

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 7th August, 1924.

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

QUESTION—CATTLE, TICK EMBARGO.

Hon. J. EWING asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Will he lay on the Table of the House papers dealing with the raising of the embargo on tick cattle from the North-West entering the southern portion of the State? 2, How many of these cattle have entered the southern districts since the embargo was removed?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, The papers have been laid on the Table. 2, 1,471, but there is no possible danger of infection, as they have all been twice thoroughly dipped and inspected prior to being trucked.

QUESTION—COST OF LIVING COMMISSION.

As to Government Action.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Colonial Secretary: Has anything been done by the Government to give effect to the two motions tabled by the Premier (Hon. P. Collier), carried by the Legislative Assembly on 12th October, 1922, and reading as follows: (1) That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed for the purpose of ascertaining what sum of money is necessary to allow a reasonable minimum standard of living, having due regard for the obligation entailed in the maintenance of an average family. (2) That in the opinion of this House the Government should introduce legislation during the present session for the purpose of providing compensation for workers affected by occupational ailments and diseases.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1 and 2, No. The matter will be dealt with by legislation during the present session.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Sixth Day.

Debate resumed from previous day.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [4.35]: Before speaking to the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply, I desire to associate myself with the hearty wel-

come extended to the new members by previous speakers, and also to join with them in the expressions of regret concerning members who were not returned. I feel sure that the sincere and kind greetings extended to them, and the views that have been expressed by those hon. members who have preceded me, should enable our new members to realise that the older members entertain a very wide and liberal outlook upon affairs, and that they are imbued with the noble ideal of advancing the State and the betterment of its people as a whole. It will be acknowledged by all members that it is a distinct honour to belong to this Chamber, and I sincerely hope that the new members will grow to appreciate that feeling, and that they will themselves entertain it as strongly as the older members do now. I trust, further, that they will work to preserve the integrity of this Chamber and the maintenance of the rights and privileges that belong to it and its members. I did not have the pleasure of being a member of the House when Mr. Drew held the position of Leader of the House previously. I have known Mr. Drew for many years, and I know that the record of his achievements in this Chamber has survived. I feel certain that we may rely upon the Minister guiding the destinies of the Chamber with the same degree of wisdom and care as was displayed by him in earlier Parliaments. Of Mr. Hickey, the Honorary Minister associated with Mr. Drew, I can only say that I have known him ever since I have been in the House and, having been on the most friendly terms with him, I know that he will display that energy and zeal in his new office that characterised his efforts as a private member. I am sure he will devote his best endeavours to improving the position of the State at large. It will be acknowledged that no one could object to support being accorded to the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply. It is my intention to support it, but in doing so I will venture to make one or two observations regarding some of the matters dealt with in the Governor's Speech. The first and outstanding item referred to in that declaration of Government policy refers to immigration and land settlement in the following terms—

My Ministers regard a policy of immigration and land settlement, combined with the development of our natural resources, as of paramount importance. To the extent rendered possible by financial assistance received, and by land made available for selection, our kinsmen from overseas will be warmly welcomed.

The determination of the Government to continue the policy of immigration and land settlement will be heartily approved by all. It has received the support of speakers who have preceded me. Certainly the Government displayed commendable caution in suggesting the qualification contained in that paragraph. The Government state they will

carry out that policy to the extent rendered possible by the financial assistance received, and by the area of land available for selection. I commend them for that qualification, because we are given to understand that the cost of settling migrants will work out at considerably more than the amount originally estimated. That amount ranged from £1,000 to £1,200. Latter-day estimates indicate that the cost will more likely be double that amount. If, for example, we did what was indicated in the Governor's Speech of 1922, namely, the settlement of 6,000 farmers, at a cost of £1,000 per settler, the whole of the £6,000,000 for which the ex-Premier made arrangements in London would have been absorbed, without leaving any money available for settling other migrants who were to come to Western Australia. Let me refer to the Governor's Speech of 1922, which stated—

The arrangement contemplates the taking from Great Britain of 75,000 men, women and children in a period of three to five years, the direct aim being an annual total of 25,000 souls.

The Government contemplated carrying out the scheme in three years.

Under the agreement entered into with the Commonwealth Government, the whole cost of propaganda work, examination and passages is borne by the Commonwealth Government, whilst the State, through officers of its own nomination, maintains control of the selection of immigrants. The Commonwealth Government further undertakes to return to Britain, at its own cost, any immigrants who on or shortly after arrival are found to be unfit, by reason of mental or physical defects, to take their place in the industrial life of the community. The agreement between the Imperial Government, the Commonwealth Government and the State Government provides that in respect of the 75,000 immigrants £6,000,000 of money shall be made available to the State in annual instalments in the proportion of £2,000,000 to each 25,000 immigrants.

