

the position as it comes to us day by day; not going back on the past, except in so far as it will indicate what to do at present and in the future—I can see no prospect whatever of this country being put on a sound foundation until, in the first place, we get rid of some of those Ministers and until the whole Cabinet, and not a member of it only, is thoroughly imbued with the principles enunciated so clearly and so ably by the leader of the House only a few weeks ago.

On motion by Hon. H. Millington, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SUPPLY BILL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.6]: I had expected that the Supply Bill would have been down from another place this evening, but our proceedings terminated more quickly than was expected. I do not know that there is any occasion to wait for that Bill. It was my intention only to move the first reading to-night, but I formally give notice now that to-morrow I shall move for the suspension of such Standing Orders as will preclude the dealing with the Supply Bill before we complete the debate on the Address-in-reply. I move—

“That the House do now adjourn.”

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.9 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 27th August, 1918.

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

[For “Papers Presented” and “Questions on Notice” see “Votes and Proceedings.”]

BILLS ASSENTED TO.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to lay on the table a list of the Bills passed during last session and assented to by His Excellency the Governor during recess.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [4.51]: I move—

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

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [4.52]: Since I have been in the House from time to time I have had the privilege of advocating that Parliament should sit in the day time during at least portion of its sittings. It is well known to the Premier and members of the House that the Federal Parliament sits at eleven o'clock in the morning every day. I have here a Federal “Hansard” which shows that on the occasion of the opening of each of its sittings, the Speaker or President as the case may be, takes the Chair at eleven o'clock in the morning. That House transacts its very important business during the day time. In Victoria a somewhat different procedure has been, and I think is at present being, adopted, one which tries to meet the requirements of the Ministers and those whose business occupies their time during the day, but at the same time shows some measure of consideration to members who represent country constituencies. The procedure adopted in Victoria is that when the House is sitting three days a week, on the third day of the week it sits at eleven o'clock in the morning until about five or six in the afternoon. I have been present in the Parliament House of that State when that procedure has been adopted, and members have been able to get away at five o'clock in the evening for their week-ends at their homes. This question was brought up before the Government at the beginning of this Parliament. I think the leader of the House promised to give some consideration to the question of adopting this latter procedure. I suggest that the Government should adopt the resolution outlined by the Premier, so far as Tuesdays and Wednesdays sittings are concerned, but that on Thursdays we should meet at, say, eleven in the morning and adjourn at about five o'clock in the afternoon.

Mr. Harrison: Would there be an interval for luncheon?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Half an hour or so could be devoted to that. Whatever arguments might have been used in favour of sitting in the day time before the alteration in the train service took place, since that alteration those arguments have been intensified, and largely increased. We have no night train to the Great Southern district on Thursdays, and I understand that the Northern districts have no Friday train at all. To those parts of the State as well as to the goldfields the trains leave Perth on Thursday afternoon. I feel sure that the Government are at all times ready to consider country members in a claim for consideration of this sort, and so far as the Thursday sittings are concerned I ask the Premier to give consideration to this alteration.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [4.53]: I support the remarks of the member for Williams-Narrogin. Most of the trains leave for the country districts at between five and six o'clock on Thursday afternoons, and in these circumstances I think the Government can reasonably alter the sittings on Thursday to enable members to get that particular train. On the occasion of the opening of last session the member for Williams-Narrogin brought forward this matter, and the Premier gave an

undertaking that the Government would go into it and see what could be done. Seeing that this is not a practice which is entirely unknown in other parts of the world, and in fact is adopted in other parts of Australia, the Government can reasonably adopt the particular suggestion outlined by the hon. member, and give effect to what he has proposed. In any case the Government might be able to arrange the business of the House differently and enable private members to get away on Thursday. Many motions come forward in the name of private members, and, as we are not all interested in the particular matters brought forward, some of us might be able to get away and not be obliged to stay here for three or four days unnecessarily. I support any move in the direction of altering the hours for Thursday.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.55]: I move an amendment—

“That all the words after ‘and Thursdays’ be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—‘and on Thursdays at twelve noon to 1.15 p.m. if necessary, and if requisite from 2.30 p.m. onwards.’”

As a country member I hope the House will agree to this amendment. The present hours are very inconvenient for country members, who have to put in the whole of their time in attendance at Parliament House, as the present train service is so unsuitable. The train service for the Great Southern is most inconvenient. I feel that it will greatly facilitate matters if this alteration is made, because country members would be reluctant to be absent from sittings of the House. That, of course, might be a blessing in some ways, but we have been elected to represent our constituencies and those of us who are keen on doing our duty to those who sent us to represent them would like to be present at all meetings of the House. I trust the Premier will accept the amendment, and believe it will suit the convenience of the majority of members.

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [4.57]: I second the amendment, and would like to point out that the mails for Geraldton leave Perth on Thursday night and return to Perth on Tuesday night. Two mail trains leave Perth for Geraldton on Thursdays within an hour of each other. We are forced, in order to be present at the House, to take the Saturday's ordinary train to Geraldton and return on the Monday's ordinary train. If we return by the Tuesday night's train we must miss Tuesday night's sitting, and if we leave for Geraldton by the Thursday train we must miss Thursday night's sitting. Under the circumstances I think we are justified in asking for this alteration in regard to Thursday sittings.

Hon. P. Collier: I would point out that if the motion be amended in the form desired by the member for Katanning, there will then be no hour for meeting set down either on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Mr. Thomson: The words contained in my amendment come in in place of the deleted words.

Hon. P. Collier: I know what the hon. member's intention is, but his amendment does not

express it. It seems to me that the original motion is so amended that there is no time set down for sittings on Tuesday or Wednesday.

The PREMIER: (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [5.1]: Several members have spoken to me on this matter; and I do know that it is most inconvenient for hon. members living in the country to sit on Thursday night, because it means that many of them cannot leave town for their homes until, Saturday morning some, and Saturday afternoon others. At one time the train arrangements permitted those hon. members to leave Perth on Friday; but with the present train arrangements the position is as I have stated, and causes great inconvenience. My desire is to meet the wishes of hon. members, and the matter is entirely in their hands. It is not for the Government absolutely to lay down the hours of sitting. I do not regard the amendment as unreasonable, or as likely to be in any way prejudicial to the work of the House.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.3]: I am rather sorry that thus early in the session there should be an exhibition of the Government's want of settled ideas, even upon a comparatively unimportant matter of this nature. The Premier said that the fixing of the hours was not a matter for the Government, but one for the convenience of members.

The Premier: Not entirely.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As a fact, in the past, the fixing of the hours has always been done with a regard for the convenience of Ministers and not that of members. What is the argument that has ever been used against day sittings but that it would be impossible for Ministers to attend to their departmental work under such conditions? Have we not heard that argument urged even against the House meeting at 3 o'clock or 3.30 in the afternoon? But now the Premier says the sitting hours are of no importance to Ministers. For that matter, the convenience of private members might be best studied by meeting at 11 a.m., or at noon, on all three sitting days. What we are observing now is another yielding to the power behind the throne. The amendment would have been at once opposed on the grounds I have indicated, had it come from this side of the House.

The Premier: Not at all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The remarkable fact remains that the Premier has entirely reversed the reasons for opposing such an amendment, turning them into reasons for accepting it. Those reasons have always been advanced in past sessions against earlier meeting. And there are other considerations than the convenience of members of the Country party. There is the convenience, for instance, of City members, who have their businesses to look after.

Mr. Maley: Do you say Country party members have no private interests to look after?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am pretty well convinced that the mover of the amendment was sure, before he moved it, of its reception by the Government. For my part, I do not mind meeting early every day.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The early meeting will involve giving two days' notice of questions.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the long programme of legislation outlined by the Governor's Speech is to be carried out and the session to terminate before Christmas, plainly we shall have to sit earlier and longer. What members on the cross-benches say, goes; and I presume the amendment will be carried irrespective of whether it is opposed by members on this side of the House.

Mr. BROWN (Subiaco) [5.10]: I oppose the amendment on the ground that there ought to be uniformity in the hours of sitting. Either let us have no day meeting, or else let every sitting of the House take place during the daytime. The adoption of the amendment will not necessarily enable members of the Country party to leave for their homes on Thursday. In order to achieve that end it will be necessary to limit the length of Thursday's sitting.

Mr. PILKINGTON (Perth) [5.11]: While not viewing the amendment with complete approval, I suggest that if there is to be a change of this kind, some little notice ought to be given of it. Should the amendment come into force immediately, great inconvenience would be caused, whereas a fortnight's notice, or perhaps three weeks' notice, would enable members to adjust themselves to the new arrangement. One does not wish to be placed in the position of having to break either an engagement outside this Chamber or one's engagement to be here. I suggest the Government accept the amendment only on condition that it is not to come into force until a fortnight or three weeks hence.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kalgoorlie) [5.12]: It is a demonstration of the possibilities of war time when the Premier makes such a volte face. The amendment is one which has been proposed in session after session. I believe it was moved even by yourself, Mr. Speaker, while occupying a seat on the floor of the Chamber. What has been the invariable answer to proposals that the House should meet in the day time? That if Ministers are to meet adequately the great needs of the country as expressed through administration, they must have the day time at their offices.

Mr. Johnston: How about the Federal Parliament? The Federal Houses meet each day during the day time.

Hon. T. WALKER: I question whether the Federal Parliament has as much to do in the small matters of administration as this Parliament has—those small matters which require attention in a young, developing country such as this, with all the needs of a population that is beginning to build up a State. There is the point, too, suggested by my leader, that members of the Federal Parliament have to attend from the other States, and that therefore day sittings may suit their convenience. But I believe Ministerial administration to be more exacting in this State than it is in the Commonwealth. If our Ministers are to attend to their administrative duties, they cannot be here during the day. How has it come about that the demands of Ministers for time in their own offices are so easily forgotten? Is it simply because the amendment proceeds from an

important section of this Chamber? There is no weakening of the argument against this proposal from last session, no weakening of the argument from all the sessions that have gone by.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The objection always came from Ministers themselves.

