

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 27th June, 1906.

	PAGE
Commission for Swearing-in Members	47
Sitting Days and Hours	47
Committees of the Session	47
Address-in-Reply, debate resumed, adjourned	47

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. H. Briggs) took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

COMMISSION FOR SWEARING-IN.

The Clerk read a commission received by the President from His Excellency the Governor, authorising him as President to administer to members of the Council who may have to be sworn the prescribed oath or affirmation.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

On motion by the Colonial Secretary, ordered that unless otherwise ordered the House do meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 4.30 p.m., and sit until 6.30 p.m. if necessary, and if requisite from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

COMMITTEES OF THE SESSION.

On motions by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, sessional committees were appointed as follow :—

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE :—The President, Hon. M. L. Moss, and the mover; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and authority to confer on matters of mutual concernment with any committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Assembly.

HOUSE COMMITTEE :—The President, Hon. Z. Lane, Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom, Hon. R. F. Sholl, and the mover; with power to act during the recess and to confer with any similar Committee of the Legislative Assembly.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE :—The President, Hon. J. W. Hackett, and the mover; with leave to sit during any adjournment and during the recess, and authority to act jointly with the Library Committee of the Legislative Assembly.

PRINTING COMMITTEE :—The President, Hon. G. Randell, and the mover.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

THIRD DAY OF DEBATE.

Resumed from the previous day.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER (East): In rising to support the adoption of the Address-in-Reply, I feel it is my duty to say a few words in respect to the retirement of Sir George Shenton from the Presidency of this House. It is well to remember his great hospitality and the able way in which he conducted his business as President and devoted his time to the duties of the House. I consider that Sir George is entitled to the best thanks of the whole of this State for the time and interest he has devoted to the welfare of the country, and I feel sure that is recognised by the whole of the State. When we consider the number of years that he has spent in parliamentary duties and the way in which those duties were performed, everyone will agree with me that we are indebted, and the whole State is very much indebted, to Sir George for the part he has taken. I would like to congratulate our worthy President on his accession to the throne of the presidency of this House. I am sure his manly bearing and the ability he possesses prove to us that he will perform his duties with credit to himself and with satisfaction to the whole House. I also express my gratification at the appointment of Mr. Kingsmill as Chairman of Committees. [Interjections indicating that the appointment had not yet been made.] I can only say that he with his tact and ability will give us satisfaction. I will now go on to the Governor's Speech. That Speech contains things which are not to my liking, because it speaks of a tax on land, and also an alteration of the franchise of this House. Those are the two principal planks of the Labour platform. However, I shall be pleased to express my opinion in regard to what is embodied in this Speech. We are assured here that the mining, agricultural, and pastoral industries are in a flourishing and satisfactory condition. We all hope this is the case, and we are willing to admit, I think, that these are the principal industries of the country. But with regard to the pastoralists I do not hesitate to say that this industry does not receive as much consideration at the hands of the

Government as it ought to in the shape of assistance in the way of obtaining water by artesian boring and works of that kind. I do not think there is a single station where I have heard of water being obtained for the benefit of the pastoralists. The pastoralist has to contribute to the revenue and he has to pay for an enormous area of territory in order to keep sheep to make the industry pay, and yet nothing has been done in order to develop that industry. No one can say that it is not one of the most important industries in the whole of the State. We are told that there is a slight reduction in the gold production. I sincerely hope that this will not continue to be the case and that through aiding prospectors and doing all that the Government can towards assisting them in the discovery of new finds something will crop up to take the place of that which may peter out. We are assured that deep sinking continues satisfactory and prosperous, and we earnestly hope it will be so. I am sure that we all heartily congratulate those who have invested their money in these ventures and wish them success. It is very gratifying to know that the dividends from the goldfields have been so satisfactory during 1905, and we sincerely hope that they will continue to be better each year. We are also told that considerable development had taken place in the exploitation of the baser metals, notably tin and copper, and it is anticipated that the coming year will show a considerable increase in production. I hope this will take place. We know that there have been large developments in the southern districts in regard to these metals; and I hope they will prove successful. With regard to the increase of population and land settlement I would like to say a little, particularly in regard to the description of settlers we have on the land. We know that a very large number of these settlers, and the very best of them too, are farmers who have come here from the other States, and many of them have held farms and homesteads there for many years, but have been obliged to give over farming in consequence of the imposition of higher taxation and of the many difficulties in the way of fast failing markets. We are approaching the same difficulties in this State. We

are fast over-reaching our local consumption and must look forward to exporting to obtain a market for our produce. So those men who come to us from the Eastern States will be faced with the very same obligations and difficulties they left behind them. I trust that farmers will do as much as possible to protect this very important industry. We all know that none can exist without bread and that the land must produce all we require. I therefore consider that every possible encouragement should be given to those on the land, and that they should not be discouraged in any way. We are pleased to see that the Government are prepared to assist in the development of this valuable industry by the farther extension of railways; and I hope that with due care railways will be constructed to all parts of the State where it may be considered we have sufficient good agricultural land for cultivation. In the matter of immigration I think the House will fully indorse the opinion expressed by Sir Edward Wittenoom yesterday, when he told us how undesirable it was to establish men here as farmers without colonial experience. I have myself witnessed many instances of that, and I certainly think that no one is fit to settle on the land until he has had a few years of colonial experience. I am pleased to see that the Government are prepared to offer farther assistance to settlers through the Agricultural Bank. There can be no dispute that the Agricultural Bank and the advances made by the Government have materially benefited agriculture and encouraged settlement on the land. I think we have every reason to be satisfied with the efforts of the Agricultural Bank in this respect, and every reason to congratulate ourselves on the way it has succeeded. We are pleased to see that provision is being made for the survey of the North-West coast. I do not know very much about the North-West coast, but I am quite sure that too much knowledge cannot be ascertained of all of our coasts and that surveys are greatly needed, because the more enlightened we are the greater benefit it will be to the State. With respect to loans, I am sure that all of us would like to see the State out of debt; but we also recognise that it is impossible to carry on reproductive works without farther borrowing. I hope

that no public works will be undertaken except those that will be most certainly reproductive and that are absolutely necessary for the advancement of the country. Now I come to a point which is important to me every time I think of it, and that is the cost of Federation. We are told in the Governor's Speech that at the recent conference of Premiers of the various States a resolution was adopted in connection with the return of the Commonwealth surplus revenue on a population basis which, if carried into effect, would mean a loss to this State of, approximately, £433,000 a year, and that is in addition to what we have already lost. This simply spells ruin to Western Australia, and I am quite sure that every member of this House will admit it is the case, and that we should do all we possibly can to get out of the difficulty we have been run into by the Federal Government. Can anyone tell me in what way we have benefited by Federation? In any single instance can it be said that the Federal Government have done anything for the State that has promoted its interests or benefited it in any direction? No. We are crushed and crippled in every way. If we want a mail service we are obliged to appeal to the Federal Government, and they have exercised their authority in an arbitrary manner. I consider it the duty of every well-disposed resident of this State to exert himself to the utmost to get clear of Federation. I fully endorse every word uttered by Sir Edward Wittenoom yesterday, and I think we ought none of us to be afraid of expressing our opinions in the same direction. I would be willing to give anything I could, and to do everything in my power, to get the State released from Federation. It is like a great octopus drawing the life's blood away from us, and it is not reproductive for us in any respect.

HON. J. A. THOMSON: On a point of order, I wish to ask if the hon. member is quite correct in speaking as he has spoken in respect of Federation.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member is in order in speaking to the Governor's Speech.

HON. J. A. THOMSON: And in advocating separation?

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member is in perfect order in referring to Federa-

tion as it appears in the Governor's Speech.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: Thank you. I am not afraid of the consequences of anything I say in this regard, because it comes from the bottom of my heart. I feel that the future of this State will be crushed for ever unless we can be released from Federation.

HON. J. A. THOMSON: Again I must rise to ask if any member of this Chamber is in order in advocating separation, as the hon. member has been doing? It is absolutely disloyal to the Federation.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member must ask his question, and not make a speech.

HON. J. A. THOMSON: I ask if any hon. member is in order in practically advocating separation from the Commonwealth of Australia.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member must not take a hypothetical case; he must speak to the matter in hand. The hon. member must put a specific case, and not a general question. I say that Mr. Dempster is in perfect order in speaking of Federation as it is in the Governor's Speech.

HON. J. A. THOMSON: Is the hon. member in order when he practically advocates separation, or a movement in favour of separation from the Commonwealth of Australia?

THE PRESIDENT: I have already ruled that Mr. Dempster is in order.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: Whatever Mr. Thomson says will not make any difference to my reading of this matter. We are told that it will be necessary to carry into effect certain economies, and our attention is called to the report of the Public Service Commissioner. We all know how necessary it is to carry out economy, and that when a business department does not pay, one of the first things a practical business man would do is to cut down expenses, and to meet the expenditure as far as possible he would reduce the staff or amount of the salaries paid to the staff. However, I think there are few instances among the officers of the public service where salaries could be decreased, because we must all live and let live; and I think officers should be sufficiently paid. Though I like to see economy practised wherever it is possible, I always advocate

justice and fair play to those getting their living in the employment of the State. I am sure we are all agreed that the large expenditure necessary in the public service requires looking into ; but now I hope we have a stable Government that will have time to look carefully over all of these departments and see that reductions may be effected wherever it is possible to do so. With a view of forwarding the future interests of the State, I hope the Government will endeavour to encourage the pastoralists, because I am sure a great deal ought to be done. I myself would have preferred vastly to have seen the pastoralists assisted in the matter of fencing in their holdings to protect them from the invasion of rabbits, instead of putting the State to such an enormous expenditure on the boundary fences that have been erected. Had the holders of pastoral leases or of valuable agricultural land, which might be threatened by the rabbits, been enabled to fence in their holdings by substantial and properly constructed fences, the fences so constructed would have added considerably to the value of the properties, and would not only have protected the owners from rabbits, but also from the trespass of stock. It would have been a much wiser departure on the part of the Government had the settlers been assisted in this way instead of spending such a large sum of money in the construction of two lines of fence. Now we approach another subject which I shall never favour—the taxation of land. I consider it undesirable. It certainly cannot be encouraging to those who wish to settle on the land to know that in future a tax will be put on the land—a tax which, though it might not be of very great moment at first, can always be increased until it becomes a considerable burden to people. We all know what is the effect in other countries, and it will occur here. Those who have no land themselves favour a land tax. So long as they can throw the burden off their own shoulders they do not think there is any injustice in the taxation, for they know the money will not come out of their own pockets. The idea of taxing the land in order to encourage the bursting up of large estates is ridiculous. How many large estates are there in the whole of Western

Australia? If you reckon them all up you will not find more than two or three large estates worth bursting up. There are estates of 20,000 or 30,000 acres of land, but in the majority of instances the land will not pay for closer settlement, and people hold it because they are not able to sell it. If the Government impose a tax on land the owners will have to throw the land up or dispose of it for less than that which they gave for it. I feel very sore on this matter, because it is to the interests of the country to protect those settled on the soil and to encourage the settlement on the soil of people who will make the land produce all that it is possible to produce. There is no land in any part of the State which cannot be made productive by the use of fertilisers. Every year I have been convinced that there is very little land that cannot be made productive of something, if the people only use the fertilisers which are most adaptable for that soil. It is hard to say what kind of soil cannot be made use of if science is brought to bear on it and the soil is thoroughly considered in all its aspects. I therefore look forward to large things being done in this country. There are a number of people who wish to settle in this country and who will make good settlers, and I wish them all the success that is possible. We should do all we can to welcome people to the country, those who have a desire to settle down in the State and become permanent sources of revenue and of benefit to the country. It has often struck me that it is not the man who holds a bit of land in the country who should be taxed ; it is the man who has not sufficient interest in the country to buy land who ought to be taxed. The man who will not acquire a single acre is the man who wants the next person to be taxed. If such people had a few hundred acres of land they would not be so desirous of advocating a land tax. I sincerely hope the result of this session of the Council will be satisfactory to the country.