That works out, as Mr. Lovekin told us yesterday, at £8 per head.

The interest on this money for the first five years after each moiety is raised will be borne by the Imperial, the Commonwealth and the State Governments in equal parts. The per capita payment of 25s. annually by the Commonwealth to the State under the Surplus Revenue Act will be augmented on account of the 25,000 new arrivals by a sum almost sufficient to pay the State's third of the interest bill. Thus, not only will the immigrants be landed in the State free of all cost, but each loan raised under the arrangement will be free of interest charge to the State for a period of five years.

That agreement contemplated settling 75,000 men, women and children in three to five years. If we take it on the basis of three years, it would mean 25,000 per annum. By the end of July, 1923, we should have added 25,000 men, women and children to the population, and by the end of July, 1924, another 25,000, making a total of 50,000 to date. The Governor's Speech at the opening of the present session stated—

The group system, of which there are now 124 units, with a population of approximately 8,776, will be continued; and a Royal Commission to investigate many phases of group settlement will be appointed at an early date.

There we have the sum total of immigrants that have arrived under this scheme. Instead of getting 50,000 additional men, women and children, we have got only 8,776. It was intended to settle 6,000 additional farmers chiefly in the South-West at a cost of £1,000 per head, and that would have absorbed the whole of the £6,000,000 without leaving a penny piece for the benefit of other immigrants arriving here. The statistics show that there has not been such an increase in the population as was contemplated. This being the case, it is obvious there is something lacking. What it is I do not know, but I think it justifies investigation. I shall support the appointment of a Royal Commission. I agree to a certain extent with what Mr. Holmes said about having before us the result of the inquiry into the settlement of the Peel Estate, but I think both Mr. Holmes and Mr. Lovekin will admit there are other phases connected with the South-West groups that should be inquired into.

Hon. J. Cornell: No one can say what the Peel Estate will be in 10 years' time.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The Mitchell Government prevented us from inquiring into other than the Peel Estate settlement. We would have looked into the others for the purpose of comparison.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: These matters should be investigated. There is a large sum of money involved, and we as custodians of the public funds must see that it is wisely and properly expended. The desire for an inquiry arises, not out of any antagonism to those who launched the scheme, but from a desire to help them and the State. I do not wish to enter into any unnecessary controversy on the subject of the agreement—Mr. Lovekin dealt with it fully yesterday—but I think I am expressing the view of every member when I say that no one doubts the honesty and sincerity of the ex-Premier. He is an honourable man and a true patriot. Whatever we can do to make a success of the scheme he has fathered will be appreciated by him.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That is so.

Hon. J. Ewing: The hon. member said Sir James Mitchell had no capacity.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not think he said that.

Hon. J. Ewing: Yes, he did.

Hon. G. W. Miles: He meant as a leader.

Hon. J. Cornell: The agreement presupposed that for every man settled, others would be absorbed, which is absolutely absurd.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: When I first saw the agreement I took the view that, though it appeared to the Premier to be a good one, we would be assuming a burden of £6,000,000. It is true an interest concession was promised for a period of five years, but that was insufficient, having regard to the circumstances prevailing then and now. There was a large number of unemployed in Great Britain to whom doles were being paid, and it was to the advantage of the Old Country to get rid of as many of the surplus population as possible. The money might well have been given to us, instead of asking us to accept the liability for its repayment. As an alternative the Imperial Government should have advanced the money to the settlers themselves, and taken security for it over the properties that we were prepared to give the settlers free of cost.

Hon. A. Lovekin: And that is what could have been done.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Imperial Government could have expended the money on the different properties and taken the security direct. Then, instead of the State being saddled with a liability of £6,000,000, it would have had the benefit of the settlement, and the settlers would have been responsible to the Imperial Government.

Hon. J. Duffell: That is the most sensible suggestion I have heard.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I made that suggestion at the time. I am glad to hear that Senator Wilson is likely to secure a modification of the agreement, and I hope it may be on the lines I have indicated. If he can secure a modification, no one will be better pleased than the ex-Premier. Involved in the group settlement scheme is the vexed question of finance. It has been the most crucial question of the debate; it is, in fact, the keystone of the whole of our State activities. Whilst I admit that it is a cause for congratulation that we have reduced the deficit to £229,158, as compared with £405,351 last year, we must not lose sight of the fact that we still have an accumulated deficit of over six million pounds. It is true that there may be certain amounts to add to that, but it is also true that we have a sinking fund greater than the amount of the total deficit, or perhaps equal to it. At one time I suggested that the two—the accumulated deficit and the sinking fund—were running a sort of neck and neck race to see which would overtake the

other. But the position remains that we are still responsible, and instead of our wiping out the deficit, and placing something to credit towards reducing our total indebtedness, we still have that load on our shoulders. It is a serious burden, and there is only one goal which, in my opinion, the Government should strive to attain, and that is the goal of keeping the expenditure below the revenue. Of course I recognise that this will be very difficult.