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly. Those who know what is necessary if a Minister is to perform the work of administration conscientiously, will always object to day meetings. There must be no opening for the excuse that Ministers require this adjournment and that adjournment, and this recess and the other recess, purely that they may catch up with administrative work. Ministers want to get level with their duties which may be in arrears, and now we have it complacently agreed to by the Premier himself that if hon. members who represent country constituencies desire to leave them for their homes on Thursday night Parliament shall be asked to meet on Thursday morning. So that for the convenience of country members the public are to be injured, or at least denied their rights of attending at the various departments to interview Ministers on matters affecting the welfare of the State. If ever there was an expression of drift we have it here from the Premier. "Let things go; what do you want, gentlemen?" is what he says.

Mr. Thomson: Are you now in a dug-out or are you entrenched?

Hon. T. WALKER: If the hon. member can make a jest out of this matter he is welcome to do so; but as every institution has its clown, Parliament can be proud of its representative. The proposal means that we shall close up all the departments of State so that the country members may have their Thursday picnic. That is practically what the Premier has told us. Administration is nothing. All the business of the country will be placed at the disposal of country members to enable them to catch their trains and to keep the Government in office. To make an innovation like this at such a time, is, if I may use the term, astounding. If the argument is good for Thursday, it is good for Tuesday and Wednesday as well, but if Ministers are to have daylight for their work then we must adhere to our own hours. Hon. members must suffer inconvenience for the sake of the public. I admit it is inconvenient to have to sit at night time, especially to the hour when churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead; and we have to suffer in order that the public may be benefited and that the public may have access to the Ministerial offices. We are here for the public welfare and not to study our own convenience, and if the work is to be done and done properly and open to the public gaze, then the Government offices must be attended to by Ministers in the day time, during usual office hours when men are about transacting business, and when they have business to transact with the State. I shall oppose this inconsistency, this easy sliding into an irresponsible condition when Ministers can be told what they are to do and complacently do it as if they were devoid of any sense whatever of the responsibilities cast upon them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [5.5]: The amendment asks that we should meet earlier on Thursdays so that country members may be able to catch evening trains. If the business of Parliament will not suffer, I do not see that there can be much complaint against the proposal. But I believe that the business of Parliament will suffer, and I do not believe we shall get through the amount of work that we have been accustomed to do when commencing the sitting at 4.30. Opposition to the proposal to sit earlier has always come from the Government. All hon members have, however, supported the meeting at an earlier hour of the day. I remember when we were in office we were urged time and again by members on both sides of the House to begin the sittings in the morning.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You tried it but it was a failure.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know that we did try it.

Hon. T. Walker: It will be a failure.

Hon. P. Collier: No business will be done.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I remember now we did try it. I know that it will be inconvenient to meet at noon, and I know that the work of Ministers will be hampered, while the public will suffer also. I am not much concerned about the public, however; it is a matter for Ministers to determine. What I am concerned about is, whether, by meeting earlier, we shall be prolonging the session. At the same time I think the convenience of country members should be studied, because they give up more time to Parliamentary duties than do the City men.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is a question.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I think they do, by reason of the fact that many of them have to travel long distances, even as far as the gold-fields and Albany, and in coming to Perth they have to spend a good deal of the day, or night, in the train. Personally, while I would be pleased to get home on Thursday evenings, if it is better for the business of the country that we should meet in the morning, I would say that we should begin our duties at the earlier hour. I think hon. members might give the proposal a trial and, if it does not work satisfactorily, it will be possible for the Government to revert to the old order of things. We are meeting very late this year; it is already the end of August, and I would like to see the session close before Christmas, and in order to bring that about I would willingly agree to sit on four days of each week. The proposal, as it stands, will, in my opinion, have the effect of prolonging the session.

Hon. P. Collier: No doubt about that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We shall know all about it after having given it a few weeks' trial.

Hon. T. Walker: We shall go on sitting into Thursday night as well as all day.

Amendment (that the word "Thursday" be struck out) put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	22
Noes	15

Majority for	7
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AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Money
Mr. Chesson	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Durack	Mr. Roche
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Maley	(Teller.)
Mr. Mitchell	

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mullaney
Mr. Brown	Mr. Munale
Mr. Collier	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Davies	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Draper	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Green	Mr. Walker
Mr. Jones	Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Lutey	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.30]: Now that we have decided to have a day sitting on Thursday, I think we should come at eleven o'clock instead of twelve noon. Let us do the thing properly. It will be impossible for Ministers to do any work worth while in their offices before coming here at twelve noon, so the adoption of that hour would mean the wasting of the morning by members and Ministers alike. If we wish the public to believe that we are anxious to do the work in day-time, let us not adopt the I.W.W., go-slow hour of twelve noon. It would be better to make it 10.30 a.m.

The Colonial Treasurer. Why not come before breakfast?

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is a good deal of difference between 10.30 a.m. and "before breakfast." I am surprised at members anxious to get the work done in day-time so that they might leave town for their homes agreeing to meet at twelve noon. At the very latest we should meet at eleven, and I do not think that 10.30 would be too early. I have in mind the rising hours of some of my friends in the Chamber, and to meet their convenience I will not suggest anything earlier than half-past ten.

Mr. Draper: Suggest six o'clock and then they need not go to bed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In this Chamber we are frequently reminded of what the boys in the trenches are undergoing. I notice that nearly all the big offensives commence at half-past four or a quarter to five in the morning. If the boys in the trenches fighting for us and our liberty, can get over the parapet with their lives in their hands at half-past four in the morning, it would not be too much if we assembled here ready for business at seven o'clock in the morning. Let hon. members be consistent. At a time like this, when the whole scheme of things throughout the world has been capsized, let us show our men overseas that we on our part are determined valiantly to do our bit in Australia, let us meet

at a reasonably early hour. I move an amendment on the amendment—

“That ‘twelve noon’ be struck out, with a view to inserting other words.”

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.35]: I am somewhat surprised at the opposition shown by certain hon. members.

Hon. P. Collier: Opposition to what?

Mr. THOMSON: To twelve noon and also to the motion.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not under discussion.

Mr. THOMSON: I presume I am entitled to traverse some of the arguments.

Mr. SPEAKER: Only in respect of the amendment to strike out twelve noon.

Mr. THOMSON: I am sorry, for I would have liked to reply. However, I am quite agreeable to accept eleven o'clock. I am pleased that the leader of the Opposition has seen the error of his ways, and withdrawn his objections to the motion, recognising that even this much-despised party on the cross-benches is entitled to a certain amount of consideration. I will accept the hon. member's amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.38]: I move an amendment—

“That ‘ten o'clock’ be inserted.”

Mr. Thomson: I understood the hon. member to say that he would move eleven o'clock. I would not have accepted his amendment had I known. I object to his making a farce of the question.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member has nothing to complain about. If he was willing to meet at any hour earlier than twelve noon he must have accepted the amendment to strike out twelve noon. It is now for the House to say what hour shall be inserted, and the hon. member has a voice.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. LEFROY—Moore) [5.39]: I am unable to support the hon. member's amendment for ten o'clock. The hon. member might agree to eleven o'clock. I am desirous of giving the House as much time as possible during the day for the discussion of business, but ten o'clock is too early for Ministers. Hon. members might get here at six o'clock without suffering any harm, but if we meet at eleven o'clock it will enable Ministers to attend to at least some work in their offices before coming to the House. I am in my office before ten o'clock, and the same can be said for other Ministers. The hon. member must realise that eleven o'clock is a much more suitable hour than ten o'clock. I am unable to agree to ten o'clock, but I will agree to eleven o'clock.

Mr. O'Loughlin: After a month's experience you will regret having made a change at all.

The PREMIER: Eleven o'clock will suit the Government much better than ten o'clock, for Ministers will then be able to do some work before coming here.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.40]: We started day sittings once before, and it proved a failure. It may not prove a failure this time, because the members on the cross-benches may succeed in altering the position. However, I have my doubts in regard to that. It will take a lot to convince

me that Ministers can do anything in their offices before coming here at eleven o'clock.

The Minister for Railways: That is from your own experience.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister for Railways is not more anxious for work than are others.

The Minister for Mines: I get to the office long before eleven o'clock.

The Premier: It will enable us to do a lot on Thursday night.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister who leaves here at eleven o'clock or twelve o'clock on Wednesday night is not going to be in his office early on Thursday morning before coming here again at eleven o'clock a.m. He would scarcely have time to go through one file. I think the time has arrived when it is necessary that Ministers should give close attention to their work instead of rushing it through on the score that they have to come to Parliament. If we are to start morning sessions let us give it a fair trial. Surely no one can complain of ten o'clock. In my opinion eleven o'clock is too late, notwithstanding which Ministers could not attend to business before coming here at that hour. If we meet at ten o'clock we shall have an opportunity of getting through business in time to enable country members to leave for their homes at five o'clock, that is, if they want to. I am confident that some of them are not anxious to go home at five o'clock.

Hon. P. Collier: They want to go to the pictures.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have not the least doubt that this amendment has been forced on the Government. In my opinion the Government would rather meet at 4.30 p.m. than at any other time. If hon. members are anxious to meet in the morning, let them give proof of their anxiety by coming along at ten o'clock. I am sure that if they do that and work here all day, the new system will prove a fiasco, as it did once before.

The Premier: I am asking for eleven o'clock to suit the convenience of Ministers.

Hon. T. Walker: No break in the day's work can possibly suit Ministers.

The Minister for Railways: We could not get the Notice Paper printed and distributed by ten o'clock.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It has been done before. Of course we could not expect to get the Questions.

Mr. Harrison: Would they be a loss?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I could easily understand the hon. member wanting an early answer to some question which he may have asked. I do not believe that Ministers would attend to any of their office work on Thursdays if Parliament met at 11 o'clock in the morning. At all events I hope hon. members will give the 10 o'clock proposal a fair trial.

Amendment (to insert “ten o'clock”) put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	16
Noes	..	..	21

Majority against .. 5

AYES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Brown	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Roche
Mr. Collier	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Davies	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Jones	Mr. Walker
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lutey	Mr. O'Loughlin

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Draper	Mr. Money
Mr. Durack	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Gardiner	Mr. Pilkington
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Thomson
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Maley	

(Teller.)

Amendment thus negated.

Mr. SPEAKER: The question now is that the words "eleven o'clock" be inserted.

Hon. P. Collier: The motion will be finally disposed of if that is carried?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: It would be just as well to fix the hour of closing.

