

while others endeavour to stand out and evade their obligations. I move—

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

On motion by Hon. Sir E. H. Witenoom, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 5.28 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 30th September, 1915.*

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

### PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Mines: Return showing the position of the audit of the accounts of the State trading concerns under the Government Trading Concerns Act as on the 25th inst.

### QUESTION—POLICE DEPARTMENT MOTOR CARS.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1, How many motor cars (if any) were used solely by the Police Department prior to the present Commissioner taking office? 2, The number in use since the present Commissioner was appointed? 3, The approximate cost per annum for the upkeep of such cars? 4, Are such cars used for other than official business?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Premier) replied: 1, One "Ford" car, obsolete pattern, unsuitable for heavy work or for roads outside of the metropolitan area. 2, One up to 14/9/14, after which a new car was purchased and the old one laid up for several months. 3, For a period of five years commencing 14/9/10, the average cost of the "Ford" was £153 17s. 7d. per annum, or 4.2d. per mile. Total mileage run during five years 44,000. The cost of the new "Talbot" car for the 12 months ending 14/9/15 is £186 17s. 11d., or an average of 2.9d. per mile (15,500 miles). As a set off against the above, there are stores, spare parts, and tools on hand to the value of about £80. 4, The "Talbot" car was let on two occasions for a patriotic purpose—once to convey workmen to Blackboy Hill to assist in completing the Y.M.C.A. buildings, and on another occasion to take out wounded soldiers.

### QUESTIONS (2)—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD.

#### *Insurance of Crops.*

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is it true that whilst the Industries Assistance Board insists on all crop in which it is interested being insured against fire, it refuses to give assistance for similar protection against hail? 2, Is he aware that during the past four years in the Great Southern districts the losses from hail storms have been somewhat severe, whilst losses from fire have been comparatively light? 3, Will he instruct the board to grant assistance for insurance against hail in those cases where the settlers from their local knowledge consider such insurance necessary in the mutual interests of the settler and the board. If not, why not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, It is left to the absolute discretion of the farmer to do his own insurance, but he must exercise this right by the 15th October. If he elects to insure against fire and hail the Industries Assistance Board will guarantee premiums, but it is impossible for the board to in-

sure against hail if farmers neglect to do so, as the board could not take the responsibility of defining districts subject to hail storms. 2, No. It is difficult to discriminate between destruction by hail and destruction by storm, and I have no definite information on the subject. 3, Answered by No. 1.

*Machinery duplicate parts.*

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Has the Industries Assistance Board refused authority to the machinery firms to deliver any duplicate parts of machinery to assisted farmers during the harvesting season, without a special order in writing from the board? 2, As broken parts must be immediately replaced during harvesting operations, what arrangements does the board propose to make for their prompt supply from the country agencies where they are available?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, In view of the fact that the Board has evidence that farmers endeavour to secure more than necessary requirements in the matter of duplicate parts, an open authority cannot be issued, but the Board will recognise supplies by machinery firms for reasonable requirements. 2, Owing to the arrangement made with machinery firms, whereby the Board guarantees the payment for duplicate parts, it is anticipated that they will keep an ample supply of parts at their country agencies.

**QUESTION—GRISTING AGREEMENT, PAPERS.**

Mr. GEORGE asked the Premier: Is it his intention to lay on the Table of the House all the papers which have passed between the Government and Messrs. Ockerby & Co. and the Perth Roller Flour Mills or either of them in connection with the gristing agreement from the inception until date?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Premier) replied: The members of the Commission are at present on the Murchison Goldfields and I have not been

able to find out what papers there are. I shall do so on their return, and if there are papers in existence there will be no objection to laying them on the Table of the House.

**QUESTION — RAILWAY STEEL TYRES CONTRACT.**

*Nationality of successful tenderer.*

Mr. SMITH asked the Premier: 1, If the Midvale Company's tender for the Railway Steel Tyre Contract was accepted because it was the lowest, why was another "lowest" tender from the same firm passed over on a previous occasion? 2, What inquiries were instituted regarding the nationality of this firm, and from whom were they made? 3, Has he noticed that British manufacturers have decided to ask the British Government to see that any loans granted to Colonial Governments are expended in the British Empire? 4, Is he prepared to acquiesce in this principle?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Premier) replied: 1, The Midvale Steel Company were not accepted on the previous occasion, as a report was received that a trial of the company's tyres was being made, and it was then too early to decide as to their suitability. 2, Confidential inquiries were made through official channels in England regarding a number of firms trading in Great Britain and the Dominions, but being of a confidential nature, the scope and results thereof cannot be disclosed. 3, I have been unable to trace such a statement. 4, Yes, where it can reasonably be done.

Mr. George: Do you not know they are a German firm?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No.

Mr. Smith: They are.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Do you think I would trade with them if I knew they were a German firm.

Mr. George: I thought probably you would know.

The Minister for Lands: Do you think the Commissioner of Railways would trade with them?

Mr. George: Of course I do not know what you know.

### ELECTORAL—ROEBOURNE CONSTITUENCY.

*Seat declared vacant.*

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to announce that the seat of the member for Roebourne (Mr. Joseph Peter Gardiner) has become vacant, according to Section 38 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1899, he not having attended for two consecutive months without the permission of the House.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder): Following your announcement, I move—

*That Mr. Joseph Peter Gardiner, having failed to attend the meetings of the Assembly for two consecutive months without the permission of the Assembly, the seat for the electorate of Roebourne be declared vacant.*

Question passed.

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1915-16.

*In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates: Mr. Holman in the Chair.

Vote—*His Excellency the Governor, £1,540:*

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Perth) [4.40]: In speaking on the Estimates the member for Irwin (Mr. Gardiner) complained of the unfair attitude of the *Sunday Times* in saying that the Budget was the words of the Premier, but the work of the member for Irwin.

Mr. Foley: The *Sunday Times* did not put it that way.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The member for Irwin disclaimed that and no wonder. There was certainly nothing to be proud of in the Budget speech. Whether one looks at it from a financial or indeed any other standpoint, the conclusion must be come to that a more mournful tale of financial

failure was never told by any Treasurer in an Australian Parliament. The Budget showed that there is already for this year a deficiency of £241,000, yet, notwithstanding that, there was not the least suggestion to economise or make good the leeway which has piled up in past years. And we have been adding to that accumulation in the past few months. It seems that the only suggestion that the Government are capable of in the way of finance is to borrow and spend as quickly as possible. That has been the policy of the past and it looks as if it were going to be the policy of the future. One hardly likes to think what the position will be if the money lenders will not go to the assistance of the Government in the future, and there is every probability of that being the case. I have in mind, of course, the reports we have been receiving of the Premiers' conference in Melbourne. I do not know that the fact that the Treasurer may not be able to borrow money will not be an unmixed blessing. If we are to judge by what has taken place in the past four years—

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): In the past 10 years.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: We can rest assured that no attempt will be made to economise so long as the Government can lay their hands on borrowed money. It will, therefore, be of advantage to the State if the Treasurer finds it impossible to raise any more money. He will then be forced to look about and try and carry on the affairs of the country in a business-like way. The Premier complains that his Administration have to face an additional sum of £150,000 for sinking fund over and above what his predecessors had to provide. It is not so much a question of what the Premier has to face as a question of what he is accumulating for his successors. No Treasurer since the foundation of the State has borrowed in anything like the same proportion as the present occupant of the office. He has borrowed in a few years the sum of 14 million pounds. On that he has not had to pay one single penny of sinking fund. That is left to a future Treasurer because the Sinking Fund, as is provided under

the Loan Acts, does not start for four years after the commencement of the loan. Therefore, the sinking fund on the 14 million pounds is a burden to concern a future Treasurer. I had intended to mention the rather brilliant idea of the Premier in respect to dealing with the sinking fund, but that has been dealt with pretty exhaustively and I think we are not likely to hear much more of this absurd proposal. In regard to all this borrowing, one would excuse the Government if they had adhered to some principle, but in their borrowing and spending they have departed altogether from the principles of their party. They profess to be a non-borrowing party. Instead of being a non-borrowing party they have been a mad borrowing party and on top of that have been reckless in their spending of the money. Largely, this money has been spent in State enterprises. It was stated the other evening by the member for Subiaco (Mr. B. J. Stubbs) that these State enterprises form a part of the Government policy and therefore the Government are bound to carry them out. Apart from the loss by spending the money on State enterprises, this action on the part of the Government is doing the State incalculable harm because it is barring capital from coming into the State. Any-one with sense would not start a trading concern in Western Australia at the present time because he would be subject to the unfair competition of the State trading concerns. It would not be so bad if the trading concerns were conducted in a business-like way, but having to compete with expenditure such as has been going on in connection with our trading concerns, no sane person would attempt the task.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It is dishonest competition when they sell below cost.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Yes; it is unfair to the country in more ways than one. It is dishonest to the country to recklessly spend the country's money because it prevents outside capital from coming in and developing the country. If we do not get more capital and more population, we shall never advance be-

yond our present stage. The age of miracles is not past if there is not a huge loss on the State trading concerns this year, more particularly the implement works, judging by the reckless and unbusinesslike way in which that concern has been managed. No attempt has been made by the Premier to economise, or to make ends meet other than by borrowing money and spending borrowed money where revenue should be spent. We passed a Land and Income Tax Bill this session and no alteration was made in the direction of spreading the burden over the whole of the people. Years ago we used to hear a great cry of taxation without representation. Nowadays it is representation without taxation. A little while ago a question was asked in another place as to how many names there were on the electoral roll for the Legislative Assembly. Speaking from memory the answer given was 190,000. Then the question was asked, how many persons paid income tax and the answer was something like 12,000. Roughly speaking, only about 6 per cent. of the people pay any direct taxation. We have the excellent example set by the Imperial Government that everyone should be asked to contribute in accordance with his means. The Imperial Government have put up the income tax to a high rate on high incomes and have spread the taxation so that everyone will be able to bear a share in accordance with his income. We have heard much of the Government's request for helpful criticism. We have been told it is the duty of every member, whether on the Government side or on the Opposition side, to help the Government. The Government object to carping criticism. I think it would be well for the Government to set the example, if they want our help, by giving straightforward answers when information is sought. We find on almost every occasion that answers are as evasive as possible and sometimes positively misleading.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: When asked to give instances, you always fail.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I will give instances. The leader of the Opposition on the 3rd August asked the Premier—

Is it true that Cabinet have decided to build a new steamer for the North-West trade?

The Premier replied—

No, but designs are being prepared by Sir John Biles for a new steamer to replace the "Western Australia" and to provide for the trade in chilled meat, etc., consequent upon the establishment of freezing, chilling and canning works at Wyndham. The cost cannot be estimated pending the completion of designs.

The Minister for Mines: That was perfectly true, too.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I am sorry for the Acting Premier's idea of truth. It was literally true but not true in substance or in fact.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It was not literally true, the steamer was being built.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: That is so. The question was whether the Government had decided to build a ship and the answer was "no."

Hon. Frank Wilson: It was only a quibble.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The same day, according to the file laid on the table of the House, a cable message was sent to the Agent General informing him that it had been decided to purchase this Diesel-engine steamer.

The Minister for Mines: A different matter altogether.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: This steamer was being built and was on the stocks in Harland & Wolff's yard at Belfast, and was approaching completion. It was being built; yet the Premier came here and gave a misleading answer and said no steamer was being built. Yet that very day the Government had cabled to the Agent General informing him that they had decided in Cabinet to purchase the Diesel-engine steamer "Kangaroo."

The Minister for Works: Will not you believe us when we tell you you are incorrect?

Hon. Frank Wilson: No.

The Minister for Works: It is an entirely different steamer. It is not for the North-West coast.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Of course it is.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The hon. member did not ask whether the Government were purchasing or building the "Kangaroo." The question was "Have Cabinet decided to build a new steamer?" The vessel was being built and the Government had decided on that very day that it was to be purchased. That is shown by the cable sent to the Agent General. These negotiations had been going on for months before. According to the file, the matter was under consideration every day.

The Minister for Works: For months before?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Yes, during the whole of July and a part of June, I think. This occurred on the 3rd August, so that it would be at least one month, and I think more.

The Minister for Works: On that one steamer?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The fact remains that it was decided by Cabinet on the 3rd August to purchase this steamer and, in reply to the leader of the Opposition later the same day—the 3rd August—the Premier stated that the Government were not building a steamer.

The Minister for Mines: You are confusing two different ships.

Hon. Frank Wilson: And the Government were negotiating with Nevanas to buy a steamer months before.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Yes.

The Minister for Mines: This is a different ship altogether.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is not; it is a ship for the North-West trade.

The Minister for Mines: I say it is.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: This is a Diesel-engine ship, exactly the one the leader of the Opposition asked about. The Premier, by his action, is not merely flouting the leader of the Opposition but is flouting Parliament. It is acting in an unconstitutional way to enter into negotiations for a purchase of this kind, while the House is sitting, without consulting us. The Government ask for the help of

hon. members and yet in a case of this kind, as I shall show presently, when the House could easily have saved the Government from making a disastrous purchase, they not only ignored hon. members but gave misleading answers to the questions asked about it.

The Minister for Works: You are not correct.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: In order to show the special pleading put up for the purchase of this vessel, it has been stated that it was recommended by the Agent General. Now what happened? The query put to the Agent General was this—

Confidential inquiry Diesel ship now considering purchase but do not understand why we are offered such a good commercial ship considering the state of the market. Please reply urgently and get Biles to hold offer open pending our decision.

The Minister for Works: You do not object to that.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It was a very pertinent inquiry.

Mr. George: Who is Biles?

The Minister for Works: I wish I had his brains; I would not be here.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Later on the Agent General replied—

As result of inquiries advised early Diesel steamers not very satisfactory, but later built have proved satisfactory in every way.

The acting manager of the State Steamship Service, Mr. Stevens, on that telegram satisfied the Government that the ship offered was in every way suitable. The Agent General (Sir Newton Moore) has not expressed an opinion on this particular Diesel ship. He gives a general opinion on what he has been advised as to the possibility of Diesel-engine ships.

The Minister for Works: You would not accept that advice, I suppose?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is not an answer to the query at all. In the first place he said these Diesel-engine ships were not quite satisfactory but that the later ships, from inquiries he had made, were, he found, working satisfactorily. He was asked "Why are we being offered apparently this soft snap?" so to speak.

There was no answer to that. He simply says in a general way that these later Diesel-engine ships are reported as satisfactory. It is passing strange that not one word is said to the Agent General in regard to the price to be paid. He does not know what is being paid for the steamer. He is not asked to get a check report on the possibilities and the capabilities of the steamer for the Western Australian trade.

Mr. Taylor: Do you not recognise that he should exercise caution after the blunder in regard to the "Western Australia"?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: He has exercised caution. There is a good deal of Scotch caution in that answer.

Mr. George: It would not do much good.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: He says, speaking in a general way, that these Diesel-engine ships were reported formerly as not being quite satisfactory, but later he says they were found to have been working satisfactorily. There is not one word about this so-called bargain at all. Then Mr. Stevens says to the Government "Will you hesitate any longer after receiving this strong recommendation?" This wants a great deal of explanation. This is the sort of blunder which would have been avoided if the House had been taken into the confidence of the Government, as it was the duty of the Government to do.

The Minister for Works: Won't you get on?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The next thing on the file we see is that the steamer has a draft of 23 feet  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches, or, let us say in round numbers 23 $\frac{1}{2}$  feet. I asked certain questions.

Hon. Frank Wilson: These are Biles' figures, I suppose?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Yes. He is the authority upon which they purchased the steamer. I asked certain questions in regard to the depth of the water in the Northern ports, and these are the answers.

The Minister for Works: We heard all that yesterday.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: And the House will hear it again to-day, and Western Australia will hear it to its sorrow for a good many years to come. The Government purchased this boat at a cost of £140,000, and it is a vessel which will be useless for our trade. We are told that she is for the Wyndham Freezing Works trade, and that she is to take the place of the "Western Australia." Where did the "Western Australia" trade if not along the North-West coast?

The Minister for Works: She is not to take the place of the "Western Australia."

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Minister is shifting his ground.

The Minister for Works: No, I am not.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: These are the answers to the questions asked, as given by the Minister for Mines on behalf of the Premier: The depth of the water at Geraldton is generally 23 feet at the outer end, decreasing down to 16 feet a thousand feet inshore. This boat draws 23½ feet, and she cannot, therefore, go within many hundreds of yards of the shore at Geraldton. To begin with, she would have 4½ inches of her keel on the ground at Geraldton, and it would not be safe to take her into the harbour at all unless there was a good 27 feet of water under her bottom. It therefore seems that she could not go within half a mile of the Geraldton jetty.

The Minister for Lands: Does she draw 23 feet whether she is loaded or not?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: She would not draw much less when she was not loaded.

The Minister for Lands: Suppose she is only half loaded, how much would she draw?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Oh, I see what the Government are driving at. Upon my word, this is most amusing. Here is a Minister putting up an excuse that they will run the steamer half loaded so as to get her into the shallow ports along the coast.

The Minister for Lands: I want you to tell us what you know about her.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I am doing so. I am afraid that the Minister knows very little about it when he talks about running a ship as a commercial proposition only half loaded and with a few tons in her bottom in order to get her into these ports.

Mr. Taylor: The greater the load on a wagon the deeper will the wheels sink into the sand.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I see the hon. member's drift. He infers that the centre-board of the steamer will get into the sand. That is what must have been intended after all. Now we come to the next port, and that is Sharks Bay or Denham. We all know that the ill-fated "Koombana" drew some 19 feet of water, not 23½ feet which this new steamer will draw. The "Koombana" was in constant difficulty all along that coast, and in no place more than at Sharks Bay.

