

being carried out in their entirety, but which should be enforced quite as much to-day as when they were passed.

The Colonial Secretary: That is due to municipalities.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Then let the attention of the municipalities be directed to the fact. If it so happens that members succeed in doing that, we shall have accomplished something.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

#### **BILL — GOVERNMENT ELECTRIC WORKS ACT AMENDMENT.**

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

#### **BILL—ADOPTION OF CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT.**

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

#### **ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.**

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.29]: I move—

*That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 7th September.*

Question passed.

*House adjourned at 5.30 p.m.*

## **Legislative Assembly,**

*Wednesday, 25th August, 1915.*

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

#### **QUESTION—RED CROSS FUNDS AND UNEMPLOYMENT.**

Mr. B. J. STUBBS asked the Premier: 1, Have the Government considered the advisability of exercising some control over the expenditure of the money collected in this State for the Red Cross Fund? 2, As it is reported that considerable unemployment exists among women, will the Government use their influence with the committee controlling that fund in the direction of inducing them to employ these women making clothing for wounded soldiers?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Funds raised by the Red Cross Society are subscribed voluntarily. The Government, therefore, can exercise no control over the expenditure of these. 2, The local Secretary of the Red Cross Fund is Mr. A. D. Rankin, and doubtless representations made to him in this regard would receive the consideration of those responsible for the expenditure of the money collected.

#### **BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.**

1, Newcastle-Bolgart Railway Further Extension.

2, Roads Act Continuance.

Introduced by the Minister for Works.

3, Licensing Act Continuance.

Introduced by the Attorney General.

## PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Lands: Government Refrigerating Works, Audit of Accounts.

# MINISTERIAL STATEMENT— HANDLING THE HARVEST.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [4.37]: With the indulgence of the House, I would like to make a statement in regard to the conference held in Melbourne, which I attended, to deal with the question of the shipping of the forthcoming harvest.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of hon. members that the Minister be heard?

Members: Aye.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister may proceed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Hon. members will recollect that some little time back a suggestion was received from the Commonwealth Government through the Federal Attorney General (Mr. Hughes) that representatives of the various States should go to Melbourne to confer with him in regard to the securing of freight for the Australian harvest. I was sent across by the Government to represent Western Australia, and Mr. Hughes pointed out at that time that he did not think it advisable to have a conference of all the States, but that he desired to get the individual view of the various States and to obtain as much detail as possible so that he might understand the question and see whether it was generally considered by the States, as a whole, that the Commonwealth should co-operate with the States with a view to engaging sufficient freight. On behalf of Western Australia I concurred in that proposal, because the views of the farmers generally expressed in this State were that we should try to eliminate competition, so far as the securing of freight was concerned. After returning to the State—I had been back only a few days

—another urgent request was received, first from the Victorian Government, that Western Australia should be represented at a conference, this time of the whole of the States, to further consider the question. At the suggestion of the Government, I communicated with Mr. Hughes, asking him whether he thought it desirable or necessary that another conference should be held. He replied that he thought it of the utmost importance. Consequently, I attended the second conference which was held immediately on my arrival in Melbourne. There were present the Attorney General, representing the Commonwealth, and the Ministers for Agriculture from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia. On assembling, Mr. Hughes said that, as a result of the meeting he had had with the representatives of the various States some time previously, that is the meeting to which I have referred, he had got into communication with shipping people, and had come to an arrangement with two firms to do the whole of the chartering necessary for the Australian harvest. An agreement had been arrived at and the terms of the agreement were submitted to the conference, but after getting some information with regard to the details from Mr. Hughes, the conference agreed that they would meet representatives of the shipping firms of Australia, representatives of the wheat buyers of Australia and also representatives of the Chambers of Commerce in the various States. We discussed with these gentlemen the proposal as it was understood by them and as it was understood by the people of the various States. These representatives all took the attitude of what they called the broad principle—I did not concur of course—that they believed in non-interference with private enterprise. They were of opinion that the shipping people should look after the shipping, that the buyers should look after the buying, and generally speaking they thought these people were well able to cope with the business without the interference of either the Commonwealth or any of the States. After hearing these

views, the conference considered the matter and it was decided with some slight alterations, very slight indeed, to adopt the arrangement arrived at by Mr. Hughes with the two firms, namely, Elder Smith and Co. and Gibbs, Bright and Co. These two firms had been approached by Mr. Hughes and an agreement had been arrived at, and with some slight alterations made after hearing the views of the various representatives mentioned, the agreement was adopted. The adoption of the agreement unanimously by the conference means that the chartering of the whole of the freightage for the whole of the crop of those four exporting States will be in the hands of two firms. I do not want to go into detail with regard to the agreement. This is a matter, of course, which is left in the hands of the Federal Attorney General, but hon. members will feel easy in their minds in regard to the payments to be made to these two firms when I tell them that, while the agreement specifies for the payment of the usual commission in regard to chartering, there is an arrangement stating that after 500,000 tons has been chartered, the remuneration or commission is then to be reviewed. The object of the clause is this: it is very difficult at the present stage to estimate exactly what will be paid to these firms, and it was generally agreed that after chartering 500,000 tons we would be in a position to judge whether their remuneration under the agreement was small or large, and whether it should be amended accordingly. That was agreed to and is part and parcel of the agreement. Thus a general understanding has been arrived at in regard to the commission which is to be reviewed after 500,000 tons has been secured. I may say it is generally calculated, though it is pretty hard at this stage to definitely state the tonnage figures, that about two million tons will be required.

Mr. S. Stubbs: Can the Minister give the House any idea what the freight is likely to be.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will come to that in a minute. If hon. hon. members will allow me, I will ex-

plain the position, and afterwards, with the permission of the Speaker, I will answer any questions that may be put. I mentioned that the arranging of the chartering would be effected by these two firms. This would include the arranging for parcels that are carried on the ordinary traders. As we all know, there are certain vessels usually trading with Australia, which carry back parcels such as a percentage of wool, a percentage of wheat, and a percentage of something else. It has been arranged that the loading of any parcels on these usual traders will be attended to by those firms. Any Commonwealth transports, or other vessels which the Federal Government may have under their command, will also be placed at the disposal of these two firms, so that they may arrange for the utilisation of that space. The rate of freight for the Commonwealth vessels, both transports and others, has been fixed at a low rate. I do not propose to give that rate, because to do so might mislead; but it has been fixed at a low amount, and will be taken in the general average when the flat rate is struck. That is a matter which I will deal with more fully very shortly. Then, of course, the two firms will attend to the chartering of all full cargoes. That work, as we know, is usually done by these firms and by the wheat-buying firms. This season, however, it will be done by the two firms I have named, and they will attend to the chartering of vessels carrying full cargoes. After we had adopted the agreement, we again met the representatives of these firms and of the various interests to which I have already referred, and informed them of the decision of conference. I am very pleased to be able to state that they said, "Well, you have given us your decision, and you are going to get our hearty co-operation." They evidenced a very good spirit indeed, and, while from all quarters they had counselled us that it was unwise to interfere with the ordinary channels of private enterprise, yet, after conference had decided, they said that the scheme would have their hearty co-operation and that they would assist in every possible way.