Amendment (to insert "eleven o'clock") put and passed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.50]: I move a further amendment—

"That the word 'onward' be struck out and 'to 5 o'clock p.m.' inserted in lieu." I believe the innovation has been brought forward for the purpose of allowing members of the Country party to reach their homes for the week end, and to carry out this purpose it is surely necessary to have a limit placed on the length of the sitting on Thursday.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [5.52]: Whilst I realise that probably the intention of the mover of the first amendment was to give hon. members living in the country an opportunity of catching their trains on Thursday evening—

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Say to Marble Bar.

Mr. MUNSIE: I am not going to be a party to imposing a limit upon the sitting of the House on that day, and to say that the sitting shall be closed at 5 o'clock in order to suit the convenience of some hon. members. If the business of the country demands that we should sit after 5 o'clock it is our duty to attend to that business. It is not our duty to consider the question of running off to our homes at 5 o'clock in the afternoon if there is work to be done here. If the business of the House warrants our closing down at that hour, I have no objection. Let hon. members catch their trains if they wish to do so. They have placed themselves in this position: By amending the motion to provide for meeting at 11 o'clock on Thursday morning, all they have done is to increase the time for sitting on that day from 11 o'clock in the morning

until 4.30 in the afternoon, and from then onwards to any time which may be thought fit.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Possibly until Saturday morning.

Mr. MUNSIE: That is so. I must oppose any scheme to close down on the business of this Chamber when there is business to be transacted. If we have the country's work to do, it is our duty to be here to do it.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.55]: If those hon. members who brought forward this question of meeting early on Thursday are consistent, or are going to achieve the object they have in view, they are bound to support the amendment. Only one reason has been advanced for altering the sitting hours on Thursday, namely, that members living in the country should have an opportunity of catching their trains on Thursday afternoons or evenings. If, after all, the House may still sit on Thursday evenings, the object will have been defeated.

Mr. Munsie: I am going to be consistent. I am up against the object.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not mind sitting on, but the object members have in view will be defeated unless they have it included in the Sessional Orders that the House shall close at a definite hour. I have no doubt that before many weeks are over we shall find that the business of the House will demand that we sit on Thursday evenings. It appears from past experience that day sittings have been a total failure. I am surprised at the Government giving way in this matter, because they will find that they will quickly get behind in their administrative work. We shall then have Ministers complaining in the House that they find altogether insufficient time in which to carry out their official duties. That argument will also be used for the purpose of continuing the sittings on Thursday evening. The House should close at a fixed hour, either at 4.30 p.m. or 5 p.m. on Thursdays. In order to give hon. members an opportunity of achieving their desire I intend to support the amendment.

Mr. HARDWICK (East Perth) [5.57]. I should like to warn the House against the generosity of the leader of the Opposition and the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin). If the amendment is carried, it will mean that we shall confine Thursday's business within a period of 4¾ hours. It has been noticeable in the past, that the member for North-East Fremantle alone has readily occupied two hours of that 4¾ hours.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I do not want any change.

Mr. HARDWICK: I am afraid the hon. member's generosity towards the Government is not too great. I am inclined to think that when he moves an amendment of this kind his principal endeavour is to embarrass the Government as much as possible.

Hon. T. Walker: That is unfair.

Mr. HARDWICK: What I have said has often been demonstrated, and the Government need not look for any generosity from that side of the House.

Mr. Munsie: You have your machine guns out to-day.

Mr. HARDWICK: We have already been threatened with a number of "Jack Johnsons" and other big guns, which were said to be waiting for us when we met this session. I trust that this idle and foolish amendment will not be carried.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [6.0]: While I am desirous of catching my train on Thursday, I wish to assure the leader of the Opposition that members sitting on the Ministerial side of the House are quite sincere in their desire to do their duty, and members on the Opposition side need have no fear where those on the Ministerial side will be when the urgency of the business necessitates it. If in the interests of the House, the business starting at 11 o'clock should go right through until Friday or even Saturday morning, members on the Government side are prepared to do their duty, but I was desirous of leaving the closing hour in the hands of the House. We might be able to adjourn at eight or nine o'clock. The business of the House should be conducted according to the needs of the country.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [6.3]: The consistency of members is remarkable. Only one reason has been given for sitting earlier and that was the convenience of country members, to catch their trains and get to their homes.

Mr. Johnston: Some of us would sit all day if we could.

Hon. T. WALKER: The hon. member had the chance just now of voting for all day yet he voted against it. There is no consistency at all on the part of members on the Government side. The Premier generously yielded to the promptings of the Country party saying that they should be considered, that their homes should be visited like town members. What is to enable them to get away if there is to be no closing hour mentioned? We are to take Ministers away from their work in the day-time on Thursday without saving any time, and we shall sit onward every Thursday if no closing time is mentioned. Analogies were made between the work here and the work in the Federal Parliament.

Mr. Johnston: And the Victorian Parliament.

Hon. T. WALKER: Will the hon. member deny that they did not fix the closing hour there?

Hon. P. Collier: They found it necessary in the Federal Parliament.

Hon. T. WALKER: Because otherwise the motion defeats itself. In the Federal Parliament the day sitting has a fixed time for closing and the House automatically closes at that hour.

The Premier: Unless the House decides to continue.

Mr. Johnston: What is the time of closing?

Hon. P. Collier: Half-past four, I think.

Mr. Johnston: In this copy of "Hansard" which I have the House adjourned at 3.20 a.m.

Hon. T. WALKER: We can reverse this procedure next week if we think fit. To be consistent we must fix the closing time. In order that country members may not be marked by being absent we must fix a closing hour. If the purpose is to do all day work and no night work, then we must close in the day-time. I trust the House will not make itself absolutely ridiculous by talking about day work when they mean all day and all night work.

Amendment (to strike out "onwards") put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	8
Noes	..	..	..	..	24

Majority against .. 16

AYES.

Mr. Angwin
Mr. Chesson
Mr. Collier
Mr. Jones
Mr. Lutey

Mr. Walker
Mr. Willcock
Mr. O'Loughlin
(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Brown
Mr. Davies
Mr. Durack
Mr. Griffiths
Mr. Harrison
Mr. Hickmott
Mr. Hudson
Mr. Johnston
Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Maley
Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Money
Mr. Mullany

Mr. Munsie
Mr. Nairn
Mr. Pilkington
Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Rooke
Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Thomson
Mr. Veryard
Mr. Willmott
Mr. Hardwick
(Teller.)

Amendment thus negated.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [6.12]: I desire to move a further amendment—

"That after 'onwards' the words 'until 5 p.m. and no longer unless by specific motion of the House' be added."

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member's amendment is not in order. The word "onwards" stood in the way before, and the House has dealt with that by the amendment, and it has been held that the word "onwards" shall remain.

Hon. T. WALKER: I think we might have a further amendment, "That after 'onwards' the words 'until the railway time-table alters' be added."

Question as amended put and passed.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

On motion by the PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) ordered: "That on Tuesdays and Thursdays Government business shall take precedence of all Motions and Orders of the Day."

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motion by the PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) sessional committees were appointed as follow:—

House Committee—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Mullany, Mr. Nairn, and Mr. O'Loughlen.

Library Committee—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Green, and Mr. Smith.

Standing Orders Committee—Mr. Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, the Attorney General, Mr. Draper, and Mr. Walker.

Printing Committee—Mr. Speaker, Mr. O'Loughlen, and Mr. Smith.

BILL—SUPPLY, £1,431,000.

All Stages.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner—Irwin) [7.34]: I move—

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

Message.

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

Committee of Supply.

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

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner—Irwin) [7.36]: I move—

“That there be granted to His Majesty on account of the service of the year ending 30th June, 1918, a sum not exceeding £1,431,000.”

In asking the Committee to agree to grant these supplies, let me explain that I am asking for practically three months' supplies; that is, to the end of September. All these supplies have been estimated on last year's expenditure for the same term. In asking for them I feel that an explanation is due to the Committee regarding the Annual Estimates; and I also purpose explaining to the Committee, as far as possible, the position of Federal finance revealed at the Treasurers' Conference. It will no doubt be remembered that last session I gave here a promise to endeavour to have the Estimates ready for presentation at the end of July. Until I left for Melbourne to attend the Treasurers' conference, I held steadily to that objective. Unfortunately, the conference was fixed for the 17th July. I tried, unsuccessfully, to have it postponed until the second week in August. I have no hesitancy in saying that, had this been done, I should have been able to redeem my promise and have the Estimates down here prior to my leaving for the Melbourne conference. However, I had to attend that conference, in order to look after this State's interests, and also to the end

of having revealed to me, in company with the other Treasurers, the position of the finances of Australia. I did not return from the conference to Western Australia until the last day of July. On my arrival I found that the Estimates were all ready; but in compliance with a unanimous resolution of the Treasurers' conference, that in the aggregate they should not exceed the expenditure of last year, these Estimates had to be sent back for revision and curtailment by various Ministers. This, I understand, is now being finally done; and Ministers inform me that their Estimates are being cut down to the irreducible minimum.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They always say that.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I anticipate, therefore, that so soon as the debate on the Address-in-reply has concluded, I shall be in a position to deliver my Budget speech and to lay the Estimates upon the Table. For several reasons I regret that since my return from Melbourne I have been compelled to spend most of my time in bed, though I have been trying my hardest to drive myself to work. As I shall deal fully with local requirements in my Budget speech, I do not propose saying anything further on that aspect of our finances at the present time, but shall merely ask the Committee to pass these supplies. With the kind tolerance of the Committee, I intend giving a short review of the financial position of the Commonwealth as revealed at the Treasurers' conference. From that conference every State Treasurer came away feeling that the war obligations of the Commonwealth, and the taxation necessary to meet those obligations, were such that it had become imperative for the States to rely exclusively on their own efforts to finance themselves during the war. So impressed were we all—both State and Federal authorities—with the position, that a resolution was carried “That in the unanimous opinion of the Treasurers at this conference the ordinary aggregate expenditure of all Commonwealth and State departments shall not be further increased during the war.” That resolution, of course, does not apply to business concerns—the Railways, for instance—where extra expenditure to obtain extra revenue returns would be perfectly justified. The position from both a loan and a taxation point of view was laid before us by the Commonwealth Treasurer. Part of his communication was to be regarded as confidential, and I can reveal to this Committee only the bald points as disclosed to the State Treasurers by the Commonwealth Treasurer. Such items as were conveyed to us in confidence will only be revealed by the Commonwealth Treasurer when making his financial statement. The loan requirements to carry on the war, merely the loan requirements, he informed us, would be at least an extra 80 million pounds per annum for each year that the war continues, and practically for two years after the war. That is the estimate laid down, not only for the currency of the war, but also, owing to the difficulty of repatriating our soldiers and getting things back into their ordinary groove, for two years after the war. To bring home the interest obligation to the Committee, who now consider Federal taxation extremely high, let me say that last year from