Mr. Male: She stopped there for about a week.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: On several occasions she remained there an even longer period. In fact she nearly became a wreck once or twice, and would have done so if the weather had not moderated. Now we come to the next port, Carnarvon. It is one of the most important ports—if not the most important port—on the North-Western coast. The answer to the question shows that Carnarvon has a depth of 18 feet at low tide and of 22 feet at high tide at the outer berth, that is, right at the end of the jetty. Here again she will ground to the extent of 18 inches if she goes into the Carnarvon jetty. She will have to stand out a couple of miles in the roadstead, I should say. Then we come to Onslow, where there is only a small jetty. It is an open roadstead and a very shallow and dangerous port. The depth of the water 1½ miles from the jetty, where the steamers anchor, is 24 feet at high tide. I have travelled in a steamer up north which drew only 16 feet of water. Even this vessel had difficulty in getting in, and it had also a difficulty in getting over the mud banks in the roadstead, yet the Govern-

ment are going to send in a steamer, or endeavour to do so, drawing 23½ feet where the depth of water, at most, at high tide is only 24 feet. It is impossible for a steamer of this size to go within miles of Onslow.

Mr. Hardwick: Perhaps the Government intend to raise the jetty.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: There is then Point Sampson which has a depth of 18 feet to 36 feet, according to the tide. The steamer could get in there, but there would be a great difficulty because she must catch the tide at the full in order to get in. An ordinary steamer on the North-West coast can go in and out of Point Sampson irrespective of the tide altogether. That is one advantage now of that particular port. At Port Hedland we find the depth of the water is 16 feet at low tide and 35 feet at high tide. That would appear to be all right. Hon. members must remember that outside Port Hedland there is a bar. I should say that the ordinary high tide on that bar never gives a greater depth than 25 feet or 26 feet. The only way, therefore, that a steamer can get into Port Hedland is on a high spring tide; that is a few days in every month. She, therefore, has to watch these few days in every month in order to get into Port Hedland. From there we come to Broome, the only port into which this ship could enter, and she could only do so under great difficulty and inconvenience. Even when we come to Broome, and Derby and Wyndham there will be great disadvantages. I think the rise of the tide in Broome is about 27 feet; therefore she would have to catch it at that depth, and if she did not watch it, she would not get in at all. She would only have about half an hour to get in before the tide would become too low. The same thing applies to Derby.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What about Wyndham?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I have not got that. The depth there is about 30 feet at high tide.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What is it at low tide?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: At low tide the ground is bare. A steamer would have to get in during a period of half an hour. If she missed that, she would have to stand out for several hours.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But she has to take trade from Wyndham.

Mr. McDowall: If she is not intended for the trade you are all wrong.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: She was purchased for the trade, else what was she bought for? The Government purchased a steamer of 23½ feet draught. That question has never been submitted so far as the papers disclose, to the Chief Harbour Master, and the depths of the harbours vary approximately from 18 feet to 22 feet, except in the case of Port Hedland where there is a depth at the bar at high tide of 25 feet; so that we have a steamer which is utterly useless and impossible for the trade between here and Broome, with the exception of Point Sampson at high tide, and Derby and Wyndham during just about an hour on every day if she was careful and watched the right moment.

Mr. George: How long would she take to unload 6,000 tons of material at one of these ports?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not know that. It would take her a long time, no doubt. If these facts had only been referred to the proper authority, or if it had been mentioned here in this House where members have a knowledge of the ports, they would have used that knowledge, and it would have prevented this steamer becoming a "white elephant" such as she will become, instead of a "kangaroo."

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Do you not think that Mr. Stevens has any knowledge of the ports?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I have had some five or six years' experience of Mr. Stevens and believe that he is a capable officer, and that he made an excellent secretary for the Harbour Trust. He is not a navigator, however, and has nothing to do with the question of navigating into northern ports. If the question had been referred to the Chief Harbour Master that officer would have shown the fallacy



of buying the steamer. So far as the papers disclose the transactions, it appears that it was never submitted to him at all. We have got this steamer and we have this evidence before us. It was well known that the "Koombana," before she sunk, drew only 19 feet of water, and that she was constantly in trouble along the coast. In fact, she was too big for the ports into which she had to go. Once out of every five trips she would get through all right, but on the other occasions she would stick at neap tide in the different ports or on the bars going in. At Shark Bay and the other places she could not get alongside, and she was a losing proposition on that account. Now we are saddled with this proposition I have just mentioned. I do not intend to say any more about this Diesel engine steamer because the leader of the Opposition dealt with it effectively. I mention this point simply because I have a knowledge of the ports of the North-West, and, seeing the draught of the steamer I confirmed it by asking the questions to which I received these official answers. They have shown conclusively that this steamer would be dear at any price for the Western Australian trade. She is, in fact, quite useless. She cannot be used on the Western Australian trade at all. If she had been purchased for £40,000 instead of £140,000 she would have been dear for the North-West trade. It is impossible for that steamer to trade along this coast. It is passing strange that when a purchase of this kind has been entered into the House should be flouted, and we see the result in the huge blunder which has been made. I want to say a word or two now in regard to the Industries Assistance Act, on the third reading of which I spoke the other evening. I owe an apology to the Acting Treasurer for having spoken on that occasion because, as he interjected, I should have given him notice of my intention to speak. I admit that the hon. gentleman was right, but I had no intention whatever of being discourteous, because from my experience I know what is due to the leader of the House. My excuse is that I had

intended to mention the particular matter to him but forgot to do so. I am sorry if I caused him any inconvenience. It was quite unintentional. I want to remind the acting Treasurer of certain statements that I made on that occasion, and I intend to repeat them and to give some further information, so that the hon. member when replying, may explain the position to the House. What I complained of was that Part III. of the Industries Assistance Act was enacted to give a free hand to the Minister to advance to mining and other industries. It will appear from the little information that we have that the Government have done so, often in a reckless way, certainly in a very generous, and, it might be said, an extravagant manner. We find that the Government have guaranteed an account of a corporation, to the Commonwealth Bank, for £50,000. The leader of the Opposition, in speaking afterwards inquired on whose behalf this guarantee was given. The acting Treasurer said that it would not be fair to disclose the name of the person, and he added that if I would see him privately he would tell me. I do not want information in that way. Personally it is of no interest to me, and I have no desire to learn the business of other people. But as a member of this House I have a right to be given this information. In regard to the farmers, information as to advances made to them can be obtained by the wide world at a cost of threepence. There is no secrecy about that. In regard to assistance to industries, it is a special thing, and if it is found necessary to give a guarantee of £50,000 to a corporation, it must have been given for a very special purpose, and the country, through Parliament, is entitled to the fullest information in regard to the matter. The acting Treasurer informed the leader of the Opposition that this guarantee was given against certain shipping documents and timber cut in stack. Has the Minister satisfied himself that that is correct? I am credibly informed that the guarantee was given to take over an old overdraft of £40,000 odd from another bank. I do not say that that is correct, but it is the

information which has been given to me. I know a lot of people who want financing like that, and I think the fact ought to be disclosed, because we are all entitled to that kind of treatment, and all our friends are entitled to it also, and the banks as well would like to be relieved of doubtful customers. It makes one think when one hears of a guarantee of this description. What I complained about the other evening was that when the Minister asked for the re-enactment of the measure, he did not give us any information about the operation of the Act while it was in force. We are led to think that there are other guarantees, and we should have full information, and we should know exactly what liabilities we are taking on. There can be no excuse for not giving this information to the House, and stating exactly what security was lodged against these documents. It is a much more serious thing to guarantee an account to a third party than to actually advance the amount, because the security is out of your hands and the third party can treat the security as he likes, and you come in for the balance. Therefore, there is greater risk in such a guarantee than there is probably in a straight-out advance. I want to know whether the Minister's answers, which he gave from memory the other evening, are correct, or whether he has looked up the matter since, as he promised to do. At the same time I referred to other advances and asked that information might be given in regard to the advances which had been made in connection with the mining industry. Another place has been told that advances made to mining under the Industries Assistance Act came to £37,000.

Mr. McDowall: A mere trifle.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is not a mere trifle, for this reason: the £37,000 would not be too much if it were advanced in a legitimate way. By that I mean if it were advanced under the Mines Development Act. That Act was passed some years ago to assist mining. We recognised at that time that mining required special assistance and it was laid down under that Act that money

might be advanced to pioneer mines. That measure has sufficed up to the present time. We were told when the Industries Assistance Act was passed that it would be necessary to include mining. I questioned that, for the reason that the mining industry had a special Act of its own. The Minister for Mines told us then that the legislation which he was seeking to pass would be necessary in order to make advances against ore. Parliament allowed the Bill to become an Act, and left to the Minister a free hand. Now we find that £37,000 has been advanced. The member for Coolgardie interjected that that was a mere trifle. So it is in the ordinary way, but it is not a mere trifle when it is advanced under an Act which was not primarily intended for making advances to mining. The House therefore is entitled to the fullest information in regard to that advance of £37,000. I have adduced some information in regard to £4,000 advanced to the Beria Consols mine, about which I spoke the other evening. The Beria Consols was formerly known as the Lancefield. The old company failed and it was taken up by the new company, calling themselves the Beria Consols. The owners were the Kalgoorlie and Boulder Firewood Company, or Porter & Co.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Who got the advance?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Beria Consols, or Porter & Co. were given the advance and they closed down the mine at the end of February.

The Minister for Lands: Are you complaining about Porter or the Government?

The Minister for Mines: Do not forget that Porter is your political boss; he is the chairman of the Liberal League.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: If that is so he has received a good political education, and that is a reason why we should be severe with him.

The Minister for Mines: You cannot say that there was anything political in the loan.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The mine was closed down by the Beria Consols Com-

pany at the end of February. The Minister for Mines may contradict me by saying that it was not closed down, but by closed down, I mean that they kept on a sufficient number of men to man the lease. There was no actual mining work being carried on.

The Minister for Mines: For how long?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Until June. The advance was made on the 6th March, and it was registered on the 24th March. A new company, the Lancefield, bought the mine from the Porter Company, and they took it over on the 17th March. The reason given by the Government for this advance to the Beria Consols Company was that it would keep the men on the mine employed. The Beria Consols company received the money after the mine had actually closed down and probably that was not known to the department. Now we are told in answer to a question that the security for this advance is a registered bill of sale over two gas engines of 220 horse-power. It is not good security for £4,000. However, the bill of sale was taken and the advance was made on the 6th March, and on the 24th March it was registered. The answer which was further given to the question which was asked in another place was that the mine was not sold by the Beria Company but only leased. I say that the mine was sold. It was sold by the Beria Company, Porter & Co., to the new company, the Lancefield Company, right out and not leased as was stated. So that we have this position: The advance was made on the 6th March, the mine was sold on the 17th March, engines and all, and is now the property of the Lancefield Co. Yet the Government were given by Porter and Co. a bill of sale over the engines; and it would appear that they sold the engines after receiving the advance and the bill of sale was registered. I am not blaming the Government, but I say that if that is the way the Act is administered it is the duty of Parliament to apprise them of the fact and see that it is not allowed to go unchecked. If the

Beria Consols Co. have done this they have done a criminal act.

The Minister for Mines: It is a serious assertion to say that the president of a Liberal League has done a criminal act.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not care whether he is the president of a Liberal league or not. I am not talking about the individual at all.

The Minister for Mines: I refuse to believe that Mr. Porter would be guilty of any such charge as the hon. member makes against him.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I say the Beria Consols received this advance and the Lancefield Company say they bought the mine on the 17th March, but that they are not party to the bill of sale.

The Minister for Mines: It has nothing to do with the Government. On your showing Mr. Porter has taken down the buyers. It is between the sellers and the buyers.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: No; they sold with the mine the engines which you are being paid for in quarterly instalments. However, I am not charging the individual with any wrong doing.

The Minister for Mines: But you are charging the seller with a very serious offence.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I am pointing out the information we have. I instanced the way in which the £37,000 has been advanced, and I say on the face of this it is up to the Government to give information to the House as to how the other £37,000 was dealt with.

The Minister for Mines: And you make a charge of dishonesty against Mr. Porter and his company.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is up to the Government to investigate it and see if he has parted with the engines over which he has given a bill of sale to the Government. It is not Mr. Porter personally, but the Beria Consols.

The Minister for Mines: He is chairman of directors.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: He is the representative.

The Minister for Mines: And according to your statement, he has been guilty of a dishonest action.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The company has, and he is the headpiece of the company.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think a president of the Liberal league would do that.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I hope for the sake of the country it is not so. It is up to the Government to give the House some information in regard to the extravagant way in which these advances have been made, because the House passed the Act in good faith to assist in a time of war industries that require assistance. The Government complain about not getting helpful criticism. When they are told they are wrong they become angry, but they will not give the House an opportunity of assisting them with helpful criticism, because they withhold information, and when the information is given it is not that which is asked for. It is a continuous system of secret undertakings and contracts. The same applies to the old powellising company. Some time ago I found from answers given to questions asked by me that the powellising agreement is still in force. I asked—

In view of the information given by the Federal Attorney General, doubting the validity of these patent rights, have the Government taken any action to test the legality of these assumed patent rights?

The highest official legal authority in the Commonwealth has stated definitely that there are no patent rights in connection with the powellising agreement, and, therefore, my question should have been taken seriously.

The Minister for Lands: Still the Federal Government are paying the royalty.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I will come to that. The reply was this—

No, in view of the very great doubt of the success of the issue of such a case.

It is a very queer answer, because I find from further answers given to other

questions, the powellising agreement has been in force since August, 1913, and up to the end of last July, one year and 10½ months, the Government paid the sum of £15,387 in royalty.

The Minister for Lands: The Commonwealth Government paid it mostly.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: In reply to a question you said you had paid that amount.

The Minister for Lands: We collect it from the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It represents over £8,000 a year. Can it be believed that the Government calmly pay £8,000 a year for this so-called patent of doubtful validity for a doubtful process? We have it from the Federal Attorney General that the validity of the patent ought to be tested. In fact he says straight out there are no patent rights at all. Yet our Government calmly pay at the rate of £8,000 a year royalty and refuse to spend a few hundred pounds testing the patent rights, notwithstanding that the Federal Attorney General has said they must succeed if they try. So much for the validity of the patent. But the Federal Government are equally emphatic as to the utility of the process. On 18th August I asked the following question—

1, Have the Government's attention been drawn to the following statement appearing in the *West Australian* newspaper of 4th August, 1915:—  
 "The Sleeper Contracts for Trans-Australian Railway.—Testing the Powellised Karri.—Melbourne, August 3.  
 --That the opposition in the Federal Parliament to the large contracts for powellised sleepers entered into by Mr. O'Malley when Minister for Home Affairs was justified has been amply proved by what has occurred since. Tenders were recently invited by the Home Affairs Department for a large quantity of sleepers for use on the trans-Australian railway, and the offers of private tenderers for some 63,000 sleepers have been accepted. It has now been decided to accept a tender for the balance of 100,000 sleepers

from the Western Australian Government's mills, but these are jarrah sleepers, instead of powellised karri, as contracted for by Mr. O'Malley.

So the Federal Government do not believe in the utility of the thing. They will not have the karri sleepers, but they ordered jarrah sleepers, and the Federal Attorney General says the patent is not worth the paper it is written on, and yet the State Government go calmly on paying £8,000 a year.

Mr. George: They are under agreement and cannot get out of it.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It is £4,000 a year.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: No, it is £8,000 a year.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The minimum is £3,700. They have to pay that even if they do not powellise a single stick of timber.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: That is so, but as I say, since entering into the agreement the Government have had to pay at the rate of £8,000 per annum for this royalty. It may be that if the case were taken into court the facts would be pleaded of this minimum payment and of the dating of the agreement for three years after the patent rights expire, as an estoppel.

The Minister for Lands: Do you say the Federal Attorney General has given the decision you quoted?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I have asked you whether you were willing to do certain things, in view of his opinion, and you said no, you would not question that.

The Minister for Lands: But you are conveying the impression that Mr. Hughes gave that opinion.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Yes, he did.

The Minister for Mines: I think you will find that opinion came from New South Wales.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: No, I read it as being from Mr. Hughes.

The Minister for Lands: I know the opinion first originated in New South Wales.

Mr. George: In any case, under the agreement the Government have to pay, so what is the use of squealing?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: There is some use if we can save the country £8,000 a year. We are asked to suggest economies. Here is a saving which, on the authority of the Federal Attorney General, can be made to the extent of £8,000 a year. Yet the Government will not take the course suggested.

Mr. George: The agreement must be adhered to. There is no help for it.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is the same with the purchase of this Diesel ship as with these secret contracts. The Government act in secret and make these awful blunders and the country has to pay for them. There are 70 odd members of Parliament, exclusive of Ministers, to govern the country and yet the financial geniuses on the Treasury Bench take matters into their own hands and act in this way.

The Minister for Mines: I have arranged to hold all future Cabinet meetings on the Town Hall steps and all the public will be there to know what we are doing.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It would save the country tens of thousands of pounds if that were done. I do not intend to delay the House any further in connection with these State enterprises and secret contracts.

Mr. Munsie: You seem to be most concerned. They are not worrying about them very much here.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The unfortunate part is that the Government are not worrying. The only thing which will make them worry will be the withholding of loan money when the Government will have their noses kept down to the grindstone.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That is the trouble; the member for Hannans does not take his responsibilities seriously.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: That is what we all complain of. I wish to say a word now in regard to the treatment of the civil service by the Government and by the Public Service Commissioner.