Hon. J. Ewing: It is very close now.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is closer now than it has ever been before.

Hon. A. Lovekin: It is close, on paper only.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes, on paper. Whilst I believe that the present Government will make an effort in this direction I sincerely hope that they will not have recourse to increased taxation. I express this hope for the reason emphasised by Mr. Lovekin yesterday, that Western Australia, compared with the other States occupies a very invidious position. The other States have a lower rate of taxation than ours, and thereby they are able to induce investors to go to those States, and men who are prepared to establish industries will do so there in preference to setting them up here.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The present Premier, in a pre-election speech, said that there would be no increase in taxation.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I am pleased to hear that.

Hon. A. Lovekin: I hope he will honour the promises of the late Government.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There are certain ways in which the goal to which I have referred can be attained. One is by practising wise economies. It is essential, of course, to maintain the activities of the State, but that economies can and should be practised is undeniable. It is for the members of the Government to ascertain the best way in which that can be done. Another course is to endeavour to induce investors to come here and establish industries so as to increase our activities and our avenues of employment for the people, so that when we do get our population added to, as we hope will be the case, we shall then be able to meet that influx of population by having industries to provide employment. There is no use in bringing out 75,000 or 100,000 people to this country and to expect that every man jack of them will settle on the land, because they will not. A big proportion of those men want to settle in the towns; most of them are men whose habits have been formed and moulded in towns, and are therefore no more suited for employment on the land than—I was going to say—myself. Of course I am hardly suited for work on the land.

Hon. A. Lovekin: We want provision made for our growing youths.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is a wise remark. If we do not establish industries in which the youth of the country can obtain employment, we are going to destroy the manhood of the country, and seriously affect the State's future. I hope the Government will work towards that end. There is one thing the members of the Government, as sensible men, must bear in mind, and it is that they cannot continue to occupy the position they find themselves in to-day with State industries. State industries are opposed to the establishment of industries by private enterprise. We must give every encouragement to people who are prepared to invest their capital in industries in Western Australia, and we must make sure that that money, launched in the establishment of industries, will not be encroached upon by the State.

Hon. J. Cornell: State enterprises are not competing with private enterprise to-day.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: The influence is there.

Hon. J. Cornell: There is an honourable understanding that State enterprises shall sell at the same price as the others.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is not the point. The mere fact that the State concerns may be selling at the same rates as the others does not remove the objection that I have always maintained is present in connection with State industries.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The greater the success of the State enterprise, the greater is the menace to the community.

Hon. A. Burvill: The Federal tariff is a hindrance to the successful carrying on of enterprises.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not think that the Federal tariff is a hindrance in that respect.

Hon. A. Burvill: What about the local jam factory?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In that respect it will be observed from the speech delivered by the Federal Treasurer the other day that he recognises that the position of Western Australia demands special consideration. One of the things in connection with which that consideration is deemed to be necessary is the dumping of goods from the Eastern States. The Tariff Board, when over here, had an opportunity of going into that question. I know several who gave evidence before the board and the position was thoroughly ventilated. I believe the Tariff Board presented a report which I have not had the pleasure of reading, but which report threw a great deal of light on the unfair position in which Western Australia was situated on account of the attitude adopted by certain manufacturers in the Eastern States.

Hon. A. Burvill: Do you not think that does more harm than the State enterprises?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No. It is proposed that a Royal Commission shall in-

quire into this matter, in addition to others, and no doubt legislation will follow to meet the position.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: If the Federal Government do interfere, that will not justify the continuance of State trading.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I agree with that, but dealing with that particular phase, it is our right to demand from the Federal Parliament some protection so that we may establish our industries.

Hon. A. Lovekin: What does the Constitution say?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I recognise the constitutional difficulty, but at the same time something should be done, and if they are going to show a Federal spirit they must do justice to Western Australia.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: They get round the Constitution in connection with other matters.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not care what happens to the State trading concerns; they are at all times a hindrance to development by private enterprise.