direct taxation the Federal Government received £7,400,000. And people said that was very heavy. Each additional war year's interest, to be provided by the Australian people from now on, will amount to roughly £4,500,000—that is, on the 80 millions sterling. Pensions are increasing at the rate of two million pounds per annum; and there are other obligations, in some cases insisted upon by the British Government, which will probably absorb another million sterling per year. It means that for every additional year the war goes on, taxation must increase at the rate of, roughly, £7,500,000; that is, there will be £7,500,000 annual increase of taxation. If the war lasts another year it will be necessary to raise £15,000,000 a year through direct taxation. If the war ends in another year, we should still have two further years' war expenditure to take into account. True, during those two years we would not have the annual addition of two millions to the pensions. But we would still have to provide the £4,500,000 for the interest bill, and probably another million in addition. So that for those two extra years, if the war ended in 12 months from now, it would be necessary for Australia to raise an additional eleven millions sterling by taxation. Thus, three years from now, providing for only one more year of war, Australia's direct taxation bill will be at least 26 millions per annum, or over £5 per head of the total population of Australia. Great Britain, of course, is at present taxing herself very heavily. She is raising 19 per cent. of her war expenditure by direct taxation. France is, I think, raising approximately 16 per cent. of her war expenditure by direct taxation. Germany is raising only 4 per cent. by direct taxation. I want the Committee to realise that we are only beginning now to pay for our war expenditure, and to make provision for the payment of interest on that war expenditure. In addition to this the Commonwealth have to face a declining customs and excise revenue. It seems more than possible, from what we have seen in the papers during the past few days, that there will be an alteration of the tariff, and of course they will endeavour to raise considerably more money than is now being raised from this source.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Do you personally think it is likely?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I think it is quite likely. But let me show hon. members how the revenue from customs and excise is falling. In the three weeks previous to our sitting the customs revenue of the Commonwealth declined £360,000. It stands to reason that that must be the case when shipping is so short. It is quite possible that the position may be rectified when the war is over, because vessels will then be bringing back our troops and no doubt also a great amount of stuff on which customs duty will have to be paid. Until that is done, however, everyone must see that customs revenue must go on falling. I want hon. members to follow me closely here. The floating of the necessary local loans for war purposes is going to be a great task indeed. And here is the disquieting phase of this question. Of the 80 millions which we

have raised for war purposes, at least 50 millions of it is being paid away in England. It can therefore easily be seen that unless there is a corrective by the sale of our products, it cannot be a very great while before there is a depletion of that money which goes to supply these loans, which may well make us pause and think of the seriousness of the position. It is quite true that the money we are getting for our wool will be a rectification of that to some extent. Last year it amounted to about 42 millions sterling. That would have a balancing effect. And it would be all right if our obligations were to cease there. There is no disguising this fact, that so far as the wheat crops are concerned it looks as if the Commonwealth or the States, or both, had to finance this question of paying for the grain. It has been freely said, and also freely believed, that the British Government will not want one grain of our wheat. If they did, they would have purchased last year's crop. But they do not want it, and it is quite reasonable and feasible to see that that is the position. If my memory tells me rightly, the members of the conference which I attended were informed that the wheat pool had been advised by the British Government that so far as could be seen it was still a good proposition to grow wheat. But the difficulty is to get that wheat to market. It means that if the British Government do not take the wheat the Commonwealth will have to face the provision of between 25 and 30 millions to finance it on a 4s. basis.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Was not that doubt removed?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It was quite candidly said by the Acting Prime Minister that they were trying to get the British Government to purchase the wheat, but that if the British Government did so it would be rather as a call of Empire than a call of necessity. I am taking it that when the Acting Prime Minister says a thing like that he is talking authoritatively. The prospect of the States borrowing for developmental work was regarded as remote after the calendar year ending December, 1919. I daresay hon. members have seen the result of the flotation of the last loan. The result was successful; it was more than oversubscribed. It was certainly underwritten, but it was floated on the distinct understanding with the British Government that it was to be the last loan to be put on the market for the development of the States during the currency of the war.

Hon. P. Collier: Are you speaking of the loan floated last week? It was only for a small amount.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: About £4,700,000. When we come to think of it, it is hardly a fair thing that we should go to Great Britain for a loan for developmental purposes, which could probably wait for more fortunate times, when Britain herself has to go to America to borrow money to carry on the war. When the present Treasurer of the Commonwealth took charge of the finances we owed Great Britain something like 38 millions in connection with general war ex-

penditure. So that we are asking Great Britain not only to buy our wheat and wool, but we owed them that sum of money for financing us in connection with the war. We cannot get any more money from that source; they will not let us float further loans. Hon. members will clearly understand that, as we are raising so much money for war purposes, it will be utterly impossible for us to rely upon local influences to give us what we require for developmental purposes. Every financial institution has to provide money for the taking up of war loans. Of the last 42 millions raised, the Associated Banks took up something like 15 millions. It will thus easily be seen that if there is to be a call on the financial institutions it must lead to an exhaustion which would prevent the possibility of the success of a local loan being placed on the market except at a price which would be hardly justifiable unless for some extreme case of urgent necessity. The Federal Treasurer was quite candid with us. He told us he did not think that after December, 1919, we would be able to get any more money. So far as Western Australia is concerned, taking our loan expenditure on the basis of that of last year, and exercising the utmost care, we can protect ourselves in that regard up to December, 1919. To do that I will have to take the £700,000 which was promised me in January and which up to now I have not touched. Then we have a promise of an additional £250,000, making in all £950,000. In connection with the allocation of the loan recently floated, it may seem strange that Queensland and Victoria got a much larger proportion than Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania. But if hon. members will carry their minds back a little they will remember that Queensland did not get anything from the first loan which was floated, and that Victoria did not get any of the money promised by Lord Forrest in January. That was why additional provision had to be made for those two States in the last allotment. The fly in the ointment is the State of New South Wales. Owing to some prior arrangement, New South Wales made a contract so that she could to an extent borrow in the old country up to a certain amount. That State thought she was coming down pretty low, and only wanted to borrow three and a half millions. We tried to get New South Wales into our arrangement, because it was pointed out that it was manifestly unfair to allow one State a free rein while the other States had to put up with what they could get, because they recognised the financial position.

Hon. P. Collier: How will New South Wales get on if the money market is closed to Australia next year?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The market will certainly be closed to New South Wales as well.

Hon. P. Collier: Then she will have to borrow locally.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes, or come into the pool. But the pool will not be able to get anything. That is the real position.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I think they have an idea that they will be able to borrow favourably in America.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: There seems to be that idea. But let us be honest with ourselves. Do we not think that it is a happy position to be placed in when we must call a halt on extravagant borrowing? We like to think that when we are hard up we can borrow money. But looking at it from a higher and broader standpoint, we should try to develop our country without extravagance. One can hardly help thinking that this restriction of unlimited borrowing is probably a good thing in disguise for Australia. Now we come to the suspension of the sinking fund. As hon. members know, I tried to get the sinking fund suspended, but the trustees in London raised a distinct objection. I laid the whole matter not only before the Treasurers at the recent conference, but more particularly before the Treasurer of the Commonwealth. We learnt at the conference that New South Wales, South Australia, and Queensland had suspended their sinking funds. Not one of those States was in the same solid position as is Western Australia. Speaking from memory, our sinking fund stocks have a face value of something like £5,558,000. I think the purchase price of those amounts to a little over five million pounds. So the difference between the purchase price and the face value is made up by discounts. Our first maturing loan of £2,500,000 will fall due in 1927. Against that we hold stocks of the face value of £1,733,000. So when it comes to the question of redemption, we are in a good position. But I pointed out that if from the outset Western Australia is to go on struggling as she is struggling now, the question of the suspension of the sinking fund during the currency of the war is one of vital interest. Unfortunately, if I have to borrow the money at six per cent., which will mean £18,000 a year, it is going to make the provision for the sinking fund £334,000. Let me give you the exact words of Mr. Watt, as officially reported. Here is the excerpt from the report—

Mr. Watt promised to make proper representations to the Imperial authorities to permit Western Australia to remit the sinking fund during the war. Western Australia may rely upon the help of the Commonwealth in the matter. Mr. Watt also said that if concert were arrived at and the Imperial Government demurred, the Commonwealth would have no hesitation in guaranteeing.

He said, "I see your position and I think you are not asking an unfair thing to have that suspended during the war, even if after the war, say, two years after, by the infinitesimal increasing of the sinking fund you eventually get it back to somewhat the same standard." He asked me to put all the details before him, which I have done, asking him to cable the Imperial authorities so that if possible we may get a decision almost immediately. We tried to ascertain what form taxation would take, but we could get no information on that subject at all, except that it was clearly conveyed to us that taxation was going to be very heavy, that there would

be few avenues left for the State to exploit, and that exemptions would probably be cut to the bone. That is the information which I got at the Treasurers' conference. I do not want to have somebody saying in the Press to-morrow that I made a dismal statement to you. I presume the Committee would not think much of me if they sent me to such a conference and I did not attempt to bring back the whole of the facts. Those are the facts as outlined by the Commonwealth Treasurer, and I am sure those facts must make us realise that when it comes to the financing of the war and of the respective States over their present difficulties, the position is full of worries, worries which we hope will be minimised as we tackle them. That is the position, and I trust the Committee will now pass the Supply Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.4]: I should like first of all to proffer my sympathy to the Treasurer in that he has been unfortunate enough to catch the prevailing epidemic; more particularly is he unfortunate since he must be snowed under in the preparation of the Budget. We listened with very great interest to the statement made by the Treasurer in regard to the financial position of the Commonwealth. Of course, after all, that has no bearing upon this State, except in so far as it affects our loan expenditure. There is no doubt the Commonwealth, like the several States, is faced with a difficult problem in financing the war and in regard to the position that we cannot hope to be financed from London in the future. I do not know that that in itself will be such an impossible task to impose on Australia, because Australia is one of the richest countries in the world. There is more wealth per head of population in Australia than in any other country in the world. The census taken by the Commonwealth at the beginning of the war revealed the fact that Australia is an enormously wealthy country. If the Commonwealth should have difficulty in raising sufficient money by way of loan to finance the war, it will be largely due to the fact that those in possession of wealth are not too much inclined to loan it.