The Minister for Mines : They are not too badly off.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : I do not hold any brief for the civil servants, but they have been very unjustly treated. I am not speaking of individuals but of the service as a whole. The service has deteriorated on account of the treatment meted out to it. It has been brought to a pass which I never expected to witness. The men in the service to-day are in fear and trembling of what is going to happen. They have no security of tenure.

Mr. Heitmann : Absolute rubbish !

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : It is a positive fact, and this sort of thing has been going on for the last two or three years. We have the latest case, that of the retirement of Mr. Gale in connection with which the Honorary Minister is not anxious to give evidence.

Mr. Munsie : Directly you ask us to effect economy and we try to do so, a select committee is appointed by another place.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : I am not speaking of the question of salaries. I have not a word to say on that point. I am speaking of the treatment which is meted out to the service as a whole. It is a sad day, which has unfortunately arrived, when the public servant has reason to believe that his billet depends upon his political views. This should never be, and it is sad to think that it has come about. There are permanent heads in the different departments, and there are political heads of the departments but the permanent heads should be allowed to carry out the duties of their offices.

Mr. Heitmann : You as a member of the previous Government should be the last to speak of political views.

Mr. Hudson : You are on dangerous ground.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : I do not think I am.

Mr. Heitmann : You struck justices of the peace off the roll because they were Labourites.

Hon. Frank Wilson : He did nothing of the sort. That is not true.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : Some time ago I questioned the Premier in regard to the retirement of Mr. Roe and Mr. Cowan. I asked whether the Public Service Commissioner was personally possessed of information which made it necessary in the interests of the State to retire Messrs. Roe and Cowan. What was the answer ? It was that the Public Service Commissioner knew the policy of the Government. That is a nice state of affairs. It was a very candid admission, no doubt.

Mr. Taylor : He ought to get an increase of salary if that is so because he is the only man in this country who does know the policy of the Government.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : I thank the hon. member for that little bit of political information. We are told that in connection with these retirements the Public Service Commissioner knows the policy of the Government and presumably acts upon it. The Public Service Act was passed to make the public service independent. We all welcomed that Act, because the public servants were to be made free from political control. The Commissioner was to stand as a judge between the Government and the civil servants, and he certainly acted in that way during the term of the Administration of which I was a member. We never sought to make him act otherwise. I might instance the appointment of the present Commissioner of Health. The Public Service Commissioner recommended another appointee. I would not accept it because I wanted Dr. Hope. The Commissioner sent along another recommendation and still I refused. I did not ask him to appoint the man I wanted but he followed the procedure of reporting the matter to Parliament and, after listening to the discussion, he came to the conclusion that I was right and he then forwarded a recommendation that Dr. Hope should be appointed.

Mr. Heitmann : Dr. Hope was appointed on the political and social pull he had.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : That is absolutely unfair.

Hon. Frank Wilson : It is a cowardly statement to make.

Mr. Heitmann : I have made it scores of times and I repeat it.

Hon. Frank Wilson : He is being forced out of the service now.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : The member for Geraldton has made an unfair and cowardly statement and one that is absolutely untrue.

Mr. Heitmann : It is not.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : Dr. Hope was appointed because he was senior medical officer in the State—

Hon. Frank Wilson : And for merit.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : And he well deserved and well justified the appointment.

Mr. Allen : He was quite qualified.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : I am very proud that I did not allow him to be overlooked. The Commissioner proposed to appoint a junior medical man from Tasmania and then another junior here was recommended for the position. Dr. Hope was the senior medical officer with long service to his credit and was well qualified for the position.

Mr. Heitmann : He had the qualification of old age and of belonging to a social clique.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : Dr. Hope was between the age of 55 and 60. He went to England and entered the public hospitals and took the diploma of public health and very few of these diplomas were held in Australia at the time.

Mr. Heitmann : Even you could take that diploma in six months.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : Dr. Hope proved an excellent administrator. Let hon. members ask the present Minister for Health and the present Minister for Works who previously controlled that department and they will say the same thing. I am sorry his name has been brought up because Dr. Hope is a gentleman in every sense of the word and a good and true officer.

Mr. Heitmann : I agree with that.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : An upright honourable man.

The Minister for Mines : No one is saying he is not.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : Quite so ; anybody who knew him could hold no other opinion, but I am emphasising this because of a statement made by the member for Geraldton.

The Minister for Lands : I am not so well satisfied with his qualifications as you are.

Mr. Heitmann : His qualifications were not brought into it.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : I am in a better position to judge than the Minister for Lands because I was very closely connected with him. As a public health officer I say he was second to none in Australia.

Mr. Heitmann : Rubbish !

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : I know nothing about his impending retirement but I understand he is retiring at his own request.

The Minister for Lands : He is retiring voluntarily.

Hon. Frank Wilson : He is retiring because of ill-treatment.

Mr. Heitmann : The leader of the Opposition inferred that he was being driven out.

Hon. Frank Wilson : I said forced out.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : I am sorry Dr Hope's name has been mentioned at all. I simply referred to him to give an idea of the attitude adopted by the Public Service Commissioner during the Liberal administration compared with what it is at present. The Public Service Commissioner on that occasion sent in a recommendation and it was not accepted and he sent in another which was not accepted. If a Minister does not accept the first recommendation the Commissioner might go on making recommendations, but eventually the matter is reported to Parliament.

Mr. Heitmann : He could have sent in a hundred and you would have stuck to the one on account of his political and social pull.

The Minister for Works : He is one of the best officers we have ever had.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY : I am very glad to hear that from the Minister who until lately controlled the Health Department.

Mr. Taylor: An honest straight-forward man.

The Minister for Works: I had three years with him and I know.

Mr. Foley: Has he been forced out?

The Minister for Works: No.

Hon. Frank Wilson: He resigned because he could not get proper treatment.

Mr. Heitmann interjected

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I protest against the member for Geraldton taking advantage of his position in the House to repeat these assertions particularly after we have had from the Minister who until lately controlled the department such a testimony to the worth of this officer.

Mr. Heitmann: That does not end it.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: We are in a much better position to judge than the member for Geraldton.

Mr. Foley: Will you accept the word of the same Minister that Dr. Hope was not forced out?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Yes, I did not say that he was forced out.

Mr. Foley: Then reprimand your leader.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I am sorry I mentioned Dr. Hope.

Hon. Frank Wilson: His case was bound to be mentioned.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I merely did it to illustrate my point. The Public Service Commissioner took up the correct attitude at that time, but I regret to see from the answer to the question I have quoted and from the Commissioner's report that he has become very flexible in the hands of the Government. This is not conducive to a good public service.

The Minister for Mines: I have not found him flexible where I have been dealing with him.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Premier said the Public Service Commissioner understands the policy of the Government and acts accordingly. The Public Service Commissioner ought not to know the policy of the Government. I say without fear of contradiction that there is a feeling amongst the civil servants that upon their political beliefs their

standing in the service depends. I regret that I have lived to see the service brought to such a pass.

Mr. Munsie: Can you mention half-a-dozen men in prominent positions who are Labourites?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: In looking through the papers, tabled by the Honorary Minister, relating to the instruction issued by the Commissioner of Police precluding police constables in uniform from entering public houses, I noticed one very sad thing. Evidently there was some stir made in regard to Constable Campbell. The Commissioner of Police wrote a pleading letter to his Minister to this effect—

Are you going to stand by me?

I cannot believe that you will not stand by me and that your political belief will sway you.

I say there is no better officer in the State than the Commissioner of Police. I mention this just to illustrate my point, that evidently that feeling is running through the service. It is a sad thing when an officer, occupying the position of head of a department, should have to express that feeling. Evidently that was the feeling.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Is it not the duty of all officers to carry out the policy of the Government in power at the time?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is. But the mere issue of a regulation is surely not a policy. This Campbell was a well known Labourite—at all events he was at the time—and he should never have entered the mind of the Commissioner of Police in that respect. Apparently, however, the matter did so enter his mind.

The Minister for Works: I do not think it did.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: At all events he writes to the Hon. Mr. Drew, the Colonial Secretary, and appeals to him to stand by him.

The Minister for Lands: Read what he said.

The Minister for Mines: It is not fair to quote the Commissioner unless you quote him accurately. You are liable to misrepresent his sentiments.



Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not say he did anything wrong, and I am not blaming the Commissioner. I merely wish to show the feeling which is going through the service. There has been cause for that feeling. No better officer exists in the service to-day than the Commissioner, and if I had been in the department at the time he was appointed I should have been ready to select him.

Mr. Thomas: No one questions his being a good officer.

The Minister for Mines: You are doing him an injustice by saying that he wrote a pleading letter to his Minister.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It was not a pleading letter. He brought it under the notice of his Minister.

The Minister for Mines: He had to report to his Minister. There is no pleading about it.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: From the minute it appears that the Commissioner asked the Minister, because this man was a Labourite, not to look at it from that point of view.

Mr. Thomas: He has little to do if he has to find out what a man's political principles are.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I have no fault to find with the Commissioner of Police. I say we have an excellent man in him and we ought to treat him well.

The Minister for Mines: The very case you are dealing with shows that the members of the public service are dealt with on their merits, irrespective of their political belief. Was Campbell shown any consideration because of his politics?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: This is a case where a head of a department is directly under the control of the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: And in a position where the Minister had power to exercise control, but because he was under that control, do his actions show that he was under the influence of the Minister?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: They do not show that he was under the Minister's influence. Be it said to the credit of the Colonial Secretary, he upheld the Commissioner as a loyal Minister should

uphold a head of one of his departments. But this sort of thing, coming from a man like that, is an indication of the feeling throughout the service.

The Minister for Mines: How can you fairly say what was running in the mind of the Commissioner? It is not fair to him.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Read the minute.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I will not have words put into my mouth by the Minister for Mines. I said not a word against the Commissioner of Police. There is no better officer in the State. I cannot say too much for him. There is no better Commissioner in Australia.

The Minister for Mines: You said the Commissioner was afraid he would not get a fair deal because of the political influence at the back of the constable.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I understand that he wished that the treatment had been such that it did not have had to enter into his mind.

Mr. Foley: Do you think it did enter into the Commissioner's mind?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do.

Mr. Foley: How do you know that?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is in the minute.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Have you read the minute?

Mr. Foley: I have.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Then read it again.

Mr. Foley: I saw nothing pleading about it.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not intend to say very much more on this question. I had intended to say a good deal in regard to the Perth trams.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What about the Perth-Fremantle Road?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: We will have that brought up later on. We were told that we were going to have an increased service and all sorts of other benefits when the Government purchased the trams. It was not my fault, so far as my vote was concerned, that the trams were even purchased at all. It was a sad day for the country when they were purchased by the Government. They bought the service at too high a price, and it is worse now than when the

Government first took it over. The roads and streets are in a disgraceful condition. The company kept them up, but now there are holes along the track which would break the springs of a motor car in the main street of the City. I want to speak about the deviation which was made by taking one of the tramlines into Murray street. The expenditure of £13,500 was, in my opinion, quite unwarranted. There is a certain amount of repairing which could have been effected along the track, which would have cost a great deal less, and preserved the track for many years. What I do complain about is the discourtesy of the Government and the Minister for Mines, who was then acting Premier, in regard to this same matter. A petition containing the signatures of 13,000 people was presented to him.

Mr. Munsie: And many of these people lived in my electorate.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: This petition was signed by people who opposed the moving of the trams. I saw the Minister on numerous occasions. He was very nice and courteous up to a certain point. This was a genuine petition, and to my own knowledge it could have been added to by another thousand names.

Mr. Bolton: At so much a hundred.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: After the petition had been presented I was shown lists containing many hundreds of names which had been collected but not included in the main petition. The petition was got up in a very easy fashion and yet we find that it contained no less than 13,000 signatures.

Mr. Munsie: Every employee in the shops in Hay-street was asked to sign.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: These people protested against the tramline being shifted out of Hay-street. The Hay-street-West people will be practically without any trams going to town at all. No one living on the south side of the line in Hay-street-West would take the trouble to walk to Murray street in order to catch a tram to town, but would invariably walk to the city instead. As a matter of fact, by the time the people have taken the tram along Murray-street and up Pier-street they would be able

to walk to town in half the time. People, unfortunately, do not realise the inconvenience to which they will be put. At any rate 13,000 people protested against it. During the time that the petition was being drawn up I was taken ill and had to go into a hospital and undergo an operation. The member for West Perth (Mr. Allen) very kindly undertook to take the deputation to the Minister for Mines on my behalf, and to present the petition. Up to that point I have no complaint to make against the Minister. He spoke fairly and nicely, but it ended with these fair words. These petitioners were never given an answer to their prayer. They were told that the matter would be considered, but a little while after the work was gone on with, notwithstanding the fact that 13,000 people sent in this request. They were not even given the courtesy of an answer. The member for West Perth was not given an answer, either. The work was gone on with and no more was said about the matter.

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member will hardly put that down to want of courtesy, because Ministers cannot follow up all the correspondence and the files. When they give a Cabinet decision on a matter they expect their responsible officers to convey the decision to those concerned. The requisition of the petitioners was fully considered. Cabinet gave a decision upon it and I could not follow up the files to see that a formal reply was given. If no reply was given it was due to neglect on the part of the officers of the department in that they did not convey the decision of Cabinet to the parties concerned.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not think I have expressed myself too strongly in the circumstances. It was not very fair treatment to accord to the petitioners, or the member introducing the deputation.

The Minister for Mines: One can hardly be expected to keep track of every letter that comes into the department.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not say that the Minister can keep track of every letter. If a deputation, which vitally affects thousands of people, is presented

to a Minister, who listens to their arguments, and if they are not given a reply, it is no answer to say that the Minister cannot keep track of every letter that goes through his department.

The Minister for Mines: As a matter of fact it was outside my department. Was I expected to ring up the Railway Department and ask them if they had written to the hon. member?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The deputation was introduced by a member of Parliament to the Minister. As a member of Parliament representing his constituency the member for West Perth had an absolute right to get a reply to the requests which he preferred on behalf of the deputationists. But neither he nor the 13,000 people who signed the petition received either directly or indirectly a reply. That is the sort of treatment which is meted out to us outside Parliament. I have already instanced the treatment that we receive inside Parliament.

The Minister for Mines: It is a petty thing to bring before Parliament at all.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not think so. Is it a petty thing to complain of the treatment accorded to a deputation which is presenting a petition?

Hon. Frank Wilson: It has been rampant for the last four years.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I protest against it on behalf of the people I represent, and on behalf of the people represented by the member for West Perth, who was good enough to take the business on for me.

The Minister for Mines: You have no cause to complain about the treatment you have received from me. I will not put myself out quite so much in future.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You will be put out all right.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Minister should not get angry because I have drawn attention to what was a serious oversight.

The Minister for Mines: It is a petty thing to complain about in connection with a Budget speech. It has great

relation to the financial position of the State.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It was unnecessary expenditure to lay out this £13,000 on the deviation, especially when the Government had no money for really necessary works. Although they should be studying economy they have incurred this unnecessary expenditure and caused great inconvenience to the people, when the money could have been spent in the metropolitan area in extending the tramway routes to the suburbs and thus bringing more revenue to the State, besides making the trams a better paying concern. And yet we are told that this has no bearing on the financial position of the State.

The Minister for Mines: Not to reply to a letter has a great bearing on the financial position of the State, I suppose.

Mr. Foley: A number of my electors signed that petition but have not complained.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: There was another deputation which waited on the Premier in connection with the formation of a water board for the metropolitan area. The Premier made a very candid admission during that deputation. We pointed out to him that our request was that a board should be formed and that the then position was that it was taxation without representation. The candid statement which the Minister made was that he wanted the profit kept for water supply on the goldfields and elsewhere.

The Minister for Mines: There is no profit anyhow.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I will tell the Minister what profit there is.

The Minister for Mines: I will tell you.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: According to the answer given by the Minister himself when I asked a question as to the working expenses, sinking fund, etc., there was a profit of £12,000 a year.

The Minister for Mines: For one year?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: That was for last year.

The Minister for Mines: Which is more than balanced by the loss on another

year. As a matter of fact we are on the wrong side to the extent of over £2,000 on the two years' operations. That is all the profit we have made.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: If you take these items on the Estimates, allocation, interest and sinking fund, we find that the figures given by the Minister are not correct.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Before tea I was making some remarks on water supply and sewerage in the metropolitan area. A short time ago there waited on the Premier a deputation consisting of members representing the metropolitan area—

The Minister for Works: Only a portion of those members.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Excluding Fremantle.

The Minister for Works: Fremantle is in the metropolitan area so far as sewerage is concerned.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The deputation waited on the Premier to urge him to permit the appointment of a water and sewerage board for the metropolitan area. The deputation pointed out that it was extremely unfair and unjust that water supply and sewerage for the metropolitan area should be administered solely by departmental officers, since those officers spend local rates. It was contended that this was equivalent to taxation without representation. The deputation urged, and rightly, that there should be a metropolitan water and sewerage board here just as there is in the other Australian States, so that the people whose money is being spent may have some voice in the expenditure. On that occasion the Premier made a most candid admission. First of all he admitted that a good profit was derived from water supply and sewerage in the metropolitan area, and then, with much candour, he went on to state that he needed this profit in order to maintain smaller water works elsewhere. That is a grave injustice to the people of the metropolitan area. It practically

amounts to their rates being used for the upkeep of some other water supply. The Government might just as well take the rates of the city of Perth and apply them to the upkeep of some other town. The Premier's admission in itself affords justification for the creation of a board such as I have suggested. Recently I asked the Minister for Water Supply certain questions in regard to working expenses, interest, and sinking fund in connection with his department. The reply was that after allowing for interest, sinking fund, and working expenses, the accounts still showed a surplus of £12,000 for the last financial year. The allocation of interest and sinking fund shown in the sheets furnished with the Estimates, however, gives entirely different figures for the metropolitan area. The difference amounts to £28,000. If those figures had been given in answer to my questions, the profit shown would have been, not £12,000, but £40,000.