Hon. J. Cornell: The State trading concerns were established to police the others, but they have gone in with the burglars.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I hope that the position will be thoroughly investigated by the Federal Government. There is another matter which might be mentioned—I am dealing of course with the question of how we can reach the goal to which I have referred, making the revenue and expenditure at least balance, and if possible show a credit balance. I have suggested two courses, economy and the encouragement of private enterprise. I would also indicate something which affects every section of the community, whether employer or employee, and it is that all should depend more on self-help and industry rather than on the government. The Government should not be looked upon as a good old milk cow that is expected to yield to every request made by road board, public bodies, or private institution. Let us try to depend more on self-help. It does not matter whether it be even a question of the reduction of hours on the part of an employee because it all tends towards reducing the productive power of the State. It is making it more difficult to carry on the work of government. These are all points that might well be borne in mind. We are all concerned in the welfare of the State, and should try to lessen rather than increase the task of government. In considering our financial difficulties we have been reminded on many occasions of the disadvantageous results accruing from Federation. Whilst it is true that Federation has certain advantages, it also has certain disadvantages. I am pleased to note from the Budget speech to which I have already referred that our position is recognised as exceptional, and that consideration will be given to it by means of a Royal Commission. A little less than a year ago, when the ex-Premier delivered his Budget

specially, he emphasised the position in the following words:—

It is true the Federal Government pay us a per capita amount of 25s., a special grant of £120,000, and £29,000 interest on transferred properties. From these three sources last year we received a total amount of £583,186. This year the estimated amount is £585,331. But let us look at taxation. Last year, the Federal Government collected in this State £2,359,443. In taxation they received £715,224, and in Customs £1,002,452.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I am not so sure about the Customs, for a lot of our goods came from the Eastern States.

The Premier: But that was the amount they collected from Customs in this State. The goods transhipped from the Eastern States to Western Australia paid duty in the Eastern States. From Excise, they collected £572,590, and from other sources £69,177. So, after paying the per capita amount, and the special grant, totalling £554,231, they got last year £1,805,712 in taxation from our people, as against the £987,558 taxation collected by the State Government, which, added to the per capita payment and the special grant, gave the State Government a total of £1,541,789 as against the £1,805,212 paid to the Federal Treasurer.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The Federal Government have to pay interest on our war loans, and also provide for defence.

Hon. A. Lovekin: We have plenty of margin in that to pay our own.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is well worth inquiry and, as I say, it has been pointed out that our State is under exceptional circumstances. I hope the position will be realised and that the Government, through the Royal Commission, will put the facts before the Federal Government in the most forcible way possible, so that we may get fair treatment. I do not propose to go further into the subject of finance, but will deal briefly with one or two other questions referred to in the Speech. There is that of the mining industry. I listened with interest to what Mr. Kirwan said on this subject. It is most regrettable that an industry that, at one time, was the most flourishing in Western Australia, should at present be really in a state of decay. The causes of that are to a certain extent attributable to over-legislation. Of course the increased cost of production has weighed very seriously against the development of the industry, just as it has adversely affected many other industries. Whatever can be done to revive the mining industry should be done. Having regard to the large increase in the cost of production, it was unwise on the part of both the Federal and State Governments to make the position more difficult by imposing taxation on profits. It is pleasing to note that they are seeking to remedy this to a certain extent. But it is suggested that the proposed remedy will merely be something in the

nature of a relief to the owners of mines from taxation until such time as their working capital has been returned to them. It occurred to me when Mr. Kirwan was dealing with this matter that the proposal on the part of the Federal and the State Governments will not go far enough. The other day a deputation waited on the Premier in reference to this subject, and he promised to give their proposals consideration. But a relief of that nature will not revive the industry to the extent necessary to encourage speculation. It will be admitted that if there be an industry in which a man will speculate, it is that of mining. He is lured on. Some men go out prospecting, led on by that will-o'-the-wisp, gold. Those who have not the capacity for undertaking prospecting are prepared to risk a certain amount of their capital in the industry.

Hon. A. Lovekin: They have very little spare capital left. It is all taken up in taxation.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: But this is the point: Whilst a great deal of capital has, by taxation, been taken out of the ordinary channels of business and diverted into the pockets of the Government, even if a man has any spare capital he will not invest it in mining under the existing conditions, or indeed under the proposed conditions, unless a further extension of those amendments is agreed upon, so that an investor will not be liable for taxation on shares that are not worth the money demanded from him in taxation. If the Government are going to submit that a man taking shares in a company has to pay taxation on their assessment, whether on the face value or on a market quotation, or on a valuation fixed by the Taxation Department, they will still prevent the speculative element from helping the development of the industry, and its progress will be further retarded. The fullest help should be given to the investment of money in the mining industry. Those who do invest, if they make a profit from the sale of their shares should be taxed on some less onerous basis than that which prevails at present. I hope further consideration will be given to this question. I realise that the North-West, with which Mr. Miles dealt so ably yesterday, is a territory teeming with mineral possibilities. We have to encourage people to go there and invest their money. We want to see that territory opened up. One of the best means of doing that is through mining. If something could be done to make mining still more popular by removing some of the handicaps at present imposed on investors, we should help forward the development of the State much more effectively than we are doing at present. Amongst the Bills it is proposed to deal with during the session is a Main Roads Bill. I am pleased to see that. I recently joined the Good Roads Association. I admired the work they were doing, and particularly the fine spirit and enthusiasm displayed by the president, Mr. Malloch, and the ex-president of the asso-