The Colonial Treasurer: There is a suggestion that they are going to make them lend it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, a suggestion, but I do not know whether it will get beyond the suggestion stage; if it did, it would probably save hundreds of thousands of pounds that to-day go in the endeavour to float the loans. If we keep our eyes on the newspapers and generally on the campaign that will be conducted from now to the closing date of the loan, it will be seen by the most casual observer that enormous sums of money are expended in the effort to raise the loan. Moreover, it must be remembered that the interest on this occasion of $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and five per cent. is a further inducement to our wealthy people to subscribe the necessary funds. As pointed out by the Treasurer, last year the value of our wool clip amounted to £42,000,000, an increase, I think, of £20,000,000 upon that of 1913.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You are wrong.

The Colonial Treasurer: Not far wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am sure I am quite right. Certainly the figures representing last year's value, £42,000,000, are correct, and the increase in value is something like £20,000,000. If we can get that amount of additional income from one industry alone, Australia ought not to have any great difficulty in financing its share of the war expenditure. Of course we shall have to face increased taxation by the Commonwealth. From all appearances it seems the Commonwealth Government are contemplating an increase in the revenue duty, an increase not of a protective character, not calculated to result in the establishment of industries, or in the giving of greater assistance to industries by way of protection. I think any increase in the tariff will be confined entirely to the purpose of raising revenue, most likely on those items that are to-day in the free list, including probably what has been known to tariff reformers as the "free breakfast table," tea, coffee, and other items of that class. But whilst no doubt it is necessary on the part of the Commonwealth to increase taxation of this description, and whilst I understand that the State Treasurers, meeting the Commonwealth Treasurer at the conference, decided that the States should not increase their expenditure for this year over and above that of last year, I do not know whether the State Treasurers offered any advice to the Commonwealth authorities as to how those authorities should curtail their own expenditure.

The Colonial Treasurer: My word, we did.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Because if one looks through the Commonwealth Estimates and other financial documents, he will find that the Commonwealth expenditure is going on in so lavish a manner that one would imagine the Commonwealth had millions to burn.

The Colonial Treasurer: We got an assurance from the Commonwealth Treasurer that he was going to do exactly the same as the State Treasurers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well, I am hopeful of better results in that direction from the present Commonwealth Treasurer than there have been in the past, for he certainly seems to realise the necessity for curtailing expenditure. But, after all, the Treasurers' conference as a conference has nothing to do with revenue expenditure in this or any other State. That is entirely a matter for the Parliament of the State. I do not know that the Treasurers' conference was altogether wise in passing a resolution that none of the States should increase its revenue expenditure for this year; because if a State Parliament feels that it is justified in increasing its revenue expenditure, and that by so doing it will get immediate returns, the question is one entirely for the judgment of that Parliament.

The Colonial Treasurer: I endeavoured to make that clear to the conference.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I agree with the Treasurer that perhaps it is a good thing for Australia that the war has had the effect of putting the brake upon the expenditure of borrowed money: it certainly has had that effect, and perhaps the lesson will be a good one for the various States. I believe that the rate at which loan funds have been expended in the several States during the past 10 years

could not continue without placing a very heavy burden on the taxpayers in the meeting of the interest and sinking funds on those loans. It is satisfactory to know that in respect of loan funds the Treasurer is safe until the end of next year. Perhaps we ought to take the advice of Lord Forrest and say, that no matter what comes after December of next year, even if it be the Deluge, let us not take a fence until we reach it. That all brings home the more keenly to us the necessity for curtailing expenditure in our own State so far as it is possible. In regard to the position in this State, I want to say at once that if I have any remarks to make respecting our financial situation they are not intended to apply to the Treasurer personally and directly. Perhaps it would be as well for the public to understand the position. Although the State Treasurer usually has to carry the burden of the whole of the finances of the State, if they should not be at any time satisfactory, there is a tendency to pile the whole of the blame and responsibility upon his shoulders. To anyone who has been behind the scenes, such as I and others who have held office have been privileged to be, that is an entirely unfair attitude for the public to adopt.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): It is not unfair; it is false.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is absolutely false, and being false it is unfair. The Treasurer, of course, does not administer any departments, except one or two small sub-departments. Whilst he controls the finances of the State generally, as Treasurer, he has nothing whatever to do with the expenditure of the great spending departments of the State, and has no control over them. If there should be excessive expenditure going on in any departments, say the Railway Department, or the Mines or Agricultural Departments, or any other, the person who is entirely responsible for that expenditure is the Minister in control of such department.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Or Cabinet generally.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, so far as that expenditure is caused by the policy laid down by Cabinet. Apart from this, the Treasurer has nothing at all to do with it. He cannot go to the Railway Department or any other department and endeavour there to effect economies or savings of his own volition. That is a matter entirely for the Ministers. If the finances of the State to-day are in an unsatisfactory position—and there is no one who will contend that they are otherwise—I say that the blame, if blame there be, so far as the Government are concerned, might be equally distributed amongst all Ministers. I do not propose to apportion the blame or responsibility at all. The Treasurer, I believe, is endeavouring personally to do his best, and I also believe that he is keenly imbued with the necessity for reducing expenditure. How it is he has not been successful I will leave other Ministers and their supporters to decide for themselves.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): And the circumstances, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not going to take the Treasurer to task for failing to have the

Budget brought down to the House in July as promised.

The Colonial Treasurer: You suggested that you would forgive me if I did not have it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That was unofficially. The Treasurer, however, has my forgiveness at once. As a matter of fact I smiled when the promise was made, because I knew perfectly well it was impossible for him to do so no matter how well intentioned he might be. Had he been here, and had he not been out of the State at all, I do not think it would have been possible for him to have had the financial statement brought down to the House in the month of July. This would have been impossible, for the reason that the Government would not meet the House in July, and did not meet it in fact until nearly the end of August. We have practically arrived, therefore, at the same stage as that at which the House has arrived in previous sessions, and in previous Parliaments, namely, that the expenditure for a fair proportion of the year has had to be incurred without Parliament having any authority or control over that expenditure.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Two months have already elapsed.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and the Treasurer is now asking for three months' supply to cover one quarter of the year. We have the position that one quarter of his expenditure is to be authorised by this House to-night simply in the form of a blank cheque, because it is not possible for members to discuss the expenditure in detail until the Estimates are presented to them, and until they have had an opportunity of scanning the public accounts for last year. I do think that to this most important matter, the finances of the State, the House would be justified in giving some attention on the question of supply. This might possibly assist the Treasurer in finally framing his Estimates. It might also give him an idea as to what members thought generally with regard to the financial situation as we now find it. I should like to know whether there is included in the amount we are asked to vote the sum which the Government have decided to grant as a subsidy to the company which has recently been formed in Western Australia for ship-building purposes, an amount of £30,000? The House would not be justified in giving any authority off-hand to the Government for the expenditure of that money until we had received a statement from the Minister concerned, and had an opportunity of discussing it. I do not propose to go into the merits of the question at all at this stage. The Minister for Industries will, no doubt, be able to make out a good case for the action that the Government have taken. All the same, the House is entitled to know more about this matter. I hope the Minister concerned will take us into his confidence at the earliest possible opportunity, and provide us with the full details and conditions under which the money has been advanced, or under which it is proposed to advance it to that company.

The Colonial Treasurer: It has not been advanced yet.

Hon. P. COLLIER: From what source will the Treasurer get that money?

The Colonial Treasurer: From the money I get from the insurance companies.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is not included in this supply?

The Colonial Treasurer: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even if it comes from the insurance companies the Treasurer will have to get authority from Parliament before paying it.

The Colonial Treasurer: Quite so. We will not give it unless we get authority.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know what stage has now been reached, but if the contract should be finalised before the Estimates are presented to the House it will then be too late for members to discuss it, or the terms and conditions of it. In passing this vote, therefore, to-night, to enable the Treasurer to carry on, and expend any sum up to the amount which is voted to him in any manner that he chooses until the end of next month, it is possible that the sum I have mentioned will be included in his expenditure. I should like to know the position in regard to the collection of taxes under the Act affecting bookmakers and others, passed last session. The Treasurer might inform the House as to whether there is any truth in the statement which has appeared in the Press, regarding the understanding which exists, or is supposed to exist, between the Commissioner of Taxation on the one hand, and the kerbstone and shop bookmaker on the other hand. We ought to know before we pass this Supply Bill whether such an arrangement has been made or not. I am not blaming the Commissioner of Taxation, because no doubt all he had to do was to take the literal interpretation of the Act as it was placed before him. If it is worded in such a fashion as to enable him to enter into such an arrangement, as it is alleged he has entered into, the fault lies with this House and not with him.

