see. On this Bill file there are numerous Bills affecting the settler. All these measures provide for licenses, fees, and commitments. The Agricultural Seeds Bill provides license fees, which mean dearer seed to the farmer. The Dairy Industry Bill provides licenses and further imposts on the farmer. The Dairy Cattle Improvement Bill means further imposts. By the Hospitals Bill, which a member of the Country Party introduced last night, further taxation will be placed on the shoulders of the people who want money badly. All these measures are supported by a party who claim to stand for the producers, and yet here is a Bill which means handing over a source of revenue to private interests, and I suppose members of the Country Party will support the measure. In Queensland, I find, the function of the Public Trustee is performed by the Public Curator under the Public Curator Act of 1915. Queensland has for investment in this connection trust funds to the value of £1,444,858, and has accumulated profits since 1919 of £8,453. In New South Wales there is the Public Trustee Act of 1913, and the State has for investment trust funds to the value of £2,189,090. In Tasmania the function of Public Trustee is administered under the Public Trustee Act of 1920. From the reports I find that one of the benefits derived from the office of a Public Trustee is that one can go into such an office and have one's will drawn up free of charge, provided the business is to be given to the Public Trustee. Will a trustee company in Western Australia drawn up one's will for nothing? No; they will charge for that work very promptly. We occasionally read in the Press the reports of annual meetings of the trustee company operating in this State. They operate in the very business for which this Bill seeks the formation of another company. Another trustee company is being formed in this little State! Why? Because the business is very profitable.

Mr. McCallum: The existing company admit there is room for another company.

Hon. M. F. TROY: We know that the shares of the existing company are quoted at a high premium. We know that the dividends paid by the company are good. And here is a bankrupt Colonial Treasurer, who laments the fact that Parliament will not give him this revenue and that revenue, who laments that he cannot get a few more shillings by way of income tax particularly, coming down to support this Bill. He laments that he cannot get a few more pounds by way of fees and licenses, and yet he allows this opportunity to pass into the hands of a private company. The Premier may be in favour of the Bill or he may be opposed to it. Probably he is not in favour of it, but if he is, I shall be astounded. I cannot understand any man having the interests of Western Australia at heart supporting a Bill of this character, which gives into the hands of a company, whose object will be to make profits, the control of large sums of trust moneys which could be utilised for the

development of the State at a low cost to the people borrowing it. It is all the more in favour of the State, when we realise that the Government already have a Curator of Intestate Estates, a man whose duty it is to carry out work of this nature. The Government have all the machinery at hand to carry out this work and yet they are content to lose this opportunity to engage in a profitable business. Where do the members of the Country Party stand in this matter? Is it a fact that certain members of their organisation hold prominent positions in connection with this company? Will their attitude be opposed to the best interests of the State? It is alleged that one or two of the prominent members of their executive are, or are to be, directors of the company.

Mr. Pickering: You are only inferring that.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I said it was alleged in the city, that certain members of the executive of the Primary Producers' Association are influential members of this particular company. I do not think that the Country Party members here will be serving the best interests of the people if they support the Bill, which places in the hands of a few private individuals large sums of trust funds which could be used for the development of our lands, our railways and our industries. I hope that what is alleged is not true and that the members of the Country Party will support the Bill. The member who introduced the Bill has his own views and no doubt he will say that the Bill will not prevent the Government from entering into the business.

Mr. Mann: Of course.

Hon. M. F. TROY: That is the point.

Mr. Mann: Or any other company.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Government cannot enter into this business, unless they pass an Act of Parliament. Immediately the Government did so, or attempted to appoint a public trustee, they would be up against not one, but two powerful interests, the later company, having, I fear, a political pull.

Mr. Pickering: I deny that imputation.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I withdraw the imputation. I do not think there will be anything like the Lake Clifton railway affair again here.

The Minister for Works interjected.

Hon. M. F. TROY: You asked for that and you got it.