The Minister for Lands: That difference is due to the old debentures under the late board.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I cannot quite follow that, because the sheet shows the allocation of interest—

The Minister for Lands: The accounts in connection with the metropolitan area are kept absolutely separate and distinct. They are not connected in any way with the accounts for other areas. That is compulsory under the Act.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The two sets of figures do not coincide.

The Minister for Lands: I think you will find that the difference is due to the old debentures.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: At all events, the figures show a profit, and that profit should be used for the extension of the metropolitan scheme. The residents of the metropolitan area are charged certain rates for certain services. The Government have no right to charge for those services more than they are worth, and spend the surplus in other parts of the State. I trust the Government will see the justice of creating a water and

sewerage board for the metropolitan area, so that the people may administer their own affairs in this respect. Then there would be less reason for complaint in regard to the connections. I do not intend to touch that phase of the question to-night. I am speaking only on the administration of the department. I do not propose to say anything further except to repeat that we private members are prepared to help the Government in every way; but I claim that we have not been given the opportunity—in fact, quite the reverse. When we sought to give the Government aid in the form of criticism, we were not afforded the necessary information. Indeed, what information has been given us has been misleading, and therefore we have not been granted the opportunity of helping the country to the extent we should like in these needful times.

Mr. NAIRN (Swan) [7.35]: What I have to say this evening will be brief. I wish to emphasise a remark made by the Premier in introducing the Budget, that the principle which would be observed beyond all others by the Government was economy, that economy would be the dominant note of this Budget. With others, I have looked almost in vain for anything in the Estimates which would bear out that statement, and tend towards economy. What has struck me most forcibly is the fact that only three departments show economies in these Estimates. One of those departments is that of the Minister for Lands, where, clearly, economy was unavoidable. In the Lands Department, economy was forced upon the Minister, even in the face of whatever course he might have wished to take.

Mr. Green: That is right. Damn with faint praise.

Mr. NAIRN: I do not think my statement is unfair.

The Minister for Lands: Any fool could have done it.

Mr. NAIRN: I never use that epithet, and although I frequently differ with the Minister for Lands I do not by any means look upon him as a fool. I hope he reciprocates that sentiment.

Mr. Green: The Minister will not commit himself.

Mr. NAIRN: It does seem singular, however, that whilst last year we had an abounding revenue, the second highest in the history of the State, it was not possible to bring out something in the nature of a closer balance than Ministers have laid before the Committee. In connection with the Estimates for the current year, a record revenue is anticipated—a higher revenue than Western Australia has ever yet known. Notwithstanding that prospect, and notwithstanding the promised principle of economy, there is a further deficit estimated of about a quarter of a million. That fact almost goes to prove that Ministers have lost control of the finances, that they cannot keep expenditure within proper limits, that they do not know how to cut their coat according to their cloth. I shall not elaborate on the question of finance, which I think has been exhaustively laboured. Whether any good will result from the criticism that has been offered is in my opinion very doubtful. There are one or two matters I wish to speak on. First, I shall be glad if the Minister for Works will be kind enough to inform me what are the proposals of the Government in regard to the construction of that very necessary fruit market in West Perth. The Minister will remember that some seven or eight months ago a deputation waited upon him and laid before him suggestions with which he entirely agreed.

The Minister for Works: I have not received a deputation on that subject. It was the Minister for Agriculture.

Mr. NAIRN: The Minister for Agriculture was very sympathetic towards the views of the deputation. I think he said that he had anticipated what the deputation intended to lay before him. Further, he stated that an officer had been deputed to visit the Eastern States for the purpose of making exhaustive inquiries as to the latest methods of conducting fruit markets. The officer in question was Mr. Hardwick. As the matter is of the greatest importance to the people who are following the very large

industry of fruit growing, I shall be glad to know what progress has been made.

The Minister for Lands: That information will be given on the Agricultural Estimates. It is hardly a matter for the general discussion.

Mr. NAIRN: It may not be; but, unfortunately, from what I am able to gather as the result of glancing through the Estimates, no appropriation is proposed for the fruit market.

The Minister for Lands: I cannot hold out any hope of an appropriation, but it will be on the Loan Estimates if it goes anywhere.

Mr. NAIRN: I am not in any way censuring the Minister. I am merely seeking information on an important subject. There is a valuable piece of land in West Perth lying idle, to a large extent unused, whereas the erection of a fruit market on that land would have a beneficial effect on the cost of living for many people as well as affording better opportunities for the growers to market their product. If the Minister can assure us that he is still in the same frame of mind as he was when the deputation waited on him, I feel certain that assurance will be much appreciated by fruit growers. Next I wish to refer to the Water Supply and Sewerage Department. The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) was undoubtedly on solid ground when he said that it was not fair to the public that they should not be furnished with estimated costs of work by the department. Up to the present I have not heard anything in the nature of a sound argument why an estimate should not be supplied to any person desiring to utilise the department's services. Apart from any consideration for the private contractor, the present system undoubtedly places the householder in an unenviable position, inasmuch as he is compelled to enter into a contract with the department for work without any knowledge on his part of what the actual cost of the work will be. More than that, he has some hesitation in accepting a contract from a private contractor because, I understand, the work has to be passed and approved by an inspector of the de-

partment, and he is compelled to work along the lines insisted upon by the department. I think it is fair, therefore, that an estimate should be given, and if that were done it would get rid of a great deal of the criticism which has been levelled against the department. I want to refer to my own private experience in regard to this department and to state that it was very satisfactory. I found it necessary to have my house connected with the sewerage system, and I was perfectly satisfied with the good service which was rendered by the department. I deprecate the general statement which is made that the average worker engaged by the Water and Sewerage Department does not render a fair day's work. We have heard that consistently, and because of that I made it my business to keep an eye on the men who were working on my premises, and I can assure the Committee that they gave as fair and as reasonable an account of themselves as one could expect.

The Minister for Lands: There are more than 10,000 houses connected with the system, and we have heard of only one complaint and it refers to the house in West Perth which has been referred to by the member for West Perth and many others.

Mr. NAIRN: I think the member for West Perth was justified in bringing under notice the question of that particular house. I think he was compelled to do that, because a mistake was apparently made. Everyone will agree that the charge which was levied against the owner of that house was out of all proportion to the services rendered.

The Minister for Lands: It was the class of work which was put into it and the standard of material which was responsible for the high cost, and the trouble was that both were out of keeping with the value of the house, and a dispute arose as to who ordered the work to be done on such a lavish scale.

Mr. NAIRN: That would to some extent, then, account for the high charge which was made for the work. In big undertakings, however, mistakes are bound to happen, but there is no reason-

able argument or good ground to advance as to why the Government should be exempt from giving an estimate in the way that a private contractor would be called upon to do. While on this department I also desire to bring under the notice of the Minister the question of the issuing of rate notices to the public. I do not want to cast an aspersion on the Minister, because I think what I am about to complain of was done even before the present Minister took office. My complaint is in regard to the manner in which the public are approached for the payments of their rates to the Department. It is a positive insult to the people to be threatened with legal proceedings for the recovery of the rates before the rates are actually due. I do not know who is the author of this attitude, but it is certainly very improper, and quite useless too. If a person connected with a private enterprise attempted to do such a thing with regard to his customers, what would be said of him? I would like the Minister to exercise his influence in connection with this matter, because it is nothing short of an insult to be threatened with legal proceedings before an account becomes due. I would also like to refer to the Canning reservoir. The construction of that work has been delayed because of reasons over which the Minister can have no control. At the same time, considerable hardship and a great amount of inconvenience is occasioned to those people who are settled on the catchment area. That area has been marked on the plan in a manner, as far as I can see, without any consideration or regard to the people who live there. I would like the Minister to bear in mind that some consideration should be given to those people instead of allowing them to be continually harassed. It is almost impossible for them to get a public convenience of any kind. A cemetery was asked for by them the other day, and it was pointed out that the proposed site, although it was marked on the catchment area, was in such a position that the water would not find its way from it into the catchment area or anywhere near it. But because the site hap-

pened to be on the catchment area the request for that very necessary institution was refused. I want to refer to some remarks which were made by the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. E. B. Johnston). He complained of the loss of the Control of Trade in War Time Act. I want to express my opinion on that, as I did the other evening, that notwithstanding the fact that I regret the measure has been lost, I believe that the loss was brought about by the action of the Minister in refusing to listen to a reasonable request which was laid before him. The cost of administering the Act was far in excess of the value of the services rendered, although I admit that very useful services were rendered by the members of the board, but to have it loaded, as it undoubtedly was loaded, with an incubus of £2,000 for salaries alone, was sufficient justification for the rejection of the measure. The administration of a similar measure in New South Wales was only £1,500, and that expenditure about covered a period of 12 months.

Mr. Heitmann: That does not include the salary of the judge.

Mr. NAIRN: The total expenditure of the Commission was £1,500 and it dealt with a population of over a million and a-half people.

The Minister for Works: Population does not come in. They must keep the same number of articles.

Mr. NAIRN: Yes, but they are distributed in so many parts of the State. The measure which we have just lost was undoubtedly costing this State four or five times as much as should have been the case. The administration of it should have been the work of one intelligent man.

The Minister for Lands: Parliament stipulated that there should be three. We would never have got it through if we had suggested one.

Mr. NAIRN: The Minister has no right to make that statement, because there was a conscientious desire to see the measure re-enacted.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot say there was a general desire, because

the leader of the Country party opposed it straight out.

Mr. NAIRN: He opposed it because it was overloaded with unnecessary expense. So far as the general principles of the Bill were concerned, I do not think he expressed himself against them. However, I regret that the measure has been lost, but I can only say unhesitatingly that it was lost because of the conduct of the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: The conduct of the Minister?

Mr. NAIRN: The want of tact on the part of the Minister. Perhaps that is the best way to put it. I was one of those who pointed out that the measure was essential, in fact imperatively essential, but that it should not be weighted down with excessive cost. The Minister would not agree to the slightest concession, nor would he listen to a proposal to treat the measure from a business-like point of view; in other words, that the cost of administration should be reduced to within the range of common sense. The member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas) made a speech last evening which did him credit, and which was appreciated by most members, and in the course of his remarks he said that the Labour party were in favour of the appointment of a public works committee to report and inquire upon the proposed works which were likely to cost more than £20,000. To a large extent, I approve of that principle, but it is in contradistinction to the attitude of the Ministry with regard to expenditure of public funds in big matters.

The Minister for Lands: One of the first Bills we introduced was that for the appointment of a public works committee.

Mr. NAIRN: If the Ministry had proceeded on the lines that they laid down when they introduced that Bill we would not to-day be face to face with the expenditure of £140,000 on a steamer in regard to the purchase of which no one, except the Ministers themselves, was consulted. The principle contained in the idea of a public works committee is a good one, and if my memory serves me

correctly, the committees, wherever they are in existence in other parts of Australia, are doing good work. The attitude which the Ministry has adopted of late in regard to the expenditure of large sums of money renders it essential that we should have such a committee in existence. The Premier has not given the Opposition a fair deal in connection with the expenditure on State enterprises. At the beginning of the session it was pointed out, or we might say it was insisted upon by the Premier, that he would, without any reservation, claim the assistance of the Opposition in any matter of emergency which might arise. That in itself was sufficient to disarm opposition or hostile criticism. The attitude which has been adopted by practically the whole of the Opposition towards the Government has been all that the Government could have desired, and the Government in doing their part should have taken the House into their confidence. If it is a matter of give and take, it is not fair to expect that all the giving has to come from the Opposition side, while all the taking is on the Ministerial side. So far as we are concerned, we can fairly claim to have fulfilled our part of the contract conscientiously and completely. Another matter I want to refer to was spoken on by the member for Subiaco (Mr. B. J. Stubbs) last night, and I believe on calmer reflection that hon. member was sorry for his unfortunate and absurd outburst. I regret that the hon. member is not here, because it was so striking a contrast to what has been the general atmosphere of the House that I am sure it was very little appreciated by those who had the misfortune to hear it. He regretted that the Legislative Council had rejected the Control of Trade in War Time Bill. That I approve. He also informed us that a number of business firms, political supporters of the Opposition, had been reducing the wages of their lowest paid employees and had, on the expiration of certain Arbitration Court awards, discharged their senior hands. I will not go so far as to say that the statement is



quite incorrect, but most certainly one portion of it is entirely wrong and misleading, namely that part in which the hon. member declared that those people who had taken advantage of our circumstances to reduce the wages of their employees were necessarily supporters of this side. The hon. member had no authority and no justification for making such a statement. I believe the actions of members on this side have been just as consistent as those of members on the Ministerial side in respect to the question of wages, and I believe that members on this side will stand by that tribunal which has been created for the protection of the workers even longer than will members on the Ministerial side. An aspersion such as was made by the member for Subiaco in regard to members on this side is wrong and improper and does not do the hon. member any credit. However, some people cannot help these unfortunate spasms.

The Minister for Lands: The statement the hon. member made is absolutely correct. There have been wholesale dismissals and wholesale reductions in wages.

Mr. NAIRN: I admit there are many people in the community who will use any opportunity in order to better their positions at the expense of others. But to say that those people are exclusively associated with one political party is absolutely unfair. I admit there are many people who have done these things, but I do not think that even the Minister for Lands will say that we have an exclusive monopoly of them among the supporters of this side. It is one of the unfortunate aspects of human nature that some men will use any opportunity to better themselves at the expense of others, but there is no monopoly of that sort of thing among our supporters, and if the Minister meant to confirm the member for Subiaco to that extent, I resent it, and I tell the Minister that he also has no justification for making such a statement.

The Minister for Lands: Speaking generally, the employer class is on your side and the labouring class on this.

Mr. NAIRN: That may be so, but speaking generally, the employer class are not of that class mentioned by the member for Subiaco. The average employer has just as fair a sense of justice as the average employee.

Mr. Thomson: More.

Mr. NAIRN: I will not say that. I think the sense of justice does not belong to any particular section, whether employers or employees, Labour, Liberal, or Country party. The aspersion cast on this side by the member for Subiaco is quite out of keeping with and is in direct contradiction of the sentiment which has permeated the House during the whole session. For making use of the remark he did I think the hon. member ought to be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Green: He might have thought it was quite true.

Mr. NAIRN: I will concede that. Even the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green) thinks he is right sometimes. But that does not prove anything. I am prepared to believe that the member for Subiaco thought he was right, although as a matter of fact he was quite wrong. I do not desire to take up unnecessarily the time of the House, because I realise the tremendous task before the Government; but in view of the treatment which has been meted out to the Government, expressive of a general desire to assist them during this time of stress, I think it is only fair that that treatment should be reciprocated.

The Minister for Works: What more can we do for you?

Mr. NAIRN: I am speaking of those things which mean so much to either party, of contracts secretly made.

The Minister for Lands: What was made secretly?

Mr. NAIRN: I mentioned one a few minutes ago. Surely the Minister does not require to be reminded of it. Were they all counted up you have not fingers enough on both hands to tally

them. I referred to the purchase of a ship.

The Minister for Lands: That was not secret.

Mr. NAIRN: It was secret so far as this House was concerned, and that is all I am complaining of.

The Minister for Lands: Then every administrative act is a secret.

Mr. NAIRN: An administrative act of the magnitude of that one should not be secret from either the House or the country. That is my opinion, and I will stick to it. I have no desire to cast any aspersions when I use the word secret. I do not mean that necessarily any wrong has been done by those dealings, but I feel that we should have been taken into the confidence of Ministers. The principle is wrong. And in saying this, not only am I expressing the unanimous opinion of this side, but I am expressing also the opinion of many members on the Ministerial side, where there is to be found almost as much dissatisfaction as exists here. This dissatisfaction has been vented almost continually by Ministerial supporters, with the exception perhaps of the member for Subiaco (Mr. B. J. Stubbs) and the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie), who are prepared to follow the Ministry along the darkest road they care to take.

The Minister for Works: They know there is no danger of getting into dark places when they follow us.

Mr. NAIRN: If the Minister does not like "dark" I will say "devious." It is not carping criticism. It is an opinion unanimously held on this side and almost unanimously on the Ministerial side.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Do you not recognise that we could not deal publicly in regard to that ship?

Mr. NAIRN: I am not suggesting that Ministers should have laid down their cards to the whole world, but I say authority should have been asked from this House to permit of the purchase of a ship at a price of £140,000.

Mr. George: Do they not require some authority for ocean trading?

Mr. NAIRN: Possibly they do, but I am only emphasising the necessity for the Government meeting our general dissatisfaction, unless indeed they are looking for fight. I am a comparatively young member here, and I may be permitted to express my appreciation of the generous and kindly treatment meted out to me by individual members of the Ministry. I wish to add that whatever criticism I may have made was not made in a personal sense. In conclusion let me repeat that if the Government desire from us that assistance which seems to me essential at the present time, they should extend their confidence to the House.

Mr. GREEN (Kalgoorlie) [8.10]: I would like to remind the leader of the Opposition that on this occasion he has neglected to use a favourite phrase of his with which he has made us familiar in a long series of Budget and Address-in-reply debates. This year he has neglected to tell us that the ship of State is drifting on the rocks.

Hon. Frank Wilson: She is on the rocks. I am becoming concerned about the salaries now.