Member: Who said that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The shippers, the wheat buyers, the Chambers of Commerce, and all those dealing with the business. Then we also urged upon these firms the importance of attending particularly to the export of flour. We pointed out—and they realised at once—that flour export from Australia is of the utmost importance. It was pointed out by the delegates that we wanted to export flour in preference to wheat. In the former case we have the advantage of the offal being available for the requirements of the various States. This phase of the question was fully realised by the charterers, and they said it would receive their special consideration. We discussed certain minor details in regard to the matter, and I propose at an early date to have a conference with the Flour Millers' Association, so as to lay before them those details, because, after all, the arrangement affects them directly and it is necessary that they should understand exactly how matters will operate during this season. The charterers will be limited, therefore, to attending to wheat freights and flour freights. After leaving that conference I went into the question of fruit freight, which of course necessitates refrigerated space; and I found that the Commonwealth Government had control of practically the whole of the refrigerated space in the various boats trading from Australia. I went into that question with Mr. Hughes again. On my previous visit to Melbourne I had brought under his notice the importance of this matter from a Western Australian point of view, and as the result of a discussion with Mr. Hughes I went to Captain Clarkson, who controls this portion of Commonwealth Government's responsibilities. Captain Clarkson went into the matter with me in detail, and submitted to me what I consider a very definite and practical proposition, and one which will prove highly satisfactory to the fruit-growers of Western Australia. Here again, I propose to have a conference with the fruitgrowers, so that they will understand exactly what is proposed. !

may say also that I am indeed pleased with the manner in which the Commonwealth Government have proposed to meet Western Australia, as well as the other parts of Australia, in regard to refrigerated space. Wheat and flour freights will be controlled by the two firms, who, in turn, will be under the direction of the Federal Attorney General, representing the Commonwealth, and of the Ministers for Agriculture, representing the various States. There was a proposal that we should have outside interests represented on some board which might go into details regarding the distribution of freights and so on, but we saw grave danger in that regard, and it was unanimously decided that the control should be left to the Commonwealth representative and the States' representatives. The two firms will start chartering immediately; indeed, I suppose some work in that connection has already been done. However, an effort is to be made to get as much freight secured as possible by October—the middle of October for preference. Then it is proposed to declare about the middle of October a flat rate. That is to say, as many transports and other vessels as may be available will be secured to lift Australian wheat during December and January. It is anticipated that we shall have a fair quantity of wheat available for lifting towards the end of December and early in January. I sincerely trust that our Western Australian farmers will make an effort to get their wheat in as early as possible, so that this State may have the advantage of its early harvest, and thereby secure a fair proportion of the early freights. In order that freights may be available for December and January, it is proposed to declare, by the middle of October if possible, the flat rate for the charters then secured. By that time wheat buyers will know what to expect and what their freights will be, and they can then start operations. That will practically mean that the wheat-buying season will open towards the middle of October, or as soon as they possibly can arrange in October. Then it is proposed to convene towards November a meeting for the purpose of distributing

the freights. I quite realise the importance of this, and so did the conference realise the difficulty and the importance of the distribution of the freight which may be secured. The matter is one, of course, that the various States will have to take into very careful consideration. By that time they will realise what their harvests will be and also will know what their railway facilities will be for getting wheat to the ports, so that we shall be able to state that by a given date a given quantity of wheat will be available at the various ports. The charters will be distributed in accordance with the exportable quantities available at the various ports at the times when the steamers are available. I also had the pleasure of going into detail with the charterers regarding some of the difficulties we shall have in Western Australia. I pointed out that I did not anticipate any difficulty in the shipment of wheat at either Fremantle, Bunbury, or Albany, but that I did anticipate some difficulty at Geraldton. I said that it was anticipated we would have a large proportion of wheat to export from Geraldton; that from what I could gather from the departmental officers and others the crops in that portion of the State, which would go to Geraldton as their natural port, are doing remarkably well, and that we should be justified in anticipating a very big harvest indeed in that portion of the State. I emphasised the need for overcoming the difficulties at Geraldton. I also pointed out that more than likely we would have an early harvest in that portion, and the charterers assured me that they would give particular attention to that aspect of the matter. I consider we are fortunate in having the firm of Elder, Shenton & Co., who, of course, are really a branch of Elder, Smith & Co., of Adelaide, in our State to look after this business. Elder, Shenton & Co. will act with Elder, Smith & Co. in arranging tonnage for Western Australian requirements. I may also point out that the importance and the advantage of the Imperial Government acquiring the export surplus of Australian harvests were fully appreciated by conference. However, I

do not desire to say more than that that subject received special consideration. There was another matter which I had the pleasure of discussing very briefly, because, after all, it is a matter which the Colonial Treasurer will have to go into. That is the question of making advances to the farmers against wheat stacked at the various sidings on the production of certificates from the Commissioner of Railways. I quite anticipate that this year—and I think all farmers realise it—we are going to have some difficulty in getting our wheat away; that we are not going to get it away in the time we did in previous years. It is going to take longer, and consequently our wheat will have to be stacked at the sidings or elsewhere for some time awaiting shipment, until the boats are available. It may be necessary for the farmers to get advances on their wheat, and I want to prevent their being forced into a position of having to sell their wheat because they are in need of financial assistance. Consequently, the matter was discussed with the financial institutions; and I believe the Colonial Treasurer will follow the matter up with a view of arriving at some definite understanding, so that if the wheat buyers find they cannot advance upon reasonable rates, owing to the difficulty or delay of shipment this year, the Government will be able to make arrangements by which the farmers will be protected, and will be able to get advances on wheat stacked at the sidings. The advance will, of course, be recouped, should the farmer elect to ship his wheat or ultimately to sell it to the wheat buyers. Another matter which has received attention, and which was briefly discussed at a Cabinet meeting to-day, was the question of making special arrangements for the purpose of covering wheat: because, if we have to stack it at the sidings, we have to remember that corrugated iron in particular is expensive and difficult to get this year. During the discussion to-day in Cabinet it was suggested that this matter should be given special attention, with a view to having special arrangements made by the Railway Department to see that the

stacks at the various sidings are adequately covered. If possible, we wish to be able to guarantee that the wheat stacked is covered in such a way that the financial institutions will be justified in advancing against it. The question of bags was also discussed, but it was found that all the other States were in exactly the same position as Western Australia. Early in the year I had a conference with the jute merchants, and they informed me that they had a fairly large carry-over from last year and that they had made satisfactory arrangements to get a sufficient supply for Western Australia. They gave me a definite assurance that they were able to cope with all our requirements, and I found that the other States were in practically the same position. It is true that some Governments have made an effort—at least, I understand that is so—to secure bags themselves; but they found, as the Government here have found on various occasions, that no Government can buy any cheaper than a merchant can. The rate is struck, and there is no advantage to be gained by buying in large quantities. Consequently, conference carried a unanimous resolution that, as far as the bag supply was concerned, it should be left to the merchants, who would see that an adequate supply was available for all requirements. Before closing I would like to state also that, while in Melbourne, I discussed with the Victorian Government the removal of the embargo which has been placed on the import of Western Australian cattle into Victoria; but, unfortunately, I could make no progress as to that. The Victorian Government do not seem to realise the extent of Western Australia. They have an idea that because we have tick in East Kimberley we must have it in Perth also. One can talk as much as one likes, but that is how the matter stands. I explained that Riverina cattle might as well be prevented from coming into Victoria because there was tick in Queensland. However, I could make no progress, and, so far as I could gather when I left, there was not much chance of our getting the embargo on the