HON. E. McLARTY (South-West) : I do not intend to take up much time in offering congratulations to you, Mr. President, for the high position you fill ; I simply content myself by assuring you that I endorse all that has been said by previous speakers. I also desire to con-

gratulate the new Government, especially Mr. Piessé, who I am sure will be a great acquisition to the Government in the many matters appertaining to land and the questions of agriculture which will be dealt with during the present session. I am not going into ecstasies about the new Government, as many have done; I prefer to wait and judge by results, and I hope at some future date I shall be able to congratulate the State on the wise administration which I think is the main thing we have to look forward to. But I feel somewhat disappointed at the turn of events recently. I had a good deal of confidence in the Rason Government and I regretted very much that Mr. Rason saw fit to resign the position of Premier. I feel that with such support as he had in Parliament and throughout the State he would have done better to stick to his colours, and have shown to the country that he was capable of carrying on the affairs of the State without resorting to additional taxation, as he stated in his election speeches that he believed he could do. Whether the fault rests with Mr. Rason or his party I do not know; but I am sorry that he should have forsaken his supporters in the time of need, rendering necessary a change of Government. With regard to the Premier, he has an intimate knowledge of the State, and should be well in touch with its requirements; and I shall be somewhat disappointed if he does not give a good account of his stewardship at the end. Dealing with the Speech I certainly think it is about the most vague and indefinite Speech we have had before the House for a long time. There is nothing specific in it to comment on; it deals with generalities. With regard to the suggested loan, I think it will commend itself to members of the House. I feel that public works are necessary, and I know it is impossible to carry them out without resort to a farther loan. We are also told that one of the most important Bills to be brought before us is one dealing with taxation. However much we may dislike it, we know we have to face it. My anxiety is to know how the people are going to pay the taxes if they are to increase at the rate they have been doing. This land tax is no new thing; we have already passed a Bill giving

the local bodies power to impose a tax on land, and they are doing it pretty freely. One roads board is levying a tax at the rate of 2d. in the £. It is an extortionate and unbearable rate. That board is not satisfied with increasing the rate to 2d., but some have urged that it should double the valuations all round. That is the result of giving power to these local bodies. When the Bill for giving this power was before Parliament I expressed the opinion that a maximum of 2½d. was too high, and it was argued that we could trust the local bodies, we could trust to their common sense. The result is as I anticipated. This particular board consists of men of very small holdings, who are engaged in working orchards. There are also some railway men on the board, men who work on the permanent way for their day's wages and have taken up a quarter of an acre or a half-acre block adjoining the township. They put themselves up as members of the board, and are elected. Their whole idea, as soon as they get on the board, is to make the big fellows sit under; they put a rate on the land so as to make the big fellows sell it. That is not the way people who have invested their money in land and spent most of their lives in developing the land should be treated. The land will not bear such taxation. If we have to pay—and there is no doubt we shall have to pay if the law is not altered—the maximum amount of 2½d. in the £, and a State tax of 1d. in the £, it will be very hard indeed for people to live in this country. Again, it will lessen the power of settlers to develop their estates. My experience, and I claim to have some, is that there are exceptional cases, but where men hold land they are doing the best that they can with it. Most people spend more than they can afford on their land; and many people spend more than they get out of it. I myself put more money into my land every year than I get out of it. Of course I look to future returns. That applies to a good many other people. I contend that it is not a wise policy to tax people to such an extent. Again, is there necessity for such a heavy rate? The district I refer to has a very small population and has good roads and plenty of material to make them; yet to get at the people who

hold the land the board propose this extortionate rate. My objection to this land tax—I know that it has to come for we have to make up the deficiency in the revenue—is that it presses on one section of the community. It is not a general tax. Because a man invests his money on land instead of in bank shares he has to bear the burden of the taxation. After all, what is to be the result? Assuming that 1d. in the £ is to be the tax, that is too small. We have a considerable deficiency this year, and we shall have a larger one next year. This land tax will not meet the deficiency, and I am anxious to know what is going to happen. There is a paragraph in the Speech that deals with the large expenditure. That is a very pertinent one, and it behoves the Government to see if the cost of administration cannot be considerably cut down. My impression is that there are far too many people in the employ of the Government, too many Government officials; and certainly too many men are employed in the Railway Department. The Railway Department seems to be paying very well; but it causes dissatisfaction to some people in the State. From my experience—and I have a good deal to do with the railways—I contend that the Government have put the right man in the right place, and that the present Commissioner has done much to improve the railway working. I am sure that we now hear very few complaints compared with the number heard before his appointment. At the same time I hope, now that he has the railways in good working order, that his health will permit him to look into the expenditure, and that he will be able to reduce it considerably; because wherever I go I see men almost tumbling over one another—certainly three men to do what might well be done by two; and I know that there are in the Railway Department numbers of men who are not earning their salt, men who are getting good pay which they are doing very little indeed to earn. To get the railways into a satisfactory condition was not a matter of a day or two or a week or two; but now that they are in a satisfactory condition, I hope that the Commissioner will look into this matter, and make a very considerable reduction in the expenditure. I know that this can

be done. I have heard numbers express the hope that the Commissioner will not be disappointed. I hope that he will, for I am sure that his continuance in the position will be in the best interests of the State. The point I like about the Commissioner is that he has some decision of character. If we bring any complaint under his notice, we do not receive, as we receive from other departments, a stereotyped reply that our letter is to hand, and that a farther communication will be sent us, which farther communication we perhaps do not get for six months. On the contrary, we may be sure that within a week at most, and probably within two or three days, we shall get a definite reply, dealing promptly, and in my experience justly, with the question. In the Speech there is not much to comment on, because, as I have said, it does not refer to any specific works. As to the construction of railways, the present Ministry have certainly endorsed the policy of their predecessors during the last session of Parliament. There are yet other railway proposals which I hope will be brought before the House during the present session. We have already heard suggestions. The mover and the seconder of the Address-in-Reply had a few railways to build in their districts. I shall not go so far as that; but I should like a few thousands spent in my part of the country. We have also had suggestions for the construction of additional railways adjoining the Great Southern line; but I think that with one branch line from Narrogin to Collie, another in contemplation from Wagin to Dumbleyung, and another from Katanning to Kojonup, that part of the State may get a little rest while attention is given to other parts. The Timber Commission, in its report, suggests a spur line from the South-Western Railway into the Timber Reserve. Well, that is a work I am sure should commend itself to the Government. There are hundreds of men out of employment, and we have large numbers of people engaged in the timber industry who will have to abandon that pursuit unless they get fresh forests to work. That fact is constantly brought under the notice of the Government. The small mill-owners are worked out, and are looking out for fresh areas. The timber industry is most

important to the State—a great deal more important than many members realise. I can quite endorse the remarks of a member who spoke yesterday in reference to this industry. I have often wondered what would become of the people if the timber mills were closed. In the employment of the timber merchants are hundreds of men with wives and families; and to throw them out of work would be disastrous to the State. I hope that the recommendation of the Timber Commission will receive very careful consideration from the Government, and that some assistance will be given to enable that industry to continue. I should be sorry indeed if it were necessary to cut down the men's wages. Considering the cost of living in this State, I think that men who have wives and families to support at the mills are living from hand to mouth, and that if the wages be reduced by even 6d. or 1s. per day, they will find it difficult to live and pay their way. I believe there is ample room for cutting down freights on timber, and many other charges. Such action would make a difference of a few thousands a year to the timber companies, and I do not think it would be felt very keenly by the Railway Department. I believe the loss might very fairly be made up by cutting down the expenditure now incurred, and doing so without in any way impairing the efficiency of the railways. We know that the time is at hand when something will have to be done—the men's wages reduced, the mills shut up, or some relief given by the Government; and I think it a matter for serious consideration whether it would not be wise on the part of the Government to come to the relief of these companies, and put them in a position to compete with their rivals in the other States. I am not an advocate of giving away our magnificent timber forests or building railways to carry timber almost free of cost for English companies. I do not think that should be done. The State should receive some benefit from its magnificent timber asset. At the same time, it is imperative to afford some relief, else the timber merchants of this State will be altogether shut out of the market. The very clear statement lately furnished by Mr. A. J. Wilson speaks for itself; and I give that gentleman the greatest credit for the straight-

forward manner in which he has acted, both to employer and employees. Respecting the construction of spur railways, I have grave doubts as to the wisdom of the Government in undertaking these works. To departmental work I am strongly opposed. I have never seen it a success in any work that has come under my notice; and although the estimated cost may seem to be slightly below the estimates of private contractors, I should have preferred to see the Government accepting some private tenders, keeping themselves free altogether from responsibility. I do not think it a right policy for the Government to employ day labour on such works; and if the plan succeeds, the result will certainly make a serious alteration in my view of the question, because I have never seen any instance in which a Government has carried out a work as cheaply and as effectively as it could have been done by a private person. If the work were let by contract, the country would immediately know the cost. As it is, we are told that railways will be built for £1,000 or £1,100 a mile; but I shall be much surprised if, with details and other extras, there is not £300 or £400 added to that estimate. I shall be much surprised if the Government can carry out those works at a cheaper rate than men who have had experience and are accustomed to railway construction. I am pleased to note in the Speech that the Government intend to undertake artesian boring in the North. This I have advocated for a good many years. The Government are, I suppose, receiving in rents from the North hundreds of thousands of pounds; but a large area of country is altogether unstocked, and it is not possible to stock it, though it is splendid grass country. Thousands of acres might be carrying large numbers of sheep and cattle; yet the land is perfectly useless. I do not think that the expense of procuring water should fall altogether on the State. I believe that the squatters of the North who have large pastoral runs would be quite willing to contribute towards the cost, or even to pay an additional rent for the waterless country, provided that water were found. That would make an immense difference to the meat supply of this State, as well as to the output of wool; and we have the

opinion of a scientific man who has lately travelled through the North that an abundant supply can be obtained. The Government have recently sent to Kimberley a boring plant which has had some difficulty in getting to its destination; but I hope that difficulty will be overcome, with satisfactory results. Little mention is made in the Speech of the pastoral industry, which is one of great importance to the State. We are told that it is progressing; but I am sorry that I cannot endorse the remarks that the stations have had relief from the recent rains. These rains have been very partial, and have fallen only in the coastal districts. A few stations have been favoured; but many stations are now in a very bad condition for want of rain. The tick regulations have been causing considerable anxiety to gentlemen interested in East Kimberley; and I for one feel some sympathy with these gentlemen. For my own part, I have always protested against taking any risk by distributing ticked cattle in the districts where cattle are being bred in the South-West, or in the northern districts that are free from tick. The greatest care should be taken; but the sending of ticked stock from Robb's Jetty to the goldfields I do not regard as being at all risky. On the goldfields are splendid markets, and I think the regulation prescribing zinc-lined trucks is absolutely unnecessary.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: What about passing through the eastern districts?

