

# Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 3rd December, 1912.

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

## PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Annual report on State-aided immigration for year ended 30th June, 1912; 2, Third annual report of the Bunbury Harbour Board for the year ended 30th June, 1912; 3, Amended by-laws, Goldfields Water Supply; 4, Eleventh annual report under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1902.

## URGENCY MOTION—MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The PRESIDENT: I have received from Hon. J. D. Connolly a communication requesting that as a matter of urgency he should be permitted to move the adjournment of the House. I have examined the subject and I deem it to be urgent. According to Standing Order 58, however, four members are required to rise in their places and indicate their approval, in order that the request may be granted.

Four members having risen in their places,

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (North-East): I move—

*That the House at its rising do adjourn until 5 p.m. on Wednesday next on a matter of urgency for the purpose of protesting against the statements*

*which appeared in the "West Australian" of yesterday made by the Hon. R. G. Ardagh, M.L.C., and Mr. A. E. Green, M.L.A.*

The statements to which I refer appear under these headlines, "Kalgoorlie Wages Board; Speeches by Union Officials; Peace can be bought too dearly; Legislative Council Attacked" and after some references to the dispute the following appear:—

Mr. R. G. Ardagh, M.L.C., in replying to the toast of "Parliament," said that Labour members in the Legislative Council had put up a good fight on the Arbitration Bill, but they had been outnumbered. The Bill, as it stood at present, was absolutely useless. The Workers' Compensation Bill was being slaughtered in the same manner. Many of those who were voting against it were getting their instructions from the Chamber of Mines. He made that statement fearlessly, as the secretary of the Chamber of Mines was sitting in the President's gallery during the whole time the Bill was before the House, and he was not there for nothing.

Mr. A. E. Green, M.L.A., said that the Upper House was responsible for the difficulty which existed on the goldfields at the present time. If the Arbitration Bill, as it left the Legislative Assembly, had been passed by the Council, the unions would have taken their dispute to the Arbitration Court. The Legislative Council had, however, moved 54 amendments to that Bill, and had sent it back completely emasculated, and useless. The unions objected to going before the Court under the present Act, and he could not blame them.

I take exception in the first place to the statement made by Mr. Ardagh as it appeared in the *West Australian*. I informed the hon. member a little while ago that it was my intention to move in this matter. He did not state that the remarks were not true, and, therefore, I think I am right in assuming that the report is a correct one. However, I shall simply take the statement as it appears in the *West Australian*.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: I have not seen the *West Australian*.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Shall I read the remarks again?

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: I heard you read the latter part of them.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The hon. member speaks in the first place about labour members having put up a good fight on the Arbitration Bill, and I may preface my remarks by stating that I should not have taken any notice of the published report of the hon. member's speech, or in fact of any of his speeches made inside or outside Parliament, or taken such a serious step as moving the adjournment of the House—the hon. member's statement would not have been worthy of the action I am taking except for one reason, and it is that there is a big dispute pending on the goldfields at the present time. This is on the verge of being settled happily or not being settled at all, and a statement such as that made by the hon. member will have a bad effect on it, and it is purely on that account that I have taken notice of his remarks. The hon. member went on to say that the Workers' Compensation Bill was being slaughtered in the same manner, and that those who voted against it were getting their instructions from the Chamber of Mines, and he added that he made that statement fearlessly. He went on further to state that members of the Legislative Council voted against that Bill as they got their instructions from the secretary of the Chamber of Mines. I think it comes in very bad taste from an hon. member to go outside the Chamber and speak of his fellow members in that way, and it is in particularly bad form from the hon. member who is one of a party about whom it is said that they generally receive their instructions from a body quite outside of Parliament.

The Colonial Secretary: That has been said in this House also.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It came peculiarly from the hon. member because if one had his senses about him, it would be imagined sometimes on walking through this House that we were within

the precincts, not of the Houses of Parliament, but of some building where a congress of labour organisations was being held, judging by the persons who are assembled about the corridors. But is it not a shocking thing that a person cannot take a seat in the President's gallery without a charge such as the one made by the hon. member being preferred against him. If the hon. member includes me amongst those who were supposed to have received their instructions from this official, I say that he has no foundation whatever for saying so because I have not spoken politically either to the secretary of the Chamber of Mines or to any other member of that body for 12 months. Even if I had done so I would not admit that such a thing was a crime, but as it happens I have not. I do not intend to devote any more remarks to the hon. member in regard to the Workers' Compensation Bill because his statement is not worthy of the prominence I am giving it. It is, however, in regard to the other statement about the Arbitration Bill that I desire to say a few words. On that subject the other hon. member said that the Legislative Council was responsible for the difficulty which existed on the goldfields at the present time as this Chamber had refused to pass the Arbitration Bill as it was submitted to them by the Legislative Assembly. That statement has also been made in this House, and I say that it is totally and meanly false. It has been contradicted before, but in spite of the contradiction it is being repeated. Unfortunately it is having a serious effect on the trouble which is pending in Kalgoorlie at the present time. If the existing Act is not sufficient, then I say that the Bill as introduced into this Chamber by the Government is not sufficient either to meet any industrial dispute which may arise. We are told that simply because some amendment was made in the Bill by this House it was going to thwart the object the unions had in view. I say it is going to do nothing of the kind, and that it will not affect the question one way or the other. If the miners in Kalgoorlie to-day wish to go to the court there is

nothing to prevent them doing so. We are told that there are a lot of technicalities that surround the Arbitration Court, but the mine owners stated that if there were these technicalities they would be willing to waive them in order to permit the unions to go to the court. The unions had not elected to go to the court, and therefore why should these members blame the Legislative Council because they have been trying to put into shape a wholly unfair and unjust measure which was sent down by the Legislative Assembly. Members of this House, other than those who belong to the Labour party, do not take their instructions from anyone. Instructions, however, have been issued to the hon. member and to other members by the body of which Mr. Ardagh is a delegate, namely, the Eastern Goldfields branch of the Australian Labour Federation, and in that report they say—

Further to the report of the executive of this council, delivered per favour of Mr. J. Cornell, M.L.C., I wish to state that since the executive drafted the report in question the whole matter has been considered by the full council, with the result that they are unanimous in insisting on the whole of clause 111 being struck out. Acting under instructions, I have wired to Mr. Underwood, M.L.A., and wish to notify you also that the council are so incensed at some of the provisions contained in the Bill that a special meeting is being called to consider the measure and point out the most objectionable features from our point of view. The report sent along was hurriedly written, also the time at our disposal was not sufficient to allow us to deal exhaustively with every clause of the Bill. At the same time we can scarcely conceive that such a measure was drafted by a representative of the Labour party, and, although some of the clauses are not too clear, and will allow the court considerable discretionary powers, on one point there is no room for speculation. I refer to the penalty clauses. They certainly provide for the punishment of those who dare question the equity of an award

of the court. The injustice of these provisions is particularly in evidence in connection with the proposed treatment of officials, especially when we consider that the officer who offends is only carrying out the instructions of his society, and may not be personally responsible. In conclusion, we sincerely trust that as this is a measure which our party is responsible for—a fact we shall never be allowed to forget—at least we are justified in pointing out just how and why we are dissatisfied.

This is the portion I wish to draw particular attention to—

If this Bill reaches the Upper House in its present form and is incontinently tossed out, I am confident that many of our members would consider that at last that much maligned Chamber had justified its existence.

Those are the instructions given by the Eastern Goldfields District Council of the Australian Labour Federation at a special meeting held in the Trades Hall, Kalgoorlie, at the time when the present Arbitration Bill was introduced to the Assembly. The majority of members in this House are not delegates of that party, but have been elected by the electors, and they refuse to take instructions either from the Trades Hall or, as Mr. Ardagh said, from the secretary of the Chamber of Mines. I simply wish to say that it is not the Legislative Council which is hindering the settlement of the dispute on the goldfields in the least. In all the statements upon this point the proposed change in the constitution of the court is emphasised, and Mr. Green in his remarks said that the unions object to coming before the court constituted under the present Act, and that he cannot blame them. The present court is constituted of a judge and two assessors. The Bill proposes a president and two lay members, and the president may or may not be a judge of the Supreme Court. If he is not a judge of the Supreme Court he is to receive a salary of £1,000 per annum. Now we must regard the president proposed in the Bill as an unbiassed person, exactly the same as a judge of the Supreme Court, and, therefore, where is the difference between the court proposed by the Bill and

the court now existing? There is no difference at all, and to say that any amendment of the arbitration law will be the means of the miners getting to the arbitration court is totally false. They can get to the court now, and the mine owners said months ago that if there were any technicalities in the way of the men getting to the court they would waive them. The reports in the Press clearly show that the very members of Parliament and union officials who are making these statements, instead of advising the men to go to the court, are urging them in the strongest terms to strike, and not go to the court at all. Such an attitude ill-becomes Mr. Ardagh and, if I may be permitted to give the hon. member advice, he would do better to try to act up to his own opinions rather than echo the opinions of others around him who have no sense of responsibility at all. I beg to move the motion.