shipment of Western Australian cattle to Victoria removed. However, I had a discussion with the Federal Minister for Customs, who has been taking an active part in the importation of meat from Queensland into Victoria and South Australia. I pointed out to him the necessity for realising that we had a certain quantity of surplus stock in Western Australia, and I asked him to take that into consideration when he was dealing with the requirements of Victoria and South Australia, and these arrangements with the South Australian authorities. There there is no embargo and we can make satisfactory arrangements with South Australia and these arrangements I propose to discuss with the export officers of the department and the export shippers so that we may come to an understanding on that point. I may point out that some time ago I instructed Mr. Lee Steere, who is well up in stock matters and a reliable officer of the Stock Department, to go into the matter and see what stock supplies there were and I was assured by that officer that we would have a surplus and that he would endeavour to market that surplus in the best markets in order to assist our producers. Our difficulty in Western Australia is, that we cannot freeze or chill satisfactorily, our plant here being limited. In order to get rid of our surplus when available I am inclined to think that we shall have to send more away on the hoof than we do at present. I had the pleasure with a representative of Elder, Smith & Co., of seeing 80 or 90 cattle in a paddock and I may say they were a fair average sample of what this State can produce at the present time. I think those were all the matters discussed at the conference and all the matters which I think I need place before the Chamber and the country so that all may understand the position of affairs.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore) [5.2] : The statement by the Minister is very interesting not only to the wheat growers but to the House and we are much obliged to the Minister for his remarks. The Minister informed us that arrange-

ments had been made with two firms for the chartering of vessels to convey our wheat from Western Australia. What I would like to know, and no doubt what the farmers would like to know, is how that freight is to be arranged. The important matter to the farmers is what they will have to pay and on what basis payment will be made. The Minister is of opinion that the lowest possible freight will be obtained if the matter is allowed to be arranged by the two firms. Perhaps the Minister will give the House some information on that point? It must have been discussed at the conference.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford [5.3]: That is one of the matters that was discussed by the representatives which I met and also at the conference. I think it will appeal to members by just stating in a broad way that there is a certain amount of freight offering in the world's markets and if each State is competing for that freight more will have to be paid for it than if one firm is competing for it all. I am confident, and the conference was unanimous on that point, that it is desirable that we should limit the competition to the utmost, and we limited it by placing it in the hands of one firm. A flat rate will be declared to start in October. In November and December another rate will be struck and so on, declaring a flat rate for the whole of Australia. Then the space will be distributed to the States in proportion to their exportable service.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [5.4]: Has a limit been placed on the amount to be offered for freight, or has a free hand been given?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [5.5]: No, a free hand has not been given. It is generally recognised that a certain rate should be secured and if it is found that rate cannot be secured, that it is excessive, then the matter will have to be sent to the Attorney General, that is if it is above what is considered a fair rate.

Hon. H. B. LEFROY (Moore) [5.6]: I would like to ask the Minister if a freight has definitely been arranged for the shipping by transports? I do not ask

the Minister what arrangement has been made, but has it been definitely arranged what freight is to be paid by transports and is that freight to be pooled?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [5.7]: I do not propose to give figures but it is a low freight. That freight will be pooled and will bring down the average of the other freight which will be much higher.

Mr. WANSBROUGH (Beverley) [5.8]: Was any effort made by the conference to induce the Commonwealth authorities to remove the imposition of the ten per cent. imposed last year?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [5.9]: That was done. A resolution was carried to be submitted to the Commonwealth Government and was conveyed to the Attorney General, who promised that he would consult Cabinet in regard to the matter.

#### BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Government Electric Works Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

2. Adoption of Children Act Amendment.

Passed.

#### MOTION—IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT, TO CONTINUE.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Perth) [5.10]: I move—

*That, in the opinion of this House, is essential in the best interests of the State that the Government should continue the Immigration Department and all agencies and arrangements made in the past, which were found essential for a vigorous immigration policy.*

I suppose without exception every member of the House is pledged to a vigorous policy of immigration. The members of the Government have declared in favour of such a policy as well as private members of the House, and I do not dispute for a moment that there is a member in the House who will gainsay the advisa-

bility of adhering to a policy of immigration. But, unfortunately, I find from experience, the Government, and perhaps members also, when it comes to the actual time for putting the policy into practice are not so enthusiastic as they were when they stood for election or when they declared that it was part of the policy of the Government.

The Minister for Works: They are more enthusiastic than you were.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Personally I am inclined to exempt from my remarks the Minister for Works. He administered this department for some years and I say in all sincerity I think he administered that department with a good heart and was sincere in carrying on a vigorous immigration policy. While saying that in regard to the Minister for Works I do not hold that opinion in regard to the Government generally. The Government have not shown that by their actions and that is the reason for bringing forward the motion this afternoon, so that the House may have an opportunity of again expressing the opinion that it is desirable and essential that a vigorous immigration policy should be adhered to.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): At the present time.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not want members to misunderstand me. No sane man for a moment would think that it is advisable at the present time to continue immigration, for able-bodied men, such as we require as immigrants, are wanted for another purpose. But, primarily, the reason I move the motion is on account of the action of the Honorary Minister (Mr. Underwood) and the endorsement that action has received from Cabinet. I find in the minute in regard to the retirement of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Mr. Gale, Mr. Underwood wrote to Cabinet stating—

I have conferred with Mr. Jull on this matter and it was agreed that the immigration department be disbanded with the exception of Mr. Neville, who will retain his present position of secretary and also take over the position

of either Chief Protector of Aborigines or secretary to that department.

Unfortunately Cabinet approved of that minute and in approving of the retirement of the Chief Protector of Aborigines Cabinet approved of the abolition of the immigration department. It took a great many years to establish, not merely the department, but all arrangements incidental to the department. I need scarcely remind hon. members that a good flow of emigrants cannot be established in a week, a month, or a year. In the early part of 1906 the Moore Government, like former governments, declared that they were in favour of an immigration policy; but unlike former governments they acted on that declaration and established the policy on a firm basis. Prior to that time we had very few immigrants.

The Minister for Works: All the initial work was done by the Daglish Government.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: If that is all the Minister can claim I am sorry for the Daglish Government's immigration policy, because I am speaking of a period twelve months or more after the Daglish Government. There were only about 200 or 300 immigrants per annum coming to this State at that time and they consisted largely of persons of the Eastern States who had their relatives here and who were offered special inducements to come here. A good policy it was, too. But in regard to receiving immigrants from England or Europe there were practically none arriving. This immigration policy which we have since enjoyed was started in the early part of 1906. Full arrangements were made and instructions were sent to the then Agent General, Sir Walter James, who vigorously took up the question.