HON. E. McLARTY: I think that we may well take the risk arising from the ticks which would drop off an ordinary truck, properly constructed. I have not seen the zinc-lined trucks, but from men engaged in the business I hear that they are not giving any additional comfort to stock which in ordinary trucks would suffer quite enough. The zinc-lined trucks considerably increase the heat; and I do not think they are at all necessary. I regret that the owners of ticked stock should be put to inconvenience as they have been during the last few weeks, and that the public should suffer in consequence. However, I suppose this has been done with a view to protecting the herds in this part of the State, and with a good intention; but I say definitely that

I do not think there is the slightest necessity for altering the trucks at all, or for taking those precautions with cattle sent to the Eastern Goldfields. The establishment of freezing works in the North is also of great interest to this part of the State. This morning I was discussing the question with a partner of mine, and I expressed the opinion, as I have often told him on other occasions, that sheep-raising in the Kimberley district would never successfully supply this market with mutton until we had freezing works. We are breeding large numbers of sheep there; but we find it almost impossible to travel them from the station to the port, ship them to Fremantle, and land them in these markets in a fit condition for slaughter. If freezing works were established, I believe that much would be done to reduce the high price of mutton. Sheep—wool and flesh—are now worth 7d. per lb. in the wholesale market. That is an enormous price. I have been trying for weeks past to get a great many thousand sheep into the country, but they are not procurable; and even if they can be brought in, they arrive in such poor condition that they are fit only to be distributed as store stock. I hope something will be done in the interests of the general public as meat consumers, and in the interests of those who hold stock in the North. One matter for satisfaction is the opening up of the Midland Railway lands. We have heard a frequent wail about the want of land, about some persons holding more land than they can use, and about other persons not being able to get any. From my observation in travelling along the Midland Railway, I am sure there is an enormous expanse of what I call first-class wheat-growing land, some of the best I have seen in the State; and I am extremely pleased to see that the land now being offered for sale is bought up so readily, so that we may reasonably expect there will be a great rush of settlement in the Midland district as there has been in the Great Southern Railway district. I am not a great enthusiast about immigration as proposed by Governments from time to time. It seems to me to involve more expense than the State gets out of it. Of course that may be a good way to advertise the State amongst people abroad; but I

think we cannot do better than by having liberal land laws in this State, by opening up agricultural lands by means of railways, and by providing all facilities for getting produce to market. Land settlement is now progressing at a most satisfactory pace in this State. Everywhere you go, you see settlement taking place, and I do not think therefore it is necessary for the State to go to a great expense for introducing immigrants, at all events from the old country. I have very little faith in bringing immigrants from the old country to carry on farming in this State, for I am satisfied that if brought here they certainly will need to be assisted by the Government in having land prepared for them, so that they may go on and begin producing without loss of time. It is a mistake to put those immigrants into the wild bush and say, "There is the land," and expect them to tackle the work, fell immense trees, and prepare the land by grubbing for cultivation. On the other hand, by clearing certain areas before selection, I think that is an admirable way of assisting immigrants, and the only way that will succeed. Of course there are settlers who have come and are coming from the Eastern States who have the kind of experience which enables them to do here what they have had to do in places they come from, men who can cut their way in the forest. As to spending large sums of money to bring people here, and then leave them to go out and select land, that is a fallacy. I support the adoption of the Address-in-Reply.

HON. W. PATRICK (Central): In common with other members who have spoken, I join in regretting the absence of our late President, and in congratulating you, sir, on your appointment. I am sure that the collective wisdom of the members of this House will be justified by the selection. I also congratulate the new Colonial Secretary. I must say that I miss the genial countenance of the late Colonial Secretary; but of course in a country where Governments change often, we must welcome the "coming guest." I therefore congratulate Mr. Connolly and my friend Mr. Piesse, and I trust that the Government will justify their existence by doing something in the near future for the advancement of the State

of Western Australia. I confess that in the two years I have been a member of this House, I have been somewhat bewildered by the multitudinous changes that have taken place in so short a period. A few weeks ago I had the honour to accompany the Minister for Mines on a trip to the Murchison Goldfields. While on that trip I promised a number of my friends, both publicly and privately, that in a week or two I would speak to them on the policy of the Rason Government; but while I was making those promises, that Government was in process of dissolution. We had got as far as Meekatbarra when we received word to turn back, and when I think one or two dramatic scenes took place before the final evolution was accomplished. I understand that at a place with a French name, not far from Perth, four powerful gentlemen held up a train and stopped one of the passengers; and I understand also that far into the watches of the night one gentleman stood looking with wistful eyes towards the east and north-east for the "coming of the colleen who never came." I farther understand that in the small hours of the morning there was what I call a pyjama conference, which finally ended in the evolution of the Moore Government. These sudden changes are no doubt bewildering; but, after all, it may turn out that the Moore Government is practically the Rason Government reconstructed, although as a matter of fact there is only one member of the present Government who occupies the same position as he did in the former. I refer to my friend Mr. Gregory, and I am certain it would have been a calamity to this community if, at the present juncture, he had been removed from his position as Minister for Mines. In looking through the Governor's Speech, which voices the language of the Moore Government—the language placed before this Parliament at the present time—I am reminded of the formation of some of the great world systems described in works on astronomy, how those systems begin with a vast undefined vapour. There is one matter only in the Speech which to my mind is perfectly defined in the midst of the surrounding vapour, and that is a tax on unimproved land values. We are not told the exact nature of the tax, how much

it is to be, or on whom it is to fall. Even that is left undefined. I take it that this Speech really represents a boiled-down edition of the Premier's speech at Bunbury, say with the bones left out. We can compare a great deal in reading the two speeches, although of course there is very little definite in the Governor's Speech. There is the usual congratulatory language in reference to the prosperity of the mining, agricultural, pastoral, and other industries of the State. I have said on two previous occasions, and I now repeat, that the progress of the mining industry is not at all satisfactory. When I say the mining industry, I allude of course to the gold-mining industry; for although mining for the baser metals has made considerable progress during recent months, still when we talk about the mining industry in this State we mean the gold-mining industry only. I repeat that the mining industry is in an unsatisfactory condition. In a State where we have an auriferous area equal to the great State of New South Wales, it is very unsatisfactory to find that the industry is not only standing still, but going back. It is all very well to say the dividends last year were better than the year before. So far, that is very satisfactory, especially to those who own the mines; but it shows this, if it shows anything at all, that while the production of gold is declining, the management of the mines and the appliances used are becoming more perfect from day to day, and no doubt the mines are better and the miners are of a higher and more expert type. That is how the gold-mining industry looks to me. I consider that it ought to be growing instead of standing still or going back. I am sure something is wrong somewhere. I am not an expert in gold-mining, although I know a little about it. There must be something in the mining laws, or in the their administration, that keeps the industry from making greater advances, or rather is keeping it from advancing at all at the present moment. However, I am sure, from conversations I have had with Mr. Gregory, that he intends to make a great effort to improve the existing state of affairs; and I have so much faith in him that I believe when the next Parliament is opened in 1907—that is, if one is not opened sooner than that

—the statistics of gold-mining will be much more satisfactory than at the present time. I need scarcely say that every encouragement should be given to this great industry, which really has been the foundation of the present great progress made by this State. There is no doubt that land settlement has made great progress, and I think anyone who has travelled about the State—and I have taken the opportunity during the recent recess, and also during the recess last year, to make myself acquainted to a certain extent with different portions of the State—will agree that the progress made by the settlers in this State, notwithstanding what has been said by many people on the subject, is of a most satisfactory character. It is a very few years since settlement really began in Western Australia; and in these few years the production of wheat has increased at such a rate that I believe, if not, this year next year at the latest, the farmers of this State will be able to supply bread without importing any wheat from any other State. But I contend there are many obstructions in connection with land settlement, and many of these obstructions are the result of what I will call Government red tape. I will give this House one instance which came under my observation. I may say that I am a small farmer myself and a few months ago I was paying rent at the Lands Office at Geraldton. This was rent on a lease that had been taken for some years. What I received was not a receipt at all, but an acknowledgment of the money and a statement to the effect that a valid receipt would be sent from the head office in Perth. But more than that, a clerk in the office took three sheets about the size of foolscap, put a carbon sheet on top of each of them, and filled in particulars of that lease from the *Government Gazette*, and then asked me to sign at the bottom that it was all correct. I had to sign. Then I said, "I suppose you are going to give me one of those copies," and he replied "Oh, no; I am going to send two to Perth and keep one until by and by. You will get one that goes to Perth." In about six weeks I got a copy of this document which I had myself signed. There was nothing on this document which gave me a receipt. The only thing was

an initial in pencil by the Treasurer indicating he had received the money. If all the Government departments are managed in that way I am not a bit astonished that there is a vast number of clerks employed by the Government. No business man could for six months avoid the bankruptcy court if he carried on his business in that way. Yesterday Mr. Sommers said he considered the price of land should be advanced to £1 per acre, and that the conditions should be more stringent. I have an idea—I may be mistaken—that the present Government intend to make the conditions more stringent; but if they do so they will make a mistake.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The conditions of improvement.

HON. W. PATRICK: I will just say that I sometimes read an interesting publication called the *Government Gazette*, and in a supplement to the *Government Gazette*, dated 1st June, there is a notice of sale of leases forfeited, and amongst others is a list of conditional purchase leases forfeited. I was astounded. I went to the trouble to add up the figures. These leases are absolutely forfeited, and are to be offered for sale by public auction.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Not absolutely forfeited.

HON. W. PATRICK: It states so. They are forfeited absolutely enough when they are liable to be sold and the whole thing is in the discretion of the Minister. At any rate, these leases, so far as this document is concerned, are absolutely forfeited. They number 1,710 leases—conditional purchase leases—and the area is 340,000 acres. I do not think there is much occasion to hunt about looking for big estates to buy back when we have 340,000 acres of land recently taken possession of by the Government.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: They will not be forfeited.

HON. W. PATRICK: Then this is a very false thing altogether. It is a very misleading document, if people are asked to attend a sale and it is announced that certain leases are forfeited. What is the meaning of it? It either means something or it means nothing. All I can say is that if a notice of this kind is to be published there should be a state-

ment at the top, "We do not mean what we say."

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. C. A. Piesse): I would like to explain to the hon. member and also the House, that in 99 cases out of 100 the lands liable to forfeiture are redeemed before the day of sale.

HON. R. F. SKOLL: Why do they not state in the *Government Gazette* that if the money is not paid before a certain date the land will be forfeited?

HON. W. PATRICK: The notification of cases where payment had to be made before a certain date was in a former issue. This was supposed to be a final statement, and people are presumably induced to come to Perth to buy land, and a list is published. In future, if the Government mean something else, they ought to say so in a public document. If it is the case that the leases are not forfeited, I consider I have done a duty to the public in bringing the matter forward. *The Gazette* says:—

The undermentioned leases and licenses (forfeited through non-payment of rent for the first half of 1906) will be offered for sale by public auction at this office on Tuesday, 3rd July, at 11 o'clock a.m. 2. The upset price of each lease or licence shall be £1, and the lot will be knocked down to the highest bidder; the amount bid to be taken as a premium, in addition to a half-year's rent and survey fee. 3. Premium, rent, and survey fee must be paid immediately after the sale; in default the sale will be void. 4. All improvements existing on any lots are the property of the Crown.