Mr. GREEN: On a memorable occasion in Kalgoorlie I heard the leader of the Opposition refer to the ship of State in a very different way. At that time he himself was at the helm, and so he referred to the ship in these terms—

Sail on, Sail on, Oh ship of State!

Sail on, Oh Union, grand and great!

It seems to me the leader of the Opposition takes an entirely different view of the ship of State according to whether or not he is the captain. Just now the pilot has been dropped, and consequently the ship of State is drifting on the rocks.

Hon. Frank Wilson: She is there. hard and fast.

Mr. GREEN: He complained that the Treasurer had offered no practical solution, that he had not told how economy was to be effected. We might expect from the leader of the Opposition some constructive criticism, something besides the negative and the destructive. The leader of the Opposition has been Treasurer upon occasions. I will not say just how successful he was in that position.

It is hardly necessary to remind him that he had deficits, and that in normal times. But if he was in earnest in regard to the ship of State, he might have given the Government some suggestion to help them in this time of financial stress. Not only do we have this continual criticism from the Opposition, but the Labour party is in a different position from that of any other party in this regard. All over the Commonwealth, in fact all over the world they have to fight the combined Press. That is a pretty big contract to take in hand. Notwithstanding the Honorary Minister's disposition to belittle the power of the Press I recognise that the Press wields an immense influence. In this State, for instance, there is one newspaper, coloured pink, the proprietor of which has left the Chamber for a moment. That paper goes into most farmers' homes, and the members of the Country party will bear me out when I say that those farmers, working hard, have no time to read extensively what is going on in Parliament, and so, because of that paper, a considerable amount of misconception prevails amongst the farmers in regard to the work of the Government. Therefore the power of the Press is something to fight. If the daily Press were such that the present Government at times received some credit, and at other times received just criticism, there would be no room for complaint, but on any and every occasion, not only hostile criticism but sometimes unfair criticism, comes from the morning metropolitan daily. Let us take what the morning daily said in its leading article on the 24th September in regard to the discussion on the Estimates—

A striking commentary on the aimlessness and drift in State politics is provided by the speeches on the Estimates of the leader of the Opposition and Mr. James Gardiner.

Those terms have never been applied to any other Government and yet the present Government are in office in times that have not been paralleled and never will be again. There are only two ways out of our present financial difficulty. One proposal is economy and the leader

of the Opposition proposes it. It is a very easy matter to suggest that economy should be practised, without offering a single suggestion as to where it can be practised. The other method is by increased taxation. Let us peruse the Estimates to see if the Government have made any effort in the direction of economising. In the Colonial Treasurer's Department we find an increase of £2,826, but that is due to two items—extra clerical assistance to the Industries Assistance Board £6,752, and incidental, including postages, stationery, printing, for the Industries Assistance Board £3,450, both items representing new expenditure such as it has not been necessary to meet in any other year. These items combined represent an extraordinary expenditure of over £10,000. In this department there would otherwise be a saving of £7,000 over the normal expenditure.

Hon. Frank Wilson: We shall wipe that out now.

Mr. GREEN: Yes. In the department of the Minister for Mines where, from the point of view of the Minister and of goldfields members the expenditure has always been too low, there is a slight increase of £2,359. This is easily accounted for—£846 represents new expenditure to the Mine Workers' Relief Fund and £617 to mining surveys. In the Woods and Forests branch, which comes under the same Minister, there is a decrease of £778.

Mr. Smith: There is a decrease of £900 in the London agency.

Mr. GREEN: Yes, thanks to the forcible opposition of the hon. member's newspaper. In the Department of Lands and Surveys there is a decrease in salaries from £44,090 to £36,016, a difference of £8,074. Of these salaries £5,656 was recouped by the loan of officers to other departments. In Lands and Surveys there was a total decrease of £11,117 and yet members will persist in saying no effort has been made to economise. Even the Sunday screed, the largest amount of waste paper in the British Empire, has neglected to indicate one particular item on which money could be saved. In the department of the Minister for Agricul-

ture, salaries last year totalled £32,480, and this year the estimate is £16,375, a decrease of £16,000 or nearly 50 per cent. That is a pretty solid reduction, and if members were fair they would admit it.

Mr. Smith: Not enough.

Mr. GREEN: Members have only occasional opportunities to speak in this House but the member for North Perth has 48 sheets every Sunday over which to spread himself, and I have failed to find one suggestion for effecting economy.

Mr. Robinson: Oh, stick to the subject.

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member is always on his feet. He is absurd and boring to listen to.

Mr. Robinson: I object to the terms used by the hon. member.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has taken exception to the expression that he is absurd.

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member has not taken exception.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I am speaking to the member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr. GREEN: I withdraw, but these interruptions are puerile.

The CHAIRMAN: Interjections at all times are highly disorderly and if an hon. member takes exception they must be stopped.

The Minister for Mines: The hon. member did not take exception; he was referring to the member for North Perth.

Mr. GREEN: To return to the even tenor of our way, the Minister for Agriculture has decreased his expenditure by 50 per cent. The member for North Perth has a whole newspaper at his command in which to indicate where legitimate savings could be effected, but has absolutely failed to do so.

Mr. Smith: Have not you the *Worker*?

Mr. GREEN: Yes, and we represent our side in that paper pretty well. In the Attorney General's department there has been a decrease in expenditure from £78,199 to £75,770, a difference of £2,429. Education shows a small increase, too small unfortunately for the present needs of this State, from £312,299 to £322,941. If any hon. member is against that in-

crease I have yet to hear him express his objection.

Mr. Heitmann: I object to the increase in the Education vote.

Mr. GREEN: Then the hon. member should get on his feet and not resort to the unseemly course of interjecting. In the Colonial Secretary's office, the expenditure last year was £38,272 and the estimate for this year is £31,664, a decline of £6,608. In the Aborigines Department a decrease is also forecasted, unfortunately, because no one more than I regrets the necessity for the decrease which is due to the dwindling of the number of aborigines in this State. The expenditure last year was £10,250 and this year the estimate is £8,440, a difference of £1,810. In Charities there is a contemplated decrease of £638, namely from £81,336 to £80,698.

Mr. Smith: Do you approve of that?

Mr. GREEN: I do not, and with the prospect of more stressful times ahead the Honorary Minister will find it difficult to keep within that mark. The Police Department shows a decrease of £708. The Fisheries Department shows a slight increase of £353, and it is scarcely necessary to point out that this is entirely due to the expansion of the department into trading channels, the supply of cheap fish thus provided having proved of immense benefit to the working classes. The Lunacy Department shows an increase of £5,150, which increase almost synchronises with the increased hostility of the Opposition. The Medical and Public Health Department expenditure is expected to increase from £109,691 to £116,839, a difference of £7,148, due largely to the fact that there has recently been provided in our hills a sanatorium for a certain class of men who, in order to get a living have unfortunately to go to a living death. In connection with gaols there is a contemplated increase of £4,419 from £21,658 to £26,077. Even with the slight increase in the Colonial Secretary's Department, this department is being run on similar lines to the others, with the result that there is a general reduction in expenditure. In the Works Department we find that the expenditure in salaries last year

was £9,000 and the estimate this year is £7,000. In wages £2,172 was paid last year and £2,160 is the estimate for this year. These two items alone in the Works Department show an estimated saving of £2,001. In public works, unfortunately, there has been a tremendous falling off in expenditure, the figures for 1914-15 being £132,780 and for 1915-16 £93,102, a decrease of over 25 per cent. In our business undertakings and State trading concerns, which seem to be a veritable King Charles's head to many members of this House, there is an estimated decrease this year of £75,537. That all goes to show that as far as one method of getting out of our financial difficulties is concerned Ministers have done fairly well in the matter of retrenchment. Yet, there is only this one outlet before us, and that is a taxation proposal. I say unhesitatingly that this is the only legitimate way in the circumstances that this Chamber can meet its financial obligations. I have failed to hear, however, upon any occasion any suggestion for increased taxation from any member of the Opposition who has spoken on the Budget. The Commonwealth has now stepped in, as has been said, and where another place has sown the wind it has reaped the whirlwind. We find that the revenue-producing avenues of this State are being absorbed by the Federal Government, and on the members on the opposite side of the House, who are anti-Federal in their attitude, this must fall with a somewhat boomerang effect. I would be prepared to hand over the whole business to Federal control if I thought it was impossible to change our present Constitution. This Government, it will be within the memory of every member here, recently sent up certain taxation proposals to another place which were less than moderate. They were, in my opinion, totally inadequate, and the Government recognised that they were inadequate, but they were sent forward because they recognised they would be a fair compromise and that it would be holding out the olive branch even to

that reactionary body, and give them a chance of falling in with the proposals to help the country. They meant, so far as members of Parliament were concerned, that the taxation was only £3 per annum upon every member drawing £300 a year.

Mr. Smith: We were quite willing to reduce members' salaries.

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member was not sincere in the idea at the time, and another hon. member who brought forward that proposal was only attacking a sacred thing for which we have fought for centuries. The hon. member is like the curate's egg—he is only bad in parts. The very root of this democratic proposal—payment for members of Parliament—has been fought for for centuries by our British forefathers. The proposal of the hon. member was only a subterfuge and a sham.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: You remember the old Chartist?

Mr. GREEN: In the old Chartists' movement this was one of their planks. We volunteered out of our salaries to give £24 per annum towards the 7.89 per cent. fund, which, in my opinion, was a most unjust taxation. We were forced to adopt it, however, and to adopt the same attitude towards our public servants, not because it was our choice, but because we were forced into that position against every principle we have stood for; and yet these taxation proposals were turned down. Even the *West Australian*, the great leader of public opinion in this State, was in favour of taxation proposals just prior to the 23rd February last. They said it was eminently necessary that the Government should adopt some taxation proposals. But when this poor old taxation proposal of ours, so moderate, so erring on the side of justice, if I may say so, was brought forward, what did they say? They said—

We are against this wholesale reduction in wages and salaries, unless it is brought about throughout the Government service, and retrenchment.

I think I heard the member for Swan (Mr. Nairn) say that his side did not stand for reduction in wages and salaries. If the *West Australian* is anything at all it is a Liberal paper. They said that the wholesale reduction in wages and salaries should be brought about throughout the Government service, and retrenchment. We have had retrenchment, and now the only way out is by taxation. I challenge members of the Opposition and another place, if they are honest in this matter, to say that they are in favour of these taxation proposals. We know it is the case, in many instances, of the ins and the outs. If it was a fair fight I would not mind. If it was a fight such as our men at the Dardanelles are engaged in, again I would not mind. We are as two men engaged in the battle; one man is suddenly robbed of his rifle by another man, and the first man has to go against the other man who is holding his rifle. It is an unfair fight that the Labour party has to engage in in Australia. And it is this unfair fight which is sending democracy to the Federal Parliament for succour.

Mr. Willmott: They suck all right.

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member sucks. The party to which he belongs has sucked all right, so far as this Government are concerned. We were willing to help the man the hon. member represents, in his hour of trial, but we do feel incensed to think that the hon. member should bite the hand that feeds him.

Mr. Willmott: We were so long being starved that we had to bite something.

Mr. GREEN: The estimated deficit for this year is £241,887.

Mr. George: That is accomplished.

Mr. GREEN: That was for last year. I understand that the decline in revenue, according to the Budget speech, was £346,000. So that the amount of the decline in revenue over the decrease in the deficit has meant an increase in one sense of £104,127.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I thought the deficit had increased.

Mr. GREEN: I will make myself clear. I want to point out that the deficit for

the year was £240,000, and our decline in revenue has been £104,000 less than that.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You are mixing up the estimated deficit for this year with last year's revenue.

Mr. GREEN: One of the main objections which has been raised in this Chamber has been to our State trading concerns. It comes with a very bad grace indeed from hon. members in this Chamber that they are prepared on the one hand to advocate that certain State trading concerns should be allowed to live, and that others should be ruthlessly cut off.

Mr. Male: Wipe them out.

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member has the best of reasons for making a statement of that kind, because he belongs to a shipping combine.

Mr. Male: I beg your pardon?

Mr. GREEN: He belongs to a combine which has had Australia by the throat for years.

Mr. Male: The hon. member might withdraw that statement. It is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. GREEN: If the hon. member desires that the statement should be withdrawn I will do so, but I want to give him a few points in regard to the shipping combine of Australia, to show him that if he is not connected with it he can thank his lucky stars that he has less to disturb his rest at night, as an honest man, than I anticipated he would have.

Mr. Male: I belong to the State combine, of course.

Mr. GREEN: Let us take, for instance, the shipping combine in the Commonwealth. The book I am going to quote from is "The Trust Movement in Australia." It is not issued at the *Worker* office. The publishing office is that of Messrs. Critchley, Parker, Proprietary, Limited, of Melbourne, Sydney, and London. It is, I believe, associated with the Chamber of Mines. It is written by H. L. Wilkinson, who is not an ordinary Labour agitator, but is a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers of the Melbourne University, and an associate member of the Institute of Civil Engineers,

London. There are facts in this book, which was published in 1914, which might well give us food for thought, and it will be extensively used by the Federal Chamber when its members are on the hustings in connection with the Referenda proposals.

Mr. George: They will never get through.

Mr. GREEN: Never mind about that.

Mr. Thomson: It will be a sorry day for Australia if they do.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It will be your fault.

Mr. GREEN: I spoke to the hon. member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) the other day and asked him what he thought about the other House. He said, "I do not know; it is all right." Because of the fact that the Upper House is not passing democratic legislation in this State their day of doom is at hand. The Federal Government intend taking over certain powers, as sure as the hon. member is sitting in his seat. The Howard Smith shipping combine, which advertises extensively in the *Sunday Times*—

Mr. Smith: They are no relation to me.

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member gets some of their profits through their shipping advertisements. What was their position. It is well within the memory of every member of this Chamber the fact that shipping fares and freights have continually, gradually, and unceasingly gone up in every part of Australia, except in one particular part, namely, that part which the hon. member for Kimberley (Mr. Male) has the honour to preside over. We do not, forsooth, find the slightest grain of gratitude in him, because the people in his electorate have cheaper fares than they would have otherwise for the reason that the shipping combine is knocked on the head in the North-West through the agency of the State steamers. He waxes virtuously indignant over the State steamers, nevertheless. It is passing strange if he is not a member of this particular shipping combine, as he had assured us he is not, that he should be wroth on the question of State ships. But to return to Howard

Smith and Co., and to their operations for the five years between 1904 and 1909. Their increase on declared assets was £563,666. Their dividends paid amounted to £219,662, and their additional actual capital subscribed to £113,655. The declared profits, namely, the increase in assets and dividends paid, less added capital, were £669,683. Let us see how they declared their profits. Their methods show what high finance can do. Their nett declared profits were £133,936. The average rate of profit earned on the capital subscribed was about 30 per cent. These are the poor struggling shipping combines which have been ruined by the law. The leader of the Country party (Mr. Willmott) has waxed very wrathful about the State steamships, and yet this is how the combine is getting on.

Mr. Willmott: I am opposed to them.

Mr. GREEN: I am hitting pretty hard, and that accounts for the interjections. The shipping companies are not satisfied with profits of 30 per cent. Freights are going up on the farmer's wheat, and yet the leader of the Country party opposes State steamships. I wish I had a clarion voice to send forth that news. Let us hear a little more about these struggling gentlemen of the firm of Howard Smith—

A remarkable increase in the published value of the assets of the Howard Smith Co., Ltd., is shown when the figures for 1912 and 1913 are compared. In twelve months, it will be seen, the book value of the assets increased over £300,000, and yet no additional capital was subscribed. This increase in assets, £75,000 in dividends, and an increase of £76,455 in the balance carried forward, amounts to nearly £500,000 in one year; the nominal capital of the company is only £750,000.

Mr. Allen: Why do you not buy some shares in the Howard Smith Coy.?

Mr. GREEN: Because these cunning gentlemen have done as the land sharks do on occasion. They have watered the business. They have arranged matters so that a buyer of their shares at the present day cannot get a return of more than

6 or 7 per cent. The Howard Smith family, however, have got in on the ground floor, and the Australian public have to pay through the nose for it. Let us hear a little more about the Adelaide Steamship Coy. The member for West Perth (Mr. Allen) gets facetious when I deal with this subject, and yet he waxed wroth because of a little hole in Hay-street. That is a mere nothing, but the fact that the people of Australia are being held up by a lot of shipping bandits is of paramount importance, and I wish the Federal Government luck in their endeavour to cope with the evil. However, let us find something about the Adelaide Steamship Coy. Possibly all these companies are not in the same boat. One may be making large profits, and another none at all. But they have a combine right enough. The Adelaide Steamship Coy., Howard Smith, Huddart Parker, and the other shipping companies trading on the Australian coast all charge exactly the same rates of freight. There is an honourable understanding between them. What is the position of the Adelaide Steamship Coy.?

The company limits its dividends to 10 per cent.—

That is most reasonable, provided the shippers get the difference.

but the following figures, taken from its own published balance-sheets, will show that large profits are being made and used in ship-building.

The writer proceeds to summarise the profits for the three years 1908, 1909, and 1910, showing that they total £302,636, and then states—

The actual disclosed profits, £100,878, made on a capital of £507,175, represent a profit at the rate of 20 per cent. per annum. But this is taking the company's estimate of its own assets, which show a decrease in value of the fleet from £8 8s. 11d. to £5 3s. 5d. per ton, figures difficult to explain in view of the addition of many new steamers.