The Minister for Works: On behalf of the Labour Government.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: No, I am speaking of the time when the Moore Government were in office, when this immigration policy was started.

The Premier: Sir Walter James was not Agent General when the Moore Government were in power.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: He was.

The Premier: He was not.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I know he was. I was the Minister controlling the department, and I remember the correspondence I had with him.

The Premier: How did Sir Newton Moore become Premier?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: By the resignation of Sir Cornthwaite Rason.

The Premier: Who resigned to go Home as Agent General.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Premier's memory is at fault. Sir Cornthwaite Rason did not leave here till December, 1906, and did not assume his new duties until March, 1907, while the Moore Government took office in May, 1906; so during that time, that is six or nine months, Sir Walter James was still Agent General. He took up the immigration policy with vigour. I do not think he has ever received the credit due to him in this regard. It was indeed a pleasure to see the manner in which he handled the policy in London, and it is due to him that our immigration policy got a good start. At that time conditions were entirely different. The capital qualifications for an immigrant was the possession of £100, with a further £25 for each child under 15 years of age. The first step we adopted was to reduce the amount from £100 to £50 in order to encourage immigrants. Again, the passage rates were very high. These we reduced by getting a better contract with the shipping companies, in addition to which we reduced the amount payable by the immigrant, so the immigrant could then obtain a passage for £6. Later on, when arrangements were working, the capital qualification was further reduced to £10 for domestic servants and £5 for farm labourers, while a passage could be obtained for an additional £5. It was still further reduced, when domestic servants were brought out for nothing and farm labourers at a nominal rate. Then we established immigration homes where immigrants could have board and residence for three days. Those homes were afterwards extended, and agencies were established throughout the country.

Special literature was prepared, as many as 30,000 copies of one pamphlet being distributed, and Mr. Ranford, who has since been retired from the public service, was sent to England as a special agent. Later on branches of the homes were established at Narrogin, Geraldton, and other places. In all 36 agencies were established throughout the State, and an officer was sent through the State to see that the immigrants found proper employment and were decently treated. Similar arrangements were made in England. Agencies were established all over England and Scotland and special contracts were made with the shipping companies. An agency was established at Fremantle and officers were sent to meet all boats. Altogether the arrangements were very complete.

The Minister for Works: They were still more complete when we closed down on them.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Nothing of the sort. At that time also there was a special department created for immigrants and tourists; that is a department which the Honorary Minister (Hon. R. H. Underwood) proposes to Cabinet should be disbanded.

The Minister for Works: Not the tourist department.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I am speaking, not so much in relation to tourists as to immigration. In 1905, while the Daglish Government were still in office, the total number of immigrants arriving was 322, and in 1906 the number was 655. That is the year in which, I claim, immigration was started. In the following year the number was just under 1,000, in 1908 it rose to 1,200, in 1909 to 1,300, in 1910 to 4,000, and in 1911 to 9,578. In October of 1911 the Wilson Government left office, and it is passing strange, if the present Government are so much in favour of immigration, that in that year immigration attained its highest point while in the next year, 1912, it fell to 6,997. In the following year the total was 7,700, while in 1914 it fell to 1,700, going back to the position in which it was five years previously. These figures show clearly that the policy which

we initiated is a sound one, because the figures kept rising until we left office and immediately the department was not sympathetically administered we find the figures falling.

The Minister for Works: What was the reason?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Because the policy was not sympathetically administered.

The Minister for Works: Is that the reason why Joe Cook sent to Germany for immigrants?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I am not concerned about Mr. Cook, but I am concerned about the manner in which the flow of immigration to Western Australia has been ruthlessly destroyed. In 1914 the figures dropped to 1,700 as against 9,500 in 1911.

The Minister for Works: Do you not know that there was an agitation in England against emigration?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: That agitation started 10 years earlier. It was no light task to initiate all this, because we were met with rebuffs wherever we went. Both in Ireland and Scotland the people were advised not to leave, and the Scottish agricultural commission which came out here openly opposed emigration to the Commonwealth. We had to fight against that and against the competition of Canada, which was receiving between two and three hundred thousand immigrants per annum; yet our figures rose in a few years to nearly 10,000. Now all that work has been thrown away.

Mr. Heitmann: But in a bad year we could not absorb the same number as we had previously done.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Of course we could.

Mr. Heitmann: Could we now, or even last year?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The present time is not normal.

Mr. Heitmann: Why do you quote it?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The war period spread over only a few months of 1914. Take the financial year 1913-14 and we find that the figures fell to about 1,700. That was months before the war broke out. I am quoting the official re-

turn, taken from the *Monthly Statistical Abstract* for July, 1915. The figures cannot be disputed. The immigrants were made up of two classes, assisted and nominated. The nominated were, of course, nominated by residents in the State. As those immigrants arrived in the State we sought, and successfully, to settle them in employment. They became a very contented people. That is clearly shown by the figures which I will now quote. In 1910-11 the number of nominated immigrants had reached 4,000, or nearly half the immigrants for that year were nominated by former immigrants. That speaks louder than any words of mine for the contentment of the immigrants. When we come to the financial year 1913-14, which the war period does not cover at all and which ended several weeks before the war broke out, we find that the nominated immigrants had fallen to 2,600. In 1910-11 the assisted immigrants numbered 4,500, and in 1913-14 they had fallen to 1,600. It shows how the Agent General was discouraged in London when he could only find 1,600 emigrants to send out to Western Australia. These immigrants who were brought out in the years which I have quoted, prior to 1912, brought with them a declared capital of £170,000. They may have had a great deal more than that, but it was only necessary for them to declare a small amount in order to obtain an immigrant's passage. In many cases they might have declared a great deal more than the stipulated amount, but altogether the amount declared was, as I have said, £170,000. I am sorry the Minister for Works is not in his place.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I am here instead.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The Honorary Minister knows nothing at all about the subject. He was not in office. It was the Minister for Works who administered the department for three years previous to the period about which I am speaking. I have pointed out that in 1912 the total number of immigrants had fallen to 6,900. Speaking from memory. I should say that there was almost

that number of nominations approved when I left office. In fact, for the 12 months after the Government took up the immigration work they simply brought out people whose nominations had been received by myself as a member of the previous Government. Full arrangements were made for a flow of immigrants to the tune of 1,500 a month and they were beginning to arrive. They were readily absorbed, and the arrangements were so good that there was no difficulty at all in utilising them.