If this does not mean what it says, it ought not to be in the *Government Gazette*. I was just going to say that this list at any rate proves to my mind perfectly that the present conditions of settlement are not too liberal. These 1,700 and odd leases, I may say, are conditional purchase leases alone. There is any amount of other leases. I am only dealing with the conditional purchase leases, or leases taken up by farmers. The conditions of settlement cannot be too liberal in this State, and it would be a crime to make them more stringent, if we can have such a position as that in which three hundred thousand and odd acres of land are forfeited by the Government, and only by the goodwill of the Government can the holders claim and get back their land. In connection with the holding of land I may say in talking

in the way I am, I am speaking in the interests of the Government; I am speaking as a candid friend. It is just possible, as Sir Edward Wittenoom said yesterday, that some of them do not know as much as they ought to in connection with land settlement, although we are aware that Mr. Piesse probably knows more about it than any other man in the State. In connection with road grants, I believe that in a great many instances—I know of one or two cases—the Government have refused to issue road grants because the local board would not, at the behest of the Government, strike a special rate. They were told they could go as high as 2½d. or 2d. Some of them did not feel inclined to pay as much as 2d., and the Government told them that if they did not pay a certain rate they could not get a grant. I think this a very wrong thing indeed. These people are entitled to the grant. They are taxpayers as well as anyone else in the State, and I do not think it is any concern of the Government whether they pay a ½d., 1d., or 2d. rate. It is the business of the Government to give the grant to which they are entitled as taxpayers of the State. The Government have a power under the Act, I believe, and no such power should have been given to the Cabinet, enabling them to order any roads board to make a certain rate or otherwise be penalised. Goodness knows we have lots of taxes. I knew nothing about this business until a couple of years ago, but I have been looking at the way they do it, and I have met a great many farmers. They have several local taxes. There is the wheel tax. A man with a four-wheeled waggon has to pay £2 a year to the roads board. That is a pretty stiff land tax.

HON. W. MALEY: A very old-fashioned one, too.

HON. W. PATRICK: Yes. The Governor's Speech says—

A steady and increasing stream of immigration is flowing into the State, and becoming absorbed mainly in our agricultural population.

I am glad indeed to hear this, and I hope the stream will continue. I for one have no fear of people coming into this State, not by twos and threes as hitherto, but even by tens of thousands. There is going to be room for them. In a great country like this, of

such a vast area, it seems perfectly ridiculous to anyone who has been outside of Western Australia—who has even been in the East—for people to say that 260,000 persons can fill one million square miles of country. The thing is perfectly preposterous. Although it is over a quarter of a century since I came here I regularly get home papers, and here is a thing which I read in the *Edinburgh Scotsman* of the 20th of April:—

There was another large contingent of British emigrants sailing from Liverpool yesterday for Canada. The Allan line steamer *Parisian* and the Dominion liner *Dominion* both carried large complements, aggregating nearly 2,500 souls. Among them was a party of 160 persons assisted by the London Self-Help Emigration Society. Both vessels open the St. Lawrence season, their ports of destination now being Quebec and Montreal.

Another paragraph says:—

The report of the provincial Minister of Lands and Mines shows that 34,958 immigrants settled in Ontario during 1905. Of this number 23,316 were English, 4,496 Scottish, 1,130 Irish.

There were also a few foreigners. You see they were nearly all Britons going to Canada, making that a great country. We need have no fear of being flooded with immigrants; because we have not the inducements to offer that Canada has, though we have an infinitely better climate and infinitely better conditions of outdoor life. I have been in Canada. I know Canada, and I have lots of friends there. The whole trend of immigration from Europe has changed during the last 10 or 15 years. I remember when the Germans went to America about 100,000 strong. Now what is the condition of things? Germany is increasing at the rate of one million a year by the birth rate, and emigration has practically ceased. Instead of a great many thousands a year, now it is only about twenty or thirty thousand. I was perfectly astonished in reading in the same copy of the *Scotsman* this report in connection with German agriculture:—

Mr. Consul General Schwabach, in his report on the trade of Germany for the year 1905 writes thus of the agricultural labour problem:—The scarcity of farm hands, which for a number of years past has been a source of anxiety to German landowners and farmers, was in 1905 smaller than anticipated early in the year, when the growing demand for industrial labour threatened to increase farther the migration of agricultural

labourers from country to town. Higher wages, more regular employment, greater independence, often better housing and treatment, and the greater facilities for amusement act in favour of this movement, which in times of industrial prosperity assumes proportions which cause great difficulty to land-owners, who are becoming more and more dependent on hands imported from abroad for harvest work. This foreign contingent now numbers about 300,000 (250,000 Russians and Poles and 50,000 Galicians, Ruthenes, and Bohemians).

This shows a fear of an influx of undesirable immigrants is perfectly preposterous; and we must remember in this population question, which after all to my mind is the greatest question so far as Australia is concerned at the present moment, that the same feeling which makes people resent persons holding large estates in this country makes the world resent a handful of people like us holding this vast continent. I should like to say a word or two about the railways. Through the flowery wording of the Governor's Speech we can gather what the Government intend to do. They propose to build a number of light railways. Of course we know the schemes that were passed last year, and I think that if it is possible to build railways at £1,000 or £1,100 a mile we cannot have too many of them. I know a little about road construction, and we cannot build first-class macadamised roads for much less than £1,000 per mile, that is if it is to be a permanent road. [MEMBER: What width?] About 30 feet. You can make fourteen feet roads of course, but if we get these railways built at the price mentioned they would be far cheaper than roads, and we cannot construct too many of them so long as they are built where they are required. That is the whole trouble. I know that in the Bunbury speech the Premier mentioned the railways already decided on, and mentioned incidentally a railway to the Black Range. I am inclined to sympathise to a certain extent with Sir Edward Wittenoom, not in any actions of the Government that anyone would resent in the North and middle North of this State. Certainly there is no one representing the Central Province who would do so; but I am certain the Government have sufficient justice to attend to our portion of the State as well as to other portions. At any rate I

expect, considering the necessity for the railway, to see a Black Range Railway on the Government's programme when once they have decided to give us a definite list of things they intend to do. There is another railway which I think is much more justified than some of the railways proposed for the South, and that is a railway through the Chapman Valley. It would do the eyes of some people belonging to the southern portions of the State good if they were to go up and look at that country now. I would like some of them just to look at the return of the wheat average for that portion of the State last year. I do not know that it was at the very top, but I think it was very near it. Certainly it was 14 decimal something bushels per acre. Under crop last year there was between 3,000 and 4,000 acres. I can say positively that the year before last there was 2,400 acres or thereabouts under wheat, and this year it was 3,400, while the average this year was three bushels more than last year, and next year it is going to be quite 16 or 18 bushels. No doubt a railway through that valley would be perfectly justified. While talking of railways, there is one in existence, the oldest railway in the State—I travel over it occasionally—and that is the Northampton Railway. On Wednesday last week it took three special trains to move 1,500 sheep from Northampton to Geraldton, and that is the utmost. Five hundred sheep at a time is the most it is possible to move over that line. I say that next year they will require to run about 10 or 15 special trains a day to remove the wheat and chaff, unless they pull up the road and renew it. I know that a resurvey has been made recently, but it is the duty of the Government to see that the alteration is made at once, otherwise there will be a block which it will be impossible to overcome after next harvest. The all-important question, of course, now is that of finance, but I do not at all take the pessimistic view taken by the Premier when he estimates the deficit at £200,000 or £300,000. The chief foundation of that estimate is laid on the presumed continued decline in the Customs revenue. It is a well-known fact, proved in every progressive country in the world—and I do not think anyone will deny that Western Australia is a progressive country, for its

population is increasing and we have here a hard-working population full of grit—that when taxation is reduced in one direction the revenue goes up in other directions. I well remember as a lad when Mr. Gladstone took off year after year taxes from sugar and this and that thing, that the remaining taxes more than made up the loss. When people found that they could get 2lbs. of sugar instead of 1½lbs. they generally bought about 3lbs. The same when fruit is 1s. a pound you do not buy any, but if it is 2d. a pound you buy 1s. 6d. worth. I am quite convinced that the result of the next year will be that the Customs revenue, instead of declining, will rise; and the latest returns we have from the Commonwealth show it already. Of course we will lose some revenue on account of losing the sliding scale tariff. That has gone for ever, but the people have got the benefit of it. They are paying less now, and must be getting cheaper goods, so that they will consume something else in greater proportion; and the result will be that the revenue will increase. I think we are perfectly justified in taking this view, so far as the Customs are concerned. I think that while the Premier took such a pessimistic view in reference to the Customs, he took altogether too sanguine a view in reference to the revenue from the proposed land tax. At the present moment I am talking of finance, and not of the principle of the tax.

HON. SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: I was accused of being pessimistic yesterday.

HON. W. PATRICK: I do not think it has anything to do with pessimism. We have a certain amount of land in this State in a certain condition, and the Premier makes an estimate that we will get a certain amount of revenue at so much in the pound. I may say that I was in the midst of the turmoil when the land tax was imposed in South Australia over 20 years ago; and there was justification for the imposition of that tax in South Australia at that time. I can say with pride that I advocated the tax. At the time it was required. What were the conditions in South Australia compared with the conditions in this State? There were over three million acres of land ready for the plough in South Australia at that time; and

there never was anything like the same amount of land cleared here. There is at present never less than two to three million acres of land under crop in South Australia. The Premier has estimated that a penny in the pound would bring in about half as much here as was obtained in South Australia through the same tax. The poorest of that land in South Australia is valued at £4 to £5 an acre, and the unimproved value is probably 50 per cent. of that. In South Australia some of the land is like an English park, a gum tree here and a gum tree there. On the Adelaide plains and on the Gawler plains there was land ready for the plough. Here every acre of land has to be made by the settler, and if the settler does not continue to make it, if he does not toil continually, the land will soon go back into a state of nature. So we cannot compare the conditions. South Australia is in a great many respects similar to this State, and it is the best guide we can get of the probable return we shall obtain from the imposition of a just land tax. We might—I do not think we need expect anything of the kind—get an unjust Government something like the roads board Mr. McLarty mentioned, which has doubled the valuations in order to increase the taxation. But I do not think we need anticipate anything of that kind. The Government propose to borrow money. I have never been against borrowing money, although I borrow as little as I can myself, for I find it is difficult to repay. I suppose that the same thing applies to States as to individuals; but so long as the money borrowed is going to bring in sufficient revenue to pay interest and sinking fund, there is no danger whatever to the State, because there is none to the revenue. But I notice in the Premier's Bunbury speech, he estimates, in referring to the deficit, that we shall require £26,000 extra for interest on loan money next year. That is right enough. We must have more interest if we borrow more money, but if the money represented by this £26,000 extra interest has been judiciously expended, why should it be an additional burden to the State? If that money has not been judiciously expended, it will be a splendid argument not to borrow any more. I should like that matter explained, because the Premier

distinctly stated in estimating the deficit that there was £26,000, and he added it up; so many thousands here and so many thousands there, interest so much and deficit so much. If the money were invested there must be some additional interest to meet. Incidentally, in connection with this matter of finances, there is a question of economy, and I took the trouble to send to South Australia to get the Estimates for last year and the present year, so that I might be in a position to compare them with the Estimates of this State, and in reference to the railways there was one thing that struck me very forcibly. In the year 1904-5, while South Australia had a revenue of £400,000 less than Western Australia had in the same year, South Australia had a credit balance on the transactions of the year of £530,000, and Western Australia, with £400,000 more revenue, had a credit balance of £330,000. It may be said we have a great many railways that do not pay. We run a long way into the wilderness, but we have no such unpayable railways as they have in South Australia. They run from Adelaide to Oodnadatta, 700 miles. There is no town there, and the train is run once a fortnight. The railway department in South Australia are burdened with that line. There is no such burden as that here. I think the Government might well look into this matter, and if we have a man as good as they have in South Australia—because the salaries practically are as good here—and if the railways are as well managed here as they are there, instead of being in the position of having £200,000 less than South Australia in one year, we ought at least to come abreast of them. Here we have little room for hope that our revenue may increase in the near future. There is another matter which was mentioned yesterday by Mr. Sommers, in regard to the Coolgardie Water Scheme. The member advocated that the surplus water from the Mundaring weir should be brought to Perth. I do not know anything about how the thing is to be done, but at the same time the financial position in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme is a burden on the State which it is not able to bear. I got some particulars from the Minister for Works to-day on this matter. I asked for par-