ciation, Mr. Mead, as well as by the others, and the heartiness with which they have taken up the matter. I am glad the Minister for Works has gone into the question. I hope means will be devised of introducing a Bill on the lines of the Victorian Main Roads Act. From what I can learn that Act is the best foundation for a similar Act in our State. It is proposed, also, to introduce a Fair Rents Bill. The Government will make a mistake if they do that. Some time ago I read some comments on a Rents Restriction Bill that was introduced last April in the Home Parliament, and which, although not a party question, almost affected the fate of the Government. I believe it was ultimately rejected. I could not say what the provisions of the Bill were, but I take it they were probably of the same nature as those contained in the Bill to be submitted to us. Certain measures were introduced during the war, but I think they have been either repealed or their provisions have been relaxed. The House of Lords has passed a Bill dealing with the housing scheme. That is a measure entirely different from a Fair Rents Bill. I have a copy of the "Spectator" referring to the Bill that was introduced by Mr. Wheatley. It shows that the Bill was intended to carry out a big scheme for the construction of houses, and extending over 15 years.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Another State enterprise.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is not a question of State enterprise. Some things the State can do better than the private individual. When a difficulty arises, such as this one, in a closely populated country, it is the duty of the State to come in, but I maintain it is not its duty to cut from under foot the activities of private individuals. It is not the function of the Government to enter into the brick or timber industries. That is the duty of the private individual. Where the people are affected and require help, and some organisation has to be established for the relief of their distress, then it is the proper function of the Government to step in.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Would not your argument apply to high rents?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No. A few weeks ago we had an indication as to how the Government of South Australia are meeting the position of the scarcity of houses. They have let a contract for the erection of 1,000 houses at a cost of about £636 each. The Government of New Zealand have entered into similar contracts. These two Governments are meeting the difficulty, not by means of a Fair Rents Bill, but by providing the commodity required, namely, houses.

Hon. G. W. Miles: We do that with workers' homes.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It is not the same thing. The question of rents, like the question of any other commodity or food supplies, is regulated by the law of supply and

demand. All the Acts in creation will not get over the difficulty, because they only create further difficulties. If we were going to improve the position by means of a Fair Rents Bill, I should have no objection; but instead of improving the position for the man who requires a home, it will make it more difficult for him to get one.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Do you know what is in the Fair Rents Bill?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No, but I assume it contains proposals to fix the maximum rent, or something of that sort.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It will restrict robbery.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Then it ought to come into the Criminal Code.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The immediate effect of placing restrictions on rents is to restrict building. If we restrict building it must mean the restriction of employment. Is it wise to pass a measure that will have that effect? If we want to be sensible people, let us pass a measure that will create more employment, and will relieve people of the distress under which they are suffering through the scarcity of houses. The more houses we erect, the more will there be available for those requiring them. People who are charging high rents will be glad to reduce them in order to get tenants. That would regulate rents, and ensure that the rents are fair.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: How long will that take?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That would depend on how the Government proceeded and what kind of houses they erected.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Rents would be cheapened if more bricks were laid per day.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: A rent restriction Bill would mean a restriction of employment. I hope the action of South Australia, New Zealand and the Old Country will be considered by the Government, who should seek to meet the position in the way these other Governments have found most desirable. They have had the experience, and it is worth while thinking hard before we make the position worse instead of better. I have tabled a motion in connection with the health regulations. I have asked that certain regulations be deleted. I noticed in the Budget Speech of the Federal Treasurer that this matter of health was referred to. He stated—

The Commonwealth Government has, therefore, decided to appoint a Royal Commission on which both Commonwealth and States will be represented to consider the present system of health legislation and administration, and to make a recommendation designed to secure the most economical and efficient results, including the elaboration of a national policy which can be followed by all authorities. The commission will inquire into the question of public

health generally within the Commonwealth. If possible, it will define the proper functions of the Commonwealth and States in order to prevent overlapping, and will ascertain in what direction the Commonwealth should move. Inquiry will also be made regarding physical defects with a view to corrective action. The Director-General of Health is visiting the United States, where he is to be the guest of the Rockefeller Institute. He will also visit most of the European countries in order that he may glean as much information as possible as to modern practice in health matters. Cancer is producing an increasing number of deaths in the Commonwealth, even more than tuberculosis, and a sum of £5,000 has been placed on the Estimates to begin a research into the causation of this dread scourge.