Mr. Munsie: Sometimes to the detriment of the local people.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It was not to the detriment of the local people. At that time, in October 1911—I cannot speak officially after that—there was a dearth of labour, as can readily be seen from the returns of the Labour Bureau. That dearth was being relieved to the extent of 1,500 immigrants a month, and the country could have gone on absorbing that number if the arrangements I had made had been carried on. Another arrangement was made which, I think, it is regrettable was dropped. There was a number of soldiers in India, short service men, who had served six years. After that term they are pensioned off. These men join when they are young, from 18 years to 20, and are discharged at an average age of 24, or 25. These soldiers have some capital and are picked men, and generally have a trade and are very handy, and make ideal settlers for a country like Western Australia. After making inquiries and interviewing Lord Kitchener when he was here, we found that these men were discharged in London, and after drifting about, generally migrated to South America. It occurred to us that it would be a good idea if these men could be induced to come here and be saved to the Empire. That arrangement was almost completed. The number of these men discharged in the course of a year during the trooping season varied between 10,000 and 15,000 and arrangements were well on the way to our getting as many of these as we could accommodate discharged at Fremantle at no cost to the State. All the necessary

preliminaries were entered into with the officer who came from India, but were cancelled by the Minister for Works. An opportunity was thus lost to us of obtaining the very best immigrants that could be imagined up to the number of 10,000 a year, and they were all young and vigorous men in the prime of life. I do not intend to delay the House any further. I have given the House a few of the principal facts in connection with this matter in order to draw the attention of members to what has taken place or is likely to take place at the present time, and to the fact that the Government have declared that they intend to abolish the Immigration Department.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): The Government have done no such thing.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: We learn from the papers which have been presented that the Honorary Minister himself recognises that the Immigration Department has to be disbanded, and that Cabinet has approved of this. While there is no room for immigration at the present time, there will, however, be a great deal of room for it when this unfortunate war is at an end. Australia, and Western Australia in particular, will never be so much in need of immigrants as it will be at the period I have mentioned. At no time in the history of the Empire will a greater opportunity be offered of securing suitable immigrants than at the close of this war. We could absorb 10,000 or 15,000 a year and we were doing it, and had been doing it for months. I believe we could have gone on doing it. If we could do that in 1911, when this war is over and we come back to normal times, why can we not do it again? We will never be greater than we are to-day unless we people this vast State of ours. What better defence could we provide within our boundaries than a vigorous immigration policy? I do not advocate that immigrants should be encouraged just now, or suggest that there is room for them at the present moment, but I would point out that it has taken years and years to make these arrangements, and that we had to make

them in the face of the strong competition of Canada and the United States. It was no small matter. We could only absorb from 15,000 to 20,000 immigrants against the absorption of one of the larger countries of 200,000. Arrangements had been made throughout England and with the shipping companies and their agents, and also within the State on a commission basis. These arrangements should not be dropped. They should be kept alive so that, when the time is ripe and the war is over, we can derive full benefit from them. It will be seen from the figures which I have quoted that, although a vigorous policy was followed in 1906, it took several years before its value could be proved to any appreciable extent. If this policy is entirely dropped now, it will take many years before we can pick up this flow of immigrants, and other countries will get it to the detriment of Western Australia. I have much pleasure in moving the motion standing in my name.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam) [5.38]: I second the motion.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [5.39]: I move—

*That the debate be adjourned.*

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): No, no.

Mr. SPEAKER: It is generally the custom in such cases to allow the Minister to speak. If the hon. member, however, desires the debate to be adjourned, I must put the question.

Mr. Piesse: I am not particular.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The Minister ought to adjourn the debate.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister—Pilbara) [5.40]: There is nothing to adjourn. The motion moved by the hon. member is—

That in the opinion of this House it is essential in the best interests of the State that the Government should continue the Immigration Department and all agencies and arrangements made in the past, which were found essential for a vigorous immigration policy.

I have read this in full to emphasise the fact that the hon. member did not touch his motion. He simply put up an advertisement for himself in connection with his occupancy of the position of Colonial Secretary. It is certainly necessary for that hon. gentleman to endeavour to advertise himself, because possibly he wants people to forget the opinions which they have expressed of him and his administration.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They say some nice things about you.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): When I am here on this side.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You ought not to be there.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): It would be absurd to attempt to follow the advertising serceed of the hon. member who has moved this motion. I will deal, however, with a few facts relating to immigration. He asserts, and continues to assert, that we have abolished the Immigration Department.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: I am only taking your own word.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): In that the hon. member is absolutely wrong. Mr. Neville is at the present time holding the position of secretary of the Immigration Department. He is doing all the immigration work that is necessary. He is also doing the work of Protector of Aborigines in his spare time. The position of Protector of Aborigines is a spare-time job.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Is it?

Hon. J. D. Connolly: That is your opinion.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): I know more about the question than the hon. member. The position is that, when war was declared, the Government decided that it was not advisable to continue an immigration policy. There are reasons for this. One reason is that we were not in a position to place immigrants in work even if we could get them.

Mr. Allen: You decided on that before the war.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The second reason is that we could not get them. These are two propositions that would stop anybody who had any sense from pursuing an immigration policy. I admit, however, it would not stop the hon. member for Perth (Hon. J. D. Connolly). If we want immigrants we should, I think, have British immigrants, and we have to go to England for them. The man who would come from England to Australia at the present time, instead of going across to Flanders, would not be a desirable immigrant for Australia.

Mr. Green: Hear, hear.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): Where else, therefore, could we go?

Mr. George: You have to take them at a suitable age.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The men who are over the age at which they can go to war would not make suitable immigrants for us.

Mr. Green: Not to start in a new country.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The man who is above the age at which he can join the Army is not suitable as an immigrant for this country.

Mr. Allen: Were you not opposed to immigration before the war broke out?

Hon. J. D. Connolly: You could not help it. You were committed to it.

The Minister for Works: We spent more money on it than was ever spent previously.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): We were in the position that we did not want to bring immigrants into this country. If we wanted to we could not do it. The hon. member says that we should have kept all our agencies intact and have gone on with all our expenditure.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: I did not say anything of the kind.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): Then the hon. member is going to keep these things in operation without expenditure. We de-

cided that it was useless to try and get immigrants even if we could place them. We decided that we would keep all the records of the Immigration Department; that we would keep the secretary and accept nominations for the wives or families of those persons who had been immigrants themselves (and we are still doing this); that we would accept nominations for their fiancées, and that in special circumstances we would accept nominations for relations. That is what we decided to do, and that is what we are doing to-day. If the hon. member can suggest anything more that we could do to-day, then I am prepared to listen to his suggestion. He certainly made no suggestion whatever. In fact, he took up all his time with telling us what he had done. So much for the question of what we have done. We have taken care that, when the time arrives again for immigration, the Immigration Office will be in a position to resume its work without any necessity for initial organisation. The whole of the work is kept in hand, and can be restarted at any time when we think we can get immigrants and want them.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: If you decided to pursue that policy—

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The hon. member makes a motion about what we are to do in the future, and then he talks about what he did in the past. Why was the hon. member not here four years ago? The hon. member says that the Moore Government carried out a vigorous policy of immigration. He gave us some figures, but I may state that he cooked them a little bit. He shifted the figures into a calendar year, whilst they are shown as for the financial year. I know the figures. Necessarily, I knew them.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: I quoted calendar years.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): In 1910-11, the last year of the Moore Government, at the end of their vigorous immigration policy, they brought into this country 7,774 people. In 1911-12, the first year of the Scaddan

Government, there came into this country 9,697 immigrants.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Four months of that year was under the Moore Government.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): In 1912-13 we introduced 7,259 immigrants, or within 500 of the number introduced in the great year of the boom Government, the Moore Government, that did such mighty things in immigration. The Scaddan Government in their second year introduced within 500 of the number of immigrants secured by the Moore Government in their last year of office.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: We booked their passages.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): I am speaking to the figures, which hon. members opposite appear not to like. Now I desire to come back to the motion, in fact to try to speak on the motion. The mover says that we should continue to maintain all the agencies which were in existence in the past. Those are the words of his motion. A system was introduced and carried on by the hon. gentlemen when controlling this department, whereby the Immigration Office established agencies in a large number of country centres. The country agents received, I think, 5s. for each immigrant for whom they found a job.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Yes, if it was a suitable place.