ticulars of money paid out of the consolidated revenue fund for the Coolgardie Water Scheme from the time the scheme started pumping, but the Minister said he was not in a position to give these particulars at once. He gave the position for the present financial year 1905-6, however: interest paid £89,300, sinking fund £81,120, totalling £170,420; revenue paid into the Treasury £92,000, provided from consolidated fund £78,420. I think it is time the hand of the Government should be forced, seeing they are short of money, to convert this £78,000 deficit into at least a level balance by the sale of water—by converting the water which is running away into cash. I consider it a disgrace. [MEMBER: There is Midland Junction.] Midland Junction is not going to pay £78,000, but Perth can. I am not suggesting how the Government are going to do it, but this is one way in which the £80,000 might be saved. The population of the goldfields is not increasing to such an extent that there is any immediate chance of requiring that water. If the Eastern Goldfields people say they must have all this water, then why should they not pay for it? We on the Murchison have to pay for all the water we get. We have to pay our sinking fund and interest and everything else. We have not asked for a penny of money from the consolidated revenue for the water we get. There are other ways by which money can be saved besides through the Coolgardie Water Scheme. There is the Agricultural Department, which I see is in a terrible mess. They have had no accounts—according to the Audit Department—balanced. They have not been balanced at all, I think, certainly not balanced this year. It seems almost inconceivable that in a Government department the books should not be balanced at all. Apparently there is money in the bank which should not be there at all, and other foolish things have been done. I am not astonished at that. What is the good of this department? We have a Journal of Agriculture which is almost useless, and there would be no harm if it were abolished. We have a man going round the world hunting for parasites. This is a perfect waste of money. A man should not have a free hand to go where he likes, from Peru to Brazil, to California, to the North Pole or to the

South Pole if he likes, and to drop into the Agricultural Department whenever he thinks fit and say he has discovered this or that.

HON. C. A. PIESSE : The Californian Government pay half the cost.

HON. W. PATRICK : I know in South Australia and in Victoria there were two of the most disastrous schemes formulated by persons from California. I look upon this matter as purely a waste of money.

HON. E. McLARTY : That is not the opinion of the orchardists of the State.

HON. W. PATRICK : Every man has his opinion, and that is mine. I should be very pleased to see some practical result, but so far there has been none.

HON. E. McLARTY : There have been good results.

HON. W. PATRICK : So I am told. I have read about them, but I confess I am not at all satisfied that they are genuine. There is another way we might save money, although I do not intend to make this altogether a saving of money. I see that by the Federal Parliament a Bill has been introduced to found a meteorological department. We have a meteorological department, but we will have no use for it after this. That is the only useful outcome of the Observatory, the meteorological department. When the Commonwealth have founded their department there will be no use for our Observatory. I should like to see an observatory here as big as the Greenwich Observatory, but I do not think 260,000 people can afford to keep an observatory.

At 6-30, the PRESIDENT left the Chair.

At 7-30, Chair resumed.

HON. W. PATRICK (continuing) : As I mentioned before, the one definite proposal in the Governor's Speech is the proposed imposition of a tax on unimproved land values. Mr. Randell asked yesterday what was meant by unimproved land values. The phrase certainly does not mean simply a land tax ; but I think it may be defined as the selling value of the land, less the visible improvements. When I speak of land, I refer to agricultural land. As regards city lands, the matter is perfectly simple. So long as the valuation is fair, there is no difficulty in getting at the unimproved value of pro-

perty in a city. But the unimproved value of agricultural land is a totally different matter. If we take land in such a State as South Australia, where the greater portion of it was originally ready for the plough, the unimproved land value there will be the selling value *plus* the buildings, fences, dams, wells, and other visible improvements. But in Western Australia the settler, in order to clear his land, has to provide labour at a cost of from £1 to as much as £20 an acre for those lands in the South which are the most difficult to clear ; and in any case it never costs less than 20s. an acre to make the land fit for the plough. If an unimproved land tax valuator were to come along and find 1,000 acres cleared, with so many dams, wells, fences, and buildings, he would base his valuation on the selling value of the land less the visible improvements. The cost of clearing the land would be altogether absent from his calculation. Now, to explain my reasons for pointing this out ; there is at the present moment in Western Australia, out of a great many million acres of land alienated or in process of alienation, between 300,000 and 400,000 fit for the plough. If the selling value of that land fit for the plough, less the improvements, is to be taken as the unimproved value of the rest of the land that is uncleared, that will be a monstrous injustice to the landowner ; in fact, it will be impossible for him to pay the tax. But unless a valuation of this kind is made, I do not see where the Premier finds his valuation of 14 millions sterling for the unimproved land values of Western Australia ; and that is the amount on which he bases his land tax to bring in the sum which he mentioned at Bunbury. At Bunbury the Premier said that the tax was for revenue purposes, and for the purpose of bursting up big estates. Well, I do not think it is honest to pass a law purposely to burst up big estates. It will be much more honest to buy them if we require to buy them. But so long as we have millions of acres of Crown land, there is no necessity to buy a single acre of private land ; and at the present rate of settlement there will be no necessity for years to come. One of the chief arguments in favour of a land tax is the argument as to what is called the unearned increment. But in a great many cases there

is what I may call an undeserved decrement. I know many cases in which people have bought property, especially on the goldfields, and they are paying taxes in respect of it, and it is not worth anything at all and will not sell, because it has no value of any kind. But the people hold on to it in the hope that it may become of value some day. If a man discovers a big nugget on the goldfields, or a rich patch of gold, no one dreams of accusing him of having an unearned increment. We say he is a lucky fellow, and so he is. But what is the difference, after all, between the man who buys a bit of land and makes out of it a few shillings or a few pounds, with the prospect of making a loss, and the man who makes a lucky hit in a gold mine? I do not say that when this land tax proposal is brought before the House I will oppose it, because so far there is no proposal before the House. The proposal may be of such a nature that we can all support it. The principle of a land tax I do not oppose. If it is necessary for revenue purposes, and it is justly laid on the backs of those who are capable of bearing it, I believe I shall vote for it. But so long as there is a possibility of saving sufficient money—and I contend there is—to put the finances of the State on a solid basis, we have no business whatever to impose farther taxation of any kind. I should like to say just a word or two in connection with the Electoral Act. Of course I know that the Government are sure to bring in a Bill to amend that Act. As a friend of mine said to-day, the proper thing to do with the Electoral Act is to tear it to pieces and introduce an entirely new Act. At East Fremantle a gentleman was returned. His right to take his seat is disputed. He is not charged with bribery or corruption; against him no charge whatever is brought; but the Court discovers that so many men have infringed the Act, according to the Judge's interpretation; and then the member returned is not only unseated, but mulcted in expenses. It seems to me that such an Act, if that be really its true interpretation, is a monstrous injustice to candidates. A man who loses his seat is thereby punished; and if a man is to be tried, condemned, punished, and mulcted in expenses for something he

never did and never attempted to do, then I say there is a gross breakdown of justice.

THE PRESIDENT: I should like to remind the hon. member that the case in question is still *sub judice*.

HON. W. PATRICK: I specifically mentioned the East Fremantle case.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. That is now *sub judice*. An appeal is pending. I am sure that the hon. member does not wish to prejudice the result.

HON. W. PATRICK: Certainly I do not wish in any way to prejudice the case. One portion of the Speech mentions an amendment of the Constitution. We all know that means a proposal to reduce the franchise qualification for this House from £25 to £15. I may say that I have not altered my opinion since last I spoke here on this subject. I am opposed to any reduction of the present franchise for this House. I am opposed to it for several reasons; but one of the chief reasons is that since the accomplishment of Federation the Constitution of West Australia, without the passing of any Act for that purpose in this Parliament, has been entirely altered in such a manner that the reduction of the Upper House franchise would be a wrong to the State. Before we joined the Federation, the Parliament of West Australia, as we all know, had full control of every kind of taxation. Parliament could impose Customs and Excise duties. These duties, as I need scarcely say, are paid and borne by every person in the community, from the poorest to the richest; and the poorest and the richest ought therefore to have a voice in their imposition. But the only power of taxation now possessed by the Parliament of Western Australia is the power to impose direct taxation; and direct taxation, as we know, is paid by, is imposed upon, must necessarily be imposed upon, the stable few, as differentiated from the unstable many. To show what I mean, I will mention the fact (referring again to Federation) that in South Australia, where they have all kinds of taxes up to bursting point, they found it necessary to impose an income tax, with an exemption of £150. At the last census there were in that State 370,000 people, and the whole of the income tax was paid by some 11,200 people, including income derived from

land, from personal exertion, from companies, and from whatever source it springs. So it can easily be seen that in South Australia, where there is also an Upper House with a £25 franchise, they have been fighting the same battle for years as some people would fight here. Of course the object of such persons is the final extinction of the Upper House—there is no doubt about that; and so far as I am concerned, I would just as soon see this House abolished as have the franchise reduced to such an extent that it would represent the whole community. If Parliament cannot impose stable taxes on stable people there is no necessity for its existence. Therefore I am entirely opposed to amending the Constitution in that way. I should just like to make a quotation from a speech made by my esteemed colleague Mr. Drew, when he spoke before his constituents at Geraldton on the 22nd August, 1904, the speech being made at the time he was appointed Minister for Lands in the Daglish Government. With others, my hon. friend stated that he wanted to emphasise the fact that he was a firm believer in the Upper House. He said the constitution of the Legislative Council was the most liberal of any second Chamber, not only in Australia but in the world; that in New South Wales and in Queensland, the Legislative councillors were nominated by the Governor for life, and in New Zealand for seven years; whereas in this State they were elected by the people on a very broad franchise. He mentioned that in Victoria it was necessary to own landed property to the value of £1,000, whereas in Western Australia anyone could stand; and Mr. Drew asked, could anything be more liberal than that? I notice the Governor's Speech states in reference to the question of the Federal Government:—

My Government, while jealously guarding the rights of the State in this respect, has every confidence that the Commonwealth Parliament will recognise the rights of Western Australia and deal justly in this matter.