I wish to emphasise that in their balance-sheets the Adelaide Steamship Company have written down the value of their steamers from £8 8s. 11d. to £5 3s. 5d.

per ton, for very obvious reasons, and in spite of the fact that they purchase first-class greyhounds for their service. Mr. Wilkinson says further—

So C. Ward & Co. in their monthly financial publication said that the declared assets "look to be hiding a lot that is of advantage to shareholders . . . . It is a pity the company does not publish a profit and loss statement, but it is evident that the omission is due to no reason which would have the effect of injuring the company's shareholders.

The Minister for Mines: That is put very mildly.

Mr. GREEN: It is put very well indeed, in the easy and comfortable manner all these big corporations adopt when making out a balance sheet. Now, what is responsible for these immense profits? Do they come from the air? They come from the people of Australia, out of freights and fares. Before the formation of the shipping combine the average freight from Melbourne to Sydney was 5s. per ton. In 1910 the rate had risen to 10s. per ton. In 1913 it had gone up to 12s. I can quite understand the heat of the member for Kimberley (Mr. Male) at these disclosures. He recognises that but for what he terms the meddling of the State Government with steamships, fares and freights on the North-West coast might have risen proportionately.

Mr. Male: The Government charge just the same rates.

Mr. Smith: Was that 5s. freight Melbourne to Sydney done at a loss?

Mr. GREEN: In 1910, at all events, the shipping companies were not running at a loss. In that year they made enormous profits, from 20 to 30 per cent., and yet they raised the rate by 2s. per ton. From Melbourne to Fremantle the rate before the days of the combine were from 6s. to 12s. 6d. per ton. In 1910 they had risen to a range of 12s. 6d. to 22s. 6d., and in 1913 the rates were from 15s. to 27s. By a parity of reasoning I presume the member for North Perth (Mr. Smith) would uphold these increases on the ground that the shipping companies were not getting fair rates pre-



viously. With regard to passenger fares, Mr. Wilkinson writes—

The increase in the fares charged by the Interstate steamship companies is just as apparent. It was possible before the combination to go from Melbourne to Sydney or Adelaide for £1 10s. saloon and 10s. steerage; now a passenger has to pay over £2 10s. and £1 respectively. Ten years ago a saloon passage from the Eastern States to Fremantle could be had for £5; now a ticket costs £8, and steerage rates have increased proportionately. Between every port in Australia the steamer fares have increased 50 per cent. to 75 per cent. during the past 14 years—the period during which the combine has been in existence.

I feel proud of the fact that the Labour Government of this State have been the first to engage in commercial shipping. Other Governments in various parts of the world have had war ships, but the present Government of Western Australia are the first Government in the world to own commercial steamers. That is something to be proud of.

Mr. Male: A nice mess the Government have made of it.

Mr. George: Are they paying?

Mr. O'Loughlin: Do you want everything to pay directly?

Mr. GREEN: Let us see what the freights are along the Australian coast as compared with the freights charged by oversea steamers. Between Melbourne and Fremantle the Interstate steamer travels 1,886 miles, and the freight, as I mentioned before, is from 12s. to 22s. 6d. per ton. Between Melbourne and London by way of the Cape, a distance of 15,000 miles, eight times as far as from Melbourne to Fremantle, the rates are from 12s. 6d. to 34s. These figures clearly demonstrate that Australia has been the happy hunting ground of the shipping combine.

Mr. Smith: What are the wages on Interstate steamers and oversea steamers respectively?

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member knows full well, or if he does not know Mr. Webb

can put him wise to the fact, that wages on a large steamer do not amount to a farthing per ton, absolutely do not enter into the question because they are comparatively infinitesimal. I have been at some pains also with a view of showing how the tobacco combine has got Australia in its grasp, but I do not desire to weary members at this late hour. My only excuse for dwelling on the question of shipping is my desire to bring that question prominently before the members of the Country party in particular, because it is a matter that interests the farmer. The member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) laid great stress on the necessity for the encouragement of primary production, and I credit him, and also other members of the Country party, with all good faith in that respect. But there is not a member on this side of the Chamber who yields to the Country party one iota on that question. We believe that the land of this country of ours should be worked for all it is worth. But there is another factor enters into the matter of production. How does the farmer get on after the wheat leaves his farm? Do not members of the Country party know that trusts and combines have the farmer in their grasp more tightly than they have any other section of the community? Have we not heard repeatedly from the other side of the House complaints regarding the price of jute? Have we not had constant complaints about the wheat ring? And yet certain members focus their little narrow eye upon getting as much as possible out of the land with as much assistance as possible from the Government. When it comes to a great principle—one upon which there is community of interests between the farmer and the worker, because the worker too is a producer—those members will not go the full length with us, but leave it at that. That is where the great cleavage occurs between the Labour party and every other party. Members opposite talk about the State trading concerns as though these represented nothing but the passing whim of Ministers. Nothing of the sort. The State

trading concerns represent a well thought out process, which has been definitely decided upon, not only in Australia, but in every other country of the world. In other countries, however, it has unfortunately been impossible for the Labour party to seize the reins of office. Fortunately for Australia, Labour has seized the reins of office in five States out of six; and that is why the future is very hopeful for the workers of Australia.

Mr. Gilchrist: Are the workers satisfied with the Labour Governments?

Mr. GREEN: The workers will never be satisfied because of that divine gospel of discontent which always exists. We have been misunderstood, we have been maligned by our enemies, but even the misunderstanding of our friends acts as a spur to us. There is a tendency in this Chamber to submit to environment, due to the fact that we have easy cushions to sit upon, but do not let it be forgotten that we represent men who are working underground and who are risking their lives daily. It is more than gospel to be a Labour man; it is a religion. I have always been fighting for it and, thank God, I will die in the faith. We have heard criticism from the other side of the House without stint about our trading concerns. Even if the State trading concerns were not paying at the present time, even if there was an immense deficit from several of them, that would not occasion us one thought in the direction of their abolition. It simply means that the managers of private enterprises, men who are working for bosses and making immense profits, it means that these people can be bought, and that they can be appointed as managers of the people's concerns so that they might be made to pay. Instead of the people being sweated under the iron heel of the trust which is threatening Australia, they will be saved from monopolies. Let us examine some of our State enterprises. Take the State ferries. A great deal of amusement has been caused by the hon. member who has no patience to listen to anyone except himself, I refer to the member for Canning (Mr. Robinson). Nearly all

his constituents in South Perth use that ferry service every day.

Mr. Smith: They cannot swim over.

Mr. GREEN: That is very true. At the same time the interjection is an unseemly one and has no point, but I suppose it serves to interrupt the discourse. The constituents of the member for Canning have been asking repeatedly for cheaper fares and that sort of thing. That very idea shows where Government ownership is of benefit. How many times, I wonder, did the people of South Perth approach, cap in hand, the private owner of the ferry and ask for a reduction of the fares? They knew that the applications would have been quite futile, but it is in the fact that the people own the ferries now that the germ of future success lies. The expenditure on State ferries is estimated this year to be £5,020 and the revenue is put down as £7,000, the estimated profit being £1,980.

Mr. Smith: Tell us what it was last year.

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member can look that up. He owns a newspaper which is supposed to enlighten the people; therefore why harass me. In regard to State hotels the estimated expenditure is put down at £29,430 and the estimated revenue £35,500, the profit being £6,070.

Mr. Male: Estimated profit.

Mr. Smith: You are counting your chickens before they are hatched.

Mr. GREEN: The State hotels have always paid just as the State ferries have done. In regard to State steamships the estimated expenditure is £102,838 and the estimated revenue £115,000, the profit being £12,162.

Mr. Male: Estimated profit.

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member will have an opportunity later on of finding fault with these figures. They have not been questioned yet; why question them now. The State Implement Works' estimated expenditure is £163,827 and the estimated revenue £128,000, the estimated loss being £35,827. On that particular industry there has been an immense loss and there is not the slightest doubt in the mind of hon. members if they are

honest enough to admit it that the reason for that loss is bad management. Instead of helping us to try and rectify that bad management by congratulating the Minister for Works on getting rid of a bad manager, we find them only too ready to support the appointment of a Royal Commission. They say "Why should this man have been fired?" but did he not lose the State a lot of money.

Mr. George: You overloaded him.

Mr. GREEN: Then we come to the State dairy, the figures of which are altogether out of proportion to the increasing amount of trade that it does, because it helps the sick in the different hospitals in the metropolitan area. That institution shows a profit of £199.

Mr. Smith: Estimated profit; you are again counting your chickens.

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member has never before dissected these figures. He talks about the deficit of two millions and he tries to show grandiloquently to an intelligent House and through his questionably intelligent newspaper that the cause of the deficit is the State trading concerns, and the cockey sits around on a Sunday morning with a bit of straw in his mouth and lets out his thinking to the *Sunday Times* just as he lets out his washing when he comes into town, and says "I thought so." The little dairying industry is nothing when we come to compare it with other commercial concerns, but it is successfully worked in conjunction with the Medical Department, and it has unquestionably altered that state of affairs in the children's hospital when the children were said to be dying like flies. That cannot be said to be the case to-day. Then on sawmills the estimated expenditure is £169,950 and the estimated revenue £188,800, again a profit. I want to say at once that I do not stick for profits so far as the State trading enterprises are concerned. The idea of looking for profits is wrong. What we want to do is to work these enterprises as we work the railways, work them on an even margin so that the people may get directly the full value for which they are paying. That is the idea of State trading.

Mr. Willmott: You will be very lucky if you get any profits from the sawmills because of the war.

[Mr. McDowall took the Chair.]

Mr. GREEN: A great deal has been said about the State brickworks. It would be unfair for me to ask the member for Murray-Wellington a question at this stage.

Mr. George: Ask it.

Mr. GREEN: Has the hon. member ever been to the State brickworks?

Mr. George: No, I will tell you why directly.

Mr. GREEN: The hon. member has missed the bus. He has already had his say.

Mr. George: I have not.

Mr. GREEN: Very well, I am not afraid of anything the hon. member may say. The estimated expenditure on the brickworks is £12,500 and the estimated revenue £14,000, showing a profit of £1,500. I have not had a balance sheet before me; I have just taken the figures from the Estimates, but from one who has visited the works I have learned that a large amount of that expenditure is due to the cost of the increase in the plant. My father was a machine brick maker. He knew his business and consequently I have a passing knowledge of what brickworks should be, and I want to say that the State brickworks plant is one of the finest that it is possible to imagine connected with any industry. It is almost self-acting.

The Minister for Works: An employer in the Arbitration Court stated that it would be impossible for him to compete with the State brickworks.

Mr. GREEN: For the first time in their history the employers are now advertising cheaper bricks. The State brickworks are being kept continually going. They do not have to depend on public works, because they have comparatively ceased, but the works are finding private buyers who readily go there because of the extra good quality of the bricks and because the works produce them cheaper.

Mr. George: Why should they not?

Mr. GREEN: If the hon. member admits that he gives away the whole case so far as the State enterprises are concerned. His sole objection to State enterprises on every occasion has been that we cannot make them pay. I have heard that so often that I could set it to music if I were so inclined and if I were so gifted by Nature. What was the position before the State brickworks came into operation? Brickmakers were charging £3 5s. per thousand delivered; now, the bricks have been reduced by £1, and the time will soon arrive when the price will be further reduced because just now we are only in the initial stage. Unfortunately for Melbourne that city has not State brickworks, but in New South Wales they have, and strange to say the experience of New South Wales has been similar to our own. The price of bricks in that State has dropped because the Government enterprise has come into competition with private enterprise. Let me quote from *Building*, a magazine published in Sydney and which is the official organ of the Builders and Contractors' Association, of which the member for Perth was a shining light at one particular time. The average builder and contractor cannot by any stretch of imagination be said to have any socialistic ideas, and yet this very magazine points out—

The brick combine in Melbourne is attempting to enforce the methods which have become so well known in America. Opposition to all costs must be silenced. In the case of the Queensland insurance building, shown elsewhere, it was officially told us that the combine would not accept the contractors' order for double-pressed bricks, because the building was being constructed in the reinforced concrete. Under the circumstances, bricks for the building had to be obtained from Sydney and now that all costs have been checked, it is said that 15s. a thousand has been saved by doing so. Double-pressed Sydney facing bricks can be delivered on any Melbourne city site for 15s. per thousand cheaper than double-pressed Melbourne bricks. The

combine we believe has also refused to sell moulded bricks on jobs where other makers bricks have been used. A leading contractor in Melbourne has had an intimation conveyed to him that as he has purchased some shares in an opposition brick company, he will not be supplied with combine bricks.

Now we come to the Boyup quarry, another State concern. The estimated expenditure was £11,500, and the estimated revenue £13,000, leaving a profit of £1,500. Then there is the supply of meat; estimated cost £33,224, revenue £34,000, and a profit of £776.

Mr. Allen interjected.

Mr. GREEN: When the member for Perth seriously attempts to locate anything he finds it impossible to get his view from other than a very narrow range of vision.

The Minister for Mines: He is only concerned about that defective joint in the tramrail.

Mr. GREEN: That is so. It is impossible for him to get his eye, or his mind, from that particular hole in Hay-street. If he had the interests of his constituents at heart he ought to recognise that the State meat shop is an undoubted benefit to the community. As Mr. Knibbs has pointed out, Western Australia is the only State in the Commonwealth where, for the last two years, the price of meat has not increased. There is some reason for that. Does the hon. member not think that the State meat shops have had something to do with it?

Mr. Male: No.

Mr. GREEN: Has the member for Kimberley had anything to do with it? No, certainly not. The State meat shop has meant that the people of Western Australia have been saved from the meat trust, that whilst the trust have got a hold in Queensland, they have been unable to get into Western Australia, thanks to the Labour Government's method of nationalising ships and meat shops. Now we come to the supply of fish, a question affecting the daily food of the people, one which comes home immediately to the cost of the breakfast table of every worker. In respect to the

State fisheries, the estimated expenditure is £14,362, the estimated revenue £15,500, and the estimated profit £1,138. I am not going to detain the House by pointing out how the price of fish has dropped both in Perth and Kalgoorlie by several pence per pound. In both districts people are eating fish who hardly knew the taste of it before. It is scarcely necessary to point out that not only has the price of Government fish come down, but the wholesale fish merchants have reduced their prices to their retailers, and their retailers are selling at the same price as the Government fish shop, and at the same time doing better than ever before. It is true that, after all, the cost of our State trading concerns, this bogey, has for the minute been laid. I do not for a moment flatter myself that it is well and truly laid for ever. I recognise that if the sting were taken from this particular objection to the Government's policy of State enterprises, Opposition members would have absolutely no ammunition whatever. I take it the daily papers will still continue to give us dry leading articles upon the absolute rottenness of the State trading concerns. We will still get the unfair criticism we have had in the past. We will still, as a party, be subject to the criticism of our own side, at times unfairly. But when we come to consider that we are part of a great movement that is not peculiar to Western Australia, or even to the Commonwealth, but which is growing all over the world, and that the voice of the worker is inarticulate as he bends over his toil, but that as he straightens himself his voice becomes articulate, even in the most unprogressive country—when we remember this, I say it is a position we might well be proud of. In pioneering our movement we unavoidably make mistakes, but every mistake made is one which we will try to avoid in the future. We know it is helpful to go forward, because we feel that we are opening the way for countries not yet blessed with a Labour Government. They, too, are looking forward to the time when they will have Labour Governments. Do hon.

members think that if a Labour Government had been in power in Germany, had been in power in England, and had been in power in Russia, the present war would have been possible? I say it would have been impossible in such circumstances. Even at the present time, when the Saxon of Germany is fighting the Saxon of England, the working classes all over the world are getting into touch with one another and are preparing for the time just after the war when they are going to say, "We are tired of your Hague Conventions and of your grabbing for the world's markets. We are convinced that the workers of the world have nothing to gain by sending fellow-workers to war." Let me not be misunderstood in this. We are in the fight now and we have to get out of it by the only possible way. I am looking forward to the time when we will be able to say to Labour Governments all over the world, "We are the enemies of all war. Solemnly we promise that neither the sound of the trumpet nor the roar of the cannon, neither victory nor defeat will swerve us from our common purpose, the union of the children of toil of all countries."

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [9.25]: I would like to say that the concluding words of the hon. member who has just addressed the House find a deep echo in my heart, and I hope that, whether it be by a system of Labour Governments, or by any other expedient, the awful crime of war from which the world is just now suffering will never again be allowed to prosper. The hon. member traversed a great deal of ground and told us many things. Among others he referred to destructive criticism, which he said he had heard from many sneakers, not one of whom had disclosed to the Government a road along which they might travel for the purpose of bettering things. In respect to the Estimates, the hon. gentleman has certainly not been a pioneer showing how things could be bettered. If he will pardon me I will explain to him where he made a mistake so big that even he will see it in a moment. Turning to the Estimates of

the Minister for Agriculture, on page 54, he told the Committee that the expenditure last year was £33,980, and that the estimated expenditure this year was £17,875; and from that he adduced a saving of £16,000. In respect to the one page I will admit the hon. member is right, but if he had dissected the Estimates as carefully as he would ask us to believe he did, he would have found on the next page that the difference was more than made up by the transfer from page 54 of items amounting to £15,000 or £16,000, and their reintroduction under other headings on page 55. So, instead of a saving of £16,000, as he told us, the Estimates themselves, in their modest way, simply claim a decrease of £967, which is a totally different thing.

Mr. Green: You are wrong. I quoted on salaries.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member was endeavouring to show us how carefully the Estimates had been constructed, and he worked out a saving of £16,000.

Mr. Green: On salaries.

Mr. GEORGE: It does not matter, the money has to be paid.

Mr. Green: I said the Estimates showed retrenchment wherever possible on salaries.

Mr. GEORGE: The items which are deleted from page 54 are included on page 55 under other headings, and so, instead of a saving of £16,000, all that the Estimates claim is a net decrease of £967.