Hon. M. L. MOSS (West): I second the motion.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH (North-East): I was present at the social at Boulder on Saturday night under the auspices of the Kalgoorlie and Boulder branch of the Federated Miners' Union, and reference has been made to a report of the speeches appearing in the *West Australian* to-day. There were several reports of the speeches made at that social and I have seen two which are totally at variance with one another. One was in the *Evening Star* and one in the *Kalgoorlie Miner*. That in the *West Australian* I have not read. All of the reports in the Press are certainly very much condensed. So far as any influence these remarks might have on the Kalgoorlie dispute is concerned, I wish to say that if there is any one in this Chamber who is anxious to settle this trouble by arbitration it is I. Inside or outside the House there is no stronger advocate of arbitration than I am.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Then why did you speak against it?

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH: I said nothing against arbitration. I simply referred to the fact that the secretary of the Chamber of Mines, a gentleman whom I

know well and have great respect for, was present during the second reading debates on these two Bills. I said that then and I repeat it now, and anything I have said I will stand by. So far as I can see I have nothing to apologise for. Hon. members who represent the same constituency as I do have taken grave exception to the remarks I made at that social, but so far as any influence those remarks are likely to have on the Kalgoorlie dispute is concerned I think they are taking a small minded view of the matter.

Hon. Member: Why do you not give the names?

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH: I have no desire to name any member. I have the greatest respect for them all, and I hope I always will have.

Hon. C. Sommers: We will not have much respect for you if you make mis-statements.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH: If the hon. member does not like my remarks I cannot help it, but I have as straight a record as any member in the House.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: You have the respect of your constituents any way.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH: Yes, the voting at the last election showed that. As to the remarks of a member of another place, I have nothing to do with them. Mr. Connolly must deal with that hon. member elsewhere. I did say at the social that the secretary of the Chamber of Mines was in the gallery during the second reading debates of the Arbitration Bill and the Workers' Compensation Bill. As a matter of fact, on one occasion when Mr. Maughan came along, I obtained a ticket from the President for him.

Hon. M. L. Moss: Then what was wrong?

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH: Nothing whatever.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Then why infer that there was something wrong?

Hon. D. G. Gawler: You said that we were getting our instructions from him.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Hon. members on the other side have said that the Gov-

ernment are getting their instructions from the Trades Hall.

Hon. D. G. Gawler : Two wrongs do not make a right.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH: Those remarks have been made against the Government inside and outside the Chamber, but I have never been so small-minded as to make any reference to them. I have nothing further to say other than that I hope that nothing I have said will show any disrespect to this Chamber. So far as the Arbitration Bill is concerned, certain votes given on vital clauses in the Bill were reversed at a later date. There is no question about that, as the records of *Hansard* will show. Let me again say that the remarks I made at the smoke social were not meant to do any harm to any member of this House; in fact, I should be long sorry to do so.

## BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION.

### *Conference of Managers.*

The PRESIDENT: I have to announce that a conference between the two Chambers on the subject of the Industrial Arbitration Bill has been appointed for 5 o'clock and it will be necessary to suspend the sitting.

### *Assembly Manager.*

Message received from the Legislative Assembly notifying that the Hon. J. Mitchell had been appointed one of the managers for the Assembly in the place of the Hon. Frank Wilson.

*Sitting suspended from 5 to 8.25 p.m.*

### *Report of Managers.*

Hon. J. E. DODD (Honorary Minister): I beg to report the result of the deliberations of the conference of managers appointed by both Houses on the Industrial Arbitration Bill—

1. Constitution of Court.—The managers have agreed that the Court shall be constituted as it is at present constituted under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1902.

2. Grouping of related industries. The managers agree that the grouping of related industries remain as in the Bill as amended upon recommitment in the Legislative Assembly.

3. Industrial matters.—The managers have agreed that subclauses (d) and (e) of Clause 4 shall be struck out of the definition of "Industrial Matters," and that Clause 85, Subclause 1, Division (d) shall be struck out of the Bill.

These are the clauses relating to preference to unionists.

4. Rural Workers. The managers agree to omit the amendment proposed by the Legislative Council excluding agricultural and pastoral workers from the provisions of the Bill. (Mr. Mitchell dissents).

5. Domestic Servants. The Managers have agreed that domestic servants shall be excluded from the definition of the word "worker," in Clause 4 of the Bill as proposed by the Legislative Council.

6. Aiding Strikes outside the State. Clause 7, Sub-clause 4, Division 4, this is to remain as printed in the Bill.

7. Industrial Agreements and Common Rule. It has been agreed that Clause 40 shall stand as printed but that the following proviso shall be added thereto:—

Provided that before acting under this section the court shall give all parties likely in its opinion to be affected, notice by advertisement or otherwise of its intention to extend the operation of such award and shall hear any parties desiring to be heard in opposition thereto.

8. Award to be a Common Rule. Clause 79 to stand as printed.

9. Joint Sitzings of Both Houses. Clauses 55 and 127, Subclause 4, to be amended so that both Houses of Parliament shall act as hitherto, namely, as separate Houses.

10. Legal practitioners.—Clause 64 Subclause (4) is to stand as printed with the addition of the following proviso—

Provided that when the court sitting for the trial of any offence, counsel or solicitor shall be entitled to appear and be heard before the court on behalf of the prosecution or of the defence, with all the powers of a counsel or solicitor appearing on the trial of an offence in a court of summary jurisdiction.

11. Award of Court.—Clause 85, Subclause (1), Division (A) to stand as printed, Division (D) as previously reported to be deleted.

That is a reference to preference to unionists.

Division (E)—

That is limiting the hours of pieceworkers.

To stand as printed, with the addition of the following words—

“in any industry except workers engaged in the agricultural and pastoral industries.”

12. Government Workers. Clause 101—Warders employed in prisons and nurses and attendants in all hospitals for the insane are to be included in the Bill. Consequential amendments—All necessary consequential amendments to be made to carry into effect the above understandings.

Amendments requested by the Council and already agreed to by the Assembly are to be included in the Bill.

I beg to move—

*That the report be adopted.*

In doing so I may say that the managers have made a fair attempt to arrive at a reasonable compromise. I suppose that each member of the conference is of the same opinion now as he was prior to going to the conference, but in an endeavour to see a workable Bill adopted by Parliament, a common understanding has been arrived at.

Hon. M. L. MOSS (West): I desire to second the motion. Of course hon. members will have an opportunity when a Message comes from another place of considering in Committee the various matters alluded to in the report. I confess, so far as I am concerned, I feel I have had to give away a great many things on which

I personally felt very strongly, but I recognised that there had to be a compromise made upon this question, and as we are so frequently told, as so much depends upon this Bill going through in order to secure industrial peace in the community, it was desirable that we should not on either side stand on our strict rights so far as our political opinions are concerned. There has been a good deal of give and take on both sides. First of all, the court is to remain constituted as at present. That means a good deal. We have a judge of the Supreme Court presiding and there will be two lay members as at present. The grouping of related industries is a matter that I feel strongly on; at the same time it was necessary to give that away in order to secure an agreement between the two Houses. Preference to unionists is a thing that the Labour party sought to obtain. They have it in the Federal Arbitration Act. The managers have been successful in inducing the Government to forego this, and I think we have secured a good deal in excluding preference to unionists from the Bill. My friends in this Chamber representing agricultural constituencies may think a good deal has been given away by including rural workers in the Bill. Discussing this matter with Sir Edward Wittenoom, we took it that rural workers are under the present Act and, after all, it is to a large extent illogical to put nearly all the workers of every other industry under this measure and exclude the workers of any particular industry. We must remember that there were managers appointed last year and we gave way then upon this question. There is the matter that has been alluded to by a number of hon. members that the Federal Arbitration Court would be able to make an award affecting our rural workers as soon as a dispute was created extending beyond the limits of one State. Therefore the Federal court may make an award affecting our workers and if they are to be brought under the operation of a measure, it would be better that we should have the opportunity of setting our own house in order than to do so by outside arbitration. I want hon. members re-

presenting rural districts to remember that we have not entirely deserted them upon this question because, as the Honorary Minister pointed out, when we were dealing with Clause 85, Subclause (e), which provides that the court may limit the hours of pieceworkers, we added a provision that with regard to pieceworkers employed in agricultural industries there is to be no limit to the time they may work. We have done a good deal for the agricultural industry in that regard. The managers of another place conceded that to us, and I think the representatives of the agricultural districts will see that, from the compromise on this question, they have not been entirely deserted, but that their rights have been safeguarded as well as it was possible to do. So far as domestic servants are concerned, we have been able to preserve, at any rate for some time, the fact that the West Australian man's home is his castle, and that it cannot be invaded by an industrial inspector or the secretary of any union. With regard to aiding strikes outside, there was a strong opinion here that aiding strikes from outside with Western Australian money would mean that there would be reciprocity and that sinews of war would come to Western Australia in time of trouble here. I do not think we have given way very much there; however we yielded on that point and at any rate I do not think that will affect the position very much. With regard to the common rule, there are two methods under this Bill of making a common rule, one where an industrial agreement has been filed which becomes an award; and in the other case where an award is made by one party citing another. Under Clause 40 as it originally came from the Assembly, the clause provided that an industrial agreement should be made a common rule. Our position was that there might be a hole and corner agreement and that then on application to the court everyone would be bound. A proviso was made in another place that there should be no common rule unless the majority of workers, or those who employed a majority of workers, agreed. We have added some-