That refers to the surplus revenue through the Customs. We know a controversy arose owing to a resolution made at the Premiers' Conference some months ago, whereby it was decided by a majority of three to two that the surplus revenue

should be divided *per capita*, in which case this State would lose about £450,000 a year of our revenue. I do not understand how three gentlemen, possessed of ordinary common sense, could have advocated such a proposal. As a general rule men are generous, and a few men are just; but there was neither generosity nor justice in this grossly unfair proposal of the three Premiers of the Eastern States. However, I am perfectly satisfied with the statements made by the Government. The Government of this State have the whole responsibility cast upon their shoulders: they are our trustees to see that our rights are properly protected. For my part, I have sufficient confidence in the Government to believe that they will see we receive just treatment when this question arises. There is one matter which I do not think is mentioned at all, either definitely or indefinitely, in the Speech of His Excellency; but I have no doubt it has been kept in view. I refer to the matter of education. While in every other branch of the service I believe in the most rigid economy being exercised in a businesslike manner, paying men well and making them earn their money, I think so far as education is concerned we can scarcely be too generous, because after all an intelligent people is the most valuable asset any State can possess; and when I referred to abolishing the Observatory, I was going to suggest that the Observatory buildings and lands would form a splendid nucleus for a University in Western Australia. Surely we have among us wealthy people—there must be among us some wealthy people, perhaps a Sir Thomas Elder, a Mr. Barr Smith, or a Mr. Hughes. Sir Thomas Elder presented £96,000, Mr. Hughes £20,000—I do not expect so much—but surely we have some wealthy men who, with such a nucleus as I have mentioned, could at least make a beginning with a University for Western Australia. While talking of education, I should like to draw attention to one matter upon which I feel strongly—I have spoken of it time after time to different Governments that have preceded this Government—and that is the question of the foundation of a technical school on the Murchison Goldfields. I am aware that the Murchison Goldfields

are not so important as the goldfields represented by my friend Mr. McKenzie; but the proportion of gold produced by the Murchison Goldfields is just about one ounce to five ounces produced in the Eastern States or in the East Coolgardie Goldfield. The Murchison Goldfields are isolated by hundreds of miles from any possibility of getting technical education. The people residing there are taxpayers in the State. There are thousands of young men there who have no opportunity of learning the business on which the prosperity of that part of the State depends—the business of scientific mining. I do not say we should have a great school of mines such as exists at Kalgoorlie; but surely when such a school is there, another technical school at Boulder, another in Fremantle, a magnificent technical school in Perth, and yet another at Midland Junction, surely we are entitled to one on the Murchison Goldfields. I commend this matter very strongly to the present Government. It would be well worth while to spend a little money. I do not ask them to grant such a sum as has been expended in other parts of the country; we do not want an expenditure of £20,000 or £30,000; but I do ask the Government to have a technical school started on the Murchison Goldfields. I hope something will be done in this important matter. Although there are some other matters upon which I should like to have said a few words, I will not dwell on them. I should like to say I have unlimited faith in the future of this State. It has unexampled resources in mines and in land, also in pastoral country; and there is no reason whatever why, in years to come, Western Australia should not only vie with the Eastern States—it has vast latent resources—but become the greatest State in the union. But we must remember that our vast territory, our many resources, will not result in greatness unless our people have faith in the country, and do their best to make it successful and progressive. Some of the greatest countries in the world have had scarcely any territory. The greatest country in the ancient world had its capital situated on a barren rock, the city of Tyre; and for over a thousand years that was one of the greatest commercial nations. It ruled the Mediterranean for many cen-

turies. Another country had its magnificent cities and palaces, the abode of great architects, poets, and men of genius; a city built on barren sand-patches worse than those seen at the mouths of some of our insignificant little creeks; so I am sure that with a population of 260,000 of the most energetic of British people, this country in a very few years will not only be great and progressive, but be the leading State in the Australian Commonwealth.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central): While sincerely regretting the necessity for the retirement of Sir George Shenton from political life, and also from the position of President of this Council, I must congratulate you, sir, on your elevation to the position in succession to him. I am firmly convinced, and I think every member of this Chamber is satisfied, that with your ripe scholarship, your strict impartiality, and your many other qualities, you will uphold the dignity of the position and do credit to yourself and to the State. I must congratulate Mr. Connolly on his elevation to the leadership of this Chamber. I think that from his aptness for mastering details and from his invariable courtesy, he will prove in every respect a success in that position. With regard to the Speech, I have studied it very carefully, and think that it is characterised with all the vagueness of a stereotyped letter from one of the permanent heads of of the civil service. There is nothing very definite about it; but I do not think we have any justifiable reason to complain on this score. We must recollect that the Ministry have been in power for a few weeks only, and they have not had opportunity to go into the details of the various measures. When those measures are submitted to us, there will be ample time to criticise the Government, and to ascertain if the measures are in the best interests of the country. I notice from the Speech that a tax on unimproved land values is proposed. I had hoped there would be no necessity for the introduction of legislation of this kind; I had hoped that a tax on unimproved lands only would have met the necessities of the situation; but we are informed that it is necessary to impose this tax for the purpose of raising revenue, and I can well understand

that it is so. We have an interest bill that is increasing yearly, and with this increase there is a very large decrease in the Customs returns. Indeed it seems marvellous to me that the present Government and the previous Government have been able to administer so well from a financial point of view. But no doubt there will be a very heavy deficit, and is the deficit to continue to swell as it has been swelling ever since the James Government were in power? The James Government went back £148,000 and the succeeding Government something like £129,000, and we are informed that the present Government are likely to increase the previous deficit by something like £130,000. This sort of thing cannot possibly go on for ever, and the necessity at once arises for imposing taxation. Many speakers during to-day and yesterday declaimed vigorously against the imposition of a tax on unimproved land values, but I do not think one solitary speaker has suggested any adequate substitute. I am quite open to be convinced in connection with this question. If members in this Chamber can show me that any more reasonable form of taxation can be introduced, I shall be only too ready to stave off the imposition of taxation on unimproved land values, although I shall be always in favour of a tax on unimproved land. Sir Edward Wittenoom expressed strong hostility to the tax, and he said we should develop the resources of the State and introduce population. The very fact that we have been developing the resources of the country has imposed on our financial resources a very heavy strain, and that strain must continue. That strain necessitates the imposition of taxation. How can we develop our resources without increasing our revenue under present circumstances? I fail to see that the argument has any weight whatever. The tax will serve another important purpose. It will operate to burst up the large estates which are held and have been held for many years for purely speculative purposes right through the country. I have travelled through most of the agricultural districts of the State. I do not want to mention names. I do not think it is right I should mention them. I could do so. In various parts of this State there are very large estates

held which are not improved in the slightest manner and are held purely for speculative purposes. They were originally perhaps worth only 7s. 6d. or 10s. an acre. Now they are worth £3 or £4, and during the time I was Minister some estates which were sold at I think £1 an acre were offered to the Government at £4 an acre without having been improved in the meantime. It follows that the unearned increment on every acre of that land would be £3. They have been improved not through any effort on the part of the owner but through the expenditure of public money from the State, by raising loan money, and the taxpayers generally of this State have now to meet interest on the loans incurred in connection with that expenditure which has so vastly increased the value of this land. We have only to go into statistics to discover that the cultivation of the land of Western Australian is not going on as satisfactorily as we could wish. There are at present only 350,000 acres under cultivation for the production of hay and cereals, whereas something like 11,000,000 acres are alienated. We do not expect men to put under cultivation every acre of land taken up, but I think everyone will admit that the disparity between 350,000 acres and 11,000,000 acres is too great, and consequently the necessity arises for compelling some of these people who hold land which is fit for cultivation to put it under cultivation as speedily as possible or otherwise contribute to the revenue of the State. Although I am in favour of the imposition of a land tax, I think it would be a fatal mistake if this tax were made to press heavily on the struggling selector who is endeavouring to develop and use his land in the best interests of the State. I think there should be a very liberal exemption, and conditional purchasers should also in my opinion be exempt, but only on condition that they improve the land. We know there are many conditional purchase owners who do absolutely nothing with the land, and I would place them on the same level as those who hold fee simple and have held it for many years but have not improved it in any shape or form. Many people simply comply with the pure wording of the Act, and as soon as they secure their fee simple they take no trouble whatever to improve the land in any respect. But

as to the conditional purchase owner, the man who is struggling to get along, and who there is every reason to believe will get on if unharassed, I think it would be a fatal mistake, seeing what we are now doing or endeavouring to do by way of fostering settlement, to impose a tax on that class of settler. There has been a good deal of comment as to the nature of the tax and the means of fixing the tax. Mention has been made of valuers and so forth, but to my mind there will be no necessity at all for the appointment of valuers if we follow the New Zealand system. Under the New Zealand system the owner of the land can fix his own valuation, and the State at any time on paying the amount of his valuation, with 10 per cent. added, can take his land and do almost whatever it likes. I hope the introduction of a land tax in Western Australia will follow somewhat the same lines. It will relieve the Government of a great deal of the trouble and expense in the matter of collection, and I think it will serve the interests of the country in various other ways which I do not intend to go into now. I notice that it is intended to amend the constitution, and I presume that the object is to reduce the qualification of electors for the Legislative Council from £25 to £15. Notwithstanding Mr. Patrick's eloquent quotations from my speech, which read much better than I delivered them, I must say I have always advocated a reduction of the franchise for the Legislative Council, and I believe that when I delivered that address I advocated it. With regard to this matter there is no very great grievance in the metropolitan districts of Perth and Fremantle, for every person who occupies a home of any sort in Perth or Fremantle pays at least 10s. a week. But it is quite a different thing in Northampton, Greenough, Mullewa, Mingenew, Gingin, and even in Geraldton. In fact in the majority of the districts there are many people who are disfranchised and have been disfranchised all their lives. It is stated in some quarters—I am glad to say not here—that if we have a reduction of the franchise we shall give the Labour party representation in the Legislative Council. Why should not the workers have some representation in the Legislative Council, if we want the Legislative Council to

survive? When an endeavour was made to get representation there was a counter move. The advocates of it were opposed, and in every instance I think they have been defeated, and consequently, unless it is due to the liberality and generosity of those who succeeded in defeating them, they have no direct representation in this Chamber. [MEMBER: Have they suffered any injustice?] I do not say they have, but I say the working classes should have some representation in the Legislative Council; not necessarily the Labour party, but the working classes. [MEMBER: We all belong to the working classes.] I can assure members that if there is any attempt to defeat this measure we shall throw on the Labour side a large number of people who view the Labour party with suspicion. They are expecting to get the franchise from the Legislative Council, and if we defeat this measure those people—and they represent a large section of the community outside the Legislature—will, I say, throw in their support with the Labour party, and some members of the Legislative Assembly who put up for election will have a bad time. It would, I think, strengthen the party which many members are anxious to defeat. I am glad to see it is proposed by the Government to construct railways for developmental purposes. One of the first railways I would like to see constructed is a railway to the Pilbarra Goldfields. Those goldfields are struggling along under the most adverse conditions. When I state that flour is £3 a bag, firewood £3 a cord, compressed fodder £3 a ton, oats 15s. a bushel, I think members will come to the conclusion that a field that has struggled along so many years under such adverse conditions must be capable of farther expansion and successful development if it only receives proper assistance from the Government and railway communication is provided. In 1905 there were 13,000 ounces of gold procured, and I find that £75,000 worth of tin has been obtained. The Black Range railway is a proposition which I hope will receive due consideration from the Government. At present the battery is quite unequal to the work it is called upon to do. Orders for stone are taken twelve months ahead, with the result that new prospectors are discouraged. There

is no hope for them. There is no opportunity for them to get their stone crushed. I hope members of the Ministry will represent this fact to the Minister for Mines and endeavour to induce him to increase and improve the battery power of this portion of Western Australia. I am in accord with Mr. Patrick's suggestion in regard to a loop line of railway to the Chapman. I think that amply warranted. The settlers there can have no good roads by which they can bring their produce to market, except at enormous expense, which I believe would exceed the cost of a railway, and without a railway there is no hope of a proper thoroughfare. There are 200 old settlers in that district, and 100 new ones. The construction of a line along that route would open up about 100,000 acres of first-class land which could be made available for settlement, and which it is impossible to make available for settlement unless railway communication is provided. With regard to immigration, I am not in favour of introducing immigrants wholesale to Western Australia. I am not in favour of introducing agricultural immigrants here unless they can come under certain conditions with certain qualifications. In the first place I think they should be persons of good repute, in the second place they should have some practical experience of farming and stock-raising, and in the third place they should come here with ample funds to ensure the success of the pursuit they intend to follow. I think that no person should be encouraged and assisted by the Government to come to Western Australia to settle on the land unless he has at least £250 in his pocket. Even then he will afterwards require to receive help from the Agricultural Bank. He must have colonial experience, if he comes here. It means that a man must remain about 12 months in the country and must take up land, clear it, cultivate it, and crop it; and I do not see how he can possibly do that with a less sum of money than £250, with the expectation also of securing assistance from the Agricultural Bank after he has spent his capital. There have been many suggestions from time to time as to the advisability of granting financial assistance to new settlers from abroad, and one gentleman suggested that each of these immigrants

should be presented with a cheque for £400 shortly after arrival. I can assure members from my experience that it would be a fatal mistake. Some members may laugh, but I can relate some of my experiences in connection with this matter. When I became Minister for Lands, one of the first problems that confronted me was the Hamel Settlement. The previous Minister had devised a scheme of settling the unemployed on the land, granting each man 20 acres and agreeing to pay £4 to £5 an acre for clearing the land. When I arrived in office the land was all cleared, and the settlers appealed to me to consider their situation. I went down to Hamel and saw the place, and I found that in many instances settlers had no spades. I examined vouchers and found that they had spent the money they had earned in clearing on encyclopædias and bicycles and such-like; and they were absolutely without a balance. They pleaded for help from the Government, saying that the Government had put them on the land and that it was only right that the Government should keep them there. I reported adversely to that proposal, saying that it was far better for the State that the settlers should die a sudden death instead of a lingering death by consumption; but in another place there was a strong agitation for help for these men, and a select committee was appointed and the Government were advised to render assistance. We gave these men £25 each, ploughed their land and fertilised it and gave them seed, and we took bills from them. At the expiration of three months, when we were looking forward to the promised return, I received letters from some of these settlers informing me that they were bordering on starvation and that they had been living for two months on potatoes and salt.