Hon. J. Mitchell: What is the arrangement?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I venture to say that this House never anticipated that any such action would be taken. It is rather an extraordinary thing that the Commissioner of Taxation, whose sole duty is to collect revenue, should be able within a short period to locate all our street betting and shop bookmakers, and to enter into an arrangement with them.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): If he had located them he would put them in gaol.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is extraordinary that the Commissioner of Taxation should be able to do this, and that the police authorities, who are supposed to control matters of this kind, should be quite unable to do so.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): There is a lot about bookmaking that you do not understand.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am aware of that. I am quite unsophisticated so far as bookmaking is concerned. I hope the Treasurer will

make it clear that no such arrangement does exist, and that if it has been made he will step in and put a stop to it. Incidentally, the Commissioner of Taxation might hand over to the Commissioner of Police a list and the addresses of all those with whom he has been in communication during the making of this arrangement. It speaks well for the opinion which the Commissioner holds of the bookmakers, for he can have no check upon them and must trust to their good faith to tear up a ticket every time they make a bet, and so contribute to the revenue in that fashion. Whether or not the Taxation Department has collected all that to which it is entitled I do not know. If a bookmaker undertakes to do a thing I believe, from my slight acquaintance with such people, that his word will be found to be just as good as that of any other citizen. I hope, without there being any compulsion in the matter, that he will not be found amiss to any greater degree than citizens in any other walk of life. No doubt the Treasurer hopes to bring down his Estimates showing no increased expenditure on that of last year. If we might judge from the statement he made shortly after his return from the Eastern States there is some doubt as to whether he will be able to cut down the expenditure to the level of that of last year. The Treasurer has stated that he had received a draft of the Estimates, and that they exceeded by many thousands of pounds the expenditure of last year. He said these had been referred back to Ministers of departments, and that it was to be hoped that some substantial reduction would be made. All through that interview I noticed, if it could be construed in any way at all, that the tone of it was in the nature of a complaint against his colleagues. At least, it was evidence of the fact that his colleagues at any rate had not succeeded in reducing their expenditure so as to bring it into line with that of last year. He says that the Education Department wants £18,000 more. Who is responsible for that? If the Treasurer objects, and it is intended to keep the expenditure in the Education Department within the figures of last year, who is responsible?

The Premier: The population of Western Australia is increasing.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): The vote of last year showed the way things were going.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The vote of last year intended just what it said. It gave the Minister of Education a certain amount, and the Treasurer complains that this amount has been increased by £18,000 in the draft Estimates that he has received.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Cut it down when you have the Estimates. You did not do so last year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not referring to last year. I am only dealing with the complaints made by the Treasurer against his colleague, the Minister for Education. The fact that there was a complaint on his part is borne out by the circumstance of his having referred the Estimates back to the Min-

ister in question with instructions to cut them down.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I voted for a reduction last year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Honorary Minister voted for a reduction then his vote has not much voice in Cabinet.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): It did not have any in Parliament, let alone in Cabinet.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If his vote and voice has no influence in this House, it should have in Cabinet. I do not know whether he voted for a reduction of the Education Estimates last year or not.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I did, and you voted against it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member's vote will be most useful in Cabinet in cutting down these votes.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): It is no use in Parliament.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But there are fewer members in Cabinet. The hon. member has no doubt got the Treasurer with him, and if he can get one or two more ministers he will have a majority with him. I am not criticising at all but I am not going to allow the hon. member to twist my remarks as being a criticism of the expenditure of the Education Department.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): What are they?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not that. I am referring to the criticism of the Colonial Treasurer against his colleague the Colonial Secretary in sending him Estimates which provide for increased expenditure of £18,000 beyond and above that of last year. There is no getting away from that position. The Treasurer says, had he been here, he would have been in a position to bring down his Budget in July.

The Colonial Treasurer: I said the second week in August.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think we had reached the second week in August when the Treasurer made a statement to the Press saying that he had not yet received the draft Estimates of the Minister for Railways.

The Colonial Treasurer: Those are not material in an ordinary way.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister for Railways had not supplied his Estimates in the middle of August, according to the Treasurer's own statement. I do not see any hope of a reduction in the expenditure. It has to be borne in mind that when the Government say they are going to keep the expenditure this year within the bounds of that of last year that is no very great achievement, when we recollect the fact that the expenditure last year, or for the past two years, has increased very considerably over and above the total expenditure for the financial year ended 1916. The position is this: when the party now in office replaced the Labour Government the expenditure had increased right along the line. The first year, for which the Treasurer was not responsible, there was an increase shown and last year showed an increase, so that if the Government succeed in

keeping the expenditure this year down to that of last year, they will still be very considerably in excess or advance.

Hon. J. Mitchell: There is the added interest.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is £200,000. It is £200,000 for 1917 over 1916. It was £100,000 greater last year and £110,000 the year just closed. The "Statistical Abstract" gives it at £111,000, so that the excess for the two years has been £211,000.

The Colonial Treasurer: It is estimated that it will be £93,000 more this year.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No doubt the Treasurer has later figures than I have, and probably more correct. I am simply taking the figures from the "Abstract" to the end of June. We have to vote the Government supplies; they must have money to carry on to pay the public creditor, but I am not voting it to them very enthusiastically. I think the House at least would be justified in cutting down the amount they are asked to vote now to such an amount as will merely suffice for the Government to carry on until the House has had an opportunity of considering the financial statement, or Budget but according to the position we are in we are at the end of the month, and by the time the debate on the Address-in-reply is completed, and the Treasurer has had an opportunity of bringing down his financial statement to the House, we shall be approaching the end of September. So that any amount less than that for three months now asked for does not seem practicable. But at the same time I would like to emphasise the statement—I does not require really emphasising, for the whole country know it, and no one knows it better than the Treasurer, yet I feel I am justified in saying that the Government have failed absolutely and entirely in their financial administration. There is no question whatever about it and I notice the Treasurer now seems to take up the attitude of blaming the man in the street, that is the public. He said in a statement to the Press quite recently that he has been trying to make the public realise the necessity for economy, but apparently so far without success. It is no use endeavouring to place the blame and the responsibility on the public, because the public did realise it. If there was one thing in the nature of a definite instruction, or mandate, which the Government received above any other in September last, it was that of economy in public expenditure. That was the only definite, tangible policy that they put before the country—although there was nothing definite or tangible in it, it was only a vague general statement—that if returned to power they would effect economies by some miraculous method of amalgamation of departments here and there. No details were given and none have been given so far, and it is 12 months now and the public have not yet had details of the economies effected by way of amalgamation. I am not saying that some amalgamations have not been carried out, but if they have been the Government, in their modesty, have kept the in

formation to themselves. We hear of the retirement of an officer here and the dismissal of another there, but there has been no general amalgamation of departments, no economy, absolutely none. There has been no attempt—or if there has been an attempt it has been an utter failure—on the part of the Government to effect economy. I want to ask the Government what their justification is for showing increased expenditure after four years of war, over and above that which the State was able to get along with in 1915 or 1916. The Government's financial position is due largely to the fact that they have given away expenditure in many directions and taken such course of action which has deprived them of revenue at the demand of a section of their supporters. That is what has happened in some directions without getting compensating increases in other directions. What are we faced with now? Are we going to have the same expenditure this year as last? And I do not think the Treasurer has any hopes of doing better than that. Taking it at that position, and allowing for the increased revenue received from the taxation measures passed last session, probably £240,000 or £250,000, I do not know, we shall still find ourselves at the end of the financial year we have now entered on in no better position than during the financial year which is just closed. I do not think there is any hope for it except for the Government to say quite frankly and honestly that the financial position has got beyond them and that they cannot cope with it. Let them admit their failure and from the vast number of supporters they have, numbering 33 or 34, ask some of them to take a hand in the business and see if they cannot do something better. That is the position. I know the Treasurer took the matter up with great earnestness and hope that he was going to accomplish something in the way of restoring the finances of the country, but whatever has been the stumbling block in the way, or what has prevented him, the fact stands out monumentally that the Government have failed miserably and lamentably to handle the finances of the State in any way satisfactorily, and if the position continues—I do not want to be pessimistic—but if they continue another year or two in the way in which they are doing, I am afraid we shall have to call on the Federal Government for financial assistance in the direction other than that in connection with the sinking fund. After all, if the Treasurer succeeds, or if the Federal Treasurer assisting him succeeds, in saving the payment to the sinking fund suspended, it will be a great relief to the finances of the country and a very justifiable one in the present circumstances. Whatever the obstacle is, it is an outrageous injustice to the taxpayers of the country that we have to borrow money at 6 per cent. in order to meet the sinking fund payments. It is a monstrous injustice and I hope the Federal Treasurer will succeed. I cannot understand any body of air-minded men, or body of trustees in London, standing in the way of the position when we consider it in all its aspects. If the Treasurer succeeds it will be a good thing, and load off his mind.

Mr. Smith: It will be the first act of bankruptcy—repudiation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not agree with the hon. member. He may call it repudiation, or what he likes. If, in the circumstances, it is repudiation, it is justifiable, but it is not repudiation. It is a justifiable and a reasonable request which this State might well make to those in authority; and it is a very small request in comparison with some that have been asked of, and have been conceded by, the Home Government to Australian States and to other countries as well. If Great Britain can lend her hundreds of millions of pounds to countries which have virtually no security to offer, and some of which are absolutely gone now, it is not asking too much that we should have relief from the comparatively insignificant sum of £300,000 per annum, having regard to the position which faces us. In any case, no other State has to bear a payment of this kind; and therefore I hope the Treasurer will succeed in obtaining relief from this payment in the future. At the present juncture I have no more to say, except that I grant supplies to the Government very reluctantly pending our having an opportunity to discuss the finances in detail. Whilst I personally am unable to see any prospect of improvement, I nevertheless trust that, somehow, the Treasurer will be able to present to the Committee some kind of a statement which will show improvement at least upon that statement with which we had to deal last session.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning) [8.47]: It had been my intention to tell the House something concerning the shipbuilding industry and the relations of the Government to the shipbuilding company in due course. If the leader of the Opposition thinks the information might have some bearing on the present Bill, and desires that information now, I have it before me, and am only too glad to give it to the Committee at once. The Government leases the site at North Fremantle, to be surveyed, to the company at a ground rent of £50 per annum for 21 years, determinable (a) at the option of the company at the end of three, five, seven, or fourteen years, at three months' notice; or (b) by the Government at any time at three months' notice if the land is required for extension of the Fremantle harbour, or as to the portion north of Lukin-road, for railway purposes; or (c) on the railway bridge being removed. In the event of the determination of the lease under paragraph (b) or paragraph (c) an alternative site is to be provided at Preston Point, or, if available, at Rockingham; 13 acres at Preston Point to be held in reserve for the purpose. The Government will expend £30,000 in the construction and equipment of a shipbuilding yard on the site; the work to be carried out by the company, on plans and specifications approved by the Government, in a proper and workmanlike manner. The company will—subject to the continuance of the lease, pay the Government five per cent. per annum on £30,000—that is to say, £1,500 a year—and thereby, subject as aforesaid, repay the