thing else besides. Sir Edward Witte-noom did not think that was sufficiently safeguarding. Before acting under the section enabling an industrial agreement to be made a common rule, we have provided that the same publicity shall be given to the intentions of parties who desire to make a common rule, as in a case of the common rule sought to be made by an award. Under Clause 79 we have already added a proviso that publicity should be given to enable the parties likely to be affected to go to the court. I am glad to say we did not have much trouble in getting a unanimous agreement with regard to this House being entitled to deliberate upon two matters, the removal of the judge and the disallowance of regulations. The Houses are to discuss these matters separately. The next point is with regard to legal practitioners, and that will stand as it is under the present Bill, with this exception, that inasmuch as under this Bill the court is constituted a court of summary jurisdiction to try certain offences, solicitors and counsel shall be entitled to appear and exercise privileges, as though they were appearing before a court of summary jurisdiction. When we come to Clause 85, that is, the clause which prescribes what the court may award, it is provided that Division A shall stand as printed. That was the clause providing for the minimum rate of wage. We had inserted an amendment, but when our attention was drawn to it we found it was not of much moment. Division D will have to be deleted. It is consequential upon the striking out of the two subclauses in the interpretation and the other one limiting the time of piece work to which I have alluded. Personally I was extremely anxious that the warders in prisons and nurses and attendants at the hospital for the insane should be excluded but that was one of the matters we were obliged to give way on in order to come to an agreement. On the whole, particularly as the court is the most independent tribunal we can get, the House will be well advised to adopt the suggestions which have been made by the managers.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North): I only propose to say a few words in support of the report. We had a very difficult task to undertake. We met with very different ideas on the subject of this Bill, and I think on the whole it must be considered satisfactory that the representatives holding strong views on the various subjects have come to an agreement with one single dissent. I think that may be looked upon as fairly satisfactory. I am prepared to admit that the dissent on that particular subject is most important, but when we cannot get all we want we must try to get as much as we can. Mr. Moss has dealt with these subjects so fully that it would be repetition for me to go over them again. I would, however, point out one great advantage we have even in connection with the rural industries, and that is that we have a judge of the Supreme Court who will have to define what these duties are. With regard to the rural workers, I am assured that it is quite possible for them to take their case to the Federal court. If that be so it is far better that we should have the issue tried here by our own judges and in our own courts. All things considered, I think perhaps we may as well be satisfied with what we have been able to secure. We were able to secure the condition about the contracts. Very great importance is attached to that by representatives of the other party, because they consider that piece-work means to a great extent sweating. They gave many instances in different trades, such as the tailoring trade and others of that description, and even in the mining industry, of how contract work has led to sweating. On the other hand, I pointed out that a man who has a contract for two or three years, putting up fences or sinking wells, or clearing land at a fixed price per acre, cannot be the victim of sweating. Why should a man away on the Murchison be compelled to work eight hours a day and sit down for the other sixteen with nothing to do? If he wishes to work for twelve hours he is surely entitled to do what he likes and nobody can say he is sweated, but I understand that that argument does not apply to tailoring

and such-like trades. There are no other details which have not been touched upon fully by Mr. Dodd or Mr. Moss, and it would be superfluous for me to speak further, except to say in connection with Clause 101 that it did appear to me unwise that the warders and nurses should be allowed to form unions. But I am told that the greatest trouble prevails at the present time without unions and there are greater opportunities for the warders to strike and to allow the prisoners to run away than if they were in a position to go to the court. For that reason and for other considerations a compromise was arrived at. In conclusion, I can assure hon. members that their representatives have done their best to get the best conditions they could, and I hope the report will be satisfactory.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I move—

*That the debate be adjourned.*

Hon. J. E. DODD (Honorary Minister): I think the proper procedure will be for us to receive a Message from the Legislative Assembly and its consideration can be made an Order of the Day for the next sitting.

Hon. M. L. MOSS: I do not think we ought to adopt this report, but rather that we should deal with these matters in detail in Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: I want to see the report in print.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I second Mr. Kingsmill's motion for the reason that if we are going to consider this report in Committee, it seems rather like putting the cart before the horse to adopt something and discuss it afterwards. I am not prepared to adopt this or any other report by simply hearing it read out as this was. I am not prepared to vote for anything I do not understand.

Motion put and passed, the debate adjourned.

#### BILL — MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Message received notifying that the Legislative Assembly had agreed to the amendment made by the Legislative Council.



# **BILL — FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST AMENDMENT.**

Message received notifying that the Assembly had not agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

# **BILL—KALGOORLIE AND BOULDER RACING CLUBS ACT AMENDMENT.**

Received from the Legislative Assembly and read a first time.

# **BILL—GOVERNMENT TRAMWAYS.**

*Order of the Day Discharged.*

Message received from the Assembly requesting the Council to lay aside the Bill in order to permit of the introduction in the Assembly of a similar measure in which the provision to which objection had been taken by the Council would be remedied.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY the Order of the Day for the second reading of the Bill was discharged.

# **URGENCY MOTION—MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.**

Debate resumed from an earlier period of the sitting.

Hon. M. L. MOSS (West): I quite agree with Mr. Connolly that this is a matter which is worth bringing before this Chamber. Mr. Ardagh at a social function—probably the fact that it was a social function had something to do with his observations—went unduly out of his way to make a most unfair attack upon this Chamber, and particularly on a section of its members. I hope the hon. member will learn when he is longer in politics that it is a good thing to give credit to his opponents for sincerity in the opinions they express.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: I do.

Hon. M. L. MOSS: A little generosity extended in that way does a good deal. The hon. member says he is actuated by those views, but when he gets before his

constituents he utters the base slander that a number of hon. members have received instructions from the Chamber of Mines as to the way they should vote on the Arbitration Bill, and this does hon. members a great injustice. I have taken a prominent part in connection with the consideration of the Arbitration Bill; I have held upon that measure very strong views and have not hesitated to give expression to my opinion, but, although that is so, I think it is a scandalous state of affairs for any hon. members to go before a body of electors and, simply because it may please that body, vilify this Chamber and any of its members. Such a speech as the hon. member is reported to have made is not calculated to effect a compromise between the two Houses on this question of industrial arbitration, but on the contrary would have the effect of inflaming the feelings of members. However, wiser counsels have prevailed, and I think the hon. member will be exceedingly sorry that he went to his electorate and gave expression to such an opinion.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: I am not sorry at all.

Hon. M. L. MOSS: Well, the hon. member ought to be after what has taken place since five o'clock this afternoon, when Sir Edward Wittenoom and I, who felt strongly on a large number of important questions, have conceded principles that, at any rate, are somewhat hard to justify before members of this House who have heard us from time to time object strongly to the retention in the Bill of the clauses that we have now agreed to with the idea of making a compromise.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: You have acted wisely.

Hon. M. L. MOSS: The hon. member acted unwisely and he ought to be sorry for what he has done in view of the turn things have taken. It shows that the Legislative Council is composed of persons who are reasonably inclined and whose great desire has been all along to secure industrial peace in the community. There has been too much irresponsible talk outside this Chamber as to what

members of this House are prepared to do to block reform, and a great deal of that talk is very unfair. Indeed it seems to be fashionable to go outside the Chamber and go to the greatest length possible in vilifying the Chamber and a number of its members who hold certain political opinions, and not enough is said outside this House to uphold any of those members, who, in my opinion, are doing their best to preserve industrial equilibrium in this State. If this short discussion does no more than act as a warning to Mr. Ardagh and others who speak on platforms or at social functions with no guard upon their tongues, and exercise an unbridled license which is entirely unwarranted, it will have done some good.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) : I did not intend to speak on this motion, but there has been a note sounded in the debate that has made it imperative that I should do so. I think that the debate that has taken place will not have the effect that Mr. Moss and Mr. Connolly presume it will of preserving the dignity of this Council. It will rather draw the attention of the public a little more to this House. And I may state that I feel somewhat jealous of Mr. Ardagh in the position that he occupies, seeing that I have done a little more strenuous fighting inside the House than he has done outside and at one fell swoop he has become immortalised.

Hon. W. Kingsmill : I suppose you know there are two phases of the next life.

Hon. J. CORNELL : I believe there are even more, because I am told there is a half-way house. I am not aware that Mr. Ardagh has in any way infringed his privileges as a member of the House. I take it he spoke generally, and if perhaps in an unguarded moment a member speaking outside does infringe the privileges of the House, this Chamber is quite within its rights in dealing with him. There is another phase of the question I do not agree with. Mr. Moss accused Mr. Ardagh of saying that Mr. Maughan, the secretary of the Chamber of Mines,

was in the Chamber, and that members were taking instructions from him. During the course of the debate on the Workers' Compensation Bill, Mr. Cullen seemed to make a by-word or a catchword of the phrase "walking delegate," and I interjected that he had not to go far for a walking delegate. I do not think that Mr. Maughan appeared for the purpose of instructing members, but I do say that he was here primarily, not as a visitor, but to further the institution which pays him and which he represents.

Hon. M. L. Moss : I do not think he succeeded very well.

Hon. J. CORNELL : Whether he did or not, he was here for the purpose. Mr. Maughan has a right and an equal right to come here.

Hon. W. Kingsmill : Hear, hear !

Hon. J. CORNELL : And then it remains with members of the House whether the personality and arguments used are sufficiently strong to weigh their votes as Mr. Maughan desires.

Hon. M. L. Moss : You are begging the question.

Hon. J. CORNELL : It is significant that some of the strongest of the principles in the Bill referred to by Mr. Ardagh in Boulder have been moulded in the direction required by that institution, the Chamber of Mines, which Mr. Maughan represents.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh : No doubt about it.