The Minister for Mines: Take page 52. Your figures are all wrong.

Mr. GEORGE: I have page 52.

The Minister for Mines: What decrease does that show?

Mr. GEORGE: It shows a decrease of £11,000 for the Minister for Lands. I am dealing with the Minister for Agriculture.

The Minister for Mines: The member for Kalgoorlie was dealing with the Minister for Lands.

Mr. GEORGE: No, he was dealing with the items on page 54, and I am dealing with pages 54 and 55.

The Minister for Lands: He was dealing with the Minister for Lands and Agri-

culture, and you are dealing with the Minister for Agriculture only.

Mr. GEORGE: I am dealing with the page the hon. member quoted.

Mr. Green: I did not quote any page.

Mr. GEORGE: Take the department of the Minister for Works, the net decrease is set down at £39,678. I am not going to dispute those figures, but it is all very well to bring about a decrease in the Estimates in the way I am about to point out. If hon. members go through the Estimates they will find, on page 86, that one of the items of the decrease is school buildings £13,000. That is to say, they are not to be erected this year; they were erected last year, and that £13,000 represents a portion of the decrease. On page 83 there is an item of £15,000 expended last year which does not require to be expended this year, so there is £28,000 out of the £39,000 decrease accounted for. On the same page there is shown an expenditure of £5,799 incurred last year which will not be incurred this year, for traffic expenses on railways under construction. We have a set of Estimates placed before us showing a decrease of £39,000 in this department, and while last year there was work which would be carried out for the wages and salaries and other expenses provided this year we have practically the same wages and salaries expenses laid down and no such works to be carried out. It is easy to effect an economy in this way seeing that it is impossible to build certain works twice over, but it is no economy to have an equal amount of expenditure for salaries and wages just the same. Turning to the Audit Department, on page 28, we find a net decrease of £711. When we come to dissect the figures, we find that the expenditure for last year contained items which do not appear this year, such as relieving officer, temporary officer, and increases consequent on decisions of the appeal board, expenditure which could not recur this year, totalling £1,058, which would leave a net amount last year of £7,100. Yet the total for the Audit division this year is £8,218, or an increase of £1,018, while, on the Estimates,

there is represented to be a decrease of £711.

The Minister for Works: There is a decrease on last year's expenditure.

Mr. GEORGE: There is no decrease which should appear in this form. The same thing applies right through the Estimates. It would take too long to dissect the individual items, but when we come to deal with the departments I shall give a little more information. When we turn to the Savings Bank estimates on page 31, the very first thing we find is that in these bad times, when every taxpayer is feeling the effects of a decreased income, when rents are difficult to get and debts are hard to collect, the manager of the Savings Bank is to have his salary increased by £85. There should be some explanation of that. I am not one to preach that a man should be underpaid, but when everyone in the State is suffering from the awful conditions produced by the war and other causes, this is not a time when large increases of this sort should be given. The total increase in this branch is £1,700. Some of it is due to the opening of new offices, but a good deal is due to increases of salary when the incomes of the very people who have to pay for these services are being reduced.

The Minister for Works: Do you believe in closing the bank up?

Mr. GEORGE: I have never hinted at that.

The Minister for Works: Then it is necessary to keep up competition with the others.

Mr. GEORGE: But when the keynote of this debate is economy, and when the Governor's Speech has urged the necessity for practising economy, it is a strange economy that the people who have to be paid by the taxpayers are having their incomes increased while the taxpayers' incomes are diminishing. Turning to the Government Stores on page 33, an increase of over £1,000 is revealed. Last year there were 40 officers in that department and the payment for them was £10,891. Yet this year there are only 38 officers and we are to pay them £11,984, and this is where the in-

crease comes in. With regard to the workers' homes dealt with on page 37, there is an increase for extra clerical assistance. Yet everyone knows perfectly well that the building of workers' homes throughout the State has practically ceased.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We have to collect the money.

Mr. GEORGE: It is perfectly true the accounts have to be kept and the payments due have to be looked after, but to ask the House to believe that, now the main erection has ceased, it is going to take something like £4,000 a year to manage the affairs of the workers' homes is to ask too much.

The Minister for Works: You realise that the workers' homes were built out of other funds.

Mr. GEORGE: That has nothing to do with the working of them.

The Minister for Works: That is a different thing altogether.

Mr. GEORGE: How does it make any difference to these Estimates?

The Minister for Works: The men are not engaged.

Mr. GEORGE: That does not enter into the question I am discussing. If the erection of these homes has ceased there must be a whole army of officers not employed.

The Minister for Works: Then they are paid from another vote.

Mr. GEORGE: But they are provided for here on the Estimates. Otherwise, the men whom the Government have ceased to employ must be foremen, builders, architects, and so on, who appear on another vote. I am dealing with the clerical staff for the management of the workers' homes, and the country may as well know that it requires £4,500 a year to pay for the staff to manage the workers' homes.

The Minister for Works: A very small percentage.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister might consider it a small item, but if these various items are taken together, they make a fairly large sum. Even in regard to the working of trading concerns, such as the Avondale estate, dealt with on

page 88, we find that the expenditure is to be increased by £3,753.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Do you know the increase in the area under crop?

Mr. GEORGE: The total expenditure is £5,000, and from the Avondale estate it is expected to receive £4,600. If that is a paying business, the Honorary Minister is entitled to think so.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We did not buy the estate, you know.

Mr. GEORGE: I know that. Hon. members must not be misled by the idea that there is a loss of only £400, because there is the interest on the money for the whole estate, which is not included here.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I would leave the Avondale estate out of it if I were you.

Mr. GEORGE: I will not. The present Government are the managers of that estate and it is for them to show that they are managing it properly, or to give up the job. The implement works are dealt with on page 101. Although a Royal Commission is inquiring into the management of the works and naturally members are supposed to keep their minds open on this question pending the presentation of the report, I would point out that we have an estimated expenditure for these works of £163,827, for which the late manager is not at all responsible because he left the works before these Estimates were made up, while the estimated revenue is only £128,000. This must mean either that the country is losing a large amount of money on these works, or that the works are building up a large stock.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Or else that they are selling on terms.

Mr. GEORGE: That does not follow. If the concern is managed as a commercial concern ought to be, we would have had a proper balance sheet placed before us ere this, and all goods sold, although not paid for, would have been credited to assets.

The Minister for Works: Not in these Estimates. You know that; why not put it correctly?

Mr. Male: What provision is made for bad debts?

Mr. GEORGE: Why not let us have the balance sheets before we start to discuss these Estimates? Why not let us have them for the credit of the Government themselves, and save unnecessary debate and unnecessary perturbation? If the Government placed before us the balance sheets of these concerns before we started to discuss the Estimates—

The Minister for Works: You did this last year when the balance sheets were on the Table.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister will try to explain it away. Let me repeat what I have often said, that even the Labour party should learn from their own mistakes. If the Government made a great mistake last year, does that in any way diminish our claim this year to have proper information placed before us prior to being asked to vote the money of the people to carry on the affairs of the State? We were entitled to have presented to us the accounts of these trading concerns to the 30th June, thus being coterminous with the Estimates, and to have them laid on the Table so that we could decide once for all how these concerns stand. Can the Minister for a moment contend that it is fair to ask the House to express any other opinion on a concern when the expenditure is shown to be something like £163,000, and the estimated revenue £128,000?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: During the 12 months.

Mr. GEORGE: I stated some time ago that I knew perfectly well that in starting on a new concern there was bound to be a loss. No matter how experienced the manager, there is all manner of expenses which must crop up and which cannot be foreseen. That period has now passed, so far as the State Implement Works are concerned. They have now been established for several years.

The Minister for Works: For how many years?

Mr. GEORGE: They have been established for from 2½ to 3 years



and cannot now be said to be a new undertaking.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Do you advocate that they should be shut down?

Mr. GEORGE: I should like to shut down the Honorary Minister, though I admit that it is impossible to do so. It is as impossible for me to shut him down as it is impossible for him to keep his mouth shut. Had these balance sheets been laid on the Table of the House as they should have been, as an Act of Parliament says they shall be, and in accordance with the undertaking of the Premier, much of the criticism with regard to State trading concerns would vanish.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We are not worried about your criticism.

Mr. GEORGE: But we have not got these balance sheets. Let us take last year's figures in connection with the State sawmills. The vote last year was £301,950, while the expenditure was £411,993, or an excess of expenditure over what the House voted of £110,000, not shillings or sixpences. We have not the balance sheet at the present time which will tell us what they have done with this money. I am aware that the previous balance sheet we did have showed there was a large expenditure for wages and a small production in sawn timber. I know that the Auditor General's report showed us that, whereas £70,000 worth of returns came to the State sawmills, three-quarters of that was concerned, and dealt, with hewn timber. Hewn timber could have been obtained for this State, and the business done, on a capital expenditure of about £150. Yet we have this huge expenditure running into nearly half a million of money on the State sawmills, and their returns bolstered with hewn timber which do not require such an expenditure for the work.

The Minister for Works: This year it will be sawn timber.

Mr. GEORGE: We find that wages and materials and other things for the State sawmills are set down as account-

ing for £163,000, that the estimated revenue is £188,800.

The Minister for Works: On the sawmills?

Mr. GEORGE: Will the Minister wait a minute? This may be accounted for by the fact that they were building up stocks, but in the absence of balance sheets for previous years this House has no data upon which to go in order to see how we are getting along.

The Minister for Lands: How could you have them for previous years when they were not in existence?

Mr. GEORGE: Where is the balance sheet for last year?

The Minister for Lands: It is in the records of the House.

Mr. GEORGE: I mean the balance sheet for the 30th June, 1915.

The Minister for Lands: If the mills were operating, it is there. If it is not there they were not operating.

The Minister for Works: There is one year's balance sheet which you have not got.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. GEORGE: We have not got the balance sheet of the State sawmills for the year ending 30th June, 1915.

The Minister for Works: You are correct.

Mr. GEORGE: I was correct before.

The Minister for Works: You said, for several years.

Mr. GEORGE: We have the balance sheet for the previous year, but not that for last year. With the knowledge that we find in these Estimates, that of the vote for last year of £301,950 the Government expended £411,000, or an excess of £110,000, this House is quite within its rights in asking for the balance sheet before we vote the money laid down here.

The Minister for Works: I told the Under Secretary to try and get that balance sheet as early as possible. I hope it will be laid on the Table before the Estimates are finished with.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister knows my opinion of him. We have our little spurs, but he knows what I think of him. Though we may get the balance sheet, it will not be before this debate

is over, for it will probably close to-night.

The Minister for Works : It is so good that I want you to see it.

Mr. GEORGE : Then why not let us have it earlier.

The Minister for Lands : Your remarks would be more appropriate on the Works estimates.

Mr. GEORGE : Possibly, but I shall repeat them if necessary in any other place. The reason why I am dealing with these matters in this way is because the hon. member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green) dealt with nearly every subdivision in connection with it and made several egregious errors.

The Minister for Lands : No.

Mr. GEORGE : He did. It cannot be denied. We have the right to ask what the Government did for that expenditure last year of £411,993, what they purchased with it and what they did with it. What did the sawmills give to add to the material wealth of the country for the expenditure of nearly half a million of money ? We have nothing to tell us. As far as the powellising is concerned, I suppose they did a little, but I believe that the powellising plant has now been absolutely shut up and closed for six months, and that there is no work for it at the present time. The latest return we got regarding the powellising showed that if it had not been for the Railway Department requiring a large amount of piles to be powellised, I believe for the electric works at East Perth, there would have been very little work indeed for the powellising plant to do, except on the part of the clerk who had to write out the cheque for those gentlemen who managed to get the contract.

The Minister for Works : What about the 500,000 sleepers for the Trans-Australian railway ?

Mr. GEORGE : We have all heard the old proverb about people hiding their light under a bushel. The Government of Western Australia, in connection with their sawn timber enterprises, have been so modest that they have hidden all information regarding them from members of this House. They

come here with Estimates for us to pass, crude in their inception and thrown together, as I have shown, in a way that does not convey proper information to the House.

The Minister for Works : That is only your opinion.

Mr. GEORGE : Of course it is my opinion. I am not voicing any one else's opinion. The hon. gentlemen can take it as they like. There has been something said in reference to the various contracts which have been made, and various speakers have referred to several of them. They have been called secret contracts and contracts by other names. I think, perhaps, this is an occasion upon which a little might be said in regard to one or two of them. There has been a contract made with Messrs. Monteath, of Subiaco, for the casting of pipes. The contract was made for five years. It was made at the end of last year and signed, I believe, in January of this year to date back to July of last year. It was made upon peculiar terms. It was made on the basis of £10 15s. per ton for pipes, and on the basis of £4 4s. 6d. for pig iron. Although the contract was not signed until January, 1915, we find that the Stores manager on the 10th July, just about the time when negotiations started, gave the price of pig iron as being 95s. per ton. It is true he said in that quotation that the quote by Hoskins, of Sydney, was 95s. at Fremantle, or 10s. more per ton than they purchased recently by local tender. If the purchases by any of the State departments from the 1st July to the 15th January, when Messrs. Monteath's contract was completed, are taken it will be found that the price of pig iron was never approaching anything like £4 4s. 6d. per ton, and why that should have been made the basis for the contract passes my understanding. There is another peculiar thing in connection with it. At the time this contract was discussed and was being dealt with, the Water Supply Department was not paying £10 15s. per ton, but had a contract for less money than £10 15s. a ton.

The Minister for Works: Who had?

Mr. GEORGE: I will tell the Minister. They had a price for 8in. pipes at £10 1s. 3d. a ton; for 12in. pipes £10 6s. 6d. and for 18in. pipes at £10 15s. Yet we have a contract made here for five years without, so far as I can ascertain, any valid reason for its being made at £10 15s., on the basis of pig iron at £4 4s. 6d. per ton, which left £6 10s. 6d. per ton for manufacture. But the State Implement Works, in connection with the manufacture of pipes, had a price of £4 per ton for the manufacture only, but at the particular time when the contract was running on there was a quotation for pipes from other makers of vertical pipes in the Eastern States, and it would have paid us to have imported them from the Eastern States instead of giving this contract in this way. It is true that at the inception of this business Messrs. Monteath were desirous that the Government should purchase the works from them. They offered them to the Government at £22,000 or £23,000. The Government, however, decided not to buy. Messrs. Monteath said that the reason for wishing to sell was that they were getting old and desired to concentrate their business. Why the Government should have given that contract for five years in this way at such a price is more than any business man can say. Let us see how this comes about. It is stated in the contract that as the price rises or falls—it was not likely to fall; it must rise—so must they get an increase in their price. We find on the 10th March last that the first claim for the extra charge came in, totalling £535, based on the rise of pig iron. If it is possible for that £535 to be the correct basis, what should happen to the department, to those who are responsible for the making of the contract? What reason was there why, with a contract which was in the process of negotiation from the beginning of July and was not ratified until January, the departmental officers, who are the people responsible, were not asked by the Minister to find out what it was going to land the Government in. In-

stead of that, we have Monteath's first claim of £535 based on the rise in the price of pig iron.

The Minister for Lands: All your calculations, based on the assumption as to the original price of pig iron, are wrong.

Mr. GEORGE: Let the Minister take it as he likes. It is presumption on his part to question it.

Mr. Smith: Can they play football?

Mr. GEORGE: I do not know. It is evident that some one plays football with the finances of the State. I have a statement here taken from the file in connection with the dates of the issues. In July, 1914, the issue was £83 18s. 6d. In November the issue was £3,499. In December it was £24 and in February of this year it was £2,597, all issue upon which this £535 was being paid. But the dates of the issues do not convey anything satisfactory when they come to be gone into. The date of the issues is what the store keeper in charge of this board worked the books at, and it does not show when this stuff was supplied by Monteath or when it was ordered. We have nothing shown us as to whether these pipes were delivered within the period covered by the contract or whether they were made before.

The Minister for Lands: Perhaps they were never delivered.

Mr. GEORGE: It would be very unjust to think that. But I do think that this is not a business contract. I think it is a contract which should not have been made without tenders being called.

The Minister for Works: There is no other firm here that could make the pipes.

Mr. GEORGE: I am quite aware that there is no plant in this State except Monteath's for making vertical pipes. I am also aware that with a less guarantee than the firm of Monteath got the firm of Hoskins' would have come here with their vertical plant years ago.

The Minister for Mines: That is only what Bernales says.

Mr. GEORGE: I know nothing about that gentleman.

The Minister for Mines: He is the principal man in Hoskins'.

Mr. GEORGE: I am referring to the time when Hoskins Bros. came here in connection with the Coolgardie water scheme, before Bernales was heard of in that firm.

The Minister for Mines: Would they do it now?

Mr. GEORGE: I do not know. We have had the powellising contract, and I do not propose to inflict any more of that on hon. members. We know all about the pipes and a few other things, and next we come to this beautiful steamer "Kangaroo" which has been purchased by the Government.

Member: What about the freight agreement with McArdle, Bell & Co.?

Mr. GEORGE: Yes, there is that freight agreement; and there is also the gristing agreement, with regard to which my questions have been blocked every time. We shall have information about that some day, and then the House and the country will have something to say.

The Minister for Lands: Why not give notice of motion?

Mr. GEORGE: Probably we will give a notice of motion shortly that will give the hon. gentleman all he wants. While the member for Perth (Hon. J. D. Connolly) was speaking about the "Kangaroo," there were interjections that this ship was not intended for Wyndham.

The Minister for Works: No; there were not.

Mr. GEORGE: May I ask for a transcript of the *Hansard* note to convince the hon. gentleman?