The Minister for Works: If the job lasted only 24 hours.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The hon. gentleman appointed agents to look for work for the immigrants, and the agents were paid by the Government 5s. in respect of each immigrant for whom work was found.

Mr. Green: A bob a nob.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): I will read a minute on this point—

Prior to the appointment of agencies of the Immigration Department in the country districts, the Labour Bureau successfully placed all the immigrants, without the expenditure of 5s. per

head, the amount paid to the agents for the placing of immigrants. On the authority of Mr. Angwin, then Honorary Minister, the placing of immigrants was again placed under the control of the Labour Bureau in July, 1911, and since that date all immigrants have been placed by the Labour Bureau. As the Labour Bureau has its agencies throughout the State, there is no reason why immigration work should not be carried out by this department, as was done long before the establishment of the Immigration Department as a separate department.

If the hon. member is merely desirous that these 'country agencies should be re-established, I can assure him that we have agencies of the Labour Bureau carrying out the work infinitely better than it was done by the nondescripts appointed by himself, and at a very much cheaper rate. The Minister for Works has pointed out by way of interjection that the immigrant from Europe is becoming scarce. He was becoming scarce before the war, and he is likely to be scarcer at the present time and in the near future.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Immigrants have been scarce for the last ten years.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): When the Cook Government were in power in the Federal Parliament, an agent named H. C. Smart was appointed to go through Europe and report on the subject of immigration. Evidently, there was some reason for going past Britain when this agent was sent. I will quote an extract from Mr. Smart's report—

On account of the drain by emigration on Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, the respective Governments have restricted same. (In Finland there are no laws in this regard.) For the purposes of the Commonwealth these laws can be observed and immigrants secured at the same time . . . . Emigration agents would be necessary, and agents of high standing are available in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland, and Finland.

Does the hon. member desire us to appoint agents as suggested by the emissary of the Cook Government? This was at the time of the volume of immigration. Shall we proceed to appoint agents in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland?

Hon. J. D. Connolly: I am not responsible for the Cook Government. I have never had anything to do with them.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): Let me read this further extract from Mr. Smart's report—

Scheme for Commonwealth to work on: (1) To appoint agents to act for each of the States. (2) The Commonwealth to meet the cost of Press advertising, lectures, exhibitions, posters, biograph shows. (3) The State to provide assisted passages. Any competition amongst the States to be discouraged, as it would have the effect of drawing the attention of the authorities to Commonwealth activities.

Those authorities apparently have not found out that the Commonwealth was going on, notwithstanding the many years during which the hon. member had been administering the Immigration Office. I will continue my quotation—

Cost of advertising on Continent for one year, £19,000. Canada objects to Commonwealth emigration activities on Continent.

This was minuted by the present Minister for Works to the Premier, who asked for a report by the Agent General. The Agent General, under date of the 12th June, 1914, which as hon. members are aware was shortly before the declaration of war, writes that, in connection with immigration from Germany, the fine advertisement obtained by the exhibition and sale of Western Australian apples in Hamburg has caused various applications for assisted passages from German farmers and farm workers, and that he was then negotiating with a responsible agent in this regard. On the 19th June, 1914, the Agent General writes that the farmer and farm worker from Northern Europe are desirable settlers for Australia, and that the scheme

outlined by Mr. Smart for securing them is identical with that in vogue in Great Britain for years past. He considers it will be an easy matter to obtain these settlers when Western Australia is ready for them. He suggests that agents be appointed in Germany, Holland and Scandinavia, and that Western Australia shall appoint her own agents.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Who suggested that?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The Agent General, the hon. member's late chief. That was the system of immigration recommended before the war. Does the hon. member want us to go on with those agencies?

Hon. J. D. Connolly: We had agencies all over England.

The Minister for Works: But you never had the immigrants; they were not there.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): Let me go on further with the Agent General's recommendations. When Seidler and party first made inquiry from Germany concerning Western Australia, the Agent General states, they were referred to the agent for the Commonwealth at Berlin, and the business was handled very unsatisfactorily for Western Australia—

Member: Thank goodness!

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The party were sent over to London days before it was necessary, and they had been informed that all their expenses would be paid by the Government, and also their expenses for three weeks after landing. That is some of the work which was done in regard to immigration matters just before the declaration of war. It must be apparent that immigration from Britain was running out; and I want to say right here that, judging from recent events, Australia would do infinitely better to go on without a great admixture of foreign people than to obtain immigrants from the countries named. The humiliating position of the United States to-day, a position owing to their mixed population, is one that should be avoided by any and

every country. When we cannot get immigrants of our own race, we should certainly not over-push that trade from other countries. Next, I desire to give a few further figures in regard to immigration and emigration agencies. I have not gone to the trouble of telling the House the cost of the local office, but the cost of the London office as regards immigration was for 1911-12 £8,084, for 1912-13 £6,042, for 1913-14 £7,726, and for 1914-15, the year just closed, £5,033. Does the hon. member suggest that we should go on paying out of the taxpayer's money such huge sums for men to do nothing? I contend that the hon. member is talking absolute absurdity. I wondered, when I read the motion, what the member for Perth was going to say on it. I did not think he was going to talk about himself.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: The Honorary Minister knows perfectly well that the agents were paid on results. If there was no business, there was no commission.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The hon. member knows his statement is not correct. He knows perfectly well that Gilbert and Dolley were employed permanently on immigration work. The Government disbanded the London immigration staff entirely. We have cut out the whole of those salaries. I will give the hon. member the salaries. For 1911-12 they were £2,209, for 1912-13 £2,167, for 1913-14 £1,858, and for 1914-15 £1,892. We have practically cut out the whole of those salaries, and I say that any Government continuing to pay them would not be doing their duty by the people of Western Australia. It was utterly impossible to get immigrants, and, besides, we did not want immigrants. Yet the hon. member says we should have continued to keep these officers in England and go on paying all those expenses, just simply in order that we might be ready to take up the work again some years hence. I contend that the hon. member before tabling his motion should certainly have come to the Government and made inquiries as to what they were doing. If this House is

of opinion that the Government should go on paying all those expenses in the London office and maintaining the Immigration Office in Western Australia on the same footing as when Western Australia was getting thousands of immigrants—whilst now we are practically getting none—all I can say is that this House ought to be down at Claremont. As a matter of fact, if the House is of that opinion, I will leave.