Hon. J. CORNELL : I do not infer that the moulding in that direction was inspired, but it would appear that Mr. Maughan's visit bore fruit. If Mr. Ardagh had spoken generally, it would perhaps have been better, though it would not have been as honest, and the blame could have been borne by members generally, but the inference would be there all the same. However, he took the course of particularising. There is one feature of the debate I think Mr. Moss and Mr. Connolly should have been the last to bring up in the Chamber; that is to say—Mr. Ardagh said that some members in the Chamber were furthering the interests of an institution, and Mr. Moss

characterised it as a base slander. If it is a base slander, then I have been slandered ever since I have been in the Chamber times out of number. Mr. Moss has said that with the party with which I am identified and Ministers as well it is a question of pulling the string and the figure works.

Hon. M. L. Moss : So it is.

Hon. J. CORNELL: He says the Trades Hall tell us what to do.

Hon. M. L. Moss : Caucus tells you what to do.

The Colonial Secretary: Is Mr. Moss in order?

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member is not speaking; Mr. Cornell has the floor.

The Colonial Secretary: It was by way of interjection.

The PRESIDENT: Anyone who interjects is very disorderly.

The Colonial Secretary: Mr. Moss said that caucus pulls the string and the Government works.

The PRESIDENT: I did not hear that.

The Colonial Secretary: I wish it to be laid down as to whether these interjections or remarks are to be permitted. If they are, of course we can only expect retaliation in the House.

Hon. M. L. Moss: It is quite true that I interjected, and said what the hon. member mentioned, but the reason I did so is that I have seen the printed Labour platform hundreds of times, and those hon. members have to do exactly what the majority of caucus dictates.

The PRESIDENT: I have to say that any interjection is disorderly, but it is to allow freedom of debate that I permit so many interjections to pass by.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We have been accused, and I have heard it said in debate in the House by two members, of having no souls of our own but only the souls the Trades Hall relegates to us; but immediately an hon. member goes out of the Chamber and makes an assertion that there are within the four corners of the House those who have no souls of their own but those relegated to them, the adjournment of the House is

moved to draw attention to it. I say it is trivial to move the adjournment of the House over what an hon. member says outside the Chamber. It would be just as logical and just as reasonable for me to move the adjournment and draw public attention to what some members have said about me. If I did, I would be doing it very often. I resent hon. members twitting us at all times with being a part of a machine of which a button is pressed and the whirligig goes round, and when we retaliate, immediately moving the adjournment of the House. Hon. members have at times used the advantage, I do not say unduly, to bring matters before the Chamber that perhaps it would be well to leave out. On a matter like this, I crave indulgence to reply to one or two of the remarks made. Mr. Connolly raised the question of the big dispute pending in Kalgoorlie. I claim to have as good a knowledge of Kalgoorlie and its district as Mr. Connolly, and I am well aware of the responsibilities that are devolving on the trades unionists generally there, and I say that I have the utmost confidence in those who are responsible and are at present endeavouring to settle the trouble. Mr. Connolly has pointed out that, under the present Arbitration Act the workers can go to the court, and that as there is absolutely nothing in the Act to prevent them, consequently the arguments adduced by Mr. Ardagh at Boulder had no effect; but during the course of Mr. Connolly's remarks, I interjected that if the workers could go to the court why did not the employers cite the workers to the court. That is a phase of the question Mr. Connolly refused to be drawn into. It is no use saying that the workers can go to the court if they desire.

Hon. J. D. Connolly : The employers are not disputing the present agreement.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Mr. Connolly says that the workers can go to the court if they desire. I say that the employers can go if they desire; they can cite the workers.

Hon. M. L. Moss: Not if they are not dissatisfied.

Hon. J. CORNELL: A dispute exists on the goldfields between the workers and the employing class.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Who started it?

Hon. J. CORNELL: It does not matter.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Yes, it does.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The dispute is established, and the present court will uphold the dispute, I feel confident; and when a dispute is established, the relationship between employer and employee is such that there is no agreement, and it is equally open to employers to cite the workers into the court as it is for the workers to cite the employers. Mr. Connolly has claimed that if the workers are desirous of getting to the court they can get to the court. I say that if the workers can have jurisdiction within the court the employers can cite the workers to the court.

Hon. M. L. Moss: Why should the employers go if they have no dispute?

Hon. J. CORNELL: A great deal has been said as to the gravity of the position now prevailing on the Eastern Goldfields, and it has been asserted that if the workers are prepared to go to the court the crisis would end; but I say that if the gravity of the position is such that an appeal to the Arbitration Court will settle the question the employing class on the goldfields will have it in their hands equally with the employees.

Hon. C. Sommers: There will be no strike.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We do not want any strike. I wish hon. members to give me the credit of being honest and sincere in my convictions, and in my endeavour to be fair in all matters I bring forward, no matter how trenchant I may be; and when Mr. Connolly brings forward a matter of public urgency and uses arguments which can be used in both ways, I hope when he does this on future occasions he will endeavour to be fair to both sides. I would not have risen to speak, except that both hon. members who have spoken accused Mr. Ardagh of doing something which they say is, to a certain extent, a base slander, but I, as a member, have had slanders made against me on innum-

erable occasions in the House. If the arguments had been taken for what they were worth, the time of the Chamber could have been better spent, and we would have heard no more about this. As it is, Mr. Ardagh will be the only gainer.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew): I regret that I cannot agree with Mr. Moss. No more childish action than Mr. Connolly's in tabling a motion for the adjournment of the House on such a paltry matter as this has come within my range of attention during the whole time of my Parliamentary career. I would like to know what the object of the hon. member is. It seems to me his object is simply retaliation. He wants to go one better than Mr. Ardagh and Mr. Green, and to my mind there was no more striking exemplification of the pot calling the kettle black than was supplied by Mr. Connolly himself this afternoon. I would like to know whether Mr. Connolly wishes to pose as the censor of conduct in this Chamber. If he does, well then I think he should set a far better example than he has this afternoon. His speech from beginning to end was reeking with reflection on the Labour party; but I may say that his conduct in that respect was quite in keeping with his conduct of the last twelve months. Months ago while, I think, the State Hotels Bill was under discussion, Mr. O'Brien said something, and Mr. Connolly interjected—"Oh, you have to do as you are told." Then, in the course of another speech he stated that the present Government were dominated by the Trades Hall, that "Premier" McCallum was running the show.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: He said so himself.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: You said so. You insinuated that the Government were directed and controlled by the secretary of the Trades and Labour Council.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Mr. McCallum said that.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The statement was made in the House and it was highly disorderly.

Hon. M. L. Moss: Did he not call himself the power behind the throne?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not care what he called himself. The hon. member insinuated as much again to-day. If members of this House take advantage of their position here and avail themselves of a majority in sympathy with them in making observations of this kind they cannot be surprised if their example is followed by members on this side of the House who go out and make similar reflections. For what purpose has the hon. member moved the adjournment? I will take his points *seriatim*. He declares that Mr. Ardagh stated that Labour members in the Legislative Council had put up a good fight but had been outnumbered. There is nothing wrong with that. The fight has lasted nearly three months—I think the Bill was introduced here on 7th September—and it is not through yet, so there was nothing wrong at all in the statement that the Labour members in the Legislative Council had put up a good fight and been outnumbered. The very fact that the Bill has been submitted to a conference shows that the sympathisers with Labour in this House were outnumbered. Then Mr. Connolly quoted Mr. Ardagh to the effect that the Workers' Compensation Bill was being slaughtered in the same manner. That is perfectly fair comment.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Fair comment, but bad language.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is perfectly fair comment, for the Bill is being slaughtered in the same manner; according to the view of Mr. Ardagh and of all Labour members here and in another place, the Bill is practically being slaughtered. I do not know what it is proposed to do with the hon. member, whether it is intended to gag him or send him to the Tower. But that is not all. Mr. Ardagh is charged with having said that many of those who voted against the Bill were getting their instructions from the Chamber of Mines. I have no sympathy with a statement like that, but I can see no harm in it unless he meant that members were being paid by the Chamber of Mines,

and of course no one could think for a moment that the hon. member meant anything of the sort. Probably what he meant was that hon. members were getting information from persons connected with the Chamber of Mines, and surely there is no reflection on members of this Chamber in that observation. Every member of the House who desires information in connection with a Bill very often has to appeal to experts to obtain that information. Anyhow, as the words stand there is very little meaning in them of an objectionable character. I do not sympathise with the observations myself, but I say the hon. member has had ample precedents in this Chamber for remarks of that sort, and even of a stronger character.