Hon. P. Collier: You cannot say anything unfair about that railway proposition.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Of course not. Immediately the Government suggested the appointment of a public trustee, and brought forward the necessary legislation, they would be met with the contention that the work was already being done well by two companies, and that there was no need for the Government to enter into competition with them.

Mr. Davies: Does not the same thing apply if there is only one company?

Hon. M. F. TROY: Quite so, but the formation of the second company will accentuate the position. The greater the vested interests created, and the more widespread we

permit their operations, the greater will be the opposition through members in this Chamber and in another place to Government interference with private enterprise. They would say there was no necessity for the Government to enter into it as the two companies were carrying on the work well.

The Minister for Works: Has not the work been done well in the past?

Hon. M. F. TROY: I do not say they have not done the work well. The banking institutions did their work well here, but that did not prevent the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank.

Mr. Lambert: And what about insurance work?

Hon. M. F. TROY: The insurance companies operated well, but that did not prevent the Governments of Queensland and New Zealand starting that business as well. While the banks have done remarkably well, the Commonwealth Bank has done better, and has put millions into the pockets of the people.

The Minister for Works: I do not quite agree with you there.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Minister should know that the Federal Treasurer would have had a deficit this year but for the fact that he drew £4,000,000 from the profits of the Commonwealth banking business. Do I understand that the Government of Western Australia are so lost to a sense of their responsibilities that they can afford to lose the opportunity to increase the funds at the disposal of the Treasury? If the Government of New Zealand think that a profit of £447,000 is a good thing, should the Government of Western Australia turn down an opportunity of deriving profits from this business so as to enable them to carry on the administration of the State more effectively?

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, because they can tax the wage earner to the extent of 1d. in the pound!

Hon. M. F. TROY: Yes, the Hospitals Bill tax. We are told that nearly 60,000 people are not paying income tax. If that is so, bearing in mind that the exemption is £100, it means that 60,000 people are not able to earn a crust.

Hon. P. Collier: Was the number not 100,000?

The Minister for Works: I think the people are doing that here all right.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Government are looking round for various sources of revenue and almost every Bill introduced means the imposition of more taxation on the people, and particularly on the constituents of the members of the Country Party. Despite that, here we have the spectacle of a private company seeking to make profits out of a business in which the Government could very well engage.

The Minister for Works: What about the profits on the sawmills?

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Labour Party made it possible for profits to be derived from the State Sawmills. If they were in

power now the Bill under discussion would never find a place on the statute-book.

The Minister for Works: At any rate, we are getting the profits on the mills because I was strong enough to fight the opposition.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I appeal to the member for Perth (Mr. Mann) who has fathered the Bill. We are told that he is a very patriotic gentleman, whose sole aim and object is to secure the advancement of the State. I believe he has been deceived regarding the Bill, as he was in connection with the Perth Markets Bill; I do not think he knows enough about it. Does the member for Perth not know that the country stands badly in need of these trust funds, so that the settlers who want their lands developed, who want water supplies and railways, and who want their land cleared in order that it can be utilised, may have their requirements satisfied? Those people are suffering because the necessary capital cannot be made available to them. Does he not know that the Government could take over this business and that a Government security is better than private securities? Does he not know that the appointment of a public trustee would give the people greater confidence when handing over their affairs to the control of that State official? Should not the Government have the advantage of the use of these trust funds, so that they could be loaned to settlers at a cheap rate of interest, and so aid in the development of the country? Does the hon. member think he is serving a public duty in introducing such a Bill?

Mr. Lambert: But he has not pretended to do that.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Does the member for Perth realise that the passing of the Bill will mean that large sums of money will be handed over to this company?

Mr. Mann: You desire to make it a monopoly in the hands of one company.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I like that! I desire that the State should have the monopoly.

Mr. Mann: You had your opportunity when Labour was in power.

Mr. Lutley: Would you support such a Bill now?