£30,000. The company will pay interest at the rate of $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum on £30,000 for the first year as advanced in progress payment, and subsequently on that figure reduced by repayments at the rate of £1,500 a year. That is to say, the interest will be payable, so long as the lease continues, on so much of the £30,000 as for the time being remains unpaid. Until repayment of the £30,000, the equipment and works are to be the property of the Government as landlord; but after repayment the company are to have the ordinary rights of a tenant to remove their trade fixtures as if such expenditure had been originally made by the company out of their own funds. In the event of a change of site, the company are to remove the shipping yard equipment to the new site—to which the lease will extend—at their own cost, to the satisfaction of the Government; and the obligation of the company to liquidate the balance of the £30,000 then outstanding to be unaffected. Certain costs, a small matter, to be incurred by the Works Department and the Railway Department in making the site available, are to be paid by the company; for example, the removing of a store and a tarring plant, and certain railway sidings. As regards the 13 acres at Preston Point to be reserved as an alternative site, the company will have the option for a period of seven years to purchase the fee simple at £3,250, being £250 per acre; and in the meantime, should the shipping yard be removed to that site, rent will be payable at five per cent. per annum on that price, namely, £162 10s. per annum; and such site will be substituted as the leased premises. On a purchase of the fee simple, the obligation of the company to pay the balance of the said sum of £30,000 by the instalments aforesaid will continue. At the present moment the survey of the site, and the precise details in connection with it, have not been settled. In fact, there will be to-morrow a visit to Fremantle of Ministers and departmental officers, the result of which I hope will be to finalise the delimitation of the site and the necessary agreement as to detail with the various departments concerned, including the Railway and Works Departments and the Fremantle Harbour Trust. The details of the site, and the survey of it, and the details of the agreements which it is proposed shall be entered into, and also the leases, have of course yet to be submitted to and approved by Cabinet. In conclusion, let me say that the original idea was that, whatever site might be chosen, the money should be spent on it and the company given a lease of it with a right of purchase. However, the site which appears to all parties to be the most suitable—that is, the site alongside the railway bridge at Fremantle—of course cannot be leased to the company for a long period, nor can the right of purchase to it be given to the company, for the reason that this very ground will some day be required for extension of the Fremantle harbour, and when in due course it is required the railway bridge will come down; and, furthermore, another railway bridge will cross the river, as is well known, somewhere near Point Preston. Therefore the company

cannot be given the right to purchase the site; but another site will be substituted, which the material and the plant will be shifted when those particular contingencies happen.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [8.56]: do not want to discuss the question of shipbuilding to-night, but the statement read by the Attorney General certainly needs some consideration. The bargain between the company and the Government seems very one-sided.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is a good bargain for the company.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes; but it has to be remembered that shipbuilding is more or less a national duty. I hope that before the agreement with the shipbuilding company is finalised, Parliament will be given an opportunity of considering it. Certainly it seems that the business of shipbuilding at £26 per ton should be profitable.

The Attorney General: America is paying £10 per ton more than we for the same class of ship.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The Commonwealth Government pay £5 per ton more than the contract price.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: At £26 per ton, unless a great deal of the material, far more than I have been led to believe, has to be imported or, rather, unless very little of the material produced in this State, the building of the comparatively small ships at Fremantle ought to be profitable. The important thing, however, is to insist on this work of re-establishing the shipping tonnage of the Old Land. It is extraordinary to find that the Government are prepared to lend to this company, security which certainly will not be very strong money at $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., when apparently I have to pay more than $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for the money ourselves.

The Colonial Treasurer: Not for this.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But this is money in the hands of the Government.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It will have to be replaced by the Government.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes. The farmer, as are told, must pay seven per cent. because the money is costing the Government six per cent. Much of the money for which the farmer is paying seven per cent. was borrowed by our friends opposite, when in office, at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. I hope the Committee will not do anything which will even appear to be an endorsement of the agreement outlined by the Attorney General to-night. We ought to be given an opportunity of fully discussing that agreement before the Government go any further. As it is with the leader of the Opposition, it is with me; I think the Treasurer has probably realised by this time that he is only one man in the six departments, and that he really has but little control himself over the work of the various departments. Twelve months ago I pointed out to this Chamber that the Treasurer does not control all the six departments, and that financial success depends upon the whole of the six Ministers. The Treasurer no doubt has the control of the purse.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Nominally.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Perhaps only nominally. Every obligation of the State, of course, has to be discharged; and if anything is to be

achieved it must be by the efforts and the good management of each separate department. I fancy the Treasurer is not quite so fully responsible for the present financial situation as he led us to believe we might expect him to be. I would like to know from the Premier why Parliament was not summoned earlier to vote supplies. So far as I know, there is nothing in the Constitution that justifies the spending of considerable sums of money without an Appropriation Bill.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You, too, want to hustle the Premier.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That comes well from the member for Northam.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Yes, it comes very well. I personally was never responsible for the expenditure of money without the approval of Parliament. At any rate, there never was a time like the present in which money was spent. And it is not only the spending of the money. We know full well there are many obligations, apart from those provided in the Constitution, that have to be met. But it is the method of expenditure, and the manner in which funds are dealt with, that this Parliament has a perfect right to consider and to discuss and to decide. However, Parliament has no control at all. Two months of the financial year have gone; and it will be two months from now before we shall have the details of expenditure, which can be intelligently discussed and considered. The Government should realise that we are not going through ordinary times, that the financial position is going from bad to worse. The leader of the Opposition said that the position of affairs when his party were in power was much better; as a matter of fact it was not. The actual deficit for the year 1915-16, allowing for the added interest bill, was about equal to the true deficit of 1916-17 and equal to the deficit of the year just closed. There was the material difference, however, that the people recognised that very much more was done for them in the earlier years than is being done now. At the present time the people are being denied facilities which they got in 1915-16 and 1916-17.

Hon. T. Walker: And in 1914-15.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know about 1914-15. The question is just now, what we are going to get for our money. We are getting less than we ever got in the history of the State and the position will become more hopeless day by day. A matter that needs explanation is where the expenditure last year of £16,000 by the Agricultural Bank has disappeared and where the £21,000 for workers' homes has gone. These are things which should be explained, and no doubt they will be explained when the Estimates are under discussion. I cannot hold the Treasurer responsible for the late calling together of Parliament; the Premier will have to answer for that. There can be no reasonable excuse for not calling Parliament together earlier. I do not know how expenditure has been approved without Parliament first being consulted. Hon. members in such circumstances have no control over the expenditure of the first four months of this year.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is not the first time it has happened.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is the first time it has happened under such circumstances and I hope it will be the last. It is idle for hon. members to believe they have control over expenditure when they have not. I notice a statement was made by the Treasurer the other day that he had to provide £478,000 for the Industries Assistance Board, but he holds wheat certificates of the value of £338,000, which can be set against that sum. It is impossible to ascertain from the figures where the £478,000 has gone. It struck me as strange that £478,000 could have been spent by the Industries Board within three months. There is some explanation, of course, but it does seem strange that so large a sum should be used in so short a time. It is true as the leader of the Opposition said that the Treasurer did not deal with the financial position of the State, but dealt with that of the Commonwealth, and the financing of the war. Of course, that is interesting, but it is a strange thing that notwithstanding all that has been borrowed in Australia during the last year, the deposits in the banks of Australia are larger today than they have ever been. During the last 12 months these deposits increased by 19 million pounds. It is a wonderful increase, due, of course, to the satisfactory sale of our produce. We have been told tonight that the wool proceeds last year amounted to 42 millions sterling. During the past three years the enormous sum of 77 millions has been paid for Australian wheat. When we talk of reducing the production of wheat, we have that reduction, because this year the yield will be 60 million bushels less than in 1915-16. The amount advanced on the 1917-18 crop is about 15 millions. I hope it may be 25 millions next year as the Treasurer anticipates. I hope the Treasurer will bring down his estimates as soon as possible. He says that we can have them when the debate on the Address-in-reply is concluded. I do not know how long that debate will last; it should not last more than two or three weeks. With regard to the sinking fund, it is a perfectly reasonable proposal to suspend it. For many reasons it should not be considered as a serious part of our annual deficit. We have borrowed our money in order that we may invest it in business concerns, railways, and harbours, and some of it has gone into trading concerns which have not been very useful to the community.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Which concerns?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Many of them, concerns which cannot now be used.

Hon. T. Walker: A good deal has gone into the agricultural industry.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: And with very good results to the State.

Hon. T. Walker: Not always.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The money invested in our railways cannot be made to earn a satisfactory profit, because the haulage is not there. We should do something to relieve ourselves of the payment of £300,000 a year towards the sinking fund. I hope the Pre-

mier will explain why Parliament was not called together until the end of August, and I hope hon. members will insist on getting an opportunity to discuss the financial position. I do not know what will happen to the State if the present drift is allowed to continue. It should be regarded as serious even by the Government, and something will have to be done to check it. The Treasurer has told us that we need not expect to be able to borrow any money for an indefinite time. There must be an end to borrowing to cover the deficit, and we should do everything that is possible to gain that result. To-day there is really no difference between loan and revenue expenditure; we are not spending much of the money we are borrowing on public works; it is largely going to meet revenue charges. That is a deplorable state of affairs. I do not say that the present, or any other Government, are responsible for it; it is due to a combination of circumstances, but we can control the situation to a much greater extent and in a more satisfactory manner than we are now doing. I hope the Treasurer will realise that he is powerless to do very much for this State unless he has the whole-hearted co-operation of every other Minister. There must be united effort, and it must also be continuous. I do not care which department of State it may be, there cannot be any possible chance of good management unless the Minister is made to feel that he is responsible. In times like these it is unfortunate for the Treasurer that he is not also Premier.

The Colonial Treasurer: I have enough worries of my own.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am aware of that, but the other Ministers would probably have a few more worries if the Treasurer were also Premier, because he would then have a different control. However, it is futile to discuss in a general way the amount we are asked to vote, because two-thirds of it has already been spent. We can promise the Treasurer that we shall display a keen interest in the Estimates when he submits them for the consideration of the House.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle [9.14]): One would have thought by the statement made to-night that the Parliament of this State would not have been aware of the necessity to exercise economy unless they had been told by the Treasurers of the other States. The Treasurers met together and told the Parliament of Western Australia that it was important that every economy should be exercised. "You must not expend any more money this year than you expended last year." Why, I find that when the Treasurer introduced his Estimates last year he said this—

Now we come to the question of economy in administration, and I wish to make an explanation to the Committee upon a matter in which I am personally concerned. I made a pledge to the House and the country that as far as lay in my power I would endeavour to effect an economy in the administration of the State, and, if I remain in my present office I am going to endeavour to redeem that promise. In this I have

the fullest sympathy and concurrence of my colleagues.