Hon. A. Lovekin: We had better qualify for that commission. I can see it is likely to be profitable.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Federal Treasurer is a medical man. If the Commonwealth Government think it is necessary to have uniformity in these regulations, and that the matter should be inquired into more exhaustively than has been done in the past, notwithstanding the conference that was held some 15 months ago, it is not unreasonable to ask that our regulations should for the time being, until the commission has furnished its report, be withdrawn. If action be taken by the Commonwealth Government with the concurrence of the State, and uniform regulations are introduced, this will remove a lot of the trouble which presents itself by one State having one set of regulations and another State a different set.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That is the position to-day.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Precisely. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.45]: In offering a few remarks on His Excellency's Speech, I wish especially to draw attention to one matter. I refer to the change made on this occasion in the opening ceremony. That change seemed to me a departure which should not meet with the approval of the House and one which ought not to be continued. I refer to the fact that on this occasion there was no guard of honour, a feature which hitherto has always been associated with the opening of Parliament. Nor was a Royal salute fired. It may be that these things are regarded as old customs which should no longer survive. But I personally feel that in the past those ceremonies worked no ill effects upon the community, and I regard them as part and parcel of the system under which we have grown up.

Therefore I hold that these ceremonies should be jealously preserved. They are inherent to a true recognition of the dignity of Parliament and the powers of Parliament; and we should preserve those old associations, and not allow ourselves to be led away by remarks sometimes made by certain people, to the effect that they do not care about ceremonies and dignities. The ceremonies which have been omitted carry with them much more than appears on the surface. In my opinion they go a long way towards helping a young generation to be loyal to the Throne and loyal to Parliament. There is nothing more inspiring, I believe, than the march past of an army, and the spectacle of those in command taking the salute; and similarly with the Navy. Let us come nearer home. Even the Labour Party themselves have their marches through our city streets. The industrialists are proud of their special trades and their special distinctions. No good purpose is served by whittling away old customs which have been familiar to us from childhood, and which I feel sure do good. I cannot for a moment imagine that the consideration which led to the omission of the ceremonies alluded to is the saving of the cost. Surely, even with all our deficiencies and shortcomings and deficits, it has not yet become necessary to make such a paltry economy.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: The Government were the cause of the omission.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: These old associations should not be discarded. I have referred to the matter in order to show where I stand and in order to draw the attention of hon. members generally to the omission.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The Government might give good reasons for the omission.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: If we knew their reasons, we might bring forward better reasons for the retention of these old customs. I have not heard any member during the present debate raise a question as to whether or not the Address-in-reply serves a good purpose. Personally I regard this debate as affording a splendid opportunity for dealing with questions which have recently arisen, particularly during and after a general election. We can all feel glad that on this occasion we have heard many outspoken opinions from members of this House on the result of the general election and the reasons for that result. As one who has been for many years associated with this Chamber, and with various political parties, and also as one who has had a knowledge of the attitude taken by the Press on the political questions recently before the electors, I have been both enlightened and entertained to learn from previous speakers that the Mitchell Government did not suffer defeat chiefly at the hands of the Country Party. The Press has laid at the door of the Country Party

a charge that we were not giving to the Mitchell Government that loyal support which the Government might have expected. Further, the Press alleges it was entirely due to the attitude of some leading members of the Country Party that the Mitchell regime went under at the polls. However, it is particularly satisfactory to know that the national supporters of Sir James Mitchell recognise the fact that they had as much to do with his downfall as any other section of the community—if not more.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Who are the National supporters who said that?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Mr. Holmes.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Mr. Holmes is not a National supporter.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I understood Mr. Ewing himself to acknowledge it.

Hon. J. Ewing: You did not understand anything of the kind.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It is within their own ranks that the Mitchell Government find the severest critics; but the criticism has come too late.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: The Country Party came back rather a shattered army.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: No; they came back stronger than they went before the electors. Despite the fact that they had kept the Mitchell Government in power so long, their little family quarrel was used by Sir James Mitchell and his followers as a red herring. The late Premier and his colleagues did not go before the electors for the purpose of giving an account of their stewardship during the past three years, but for the purpose of using the internal dissensions of the Country Party as a red herring. In the meantime they entirely forgot to go around among their particular supporters and look after their seats in doubtful districts, seats which they might have retained or secured had they given more attention to their home fires. The late Government might well have drawn a lesson from the general election of three years ago, when some of their most important seats were lost, though not necessarily to Labour. Three years ago the electors gave some little indication of what they were smarting under, because the policy of abolishing State trading concerns and day labour undoubtedly had not been carried out. The Mitchell Government had promised that public works should be carried out by contract; but that promise was never carried into effect. Certainly at this general election the people showed that they had made up their minds no longer to support those who had not carried out the wishes of the country as expressed three years before.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Was it day labour that turned out Mr. Carter?