Mr. George: I think it is worth risking.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): I really do not think there is anything to reply to. I can only say, in conclusion, that the Government, realising that we do not want immigrants at the present time, and also that we cannot get them, were absolutely right in keeping down the expenditure to the lowest possible figure. While we have done that, we still retain the organisation, and it can be restarted when immigrants are again available.

On motion by Mr. A. N. Piesse debate adjourned.

## BILLS (2) — RETURNED FROM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

1. Land and Income Tax.
2. Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

## MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE, JOINT STANDING ORDERS.

### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Legislative Council intimating that it had agreed to the resolution from the Legislative Assembly and had appointed a select committee consisting of the Hons. H. P. Colebatch, F. Connor, J. Cornell, A. G. Jenkins, and W. Kingsmill, to act conjointly with the select committee of the Legislative Assembly, and that the first meeting of the committee would be held in the committee room of the Legislative Council on

Tuesday, 31st August, at 11 o'clock a.m., and to report to the House on Wednesday, 8th September.

**MOTION—WYNDHAM FREEZING WORKS, TO INQUIRE.**

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [6.5]: I move—

*That a Select Committee be appointed to make full inquiry into all the circumstances surrounding the inception, letting, and cancellation of the contract or contracts with Nevans & Co. in connection with the establishment of freezing works at Wyndham and report.*

The trouble in connection with this matter—

The Minister for Works: No trouble at all.

Mr. GEORGE: The trouble in dealing with this matter, from this side of the House at any rate, and I fancy also from the Government side of the House, is that the file which has been laid on the Table is not complete in matters upon which a debate can ensue, but it is so full of items upon which a debate can take place that it will be very difficult indeed to keep within the bounds of the understanding which has been arrived at this session, that party controversial matters should be put on one side. I will endeavour, so far as I possibly can, to keep within bounds, and I ask the House to bear with me if I do not succeed. I will endeavour to justify anything that I may have to say by reference to the file, and by quoting the page of the file from which other hon. members will be able to obtain the information for themselves. Remembering the speeches made in this House on the Address-in-reply, we can recall that when the member for Mount Margaret was speaking the Honorary Minister interjected, "You will never get to the bottom of it." At that time I am afraid I did the hon. gentleman an injustice. I thought he was speaking in a defiant mood, but after having examined the file, and taken notice of the utterances

of the Premier to a representative of the *Sunday Times*, I have come to the conclusion that the Honorary Minister was speaking after a continuous effort on his part to understand the question, and had given up the matter in despair. The file was produced to this House under very curious circumstances. References were made to this matter in the debate on the Address-in-reply by various members on this side of the House, and the Minister for Works interjected at one time that we could have the papers, and it was naturally supposed that all the papers would be supplied.

The Minister for Works: You have had all the papers.

Mr. GEORGE: Then it will be for me to prove, if I can, from the file and from the pages of the file, that we have not been supplied with all the papers.

The Minister for Works: You have had all the papers.

Mr. GEORGE: We have not, and I shall try to show that that is the case. Before going into the details, I would like to explain to the House what the file really consists of. In the first place, it is not a file; it is simply a mass of papers which have evidently been thrown together regardless of dates and continuity of narrative. How can it be otherwise when hon. members take up one page and they find that it starts in October, 1914, with what purports to be a precis of proceedings of some conference, and that then it jumps to 12th March, 1915, and then goes back to June, 1914. After that it goes back to January and then wearily to the end of July, after which it returns to March and finally ends in July. Hon. members who have had experience of departmental matters know well that a file starts with a paper bearing a certain date, whatever that date may be.

The Minister for Works: You have not examined many files.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member has not seen as many files as I have. As the papers accumulate they are placed upon the file so that the top one is the most recent.

The Minister for Works: Not always.

Mr. James Gardiner: If that were true, a Minister's life would be much easier.

Mr. GEORGE: If it is not true it ought to be, and if it is not true it is for the Minister in charge of the department to see that he gets the file put before him in order.

The Minister for Works: He would have a job.

Mr. GEORGE: I could tell the House, but it is not necessary for me to do so, of the job I had in the Railway Department, and I know well how I left the files. In addition to what I have said, the file which was presented to us bears evidence of being incomplete. No one will say that the file contains the information that the House and the country have the right to receive. There is one aspect to which I might refer now. The Minister for Works, on the 13th July of this year, received a couple of letters dated 26th March and 27th March from Mr. Nevanas addressed to the Minister for Lands, Mr. Johnson, and the Minister for Works, with his characteristic honesty and candour, says in a memorandum that he is unable to discover the originals in any shape or form. The point I want to make now in regard to those letters, is that if they were delivered by Nevanas & Co. to the Minister for Lands, where were they when the Minister for Works had to deal with the cancellation of the contract, and how was it that they did not appear with the other papers on the file which the hon. member has given us here? If there was a doubt in the mind of the Minister for Works as to the existence of the originals of those two letters, and if he did not believe they were genuine, why did he complete his negotiations with Nevanas & Co.? If they were genuine, then the answer which will have to be given is, where were they, and why were they not given to the Minister who had to deal with the matter? Either Nevanas & Co. were bluffing the Minister, or were joining in a conspiracy against the Government, and were putting forward false documents, or else those papers have been

withheld and were not there to give the proper aid to the Minister in carrying out his duty.

The Premier: You must not prejudice the case.

Mr. GEORGE: I am not doing that. I am drawing attention to these missing documents because of an interjection which was made.

Mr. Munsie: There is nothing you would not say if you had the opportunity.

Mr. GEORGE: I should like to say something about the hon. member but I am afraid, if I did so, you, Mr. Speaker, would say that I was not a gentleman. It is undesirable that papers should not find their way into the record room at the proper time.

Mr. James Gardiner: You would not say that you would put confidential reports on the file.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member is trying to draw me away from what I am endeavouring to show; I am not dealing with confidential documents, I am dealing with documents which are supposed to be ordinary business memoranda, documents which are supposed to be passing between Nevanas & Co. and the Minister for Lands. I know well that confidential documents are kept back.

The Premier: But there are some confidential documents on this particular file.

Mr. GEORGE: The documents to which I am referring are simple business documents which were supposed to have passed between a man who wants to do some work and a Minister of the Crown. If the originals of these documents have been on the file, and are not now on the file, the House will agree with me that it was wrong to remove them. The House has the right to have all the papers in connection with matters of this sort.

The Minister for Works: I say you have every paper in connection with the job from the time Nevanas took it up to the time he left it.

Mr. GEORGE: The House has the right to have all the papers and every information, and it cannot form an opinion on a matter of this sort unless it

is in possession of the fullest information. It is not sufficient for the Minister for Works, or even the Premier, to make such statements and expect the House to accept them. The House has a right to examine everything, but there is no reflection against Ministers if members do not accept their statements. When the House asks for information it has the right to expect it.