Hon. R. D. McKenzie: What do you mean by "a stronger character"?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have given instances already. One hon. member this afternoon interjected that two wrongs did not make a right; I think that was said by Mr. Gawler. I can say from experience that during the time the hon. member has been in the House he has never been guilty of a similar wrong; it would be quite foreign to his nature. But those who come forward and pose as models of good conduct should set a better example, and the last man to complain should be Mr. Connolly himself. I do not care whether or not the motion is carried, but I am confident the common sense of the House would not give it a moment's consideration. Where would these matters end if we were to call every person over the coals who attempted to criticise the Legislative Council? We would make ourselves the laughing stock of the community. The next thing would be the moving of the adjournment because of some criticism which appeared in the Press. It is perfectly ridiculous attaching an importance to a matter of this kind which is not really warranted.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan): I do not altogether agree with the last speaker as to the sin of Mr. Connolly in moving the motion. Such a motion, of course, is never moved with the intention of having it carried, but simply to call attention to a matter which the

mover considers to be of public urgency. As far as I am concerned I look upon this matter in this way: That if Mr. Connolly, or any other member of the Council, or several members of the Council, thought that unwarranted aspersions had been made on the Council as a body, or themselves as individuals, by speeches which have been made by hon. members outside the Council, they should have at all events the same right to call the member making those speeches to order as they would have if the speeches were made inside the Chamber. That being so I think the action taken by the hon. member can be very well justified. Personally I most certainly would be sorry to think that anything of the nature hinted at by Mr. Ardagh could occur. I would be sorry to think that any member of this Council would take instructions—not information, but instructions—from the Chamber of Mines. My experience in this Chamber is that when bodies such as the Chamber of Mines, the Chamber of Manufactures, the Chamber of Commerce, send suggestions or instructions or information, call it what you will, to hon. members, these suggestions are usually received some time after hon. members have expressed their opinions on the subject, and when it is too late to use the information or instructions or suggestions alluded to. So far as I am concerned, I do not know whether I have more of the original Adam in me than most people, but when I get a suggestion as to a Bill, a most unholy idea comes into my mind to vote directly opposite to the suggestion.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: It is only the Trades Hall that instructs; other bodies supply information.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I am quite prepared to accept the ruling from the hon. member, who knows a good deal more of the methods of the Trades Hall than any other member.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: You said the Government took their instructions from the Trades Hall.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I do not remember making any remark of the kind. I must confess to an utter ignorance as

to what influences either the Government or the Trades Hall. As for the motion, I think Mr. Connolly was fairly well justified in the action taken, and it is my intention, to mark my approval of the hon. member's conduct, to formally support the motion he has moved.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (in reply): I just wish to say a few words in reply, principally to the very extraordinary remarks made by the leader of the House. Since I have been a member of the House, and whilst I was leader of the House, I always understood that it was the first duty of the leader of the House to uphold the privileges of the House. I always hold it is the first duty of the Minister to be a member, and leader of the House, before he lends support to any party or any member. That is what the leader of the House should always bear in mind. But we have this afternoon the extraordinary position of the leader of the House giving support to the statement that many of those who are voting against the Workers' Compensation Bill were getting their instructions from the Chamber of Mines. We were told by the leader of the House that that was fair criticism.

The Colonial Secretary: I said no such thing. I said I had no sympathy with such observations, but that there was good precedent for them.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The hon. member held that I was childish in moving the adjournment of the House for something which he said was fair criticism. That certainly was said. Am I right or wrong in saying that he said it was fair criticism? I cannot put any other construction on the Minister's words. The extraordinary thing is that we have Mr. Ardagh this afternoon adopting a straightforward course and saying that if he had said anything offensive he regretted it; notwithstanding which the leader of the House stands up and tries to justify Mr. Ardagh's remarks. Surely it is a most extraordinary position. It seems to have annoyed the hon. member that Mr. Moss should have said that according to the Labour pledge they were bound by a majority of caucus. As a new adherent to that pledge the hon.

member evidently does not like to hear what is in it. That is all I have to say. I do not intend to go over the old ground. I simply wish to draw attention to the extraordinary attitude of the leader of the House. I have drawn attention to something which has been said in reflection on members of the House and we have the extraordinary position of the hon. member admitting that he said it, and yet the leader of the House defends it instead of being the first to take exception to it. He should remember he is the leader of the House before he is a member of the Labour party or anything else.

The Colonial Secretary: And follow you in your rambles.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I was leader of the House before I was anything. The Colonial Secretary made a boast that he did not care whether the motion was carried. The Minister knows that these motions are never moved for that purpose, but simply to ventilate matters. I ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

#### RIGHTS IN WATER AND IRRIGATION BILL SELECT COMMITTEE.

##### *Extension of time.*

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East): I beg to move—

*That the time for bringing up the report of the select committee be extended for one week.*

In doing so I can assure the House that ever since the appointment of the committee we have devoted three or four hours a day on three days a week to the inquiry and have completed the taking of evidence, and we have every reason to believe that the report will be available this day week.

Question put and passed.

#### BILL—NORSEMAN-ESPERANCE RAILWAY.

##### *Second Reading.*

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew) in moving the second reading

said: It is not my intention to weary members with the history of the question further than to point out that local conditions have so changed since the proposal was first mooted for a railway to Esperance as to have removed the only real objection to the project. At the outset this railway was advocated by its supporters on the grounds solely that it was necessary in order to give the gold-fields access to what was then regarded as their natural port. There was at that time little suggestion or even anticipation that the line was or could be justified as an agricultural railway. For many years after the agitation for the construction of this line, the country which would be served by it was regarded by many as beyond all hope from an agricultural standpoint, but to-day there are hundreds who would be entirely opposed to the line merely as an outlet for the goldfields, but who are supporting its construction in view of the immense agricultural possibilities known to exist. When the Bill was before the Legislative Council last year Mr. Moss, with questionable taste, quoted a speech I delivered in connection with the Esperance railway as far back as 1906. It is not so in this case, but it could easily happen that a Minister might have to introduce into this Chamber a Bill of which he did not personally approve. It is not so in this case because my views on the question of a railway from Norseman to Esperance completely changed immediately after the Advisory Board presented their report early in 1911. During the recent general election I travelled through all the agricultural portions of my constituency north of Dongara and clearly explained that I was in favour of the building of the railway to Esperance, and gave my reasons.

Hon. M. L. Moss: It was nearly touch and go with you.

[Hon. W. Kingsmill took the Chair.]

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I travelled in company with Mr. Austin, a Northampton farmer, who said that although he was a farmer, and I might add that he is one of the largest in the Victoria district, if returned to Parliament he would strongly advocate the railway

line to Esperance after his perusal of the Advisory Board's report. When I joined the Government I came up for re-election and the people knew my views had changed and they had every opportunity to oppose me at my election, but I was returned unopposed. During my recent election I left no room for doubt as to what my future attitude would be on the question of a railway to Esperance. The agricultural development which has occurred in that district and which has changed the face of this proposition entirely is of comparatively recent date. Prior to 1909 when the railway connecting Coolgardie and Norseman was opened, there was no settlement in the district to the south of Norseman. A little over two years ago attention began to be directed to what has since become to be widely known as the wheat belt, an admittedly good agricultural area between Norseman and the southern seaboard. Perhaps the best evidence that can be adduced as to the excellence of this land is in the fact that notwithstanding the difficulties of transit and the isolated position, settlement on this area has gradually extended until there are now no fewer than 50 resident selectors. When we remember that so recently as last year Parliament refused to approve of the construction of this line, it must be admitted that the continued occupation of this country and expansion of cultivation are substantial proof of the faith of the settlers in this latest addition to the wheat lands of the State. The holdings of the 50 settlers on the wheat belt aggregate 50,000 acres, the population for the whole district that this line is likely to serve being now 500, and that number is being added to daily. Presently I shall quote, for the information of members the acreage suitable for cultivation—that is the acreage which would be served by this proposed railway—and I am sure that the figures which I shall give will be sufficient to demonstrate the point which I am endeavouring to make, that the State owes a distinct duty to this portion of Western Australia to grant the transport facilities which alone are wanting in order to add another province to our agricultural areas. I said at

the outset that the only real objection to this railway had been removed. The facts I have given should indicate that the line is now to be regarded as an agricultural railway. In the early days of the agitation the principal argument against it was that to construct a railway from Esperance to Coolgardie would be to open up the goldfields trade particularly to the producers of South Australia. That objection, I think members will realise, no longer holds good.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Why not?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I will tell the hon. member presently. The agricultural development of Western Australia has been such during recent years that we have no need to fear at the present time the competition of the Eastern agriculturists. This railway is now not required to aid the Eastern agriculturists, but to extend our own agricultural development and bring prosperity to our own producers. If this line is constructed the produce which will be consumed on the goldfields certainly will not be produce from South Australia, but it will be the produce from Esperance and the country around it. It must be remembered that the settlers are our own people and they have given an earnest of their bona fides by taking up land and improving it in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties.

Hon. D. G. Gawler: The Government are assisting them.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No large amount of assistance has been granted, but it is wonderful even with the assistance rendered what has been accomplished.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Very trifling assistance.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The assistance has not been on a par with the assistance rendered to settlers in other agricultural portions of Western Australia, and no doubt the action of the Government has been due to the fact that the Agricultural Bank will not lend money in that portion of Western Australia at the present time.

Hon. D. G. Gawler: The Government have agreed to buy their wheat.