Hon. E. H. Harris: His trouble was lack of trams in Leederville.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: It certainly was not day labour.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: As I understand the position, the Country Party undertook to support the Mitchell Government

because of that Government's promise, made to the electors, that they would place the finances of the State on a sounder and better footing. They were to restore the confidence of the investing public. They were to do away with State trading and State competition. They were to carry out public works by contract instead of by day labour. Those, I agree, were the wishes of those sections of the community which supported the National Government. They have been emphasised this afternoon by Mr. Nicholson who holds the same opinions as Mr. Lovekin and others have expressed here. Undoubtedly the essential thing is to restore the confidence of the investing public.

Hon. J. Ewing: Has it not been done?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Probably it has been done since the last general election. In my opinion, however, it certainly has not been done up to the present. Therefore one hopes the best from the new Government, of which Mr. Drew is the representative in this Chamber. I welcome Mr. Drew back to the House. I served here when he was Leader previously; and I must say that in view of the change of Government which has occurred, there is no one I would rather see leading this House than Mr. Drew. His re-election gave me great pleasure. I also welcome the other new members of the Chamber, and sincerely hope that as time goes on they, like many other good and loyal supporters of one party or another, will realise that this is a broader-minded Chamber than they were led to expect, and particularly that this is not a party House. New members have come here with the intention of making this Chamber a party House. Some have even come here with the intention of doing away with it.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am glad I have not heard that put forward by any of the new members this session.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You will hear of it.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I hope, if those views are held by new members, they will alter them before they have been with us very long. I am convinced that the Government will recognise the necessity of endeavouring to do what the late Government failed in, namely, the restoration of confidence on the part of the investing public. If Ministers take note of the remarks of Mr. Nicholson and other members, and will adopt more rational methods than were displayed when in office before, they will go far towards restoring confidence in the State and will probably have more than three years of office ahead of them. The State requires confidence on the part of those who have money to invest, more than anything else. I regret that almost the first action taken by the Government was the re-introduction of the 44-hour week in favour of a section of the Government employees.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: The Government merely carried out their policy.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Government also went out of their way to provide works for the unemployed on the goldfields to give the men a wage in excess of that ruling in the mines and in the service of the municipal authorities. The scale of wages on the mines represents 13s. 6d. a day, while the men working underground get 14s. a day. The men employed by the municipal authorities get 15s. a day for a week of 48 hours. The Government, however, paid the men on relief works at the rate of 16s. a day for a week of 44 hours. If the information I have received on that point be correct, that action of the Government will not tend to restore confidence.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They set a good example.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I do not know that it is a good example.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: But is your information correct?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: That is what I was told.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The rate is 2s. 0½d. an hour.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: What is the rate per week or per day?

Hon. E. H. Harris: The men are paid by the hour.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: They are paid a daily rate for an 8-hours' day.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member desires the Minister to reply to his point.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: What I desire to point out is that the Government have gone behind the back of the Arbitration Court and have fixed a rate in excess of that obtaining on the fields.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Do you think 13s. 6d. a day is enough?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: What I do think is that if the Government start with a rate of 16s. a day, they will close down the mines. That is a most important aspect. After the Arbitration Court has thrashed the matter out, and come to a decision as to the wages to be paid so that the mines may live—