The Treasurer at that time had the fullest sympathy of his colleagues. He has had nothing else ever since. It has been sympathy all the time. Take the Lands Department: an increase in expenditure this year over that of last year. Take the Works Department: a large increase this year over last year. So too, with other departments. Yet we are told there is necessity for economy. Unfortunately Ministers did not find this out until after the Treasurers' conference. They have been preparing their Estimates. Those Estimates have been sent to the Treasurer and the Treasurer has sent them back again, reminding Ministers of the results of the Treasurers' conference, with the remark, "You must cut down to last year's expenditure." When I saw the Treasurer's statement in the Press to the effect that Ministers had been instructed to cut down to last year's expenditure, it was surprising to me, because last year we were told that the Government had exercised very great economy in administration during the few months they had been in office and that although the economy did not show in last year's Estimates, it would certainly appear in the Estimates of this year. Now we have that wonderful resolution passed at the Treasurers' conference that expenditure must not exceed the expenditure of last year, and in consequence I expected to see a reduction of last year's figures. Last year the Premier said—

It is almost an impossibility for the Government to square the finances in one year, but Ministers will be able to tell where many economies have been effected during the last 12 months.

Where is the economy effected in the Supply Bill before us to-night, a Bill for a million and a half, one-fourth the expenditure of the whole year, without any curtailment at all? The Premier went on to say—

It is not probable that there will be much saving this financial year owing to the allowances which have been granted for abolition of office and in some cases the pensions which have been given.

They could not show it last year, but they were going to show it this year. Yet the same thing has gone on. Again, last year the Premier said—

Hon. members opposite know as well as hon. members on this side know that the Government are engaged in effecting economies in every possible direction in the administration of the country.

Those were the statements of the Premier, the mouthpiece of the Government—economies are being practised everywhere. Yet we find that the same amount is required for the first three months of this year as has been required previously. One remark made by the Premier last year which I have overlooked probably has a good deal to do with the position. The Premier, following on an interjection by the member for Forrest, said, "We shall be able to straighten our finances by-and-bye." We have to look ahead, and no doubt when that by-and-bye arrives the finances will be in a far better condition. I

had thought to see this year the effect of the economies which the Government last year professed to have made; but when we are told that we are going to adhere to the decision arrived at at the Treasurers' conference, it shows we are going from bad to worse. There is no necessity for Billy Holman, the Premier of New South Wales, to tell us how to manage our affairs here, any more than there is for Billy Hughes to go to England to give similar advice there. We know the position here better than does the Premier of New South Wales. The position is becoming very acute outside. The people of the State are losing faith in the Government. They are realising that the promises of the Government are not being kept, and that the business acumen which everybody expected of the Government is not being shown, that indeed we are drifting on in the same old way. The only reason why the Labour Government went out from office was the condition of the finances. The only reason given to the public was that the Labour Government did not possess the business acumen necessary to the carrying on of the affairs of the State without running up a large deficit. Yet each year since the Labour Government went out of office the deficit has been more than double what it was under the administration of that Government. To me it proves conclusively that Ministers are not exercising in their offices that diligence necessary to enable them to keep their expenditure within bounds. I have every sympathy with the Treasurer, for I know what his position is. He cannot go to his colleague and say, "You are not going to have this." The late Sir George Turner was the only Australian Treasurer who ever went that far. Ministers should be given clearly to understand that they must curtail expenditure as against that which obtained at the beginning of the war. I do not intend to take up any more time. I merely wish to point out that there was no necessity for the Treasurers' conference to draw the attention of this Parliament to the urgent need for economy in this State.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner—Irwin—in reply) [9.25]: I appreciate the remarks of the leader of the Opposition. I am afraid that if I had been in his place my remarks would have been even stronger. His knowledge tells him that there is in the present financial position much which the Treasurer, no Government could have avoided. If we look at what has gone behind us during the last 12 months it will be realised that there were circumstances which nobody could control. Outside of that I have not the slightest objection to any remark which fell from the leader of the Opposition. Certainly he referred to street betting, but I think I got just as much shock over that as he did when he saw the article in the newspaper. It is one of the drawbacks of knowing little or nothing about betting. That was a measure to get money from bookmakers on a racecourse, but it never entered my mind that there was a possibility of its operating to extract money from them in shops and on the street. I at once

wrote off to the Commissioner of Taxation to know what was necessary to straighten out the position. As a Treasurer I may be hard up for money, but I have no desire to get it that way. The member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) amuses me. One cannot help being amused at times. I do not think I have ever once referred to the shortcomings of anybody who preceded me. What is the use of it, what use does it do? Almost every Government have sinned on the question of delay in bringing in their financial proposals, and almost every Government have sinned in the spending of money without authorisation. If they have not done these things in one way they have done them in other ways. I happened to be at the opening of Parliament in South Australia. On the last day in July the Government came along for supplies. I and my colleagues have striven to get our Estimates ready according to promise. Before the close of last session the leader of the Opposition said, "We shall be up to the time for which you promised the Estimates before Parliament adjourns." That was the position. We were here practically to the end of May. I have those Estimates ready, and I would have presented them here to keep my promise to the House. To listen to remarks one would think no economies had been effected. Last year we closed operations with £5,000 more deficit than in the previous year; but how much additional interest did we have to pay? There was £25,000 extra for wages, £25,000 extra for floods, and nearly £40,000 for loss on cattle.

Hon. P. Collier: Every Government have their unforeseen expenditure. The only increase to which the Treasurer can legitimately call attention is the interest bill.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: When we consider that we met all these extra things out of practically the same revenue as that of the previous year, without any additional taxation, we must see that there is some sound evidence that we have been looking into things and trying to effect economy.

Hon. P. Collier: There was an extra £25,000 from the land and income tax.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It has all gone.

Hon. P. Collier: You are short of that much this year.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes. Now we have the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) saying that things must be squared. There was the exhibition in the House over the taxation measures I left here, which showed that there was no honest endeavour to square the matter by taxation. In those measures there was provision for the interest of everybody. The member for Northam then says, "Oh, it has to be fixed." I told the House that, but with what result? The supertax that I ought to have I did not get a penny of, but finished up with less than I had. I had a dividend duties Bill with a supertax added on but this had to be recalled in common justice.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Government were to blame.

Hon. P. Collier: Your colleagues voted against it.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I do not want it to be preached to me that we have to square things, while at the same time that preaching is not practised in the House. That is not fair. We all realise the difficulty we are in. If the leader of the Opposition was in my place to-morrow, I would give him the same promise that I gave to the Government before, namely that I would help them in every way possible. I do not want any charity in the House, neither do I wish to be singled out at the expense of my colleagues. It is a difficult time and a difficult task. If the House, as it did by its vote, says that education must not be curtailed, what am I to do? Not only has this become the policy of the Government, but it has become the policy of the country. Members here can make and unmake Governments, but if they are going to say that certain things are sacrosanct, what is the good of anyone talking about reducing them? Take our hospital grants, and our domestic grants! Do members know what our domestic expenditure comes to in the year? It comes to somewhere about £850,000. How am I to get the money to carry on these services?

Mr. Holman: Where does it all go?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: On education, gaols, medical and health, sanatoriums, and things of that sort. That is where we have to put it. The general administration of the State has to be looked after and probably would not involve a very much greater expenditure than £480,000, but included in the general administration of the State are the Agricultural Bank, the Savings Bank, the Taxation Department, etc. It does not matter how much we cut into that expenditure, we cannot effect a big saving. The member for North-East Fremantle put his finger on the difficulty and we are trying to get over it. He says that in the amalgamation of departments we have to make space. We have made some air space and have amalgamated some of the departments. The Minister for Works has got rid of about 100 of his officers altogether. In my own place we have got rid of six or seven officers. I do not want any wholesale sacking. If we have 11 or 12 months in Parliament we cannot be expected to put these things right.

Hon. P. Collier: Judging by to-day we shall be here for the rest of the year.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: If members want to sit in the day time, they will have to work. We had experience of it last session. I do not mind any criticism that can be levelled at me. I say that now is the time to criticise. It is for members to keep us straight by criticism, if we need to be kept straight. No man is going to object to it, and if he does he does not want to do a fair thing. Let hon. members criticise by every means in their power. It is from criticism that we can be brought to see our faults. With regard to the conference, if I was able to say all that took place there, even the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) would agree that there was a position which showed that probably we were not free agents as we would like to be.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The responsibility is

more with the Federal authorities than any others.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: We know that. The position has become apparent not only to people in Australia but to people outside. Sometimes the people outside Australia have to find the money for the purpose of carrying on Australia.

Question put and passed; resolution reported and the report adopted.

Supply Bill introduced, etc.

Resolution in Committee of Ways and Means having been passed, a Supply Bill was brought in providing for the expenditure of £1,431,000.

Bill passed through its remaining stages and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

House adjourned at 9.45 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 28th August, 1918.

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

[For "Question on Notice" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

COMMITTEES FOR THE SESSION.

On motions by the COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch), sessional committees were appointed as follow:—

Standing Orders: The President, the Chairman of Committees, Hon. J. Nicholson, Hon. A. Sanderson, and the mover.

Library: Hon. W. Kingsmill, Hon. H. Millington, and Hon. J. F. Allen.

Printing: Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom, Hon. R. G. Ardagh, and Hon. A. Sanderson.

House: Hon. W. Kingsmill, Hon. J. Duffell, Hon. R. J. Lynn, Hon. H. Millington and Hon. J. Nicholson.

BILL—SUPPLY, £1,431,000.

All Stages.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.40]. I move—

"That so much of the Standing Order: be suspended as is necessary to enable a Supply Bill to be taken into consideration immediately on its receipt from the Legislative Assembly, and passed through all its stages during this sitting."

This motion is the usual one tabled in such circumstances. The Supply Bill passed