The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am stressing the point that this line should be regarded purely in the light of an agricultural railway. I would urge that this is the aspect from which this Bill should be viewed. We should put out of our minds those arguments which have hitherto successfully blocked the construction of the line so long as it was advocated merely from a mining standpoint. The evolution period through which the producing districts in other portions of the State have passed has now touched the Esperance-Norseman district, and as I shall conclusively show presently the agricultural propositions of this little known, and I am afraid too little regarded portion of the State are as good as those of many other districts for which Parliament has already approved the construction of railways. I venture to say that there have been passed by Parliament railway propositions for districts in which not nearly so much actual settlement and agricultural development have taken place, as can be pointed to in the district under consideration. In the immediate vicinity of Esperance 15,000 acres of land have been taken up and are being agriculturally developed. The total area of land alienated within a 12½ miles radius of the proposed railway is 203,900 acres. In addition there are 25 holders of grazing leases who have selected between them 47,500 acres. Pastoral leases are represented by 26,000 acres, and pastoral holdings under annual license aggregate 100,000 acres. Surely that amount of selection is sufficient ground for assuming that provided the railway is authorised further land selection, even on a much larger scale, may be anticipated. I wish to point out that there is available a very considerable area for such further selection. Within the 12½ miles radius upon which basis all the computations of area have been made, there are 1,624,600 acres of cultivable land, and if the zone is extended to what may be termed the area within the influence of the proposed railway the available land amounts to 1,876,000 acres. I will be pardoned if in assuming that members are not conversant with the agricultural possibilities of the district. I inflict too

many statistics, but the case in favour of the proposition as an agricultural railway is so strong that I feel I shall not be doing justice to the question unless I give the fullest information to the House. We have the report of the Advisory Board which was quoted last year, and which I shall simply skim over.

[*The President resumed the Chair.*]

Hon. M. L. Moss: The same report?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have other reports. I wish to place a brief extract from the report on record. It reads—

We may state that this large extent of wheat growing country, some million and a quarter acres, is the greatest area of wheat land in the State at present in possession of the Crown, with so good a rainfall. Surveyor Watkins who surveyed the country said—

It is a large area of splendid country of uniform quality with good loam and clay subsoil, and is eminently suited for cereals. It has a reliable rainfall and exceptionally favourable climate, is in close proximity to the surveyed line of railway, within easy distance of a good harbour with shipping facilities, and capable of supporting a large and prosperous community and establishing a profitable and large export trade.

That would cover the information which was before hon. members last year when they rejected the Bill.

Hon. C. A. Piesse: Whose report was that?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Advisory Board's report and extracts from Mr. Watkins' report. The southern boundary of the wheat, or mallee, belt is irregular, and is at its maximum distance (30 miles) from the coast on the route of the proposed railway. Eight miles to the west of the 30-mile the wheat land approaches to within 15 miles of the coast. Dalyup agricultural area, one of the richest patches on the coastal sand plain, is 6½ miles from the mallee belt and five miles from the coast. Mallee, of a kind, grows on the sand plain also, but it is quite different in appearance

from what grows on the wheat land. I will quote from the report of Mr. O'Brien, the engineer for Mines Water Supply, who says—

The services of Mr. Surveyor Middleton were secured and he, with a suitable party, commenced work in February this year and finished early in August—time 6½ months; cost about £1,200. Mr. Middleton's report is attached. It was arranged that the examination would extend over an area 80 miles by 30, that is, from Esperance to 80 miles north and 15 miles east and west of the railway survey. The 80-mile was fixed as the limit of safe rainfall, as accepted at present, and the east and west distance from railway survey (15 miles) was taken as the maximum a farmer can profitably work from a railway siding. This area measures 1½ million acres and is shown on plan 1 with explanatory notes. Mr. Surveyor Middleton had to traverse the country in all directions in collecting W.S. data. The Surveyor General was interviewed and he readily agreed to recognise the classification of the country by our surveyor, and thus save the expense of another surveyor going over the same ground later on. The total area of land within 15 miles of railway survey and from Esperance to 80 miles is 1,540,000 acres—of this 1,028,000 is mallee land, and the balance, 412,000 acres, is known as coastal sand plain. Here and there peaty swamps exist which, if properly worked, should produce excellent root crops. Having a good rainfall the sand plain will, if properly improved, become good grazing country. About 176,000 acres of mallee land and 45,000 acres of coastal sand plain were selected up to March of this year. In that month the area this report deals with was reserved from sale pending the examination and this report.

According to this report good land extends all the way to Norseman, though, of course, the best is comprised within the wheat belt. I have only read portions of Mr. O'Brien's report, and what I propose to do is to lay it on the Table

so that members may investigate it for themselves. The soil in the whole of the country within the influence of the proposed railway is easily prepared for the plough. Within the mallee belt it is comprised of a light loam from four to nine inches deep, sometimes covered with a layer of sandy soil, and a good loam subsoil. There is a nodular limestone which is very useful as a fertiliser, from one foot to four feet thick under the subsoil. The soil, which is fine grained, varies in colour, light red, chocolate, light or dark grey, and cream. On the main roads the loam is washed out, leaving a white sandy residue behind. This gives a poor and hungry look to the land, and may possibly have some bearing on the reserved nature of the Advisory Board's report. The board did not minutely examine the land off the main roads. As showing how easily the land may be prepared for the plough, I will quote two estimates which have been prepared of the cost. The first deals with light mallee and scrub, and the other with the more heavily timbered mallee lands. In both cases the character of the timber is such that scrub-rolling may be resorted to in clearing operations. To roll the scrub on the light mallee land is estimated by Surveyor Middleton, who is supported by Mr. O'Brien, to cost 2s. 6d. an acre, and the picking up and burning subsequently another 2s. 6d. or 5s. per acre altogether. In the heavy mallee the rolling is estimated to cost 10s. an acre, but the picking up and burning on this land can be done for 1s., or 11s. altogether. We have thus an average cost of clearing, taking the two classes of land, of 8s. per acre.

Hon. C. A. Piessie: Nonsense!

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That information has been supplied by gentlemen who have had long experience in the classification of lands. In no other part of the State can wheat land be so easily and cheaply prepared for cultivation.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: He has not allowed for current rate of wages.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The soil is admittedly deficient in nitrogen and phosphorus, rendering fallowing

necessary, and also the use of super-phosphates, but that applies with equal force in nearly every part of our agricultural areas. Samples of soils were taken and examined, the examination of some being conducted by Mr. Mann, the Government Analyst. Mr. Mann reported that he found in some of the samples a high percentage of salt, and the analysis of further samples disclosed generally the presence of salt.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: There is plenty of salt.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The limit of tolerance of wheat for salt is placed by Mr. Mann at .05 per cent.; by Hilyard, the greatest living authority on soils, the limit is placed at .25 per cent.; and by Kearney, renowned in Egyptian and American agriculture, the limit is placed at from .25 per cent. to .4 per cent. Disregarding, however, the divergencies of scientists on this point, we have the proved fact that wheat has already been successfully grown on ten farms in the Esperance mallee country.

Hon. C. A. Piesse: What will you do with it when you grow it?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This demonstrates that whatever be the true limit of tolerance, there is not too great salinity of soil for successful wheat growing. It may be pointed out here that soil samples from other localities—the well-known wheat areas of Coorow and Baandee—have shown salt in every sample tested.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: There is not much wheat grown at Coorow.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think so. The existence of salt lakes, which occur more or less thickly throughout the area, has been referred to as condemning the country from an agricultural standpoint. But it is known that the soil is of rather better quality in salt lake country. I know myself at Carnamah, where there are many lakes, we have some of the very best soil in Western Australia.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Do they grow much wheat at Coorow?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think so. The existence of salt lakes, which occur more or less thickly throughout the area, has been referred to as con-

demning the country from an agricultural point of view, but it is found by those who have had experience that the soil is rather of a better quality in salt lake country. I know that at Carnamah, where there are many salt lakes, we have some of the best soil in Western Australia. The country in the Esperance district is similar in all respects, according to the reports of these gentlemen, to the mallee country now being developed in South Australia. As before stated, the deficiency of nitrogen and phosphorus in the soil renders fallowing necessary in order to secure good results. With the exception of the owner of Grass Patch, none of the settlers up to date have gone in for fallow. Despite this and the further fact that the crops grown have been in many instances scratched in with a cultivator, sometimes as late as July, the hay yields have been as high as 23 cwt. per acre, and last year with fallow an average return of 8 bushels of wheat to the acre was reaped.

Hon. D. G. Gawler: On what area?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know, but it has been considerably increased since last year.

Hon. C. A. Piesse: There are 170 acres of wheat there this year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There are 778 acres. There were 108 acres under wheat last year.

Hon. C. A. Piesse: The report I read distinctly states 170 acres.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The land cleared totals 5,000 acres and it is estimated that the contracts already arranged for represent a total of 20,000 acres. The future cultivation of this land, however, depends entirely on the fate of the Bill which is being submitted to this House for consideration. Although we may admire the pluck of the settlers which has induced them to go there and improve the land under the unfavourable conditions now obtaining, it can scarcely be expected that they will put the district to its greatest possible utility as a producing district until they have been furnished with facilities for transport.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: How soon could the railway be built if the Bill was passed?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I should think within three years at the outside. We must recollect that it is a line of 125 miles in length and it certainly could not be built this year, but it would be built as speedily as possible. I wish here to quote the report of Constable Brodie on the Esperance sub-district for the year 1912:—

I respectfully report having completed the winter collection of areas under crop for the year 1912 in the Esperance sub-district, which includes Dalyup, Fanny Cove, 14-mile Condenser, Myrrup, Israelite Bay, Balladonia and Thomas River. The total area under crop this season is 1,283 acres, which is an increase of 612 acres on last year. This is accounted for by the increased settlement on the mallee land along the Norseman-Esperance road, where only 174 acres was sown last year as against 758 acres this year. There is also an increase around Esperance. The season has been very favourable and the rainfall this year so far has been 14½ inches, which, although slightly later this year, has been very evenly distributed, and the majority of the crops are therefore looking well.