Hon. W. H. Kitson: It is not a question of mines living, but of men.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am afraid the effort will be to throw men out of work, for they will leave the mines and join the ranks of the unemployed so as to receive the Government doles.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The employment provided is only temporary.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I remember, years ago, when the Labour Government were in power, free meals were provided for the unemployed in Perth. Workers throughout the country soon threw up their jobs, drew what money they possessed or was owing to them, and came to the city to have a jolly good time. They believed that if free meals were available, they should have some of them.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You are not serious.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: That is why the Labour Government shut down on those meals. They found this out.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: If the Government desire to provide relief works, they should not pay a higher wage than is fixed for the lowest class of work in connection with mining, or they will destroy confidence in the industry. I congratulate Mr. Kitson on the speech he delivered when moving the adoption of the Address-in-reply. He referred to the necessity for the establishment of a high school at Fremantle. An enormous amount of money is spent annually in connection with education, and, as mentioned by Mr. Nicholson, some of it is not spent in the best directions. We have a vast territory to develop, and it is far more important to foster agricultural education than to establish high schools in Fremantle and other large centres. I congratulate the Government on their decision to further the proposal of the late Government regarding the establishment of an agricultural collage. I had hoped that the site for that institution would be selected at some spot between York and Northam or Beverley. I have been told that the Government have practically decided upon the site, and I trust that the area selected will provide ample room for the erection of an up-to-date institution, where the State will be in a position to give students a course of agricultural education that will be welcomed by the people. In my opinion it is essential that a site, such as those along the banks of the Avon River, should be chosen, so that a study of irrigation and dairying may be added to the curriculum. I do not know whether the Government have that matter under consideration, but it is in that direction that a great deal of good can be done for the youths of to-day. Such expenditure would be much more advantageous than lavish expenditure on secondary education in our larger centres. The Governor's Speech indicates the intention of the Government to introduce legislation affecting closer settlement and also an alteration in the land tax. I will deal with those measures when they come before the Chamber in due course. I hope the Government will realise, however, that reduced, rather than increased, taxation is required to encourage people to proceed with the development of the country. In South Africa reduced taxation is imposed upon people who spend their money in introducing better stock into the Union, and South Africa has secured enormous prices for her stud sheep as a result of that policy. The fact that sheep of such a description have been grown in South Africa means a greater return to the country than the taxation that might have been imposed by the Government. Possibly in that direction the Government may find it advisable to encourage the pastoral industry and also other industries as well.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The Wyndham Meat Works are doing that in connection with

cattle. It is the only good thing they are doing.

Hon. V. HAMFERSLEY: I recognise that.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 7th August, 1924.

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

RETURN—WATER CARRIAGE SUBSIDY.

Mr. LATHAM (York) 4.34: I move—

That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing the amounts paid to the Railway Department, as a subsidy by the Treasury, for water carted over the railways for the use of settlers in the agricultural area for the years 1922-23, 1923-24.

This is only a formal motion, and I do not think—

Mr. SPEAKER: It being formal, the hon. member cannot speak to it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I think the motion might well be extended.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss it.

The Minister for Lands: But if the hon. member wishes to raise an objection—

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I rose to discuss the motion.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss it. He can raise an objection to it. Does he object to it?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes, I object to the motion in its present form.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then it cannot be further entertained at this stage.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motions by Mr. Richardson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Sir James Mitchell (Northam) on the ground of ill-health; and to Mr. Teesdale (Roebourne) on the ground of urgent private business.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Sixth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Mr. CHESSON (Que) [4.37]: I find it more difficult to speak from the Ministerial side than from the Opposition side. Whereas when in Opposition we were free to offer destructive criticism, when one is standing behind the Government he is expected to bring forward something constructive. Since last session our party has been before the people and they have returned us to power with a mandate. The policy speech put forward by the then Leader of the Opposition, now the Premier, has been endorsed by the people. This leaves but little for members on this side to speak upon. Reading the Governor's Speech we realise that it is our own policy. Consequently, the ground is cut from under the feet of members on this side. Some Bills foreshadowed in the Speech have been before us on previous occasions and, although passed in this Chamber, have been slaughtered in the other House, or at all events mutilated beyond recognition. I hope when they are again dealt with this session they will meet with a better fate. With two exceptions my remarks will be confined largely to questions affecting my own electorate. In the Speech it is proposed to bring down a Land Taxation Bill and a Closer Settlement Bill. I was pleased with the utterance of the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) the other night, and I feel sure that when the Closer Settlement Bill comes down that hon. member will support it. Certainly his deductions in respect of it were perfectly sound. When the member for York (Mr. Latham) made his maiden speech in the House he also was in favour of that measure.

Mr. Latham: He is in favour of it now.

Mr. CHESSON: No, I rather fancy he has slipped from grace. On the earlier occasion he put up a very able speech and showed that he was in favour of land values taxation.

Mr. Latham: No, no.

Mr. CHESSON: But since then, as I say, he appears to have changed his views.

Mr. Latham: You will find me supporting the closer settlement policy, but not that of land values taxation.

Mr. CHESSON: I am going to make a claim on behalf of my electorate. I contend that if land values taxation is introduced, connected with that should be a reduction of railway freights. Freights play a big part in the development of the outer goldfields. A large portion of the revenue to be derived from land values taxation should be earmarked for the reduction of railway freights. Under our present system of railway freights, the further out a man is the more he is penalised. The people of the metropolitan area do not pay much in railway freights.

Mr. Clydesdale: They pay their share..