* THE HON. MINISTER: Seed potatoes was it?

HON. J. M. DREW: I came to that conclusion. I am very much afraid if assistance is given indiscriminately and without judiciousness and tact to new settlers, and even old settlers, the State will fall in every time. We have heard a great deal from Mr. Piesse from time to time as to the withdrawal of grazing leases, and now I trust he will use his

influence with the Government in the direction of making the grazing leases, or second and third class land, available as speedily as possible. There was necessity for the withdrawal of grazing leases at one time, but there is no necessity now for it. There was fear at one time that a certain section of the community would gain a monopoly of these leases. However, through the amendment I secured last session in this House, that obstacle has been removed; so I will rely on Mr. Piesse endeavouring to make grazing leases available as soon as possible, because I am sure he must regard it as very unjust that a large section of the community in districts where land is only second and third class should be compelled to pay first-class prices for second and third class land. Sir E. H. Wittenoom in the course of his speech referred to the Millars' Karri and Jarrah Company, and stated that the Combine had been badly treated by the State. I think I know something about the matter, and I say that the company has been very generously treated by the State. The Combine hold, as well as I can recollect, about 400,000 acres of timber country under concession, and about 400,000 acres as well under lease. Under the Land Act, no person or corporation can hold more than 75,000 acres of timber country, but the Combine, through a process of skilful manipulation, have virtually secured 400,000 acres of timber land; and the result is that in the closely accessible portions of this State there is no good timber land available. When I was in office I had to make available the Flora and Fauna Reserve, and also a reserve at Collie, to cope with the question of the unemployed.

HON. M. L. MOSS: I think that if you had the papers of the Flora and Fauna Reserve laid on the table it would not be very creditable to your Government.

HON. J. M. DREW: The hon. member will have an opportunity of asking for the papers and having them laid on the table. I do not think anything dishonourable to the Government will be found to be contained in those papers. If there is, the blame will rest on me.

HON. M. L. MOSS: I do not wish to cast any reflections, but the public will be informed.

HON. J. M. DREW: What are the Combine paying for the land? They are paying £20 per square mile. What are the other timber-cutters paying? They are paying £320 per square mile. They pay a royalty of 2s. 6d. a load. It is poor timber country that does not produce four loads to the acre; and as there are 640 acres in a square mile, they are contributing something like £320 a square mile, whereas the timber combine only contribute £20. Therefore I think that if the matter is viewed in a reasonable light members will fail to agree with Sir E. H. Wittenoom that the State has been treating the Combine badly. The hon. member also says that the Midland Railway Company have been badly treated by the Government. I have been thinking over this matter all day, and I think that the Midland Railway Company have received every help and assistance from the Government. By a previous Premier of the State they were helped to the extent of £60,000 without the consent of Parliament; and subsequently they were backed to the extent of half a million. Times out of number the contract could have been annulled and the Government could have foreclosed, but they did not do so, and showed the company every consideration. I think statements like these going abroad must necessarily have a bad effect.

HON. E. McLARTY: We subsidised a steamer to run in opposition.

HON. J. M. DREW: Yes; the "Julia Percy"; and for a very good reason. The accommodation on the Midland Railway was very wretched, and representations were made by the members for the district to the Government and the steamer was put on, but not to enable the steamer to undercut the rates charged by the company. It was nothing of the kind. I took a prominent part in connection with the matter, and the reason for our action was solely to compel the Midland Company to put on better accommodation between Midland Junction and Geraldton.

HON. M. L. MOSS: The accommodation is disgraceful now.

Hon. J. M. DREW: It is getting bad again, because the contract with the steamer has nearly expired. At that time there was only one car on, with

no lavatory, and I have seen as many as 50 persons on that car. It was owing to the representations of members that we got the Government to put on the "Julia Percy" to compel the company to put on the necessary accommodation, and since then the accommodation has greatly improved, though there are signs now that it is going back to the old state. I do not know whether it is in the Governor's Speech, but I think I read it in the Premier's policy speech that it is proposed to amend the Agricultural Bank Act. I shall carefully consider any amendments. I favour the reduction of the limit to £500. I think any settler who wants more than that should apply to a private financial institution for aid. I think the time has come when the bank should be under the management of three trustees as is the case in South Australia, where the trustees are appointed for life with three fees which in no single instance must exceed £200 a year, and where they have the advice of an inspector general. Here we have one manager, however conscientious a man he is. He has already lent a half a million and has authority to increase that to £600,000. I contend it is too large a responsibility to rest on one brain. We may not always have Mr. Paterson, and seeing that he may retire at any moment, we should make provision to place the bank under a board of trustees as private banks do their business. I do not know whether it is the idea of the Government to do so, but I think the time has arrived when some such action should be taken. There are several suggestions I could make, but I do not wish to delay the House. However, there is one suggestion I should like to make in connection with the Land Act. Under Section 17 of the Land Act the Minister has power to decide, when there is more than one applicant for a piece of land, whether it should be determined by lot or referred to a board. The present practice is to refer to a board; but the board sits and takes evidence, and the evidence is not enough. All sorts of wild statements are made, and the man who tells the biggest lie generally gets the land. He is not put under oath, and I have known extraordinary statements to be made in connection with this evidence. I never knew, until the sitting of the Land Court

at Geraldton, that there were so many capitalists in that town. There is no means of prosecuting these people; but if they give evidence on oath they can be prosecuted for perjury. There should also be provision that the land secured through misrepresentations should be forfeited. There is another matter to which I wish to refer, and that is the conduct of the Central Board of Health in connection with the Geraldton plague outbreak. Plague was discovered at Geraldton about 11 o'clock on Monday night. The local board of health was sitting at the time and immediately communicated with Dr. Black. They had proof that the telegram asking Dr. Black to send a bacteriologist, prophylactics, and nurses, reached him at two o'clock in the morning of Tuesday; but Dr. Black took no action, though it was necessary that nurses should be sent without delay, because neither the doctor nor the ordinary people in Geraldton knew anything about the treatment of plague. They received no reply from Dr. Black on Tuesday, nor on Wednesday until 8 o'clock in the evening. Dr. Blackburne, the bacteriologist, came along on the Wednesday evening, but Dr. Black refused to send the nurses asked for until he heard from Dr. Blackburne that it was plague. All this time the patients were in a state of collapse, or most of the time. Dr. Black absolutely refused to send along the necessary medicine. He was informed that the town was reeking with plague, but he took no action except that next morning the people of Geraldton became aware through a Press telegram from Perth that Dr. Black had characterised the telegram he received from Geraldton as discreditable. Dr. Black was then urged by farther messages from Geraldton to take prompt measures, but he did not then reply. A reply had to come from the Premier, who sent a very callous message. I am sure that if Mr. Kingsmill, who was then Colonial Secretary, had been in the office when the Geraldton messages were received the case would have been treated differently. However, the Geraldton authorities found it necessary to treat with the Premier directly, and they received from Mr. Rason a most callous reply, in which he stated that everything that was necessary had been done; yet

the fact was that nothing had been done, and the patients in Geraldton were dying through neglect. I express it now as the opinion of the great majority of people in Geraldton, that many of those patients who died practically rotted to death. I may inform the House that it is my intention to move for a select committee to inquire into the matter; and therefore I shall say no more on it at present. Referring again to the Governor's Speech, in regard to most of the definite provisions in the Address I am only waiting to see what the statements will result in when the promised measures come before the House. I am inclined to applaud the Speech as far as it goes, and I hope that some of the measures which are to be introduced will pass.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY: I have much pleasure in joining with other members in expressions of congratulation with regard to yourself, Mr. President, and to offer my congratulations to the Leader of the House on his appointment, and to my old friend the Honorary Minister. With regard to the land question, I am sure the able advice of Mr. Piesse will be of great service to the Ministry and a benefit to the country. I do not intend to speak at length on his Excellency's Speech, because most members have dealt with the few subjects on which I had made notes, and it would be only killing time for me to speak now at great length. I am pleased to see that the Government have given particular attention to a question that has been before the House for some considerable time, that is the development of the railway system throughout the State; not particularly that the development should be confined to agricultural areas, but that new railways should be extended to mining centres and other parts, particularly those concerned in the timber industry. I hope we shall see some definite propositions brought forward during the session in regard to new railways. In the Speech we have no definite lines specified, though I feel it is only a matter of omission on the part of the Government in formulating the Speech. Still it may be well to refer now to those railways which came before us at the close of last session, which members were pleased to pass very hurriedly. It is possible that many of

the members were not seized of particulars relating to these lines; and the Government did not bring down to the House all the information and particulars which members would like to have had before passing these Bills. If the Government have found since then that some slight deviations in the directions of these lines are desirable, it would be well if they would state their intentions to the House; and in regard to new lines, I hope the Government will be able to place full particulars before hon. members. It will be a great mistake if our railways are to be run indiscriminately, when the Government may have become aware of some factors which make it desirable that the three railways which were passed at the end of last session should be deviated in some way. I do not wish to lay particular stress on any lines I may desire the Government to bring forward, although certain lines in which I have felt a particular interest should have strong claims on the consideration of the Government. I feel confident that the Government will give every consideration to those lines, and will bring the particulars before us; and, although not mentioned in the Speech, I hope we shall have something definite in regard to them before we get far into the session. I should have been pleased to see in the Speech a particular reference to the Pilbarra Railway, for undoubtedly the development of the North-West by a railway system is well deserved. I feel that Sir E. H. Wittenoom expressed in a very nice way what many of us in the country have felt with regard to Federal control, or what we suffer from under Federation. I sincerely indorse all that fell from him in that connection, and with him I fail to realise that we have got anything very great from entering into Federation. We all know that the strongest argument in favour of entering into Federation was in regard to the question of centralisation, for we understood that in joining Federation our ideas would be widened considerably. I know one small result which seems to me to be of urgent moment, and that is the change that has taken place in regard to the control of the post and telegraph services in this State. In travelling round I frequently hear great complaints from various centres, and there