The CHAIRMAN: I will ask the hon. member to continue his remarks.

Mr. GEORGE: I have a paper here signed by the Colonial Secretary and addressed to the Premier in Cabinet. The Colonial Secretary refers to the matter of the "Kangaroo" as follows:—

In view of the reports of Sir John Biles & Co., the famous builders, and the strong case put up by the acting manager of the State Steamship Ser-

vice, I think we should buy this ship, provided that the purchase can be financed in such a way as would not involve a drain on our financial resources at a period like this, when it is necessary to conserve our public funds. It would be unwise, in my opinion, to go on with the Wyndham meat works unless arrangements be made to bring the products down, for without a suitable ship we could not operate the works after their completion.

Then the Colonial Secretary proceeds to quote some of the arguments of the grandiloquent acting manager of the State Steamship Service. I wish I had some of the acting manager's youthful enthusiasm. The minute proceeds—

Even if the freights come down to normal sooner than expected, we should with a ship like this be able to advantageously compete with others until the vessel goes on our Wyndham works.

There is not the slightest doubt that the Government will, so far as they can, use the "Kangaroo" on the Wyndham works. They would be foolish not to do so. Now they have the ship, they must do the best they can with her; and I am sure the good wishes of all members of the House will go out to the Government that they may make the running a success. But we may perhaps be allowed to express our opinion that success is somewhat doubtful. The papers which support the purchase of the "Kangaroo" tell us that she is eminently adapted for carrying wheat. The policy running through these papers shows that the acting manager of the State Steamship Service is desirous of convincing the world that Western Australia can solve the problem of carrying wheat in bulk. The object may be a very estimable one, but I doubt whether this country is prepared to allow the present Government or any other Government to enter into unlimited business enterprises in this fashion. We know that the Government have embarked on a large enterprise in the way of chilling and canning meat, and also of paying compensation in the same connection, as

we know has happened. Further, as we know from these papers and from speeches delivered in the House, the Government intend to convey those products to London by their own vessels. We shall be having State vessels for the purpose of conveying the products of the Wyndham meat works to London. The last proposal is that we are to embark in the oversea wheat trade. With all desire to give credit to those who are not afraid to move, I would ask Ministers to consider whether it is for themselves, that they should enter quite wise, even for their own party and almost baldheadedly and blindly into competition with the ship-owners of the world while the finances of the State are in their present condition? Do they think that because Western Australia puts on a few ships, the whole shipping trade of the world will be revolutionised? If they do, they will find out their mistake; but they will not have to pay for that mistake. The people, who are not consulted in the matter, will have to pay, will have to nurse the baby when the trouble is over.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): The Government have revolutionised the shipping on the North-West coast.

Mr. GEORGE: If we have a general election soon, I hope the Honorary Minister will be revolutionised. Although he has many good qualities, he has so many offensive ones that he is a nuisance in this Chamber. Reverting to the steamer "Kangaroo," I understand that in December of last year there was a Diesel boat in Sydney, named the "Annam." An officer of our State service happened to be there, and he was instructed to inspect the "Annam." He did inspect her, and gave a report which was very cogent. In that report I observe he states the cost of fuel as 35s. per ton at Sydney, whereas the cost of fuel—I refer to the fuel required for Diesel ships—is 70s. per ton here, or double the first-mentioned amount. When Mr. Stevens sent forward his estimate in connection with the "Kangaroo," pointing out how many thousands of pounds of profit might be made in

the first year—I think he estimated £40,000—he did not allow, so far as I can see, what every business man allows for, namely, unexpected contingencies. And there is nothing connected with traffic in which we must make greater allowance for unforeseen contingencies than the shipping trade. I am by no means assured by this file that we are buying a new ship, because I find that the company from which the steamer was bought has various boats—the "Annam," built by Burneister & Wain of Copenhagen; the "Selandria," built by the same firm; the "Siam" also built by that firm; the "Falstria" and the "Lalandria," now the "Kangaroo," built by Harland & Wolff. All these names are on the file, and the list was made up in December of last year.

The Minister for Mines: As a matter of fact, the ship we have bought is not yet completed, and will not be completed for another month.

The Minister for Works: She has never been in the water.

Mr. GEORGE: I should be glad to be assured of that. If I am correctly informed, she has been in the water before and has been put back for structural alterations.

The Minister for Mines: You are wrong.

Mr. GEORGE: It means only the cost of a cablegram to allay the Minister's anxiety and mine on that point. I am not too anxious to believe that the Government have been sold a pup in this case, as they were in the case of the "Western Australia;" but I am afraid it may prove so on this occasion as well. In conclusion, I wish to say that after going through the main items of the Estimates, leaving the small items aside for the time being, I can see nothing to give one a feeling of content. To my mind these Estimates have not been gone through as carefully as they should have been by the Ministers in charge of the various departments. I know they have not been gone through carefully as regards one department, on which I do not care to speak just now. I can see evidence of that very clearly. The Estimates are not such as would

inspire confidence in any financial house or in any set of business men who had to deal with them. The very fact that our deficit, of which the Premier speaks so lightly, is continuing to grow arouses disquiet. Apparently the growth of the deficit does not trouble the Premier very much, but it is of great moment to the people of the State. Mention was made of the action of another Chamber in not passing an Income Tax Bill last year. That is assigned as one cause of the deficit. Do Ministers wish us to believe, and do they wish the people to believe, that the non-passing of that Income Tax Bill is responsible for the deficit of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  millions? What would that income tax, if carried, have brought in? Could it by the wildest stretch of imagination have been expected to bring in more than £50,000 or £60,000? I believe that if the matter were properly reckoned out, and if the returns from the present income tax were deducted, it would be found that the income tax which failed to pass could not have yielded more than £40,000. For hon. gentlemen to make out that the deficit of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  millions is the result, principally, of the refusal of another Chamber to pass a certain Bill is, to my mind, bringing down politics lower than even a certain hon. friend of mine opposite would care to stoop. We are in trouble enough with our finances, both personally and as a community: and if the Government are not prepared to handle the finances from a solid common sense point of view, then I see nothing but darkness and ruin for this fair State.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [10-14]: It was not my intention to say anything at this juncture on the Estimates generally, but as all hands now seem to have had something to say I may as well contribute a few words. I shall not detain the Committee very long. We have had a considerable amount of speechifying on economy. Nearly every member who has spoken has talked of the necessity for economising. I was very pleased to listen to the remarks of the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green). I thought that we were in a very much worse state

than we actually are in, according to the hon. member's remarks on the State enterprises, of which we have heard so much, and which have been ridiculed as non-paying concerns—concerns that are ruining the country. According to the member for Kalgoorlie, they are all paying concerns. We are also told that they are saving the people a considerable amount of expense and that they are cheapening all the supplies of material and foodstuffs. If that be the case I do not think there is such great need for economy as has been preached by hon. members. According to the member for Kalgoorlie we are getting on pretty well. I know it is not a very good time to ask for grants for various works, but if all those concerns are paying so well, as we have been told, we might ask for a reduction in the freights on manure. It has been stated that production is the keynote of the prosperity of this State, and I think the increase of the freights on manures runs into something like £20,000. If that sum were put into production it would create a considerable amount of work for the State.

The Minister for Works: It would not make much difference to the deficit.

Mr. HICKMOTT: No, but it would increase production and that would provide additional work. One hon. member told us that there were many who were almost starving in the City, but I do not think that is the case, judging from what I have seen about Perth. As the member for Geraldton remarked last night, hon. members have not a good knowledge of the conditions of the working people in the back blocks, as to how they are fed and clothed. The Minister for Lands and those members who had the privilege of attending the picnic at Emu Hill a week ago had the opportunity of seeing how the farmers are housed and fed, and also the difficulties they have to contend with, and while there is so much talk of the manner in which the workers in the metropolitan area and various other places in the State are treated, I think if we look at the position of the people in the country and realise the hardships they have to put

up with, we must conclude that they want some help. I am pleased with the help that has been given to them already by the Government. We have heard a great deal about what the goldfields have done for the State. Being an Australian born and having lived in Australia all my life, I am familiar with what the goldfields have done for the country. They have materially assisted in opening up and developing the States, but we also know that goldfields gradually decline and another industry has to take the place of the mining industry. The agricultural industry has invariably followed mining, and it is our duty to make that industry attractive. We want to induce people of the right class to come to this State. Some years ago it was said by those who were then in power that a man could take up land here without capital. That has been proved a fallacy, because many of the farmers in the State are entirely dependent upon the Government. We want to attract people with capital and people who understand the work of agriculture. As I stated when I spoke on the Address-in-reply, I think this State is only in its infancy so far as agriculture is concerned. Within the course of another decade we shall probably double or treble the output of wheat and our other products. When I first came to this State I did not think a great deal of the class of country that I saw, but it has been proved to the satisfaction of everybody that Western Australia will be a great wheat and stock producing country in the near future. It is to that that we have to look.

The Minister for Lands: The expenditure on the industry is largely responsible for the present financial condition of the State.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I recognise that a large amount of money has been advanced to the farmers to help them through their difficulties. I have already congratulated the Ministry on the good work they have done in that respect, but I think the present Minister for Lands is a little hard on some of the struggling *bona fide* settlers. I do not think that a farmer should have his land forfeited for the non-payment of

rent. We know that it is easier to pay one year's rent than two or three.

The Minister for Lands: We cannot let one off and make another pay.

Mr. HICKMOTT: A *bona fide* farmer, who has been on the land for years, and who is situated 20 and 30, and in some cases 50 miles from a railway, should receive special consideration. Those people were promised railway facilities when they took up their selections, and they have no chance whatever of making a living out of their holdings. Many of them took up their land with very little capital and they have been working on the Agricultural Bank, and when that fails they will be down and out, as the saying is. The Minister should give these people a chance. I know there are many who will not pay their rent, but I do not speak for those people. Anyone who is in the position to pay his rent should be forced to do so under a penalty of forfeiture. But the struggling man who is so far away from a railway should receive every consideration. The work that he does on the land is good security for the Government in case he should drop out. Many things have been said during this discussion with which I agree, notably in regard to secret contracts. It appears to me that many of these things have been done without any reference whatever to the House. I cannot possibly support that kind of thing. I recognise that Ministers may see an opportunity of making a good deal, and when that comes about a Minister should undoubtedly take advantage of it, but he should not miss the first opportunity of placing the matter before the House. I cannot give my support to big contracts, such as have been undertaken, without tenders being called. The House should be taken into the confidence of the Government and everything should be fully explained. With reference to the purchase of the new steamer, I was much surprised at the answer which was given to the question asked by the leader of the Opposition. The Premier said there were no negotiations going on, and yet we

found out soon afterwards that the steamer had been purchased.

The Minister for Works: That is incorrect.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It does not matter what you say. It was a disgraceful thing altogether.

Mr. HICKMOTT: This sort of thing brings only ridicule on Ministers.

The Minister for Works: It was not done.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I am glad to hear the Minister say that, and I hope there is some truth in it.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They were hoodwinking themselves.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Very few practical suggestions for economising have been brought forward. Members should endeavour in every way possible to assist the Government to economise as much as they can at a time like the present.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Should not Ministers start by reducing their own salaries in accordance with their promise of four years ago?

Mr. HICKMOTT: Yes, I think they should. I myself am agreeable to make some little sacrifice in that direction. In this respect country members are in a different position from those who have their businesses in town. We have to employ somebody on the farm while we are away, and in addition we have our expenses to pay in the City, with the result that what is left of our Parliamentary allowance does not afford much margin for sacrifice. However, I am agreeable to fall in with anything hon. members may attempt in this respect. I have been pleased at the moderate tone that has marked the various debates this session. Certainly the speeches have become a little warmer during the last night or two, and some of the old fiery criticism has returned, but on the whole the debates have been marked by a spirit of conciliation. It is cheering to note that the harvest prospects all over the Commonwealth are so bright. I believe that things will be better than we anticipate. The one fly in the ointment is the probability

of prices being much below what was generally expected a few months ago. A reasonable price for the result of the harvest would be of great assistance to the State in its present emergency. However, I hope there is a silver lining to the cloud, and that things will turn out better than appears likely. We can only do the best we can. There are many ways in which expenditure can be curtailed, and I make no doubt those openings will be seized upon by Ministers. As some hon. member has said, after all, the existence of our deficit is scarcely to be wondered at. At the present time every State in the Commonwealth is building up a deficit, and in that respect we are no worse off than the others. I hope the harvest will be as bountiful as we all expect, and that the prospects of good prices will brighten.

[Mr. Holman resumed the Chair.]

Mr. CUNNINGHAM (Greenough)  
[10.36]: I move—

*That progress be reported and leave asked to sit again.*

Motion put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes	..	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	..	17
				—
Majority against	..	..	..	5

AYES.	
Mr. Allen	Mr. Smith
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Thomson
Mr. George	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Gilchrist	Mr. F. Wilson.
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Male
Mr. Hickmott	(Teller).
Mr. Robinson	

NOES.	
Mr. Angwin	Mr. McDowall
Mr. Carpenter	Mr. Mullany
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Collier	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Green	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Hettmann	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Johnson	Mr. O'Loghlin
Mr. Johnston	(Teller).

Motion thus negatived.



Mr. CUNNINGHAM (Greenough) [10.43]: I have listened very attentively to the speeches on the Estimates and I have been struck by their moderate tone generally. This is only natural in view of the trying times through which we are passing. This is a period when we should, to a large extent, forsake our political differences, leave all party strife in the background and exert our best efforts for the good of the State. From the tone of the debate, most members have shown an ardent desire to do this. We find that the financial position is not all that could be desired and it is to be hoped the efforts of the Premier—though accounts so far have not been too favourable—will after a little time result in successful arrangements being made whereby the State will be able to obtain additional funds to carry on its works and business generally. We have a big mileage of railways and a number of State activities, and if we have to stop the expenditure of loan funds all of a sudden during these troublous times, the position will be felt very keenly. I hope things will so turn out that we shall not have to cease these activities, but that we shall be able to obtain sufficient funds to keep them in operation for the benefit of our people and the advancement of the State. A good deal of the prosperity of the State depends on a bountiful harvest being realised this season, and the outlook at the moment is very good indeed, but, as a previous speaker remarked, there is one fly in the ointment. I heard a report only a few days ago that the freight for conveying wheat to the European market is likely to be fixed at something like 95s. per ton.

The Minister for Works: It is a pity we have not one or two more steamers and we could do it cheaper.

Mr. CUNNINGHAM: That will run into about 2s. 7d. per bushel, and with other charges the cost will total about 3s. a bushel. If these figures are correct it is improbable that the farmers will realise more than about 3s. 6d. per bushel for their wheat. When we consider the very high cost of living, to-

gether with the high cost of jute goods and the extra expense of carrying on during abnormal times, it will be realised that the farmer is not likely to make very much profit out of his operations during this season. This is to be regretted. The farmers have experienced a bad time during the past few years and a bad time for the farmers means a bad time for the State as a whole, because the welfare of the State is bound up with the welfare of the farmers. Therefore, it is to be hoped that the farmers will be able to obtain a better return for their produce than seems probable at present. I regret that the timber industry has become paralysed on account of the abnormal conditions now prevailing. The high freights on timber render its exportation almost an impossibility at the present time. We cannot operate on that timber industry unless we get some return from it; we cannot operate everything at a loss. I do hope, therefore, that the day will come when we shall enjoy better times, when the timber industry, as well as other industries in the State, can be carried on at a profit, and that there will be prosperity generally throughout the State. We owe a great deal to the mining industry during the present time, because of all the industries in this State the gold-mining industry is the one which is least affected by the prevailing abnormal conditions. I say, therefore, that the country is indebted to the gold-mining industry for having been able to pull through as well as it is pulling through at this juncture. Whilst I am a representative of an agricultural district, I am willing at all times to give a fair deal, as far as I am able, to the gold-mining industry and any other industry in Western Australia. I feel sure that the interests of one section of the community are bound up with those of any other, that the interests of all industries are interwoven, and that we as individuals, no matter what our trade or calling may be, should take a broad and generous view for the general good of the whole community and for the advancement of this State.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

## BILL—WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

Returned from the Legislative Council, with amendments.

House adjourned at 10.55 p.m.

## Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 5th October, 1915.

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

## PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Audit of the accounts of the North Fremantle sale yards. 2, Department of Land Titles, annual report.

## PETITION—SALE OF LIQUOR REGULATION BILL.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER presented a petition from the Metropolitan District Christian Endeavour Union asking that the Sale of Liquor Regulation Bill be passed without serious amendment.

Petition received and read.

## ASSENT TO SUPPLY BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read assenting to the Supply Bill No. 2 (£650,000).

## JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, HORSE-RACING CONTROL.

Extension of Time.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East): I move—

*That the time for bringing up the report of this select committee be extended to Thursday, 14th October.*

The committee have completed the taking of evidence and the draft report is now under consideration. I have every reason to say that the report will be presented on the 14th October.

Question passed.

## JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

Extension of time.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) the time for bringing up the report was extended for 14 days.

## QUESTION—UNIONISTS AND ARREARS OF FEES.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS asked the Colonial Secretary: Referring to the question asked on the 22nd of September as follows:—"1, Have any instructions been issued or has any minute been forwarded by the Minister controlling the Water Supply and Sewerage Department to any workmen working under the department containing instructions that if unionists, who owed arrears of fees to their unions, did not make arrangements to pay up these arrears of fees, they would be treated as non-unionists, and be dismissed from their employment? 2, If so, the date of the instructions or minute, and the full terms of same?" Will the Colonial Secretary reply to the following: 1, Were any instructions issued or any minute forwarded by any