Hon. M. F. TROY: The member for Perth will disclose his attitude next week, when we will see him trying to destroy, by his vote, some of the institutions set up by Labour and which he is pledged to destroy. Yet he asks now, will we do this or why did we not do that? At the earliest opportunity he will seek to destroy that which we did. However, I have pointed out what his duty is. The State requires money. Here is an opportunity to get it. A public trusteeship could easily be established; the machinery is already available. The State could engage in a profitable business enabling it to assist greatly in the development of the country. I ask the member for Perth, in the interests of the public, to withdraw the Bill. If he were to introduce a Bill to give the Government power to

enter into this business, he could rely upon getting the unanimous support of members on the Opposition side of the House. I am surprised at the time of the House being taken up with such a Bill, seeing that it confers privileges upon certain individuals and is opposed to the interests of the State.

Hon. P. Collier: The Bill was introduced in another place in the hope of getting it through quickly.

Hon. M. F. TROY: That is so. I know the people who engineered this business are anxious to get it through.

Hon. P. Collier: Fancy a private Bill taking precedence over Government Bills on a Government business day!

Hon. M. F. TROY: In Australia lately more concessions have been given to companies and more opportunities have been provided for exploitation by individuals than was ever done before. Prior to the war public opinion was tending towards a recognition that the State should undertake the work of a trustee company, but in the turmoil of war and its aftermath people have not got back to that frame of mind. The fact to-day is that big business is ruling the Commonwealth, and little by little all democratic legislation is being wiped out, and democratic institutions are being handicapped. This is merely in accordance with the spirit of the times. Our duty here is to see that we do not give certain people an opportunity to further exploit avenues which properly should be available to the Treasurer. We should see that the people of Western Australia benefit by work of this nature being undertaken by the State. For these reasons I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Mr. Lambert, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 2nd November, 1922.

URGENCY MOTION—STOCK DEPARTMENT REGULATIONS.

The PRESIDENT: I have received notice from Mr. Holmes that he wishes to move the adjournment of the House on a matter of urgency. The hon. member writes—

In speaking in the House at the last sitting I made reference to the Stock Department, and the Minister for Education, in replying, stated that he had since spoken to the Chief Inspector of Stock and that what I had stated was not correct. I have since interviewed the Chief Inspector, who informed me that he had told one Minister that I ought to have my head read. It is under these circumstances that I wish to bring the matter before the House and make a personal explanation.

Under Standing Order 58, four members will have to indicate their support before Mr. Holmes may proceed.

Four members having risen,

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member may proceed.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.34]: Before the hon. member speaks, may I be permitted to say that the statement I made to the House last night was that I had been informed by the Chief Inspector of Stock through the Minister for Agriculture. I did not say that I had spoken to the Chief Inspector.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [4.35]: Since handing in that notice, Sir, I have seen the Leader of the House, who informed me that it was not he who spoke to the Chief Inspector of Stock, but the Minister for Agriculture. The reason I desire to ventilate this matter is that for some time past we have been endeavouring to convince the Government that the country is being run by the heads of departments, and that inspectors are harassing and annoying the public. Yesterday, when alluding to the Stock Department, I referred to what had been done on the lower Murchison. It is ridiculous to issue a regulation insisting on sheep being dipped for tick in a locality where tick has never been known to exist. In reply to that the Minister told the House that he had consulted the Minister of Agriculture, who in turn had spoken to the Chief Inspector of Stock, and that the Chief Inspector had stated that what I told the House was wrong; the regulation applied to Geraldton, south to Mingenew and only 30 miles from the coast. The Minister on that occasion used more generous terms than he usually employs, and added—for the first time in his life I think—that I would not accuse anybody wrongly, for which I thank him. This morning, in order that the villain might still pursue the facts, I called on the Chief Inspector of Stock and asked to see the regulation referred to. He asked me what I wanted it for. I said I wanted to see the areas which had been defined, and continued, "You told the Min-

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