That report comes from an impartial source.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: What is the area estimated to yield?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It does not give that. The report continues—

Should the season continue favourable for a couple of months a record harvest is assured for the district.

Hon. C. A. Piesse: What is the date of that report?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have not got the date of it. It is a report for the season 1912. Constable Edward McKinley reported on the 2nd November, 1912—

I have to report having completed the crop forecast for areas 11, 17, and 18 respectively. The crops in and around Esperance have been a failure owing to continual drought. Area 11,

which embraces Dundas, Salmon Gums, Grass Patch, and vicinity, has also experienced unusually dry weather, but the crops at the last mentioned place, taking into consideration the small amount of rain registered and the hot spell of weather that has been prevailing lately, have given the settlers a good idea of what the ground is capable of producing with a fair rainfall. In only one instance, as far as I could ascertain, was the land fallowed, and that has produced, according to estimates, over one ton per acre, and was being harvested at the time of my visit. The other settlers did not fallow, as in most cases it was their first crop, and was put in after the rolled timber was burned, with the disc harrow, and, in consequence, their returns have not been so satisfactory. The rainfall has been considerably under the average for the locality, and it speaks well for the quality of the land for so favourable a result under the circumstances. The settlers are satisfied that next season by fallowing their land they can produce a bountiful harvest. In the majority of places visited in this area harvesting was in full swing, and some of the settlers intended stripping portion of their crop for wheat, the heads of which look satisfactory.

That is a report dealing with the other part of the district to be served by the proposed railway. With the object of encouraging the settlers to persevere with their holdings, after the bitter experience of agriculturists generally in the State last year, the Government assisted the settlers in this part in common with those of other parts, to tide over their difficulties. In doing this the Government were merely performing their obvious duty to the agricultural industry. The State has endorsed our action in this respect and what was done for the settlers of other parts has been done for the settlers in the Norseman-Esperance district, nothing more and nothing less.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: What has been done?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I will come to that before I conclude. Mr. Sutton, the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, was commissioned by the Minister for Agriculture to visit the Norseman-Esperance district and report generally on the question of financial assistance. Mr. Sutton recommended as a result of his investigation that the Government should grant assistance up to £500 on each agricultural holding. It was decided that this money should be lent for the purpose of clearing and for improvements on somewhat similar lines to those adopted by the Agricultural Bank in other districts. At the same time Mr. Sutton laid down specific lines upon which applications for assistance should be based.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Did not the bank lend that money?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Why not?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The bank would not lend the money. The manager promised that he would, but he afterwards changed his mind.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Under the influence of the late Minister for Lands.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Under the conditions laid down by Mr. Sutton there were 63 applications for loans and 57 were approved, totalling £5,900, of which £1,290 has already been paid over. In the consideration of any proposition for railways in agricultural districts, perhaps the first and most important point is the question of water supply and water conservation. The Government have had that most minutely inquired into, and I have some information on this head which I think hon. members will regard as very satisfactory. Having decided to appoint an officer to investigate the question, it was deemed desirable to secure for this purpose a gentleman who would combine with it the duty of classifying the land. After consultation with Mr. H. F. Johnston, the Surveyor General, Mr. Middleton was selected for this particular duty. This gentleman's qualifications entitled him to speak with considerable authority. He was engineering surveyor in charge of

one of the parties first sent out to locate tank sites on the goldfields, and as regards land valuation, he was for four years under the Surveyor General classifying and surveying land in this State. I propose to give hon. members the expert opinion thus obtained on this important question. Mr. Middleton says—

When I add that notwithstanding that there are some peculiar natural characteristics, the conservation of water presents no serious difficulties, I am confident that this mallee country, when developed, will be a splendid asset to the State, and will add largely to its exports. It is practically certain that there is no permanent surface water on the country examined. A limited quantity of a few hundred gallons of more or less foul water can be depended on at The Cups (a flat granite rock on the Fanny Cove track to Norseman) through the summer if not too much drawn upon. Granite rocks are very scarce, and not generally suitable for water conservation. Permanent soak water, in shallow wells, exists at Fitzgerald Peaks and Mt. Ridley. At the former mountain, the top of which I found to be 1,300 feet above the surrounding country, a good reservoir site was discovered, by which a concrete wall, four chains long and 30 feet high, would impound 8,000,000 gallons of water with a rock catchment of 73 acres.

The suitability of the country for tank excavation is an important question which was largely discussed in this Chamber last year and on that question Mr. Middleton says—

Owing to the country generally being covered with dense mallee and scrub, and the consequent difficulty in taking a boring plant and party through it, I adopted the plan of testing the ground for clay along the three tracks that now exist, namely, Norseman to Esperance, Esperance to Frazer's Range, and Norseman to Fanny Cove. If clay could be found at reasonable intervals on these tracks, it is fair to assume that it would be found in the intervening and adjacent country.

Clay was found along each track within the mallee belt at intervals where looked for—about seven miles apart. Though the bore holes, with one or two exceptions, did not disclose ground impervious to water from top to bottom, there was sufficient thickness of clay to allow for puddling the porous section of any tank.

In regard to tanks already excavated the report says—

Your department has already excavated tanks at Stennet's Rock, at the Salmon Gums, and Grass Patch (being respectively at the 93-mile, 65-mile, and 45-mile pegs), while that at the 30-mile is being excavated (now complete, 29th September, 1912). Stennet's Rock tank was outside the country I examined, but both Salmon Gums and Grass Patch tanks hold water well, and could be enlarged if required.

Hon. M. L. Moss: How much water is in them now?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I cannot give it actually to the pint, but the tanks are full in many instances. The report continues—

The roads board has excavated a small tank at the 79-mile, which has a good catchment, but does not hold water very well. I think better clay could be found on higher ground. However the leakage cannot be serious, for there was water in the tank (though a small one, and supplying fairly heavy traffic) throughout the summer months that I was there. About ten private tanks have already been excavated during this last summer by new selectors, and I am of opinion that they will all hold water but one tank on Location 44, which appears to me to have been sunk (in fairly low country) rather too close to the salt water level of the locality, and there is some danger of the water becoming slightly salt in consequence. If so, it will be an easy matter to fill up eight or ten inches of the bottom of the tank with good pugged clay from the sides, to make it water-tight. Mr. James Lewis at the 58-mile has had a small tank excavated for some time which is water-

tight. Mr. G. Thompson has within the last year or so excavated a tank at his Grass Patch property, which was nearly full of water at the time of my visit and appeared to be watertight. This gentleman had a small tank sunk originally on the opposite side of the road which, he informs me, held water well.

Hon. M. L. Moss: I hear that his tank is lined with galvanised iron.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: So much for the water conservation. Let us now inquire into the other equally important point, the question of the rainfall. The measured, not the estimated but the measured, records of rainfall covering the last fifteen years are available, and these show the following averages:—At the southern edge of the mallee country 18 inches; at Grass Patch 15 inches; at Gilmore's (92-mile) 11 inches; at Norseman 10 inches; at 80-mile (estimated) 12 inches; at 30-mile 18 inches.

Hon. M. L. Moss: In what time of the year does that rain fall?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have that information. I shall tell the hon. member directly. For the purpose of comparison, the following averages of rainfall in different agricultural localities are useful. At Merredin the average rainfall is 11.9 inches; at Kellerberrin 12.3 inches; at Mangowine 11.7 inches; at Mullewa 12.2 inches; at Balbinnia (within the Norseman-Esperance mallee belt about 100 miles east from Grass Patch) 14.33 inches; and at Burracoppin 10 inches. Now, with regard to the question, very pertinent and very proper, asked by Mr. Moss as to when this rain falls, the great bulk of it happens to fall at the right time of the year in the district to be served by this railway. Observations of the rainfall show that between May and September in the Esperance district 68 per cent. of the total fall is recorded, at Grass Patch 60 per cent. of the total fall falls during the same months, and at the 30-mile 63 per cent., and at Swan Lagoon (45 miles north) 60 per cent. Dealing with the question of water supply, Mr. O'Brien too has something of value to say—

Various reports and statements have been published to the effect that the mallee country is porous, that no water courses exist, and that great difficulties would be met in providing settlers with water and so on. A few words on the above will show how half a truth given out in all innocence may leave a bad impression. The mallee "surface soils," and to some extent the subsoils, are porous, and it is fortunate for the State they are. The soils of the mallee belt can easily absorb all the rain which falls and hold it for a considerable time before the sun's heat pulls it out. The sandy loams which prevail over the surface assist the retention of moisture in the soil below, and require less cultivation in fallow than heavier and clay soils. . . . Surface soils and subsoils absorb rain, and lose it again by evaporation, less the quantity used up by the scrub and trees. Taking this in conjunction with the character of the rain (slow soaking falls) and the easy grades of the country, the absence of watercourses is explained. After an examination extending over six months and carried out in a systematic way, I see no serious difficulty in providing a reliable, economical, and clean water supply all over the area of 1½ million acres, including railway requirements.

This is from the report of Mr. O'Brien, the engineer in charge of water supply for the Mines Department.