seems to be a general grievance arising from the hardness with which grievances in connection with these services are treated by those officers who are acting under the Federal Government. I remember that when this State introduced, years ago, some experts to give us the best information on the telegraph system, one recommendation was that instead of using wooden posts, jarrah and white gum, we should use iron posts. These iron standards were introduced at great expense in the telegraphic system throughout the State, and I understood that it was laid down as a general principle that in future only iron standards should be used. Iron standards were erected throughout the length and breadth of the country, and many officers were stationed along the lines, which were cleared half a chain wide. Now that we have Federation, we find that the principle of iron standards has been entirely abandoned, and we see the Federal authorities have reverted to the old wayback system of erecting wooden posts cut from the nearest bush. That might be a saving in cost, and those who wish to look at the matter from an economic point of view may regard that as a benefit; but we see now that the money expended in obtaining the advice of experts as to the best method of managing the telegraphs in this State has been thrown away; and we all know that the changes effected have not been viewed altogether with favour by the officials whom, for some years past we have had in the service. In the Speech the principal matter that I wish to note is the falling-off in the revenue. We are told that it is highly necessary to keep up the revenue, and that we ought to be called upon to bear an additional burden of taxation. As Mr. Dempster says, the Government propose to adopt the system of taxing the other man—taxing unimproved land values. Nearly every member who has spoken on the Address has dealt with this subject; and in every instance we have heard much about unearned increment. Several have mentioned that much of our land carries no unearned increment. I know that against the unearned increment we have to set off all the unavoidable hardship that many have borne while holding the land or carrying it through for a great number of years,

when this country was in the throes of very deep depression. I refer not only to people who are pioneering on broad acres, but to holders of city lands. No doubt these men have spent many sleepless nights, and have grown weary of watching, financing, and paying rates and taxes on such lands for numbers of years, at the same time keeping the country going, trying to encourage others to acquire land alongside of them, and doing their utmost to advertise the resources of the State, thus helping to build it up, in the hope that new settlers would arrive whose desire for land would be as great as theirs. And we know that many of those pioneers would have been only too glad to dispose of their lands, and to let others carry their burdens. Only within the last few years has there been any opportunity to sell their lands; and when a Government has so many million acres of Crown lands, and an Agricultural Bank to assist settlers, particularly those taking up broad acres, and yet cannot get sufficient settlers, it seems to me extremely erroneous to tax private lands with a view to bursting up large estates. I remember that some few years ago the Government of the day felt the stress of a strong agitation for a measure similar to that proposed by the present Government. Many of the landowners were impressed by the proposal; and I know of one private estate which was cut up and offered for sale; and a member of the then Government, who himself was a strong advocate of this very tax to burst up large estates, happened to be the auctioneer on that occasion. After much judicious advertising he did his best to sell the land, and failed, although the reserve was actually only the cost of fencing the ground. And the land was within four miles of one of our most important farming townships. Four miles is not a great distance. In front of a body of 350 men who turned up at the sale, the auctioneer failed to sell one acre of the land; and I can assure the House that event had a very powerful effect upon the auctioneer, who was himself a Minister of the Crown. He owned he was convinced that there was not much in the cry for a tax on unimproved land values to make large landholders disgorge; and soon after that the Premier of the day

decided on the Lands Purchase Act that we now have on our statute-book, so that the Government themselves should guarantee the purchase of the blocks rather than force the large landholder into a market where the Government were themselves competing. And I claim that the same holds good to-day; that the Government are competing against the very people whom they would like to force on the market with their lands; are competing by means of the very large areas the Government have at their disposal; are offering to give the land away on ridiculously easy terms. No private person can attempt to compete with the Government; and in addition to that the Government offer the settler financial assistance. I fail to see that any good will come of the proposed land values tax, or that it will be the means of bursting up large estates. We must bear in mind that owners of so-called large estates are the greatest employers of many wage-earners, including men of small means who take up small blocks from the Government. These men, who without capital take up small areas, must look to someone near at hand for employment—to someone who can pay them wages. And it seems to me that by taxing the employer of such labour we shall be taking out of his pocket the money which he is in almost every case only too pleased to spend in employing the labour of Crown land farmers, in preference to bringing other men from the towns. Moreover, personally I think that all the landowners claim that they do not put by any money; that every penny they can lay their hands on goes back into the soil, and usually in the form of wages, but always by way of building up the resources of the country. Their management is characterised by the greatest thrift. And I claim that the large landholder who has had some experience of the conditions governing the cost of farming and of the class of work to be done, invariably knows much better than the newcomer the best means of spending money. I claim that by extracting from the large landowner so much money by way of tax to increase the State revenue, we shall take away from him the cash which he would otherwise spend much more judiciously than the Government of the day or any other Government is likely to spend it in the

interest of the country; that in every instance the landowner will spend it much more judiciously in building up the country than the Government are likely to spend it in salaries, or in squandering it, as I fear much money is squandered. The sums spent by the settlers of whom I speak are individually small, but are large in the aggregate. With regard to the areas on which the Government suggest the imposition of more stringent conditions of improvement, I indorse the remarks of previous speakers that the improvement conditions are severe enough, provided they are enforced in their entirety, with reasonable care. I can but believe that if the people taking up those areas carried out their part of the contract, the Government and the country would have little to complain of. Moreover, I believe that much of the unimproved land we see is not part of large estates, but belongs to new settlers who have not the means of providing the heavy expenditure immediately necessary to carry out the conditions of improvement which they have undertaken to observe. As to providing special settlement areas, I much regret that the Government have not pursued the policy of a Minister in office some years ago—the policy suggested by Mr. Hopkins. I still hold the opinion that rather than get selectors to clear the areas, we should for that purpose utilise prison labour. It seems to me that we are carrying prisoners on our shoulders, many of whom are absolutely worthless persons who decline to do anything for the welfare of the State; and it seems to me that land-clearing would be an open-air life which would make prison labourers of very good service to the country. [MINISTER: Who is to look after them?] Who looked after them in the early days? I fail to see that we cannot do at the present time what was done then. In many instances it would be found under this system that instead of having the number of prisoners you have now, there would probably be an increase, for those men would like the outdoor life. At the same time I feel that it would pay the country from the fact that at present we are expending something like £32,000 per annum in the upkeep of prisons. We have a daily average of 775 inmates in our prisons, from whom we get but a

small amount of work in the form of industries in prison workshops; and I am not sure that this amount is actually received by the State, for I think it is given to the prisoners on the expiration of their term as being their share of wages earned in the workshops. The country is taxed to a serious extent per head for the upkeep of prisons, and I cannot see why the amount should not be expended in clearing land and making it of some value to the State, by enabling the Government to sell it at an increased price, which would more than cover the expense of keeping these men in prison. With regard to the water supply for the metropolitan district, I agree with remarks that have been made on the point. It seems to me unreasonable that we have gone on so long allowing a great quantity of water to run to waste from the Mundaring Weir, instead of utilising it as might be done. Pipes are laid from the Weir as far as Midland Junction, and it is unreasonable not to carry the water some 12 miles farther to supplement the supply in Perth. I do not say the surplus water from Mundaring should be used to supersede or be in lieu of the Canning scheme for increasing the water supply to Perth; but we know there has been a great scarcity of water in Perth during the last few years, and I see no reason why the Canning scheme of supply should not be started as it were at the Perth end, and ultimately complete the reticulation, and by that time probably Perth would require a much larger water supply than can be obtained from the Canning scheme. By utilising the Mundaring overflow water to supply Perth, the pipes laid for the purpose could be of such large size as would meet the expected requirements some ten years hence; and in the future, as times went on, the Canning scheme could be carried out. By the time that Perth required a much larger supply of water the suburbs between Perth and Midland Junction could perhaps utilise the Mundaring overflow supply through the pipes which had been laid to Perth. I have also wondered on several occasions why the Government continue to pay enormous sums for carrying water along the Government railways, when it would be much cheaper to lay a line of pipes for carrying the Mundaring water to places

like York and Beverley, for supplying the railway and other purposes. Water is now carried there by trucks at great expense, instead of running it through pipes, which would be a more reasonable system and cost less. That method of supplying water to railways along that line must be very expensive to the Government. One instance of the way money is expended is that a man is kept in charge of an abandoned water supply at an expense of £2 a week, and he is doing absolutely nothing. He was removed from one spot to another a few miles away, which had been abandoned for three years, and he is still drawing his £2 a week and doing nothing.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: What is he supposed to look after?

HON. V. HAMERSLEY: For some time past he was supposed to look after a catchment area that was resumed from Mr. Andrew Dempster's property near Spencer's Brook, and I understand the man was removed from one place and put in charge of the abandoned water supply at the Burlong Pool. It would be better in the interests of the country that this man should receive a pension, and that it should be called a pension, rather than he should be paid in this way for doing nothing. With regard to several of the Bills mentioned in the Governor's Speech, I notice one is for amending the Constitution Act. There have been several hints as to what direction this amendment is likely to take. With regard to the lowering of the franchise for the Upper House, I need hardly again express my conviction, and we know what the general opinion of members is, so that I need not speak on this matter till the Bill comes before us. I notice one Act that I had hoped to see mentioned in the Speech, and that is the Bush Fires Act, which greatly needs amendment. A great number of bush fires have occurred lately, and some of them have done serious damage in agricultural districts. Some alteration should be made in the Act, to make it more workable in the interests of settlers; because, for instance, there is at present a great difficulty in arriving at the responsibility attaching to persons who start a fire. The owners of land in many instances may let a contract for clearing or doing other work, and then feel that

their liability in regard to fires has ceased. It would be well for this matter to be discussed in Parliament, so that provision may be made to meet such cases as that of a man who perhaps wishes to clear 10 acres, and simply ignores his neighbour when setting fire to the scrub. The neighbour may in such case have invested a large sum of money in the purchase of stock so as to make the best use of some superfluous feed he has available, which feed may be burnt off by the operations of the other man who is clearing. Under the Act as it is, the man having the feed is at the mercy of the man alongside him who wishes to burn off, and in many instances great suffering and almost ruin have been caused to settlers. I have mentioned before in this House with regard to the Bush Fires Act that at present if a person wishes to burn sandplain country he has absolutely to break the Act and so become liable under it. It is well known to pastoralists and others that there are many areas in which sandplain can be burned off only during the hottest period of the year, January and February; because later in the season the atmosphere alters considerably on sandplain areas, and it is only in extremely hot weather that a good burn can be got on sandplain country. Still the owner of an area of that kind, although he may be miles away from any chance of damaging a neighbour, is not allowed to burn off in January or February according to the Act. The Act does not allow him to burn off even if he be 50 miles from any other settler. I hope we shall be able to do something in that direction during the present session. I regret to notice the remarks of Mr. Patrick as regards parasites and the Agricultural Department, though I congratulate him on almost everything else in his speech. I feel that we are in good company if we are really on the wrong track in the introduction of these parasites. We have before us good evidence from the Agricultural Department that the parasites have been doing good work in many fruit-growing areas, and such evidence comes not only from this State, but from California and other parts. It has been freely admitted by many fruit-growers that the parasites have been the means of saving them many pounds in expense and

much necessary labour in trying to get rid of pests; so I sincerely hope that Mr. Patrick may find on closer acquaintance with the subject that the parasites are not going to be such a costly experiment to this country as he suggests, nor that the department is going on wrong lines. I should only be doing right by saying what I can towards congratulating the department on what it has been able to do in this direction; and I hope these efforts will continue and be found to be a great benefit to fruit-growers in this State, who have many difficulties in regard to pests that are now a scourge or likely to become a scourge unless we have some remedy of this kind. I hope, in the words of the last paragraph of the Speech, that we shall be able to materially advance the well-being of this State during the present session.

On motion by the HON. R. D. MCKENZIE, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9:15 o'clock, until the next day.