Hon. M. L. Moss: How long has he been an engineer in the department?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: He has been there for some years to my knowledge.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Have you a report from Mr. Sutton?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: He only recommended advances to the settlers.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Referring now particularly to the railway, the approximate length of the line is 125 miles to Norseman. Water supplies are provided throughout, there being Government tanks (the capacities of which could be easily increased) at 30-Mile, 46-Mile, 65-Mile, and 92-Mile. The original esti-

mate of the cost of the railway was £313,000, including an item of £44,000 for water supplies; and as the latter have since been provided it seems to me that the balance of the estimate would be £273,000, though it is possible that more money than this may be required, owing to the higher prices in that locality and, of course, higher wages.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: What would it cost to build the line recommended by the Advisory Board?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have not gone into that question. When the Bill was before the House last year it was thought that the necessary harbour improvements at Esperance, without which, of course, the railway would not achieve its greatest possible usefulness, would cost a large sum of money. Mr. Middleton, who has had some experience in these matters, and who was three years engineering surveyor and technical clerk on the Fremantle harbour works at their greatest activity, and was in charge of the field staff for engineering measurements, estimates that the required harbour improvements at Esperance can be effected for £44,000.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: He appears to be the ace of trumps.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: He has gone carefully into the matter, and he has come to the conclusion that we can provide a very good harbour indeed at Esperance for £44,000, made up as follows: sand dredging to 26ft. below low-water mark an entrance channel, 234,260 cubic yards, £6,000; swing basin, 921,000 cubic yards, £23,000; timber quay 60ft. wide and 500ft. long, £15,000; total £44,000. The harbour, he represents, is practically landlocked and affords a safe anchorage.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Where would it be?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have a map for the information of hon. members.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: The Esperance harbour is very large.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Of course if it is found necessary to construct a breakwater, he estimates one could be

built 2,500ft. long at a cost of £34,000 additional. We have thus an estimated expenditure on the railway itself, water conservation, harbour works and break-water, of approximately £400,000, or less than half the amount it was stated here last year it would cost to construct harbour works at Esperance.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: You have no water at the jetty.

Hon. D. G. Gawler: Is there any idea of the probable receipts from the line?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The estimated value of the land to be served by this railway, apart entirely from the value of the increased trade it would bring, is made up as follows: wheat lands within 15 miles of railway, £461,000; sandplain south of mallee belt, £92,700; sandplain within mallee belt, £5,000. This classification has been made by Surveyor Middleton. Though I have confined myself largely to justifying the line as an agricultural proposition, there are other aspects from which it may be advocated.

Hon. M. L. Moss: You said you would let us have that report of Mr. Sutton's. You have not referred to it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The report I have simply deals with the arrangement he made with the selectors down there. It was published in the *West Australian* this morning.

Hon. M. L. Moss: There is another report of Mr. Sutton's.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have not seen it.

Hon. M. L. Moss: Will the hon. member deny that Mr. Sutton made a report?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have none; I have not seen any.

Hon. M. L. Moss: Do you mean to say that the Wheat Commissioner has not been asked to report on the capacity of that country?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am not aware that he has been asked to report on it. He went down there to meet the selectors and endeavour to find out what amounts could be safely lent.

Hon. M. L. Moss: Yes; and there is another report. I want that produced.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is well known that the salt deposits in

this district are considerable and of great commercial value. In fact the Esperance Salt Company is already operating and the following is an extract from a communication addressed to the Government, showing the extent of the operations to date and the prospects of further development as soon as the railway is assured.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Where do they want to send the salt?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know where they propose to send it. Some hon. members think I am a thought-reader.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: No; we do not.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This letter proceeds—

You know we have spent over £2,000 during the last twelve months, and that we are blocked from spending any more until we can get steamers to call at Esperance, and they will not call there until the railway is linked up with Norseman. If this were done, we should erect a fine factory at Esperance and make regular shipments of salt to the Eastern States, and we feel sure that it would mean an influx of £10,000 per annum to the town of Esperance. We are most anxious to put down a factory, and the railway means that it will be erected as soon as the Bill is passed.

There is another feature to which I desire to make a brief reference. The climate and living conditions on our goldfields are such as to necessitate, particularly for the women and children, periodical holiday trips to the coast for health purposes. As members know, this necessity has been so well recognised in the past that a league is in existence, the object of which is to send the goldfields children to the coast. At present the only alternatives offered are Bunbury and Albany. The trip approximates 300 miles of railway travelling, and no stretch of the imagination is needed to picture the condition in which the women and children, already run down by the enervating atmosphere of the goldfields, arrive at the end of such a journey. A lengthy holiday is required for the purpose of recuperation, but the expenses of travelling



are so high that it is given to but few of the goldfields folk to afford the costly outlay involved. Given railway communication with Esperance the people of the goldfields would be comparatively close to one of the finest health resorts in the State. The suggestion has been made that failing the construction right through, the Norseman railway might be authorised from Norseman to the 65-mile point or the northern edge of the mallee country. But such a proposition cannot be met with favour. It would leave the railway system of the State in an incomplete condition, and the isolated line would be much more costly to operate than if it were all connected up with the present service. Further, as I have already said, the land between the wheat belt and Norseman is by no means so inferior as to be incapable of agricultural development, and when we remember the changed conditions of to-day as regards the capabilities of West Australian land, there is no reason to be pessimistic in respect to the probability of the whole of the lands from Esperance to Norseman being capable of profitable development from an agricultural standpoint. It must be remembered that although the Advisory Board did not recommend the construction of a through line, neither did they condemn the proposition. The report of the board was certainly a conservative one. The new facts adduced to-night, however, constitute further evidence of the soundness of this proposal, and I venture to think that if the Advisory Board had been in possession of the further facts and the further data I have submitted the reservations which they made would not have found a place in their report. The facts placed before hon. members to-night regarding the nature of the soil and the extent of cultivable land will, I think, induce them to give the Bill their most serious, and in the end, their most favourable consideration. The opinion formed of the value of the land by the Advisory Board was not the result of nearly so close an inspection as the inspection made by Mr. Surveyor Middleton and Mr. O'Brien, because whereas the Advisory Board confined themselves to the

main roads and the country adjacent to those roads, the time occupied by Messrs. Middleton and O'Brien in making their inspection was no less than 6½ months. Without laying myself open to a charge of being personal I think I may say the opposition displayed in many coastal circles to this railway proposition has been due largely to prejudice born of ignorance of the true position. I ask hon. members to put out of their minds anything in the nature of parochialism in considering this question. I trust they will approach it from a State point of view. We have here a vast area capable of profitable cultivation, and I place on the House the responsibility of rejecting this proposal. One word more. Parochialists tell us this railway would spell financial ruin to, or at all events the passing of, Fremantle as the chief port of the State.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Who says that?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That was said some years ago. I do not admit it, and I do not think at this stage the point will be raised in this Chamber, although probably some opposition which will be urged against the Bill may be inspired by a belief of that sort. I know that, some years ago, that was one of the reasons which actuated me in my opposition to this line, that and the then absence of any proof that there was good agricultural land along the proposed route. I think it will be admitted by those who have given the matter any thought at all that Fremantle is and must remain the chief port of Western Australia. It cannot be contended that the opening up of Esperance as a port will deviate the great ocean mail and cargo steamers. Fremantle will still be the terminus of the Trans-Australian railway, and the chief naval base in the State. We heard a similar cry raised regarding Albany when the mail steamers were transferred to Fremantle, yet Albany now is one of the leading ports of the State and the large expenditure which is annually found necessary is evidence of its great prosperity. That is the case for the Norseman-Esperance railway to-day, as well as I am able to submit it.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: What about estimated earnings of the railway?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I had some information in regard to them. It is estimated that the railway will carry about 500 tons per week.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Where from?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I cannot give you any further information on the point. It was supplied to me, and like the hon. member I wanted further information regarding it.

Hon. M. L. Moss: I should think you would.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That information was supplied to me. It came from one of the departments, and before making a statement to that effect in the House I thought it just as well to investigate the matter a little further. I hope hon. members will view this question having regard to the altered conditions, and that the prejudice of the past, if any prejudice has existed, will be dispelled, and that it will be the resolve of the House to consider this proposal on its merits. I feel certain that if hon. members will carefully examine these reports they will give favourable consideration to the proposition, and the railway will be built. I beg to move—

*That the Bill be now read a second time.*

Hon. M. L. Moss: Will the Minister lay on the Table the reports from which he has quoted, and if Mr. Sutton, the wheat commissioner, has made any other report on the subject than the one alluded to, will the Minister also lay that on the Table?

The Colonial Secretary: I will be only too pleased to do so.

On motion by Hon. D. G. Gawler debate adjourned.

#### BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION.

Report of Assembly managers received.

*House adjourned at 10.42 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 3rd December, 1912.*

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3.30 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTIONS (2)—COLLIE COAL.

#### *Spark Arresters in Agricultural Areas.*

Mr. A. A. WILSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, In view of the large reduction of the local coal orders for the Railway Department, and the consequent result that the coal miners of Collie are now working only half-time, and as such reduction of the coal orders is brought about by the total exclusion of Collie coal in the agricultural areas of the State through the alleged liability of the local coal to more freely cause fires by sparks from the locomotives than the imported coal, will he appoint a representative commission of inquiry to make investigations into the matter with the object of finally deciding the vexed question of whether Collie coal is more dangerous to the farming industry than the imported coal? 2, How much compensation has the Government paid to settlers during the past five years through fires caused by Collie coal? 3, Will he make inquiries from the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia as to the number of fires caused by sparks from coal, and the amount of compensation paid by the various Governments for losses to the settlers during the past five years? 4, Will the Government consider the question of offering a reward for an efficient spark arrester,