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

*[The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Holman) took the Chair.]*

Mr. GEORGE: Before the adjournment I was trying to establish the point that the House has a right to have all the papers or none. It is utterly impossible for the House to form an opinion on any matter before it for decision unless it is in possession of the fullest information. That being so, it should insist upon that fullest information being forthcoming. When the Estimates come forward, hon. members will be asked to vote money in connection with this project. They cannot consistently do that unless they are in possession of all the information in relation to it. If this proposed committee be appointed its inquiries and its report will be open to the public, as well as to members. I do not suppose anyone will deny that the publication in the *West Australian* of a lengthy resumé of the file—I say nothing of the comments made by the newspaper—have caused some anxiety among the public; and we have to remember that, apart from our position in the House and our duties, we are after all simply the representatives and servants of the public, and unless the public are satisfied that their business is being conducted on proper lines—

The Minister for Lands: Are you prepared to guarantee that what appeared in the Press was a true resumé of the file?

Mr. GEORGE. The resumé of the file given by the *West Australian*—I am not speaking of its comments—is a fair indication of what the file contains.

The Minister for Lands: I say they have left out salient features.

Mr. GEORGE: Possibly so.

The Minister for Lands: Well, how can you say it is a fair resumé?

Mr. GEORGE: So far as I can judge from a close study of the file the resumé given by the *West Australian* is a very fair one.

Mr. Carpenter: It is a very hot file, apparently.

Mr. GEORGE: As a proof that there are other papers which it is desirable we should have, I will refer members to folio 1 of the file, on which Mr. Cairns, one of the members of the departmental board, refers to an Agricultural Department file. That may be taken as evidence that there are other departmental files in connection with this. Also, on folio 14, members will find information given by the departmental officers from departmental documents supplied to Nevanas & Co. On page 33 they will find that Mr. Beasley, the chairman of the board, on the 19th March, had this to say—

Construction and design. This is similar to a proposition put up by me about 12 months ago at your request. On folio 34, the same date, they will find that Mr. Cairns, after having gone carefully into the matter, advises, for reasons which appear to be prudential, that only one-third of the scheme should be put in hand. On page 37, Mr. Bone reports that investigations had already been made by the engineer for the North-West, and reported on. That report is not on the file.

The Attorney General: That was in another Government's time.

Mr. GEORGE: I am trying to put this case fairly, and it will be optional for the Minister later on to comment on what I am saying. There are other papers which should be on the file. The Minister for Agriculture wired to the Minister for Agriculture in New South Wales, and asked whether he could recommend Mr. Nevanas as suitable for the supervision of the erection of the building.

The Minister for Lands: I never sent such a wire.

Mr. GEORGE: It is on the file. It was sent by one of the Ministers and, I

believe, by the Minister for Agriculture. I will give the page on the file where it is to be found.

The Minister for Lands: It goes to show you have not read the file very carefully. You have been reading the *West Australian* instead.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister will not succeed in putting me off my subject by irrelevant interjections. There is on the file a wire purporting to have been sent by the Minister for Agriculture to the Minister for Agriculture in New South Wales, asking whether that gentleman can recommend Mr. Nevanas for the supervision of this contract. The reply comes, "Yes, letter following." But no such letter appears on the file. When negotiations in connection with schemes of this sort are in progress and it is considered necessary to ask the advice of someone who knows the person offering to do the work, and necessary further to put the telegram on the file, surely it is necessary to also place on the file the letter giving further explanation.

The Premier: Suppose there is no such letter?

Mr. GEORGE: That suggestion could be made by the Premier in the course of his speech. If there is no such letter—

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Why not give the letter to the committee?

Mr. GEORGE: Earlier in the evening the Honorary Minister said that if the motion then under discussion were carried he would have to leave the House. I hope he will not make me feel that it is a pity that motion was not carried. With regard to these Wyndham freezing works, this question has been under consideration for some years. It was initiated, I believe, by the Government which preceded the Wilson Government. It is rather interesting to know what the department itself has done. While it is unnecessary to go back over a number of years, let us see what members of the board state.

The Premier: Why not go back over a number of years?

Mr. GEORGE: Because I am not discussing the start of the project. I will be prepared to discuss that when the hon. member gives us the papers we are entitled to have. Mr. Cairns, in his report of the 10th October, says that the confidential report of the Government's clients dealing with this business consisted practically of a fair précis of the departmental files. And he puts a comment at the end of it to the Under Secretary of the department as follows:—

I rely on you to see that the departmental contributions, carefully compiled, are not entirely forgotten or overlooked.

There is evidence that work had been done by the department.

The Premier: I have tried to get that, and failed.

Mr. GEORGE: On folio 14 the Minister for Works—presumably the present Minister for Lands—sends to Mr. Nevanas plans and details which had been prepared by the department. I am anxious to show that the department knew something about the matter. On page 29, under date 4th January, the Minister for Lands wanted Mr. Tindale and Mr. Babington to call, so that he could make progress in regard to the proposed agreement for the erection of the works. That was in January of this year, long before the tender was arranged. If the works were going to be done departmentally, there was no necessity for an agreement. If there was necessity for an agreement, it goes without saying that the idea of making an agreement with Mr. Nevanas had been settled long before. On page 33 Mr. Dundas, one of the members of the board, under date 19th March of this year, recommends that the work should be let by contract, and says that the construction and design plans laid before the board by the Minister are similar to his proposition of 12 months before.

Mr. Foley: He does not say it should be all done by contract.

Mr. GEORGE: He says the construction and design are similar to his proposition of 12 months earlier. What I

am trying to establish is that the department had already gone thoroughly into the matter.

The Premier: He was not in the department 12 months previously.

Mr. Foley: Dundas says the machinery and other plants should be done by day labour.

Mr. GEORGE: I am sorry the hon. member cannot see the point I am making. It is evident there is some portion of the scheme which Mr. Dundas recommends should be done by day labour, and it is also remarkable that the tender accepted from Mr. Nevanas was accepted by the Government for the whole work. On page 34, on the 19th March, Mr. Cairns recommends that the work should be done by public tender; and he says again that the plans, etc., bear a close resemblance to departmental recommendations. On pages 35 and 36 Mr. Bone, one of the departmental officers, refers to those plans submitted by Mr. Nevanas, and says there are no detailed plans—leading us to believe that they were simply sketch plans and he adds that the board should have proper working drawings. His estimate for the water supply work to be done is set down at £48,550. This shows clearly that the department itself had gone into the matter. To my mind it also shows that in the desire to assist Mr. Nevanas—I do not say a wrong desire—the whole of the plans and information in the hands of the department were placed in the possession of Mr. Nevanas. We might now inquire a little about this particular firm. Mr. Cairns refers to them as the Government's clients. I thought a client was someone who wished to be advised by a lawyer or wanted to purchase something, but Mr. Cairns refers to them as clients of the Government.

The Minister for Works: That is sufficient prejudice.

Mr. GEORGE: Whether that is so or not, the Minister has had more to do with them than I, and possibly he might be correct.

Mr. Foley: You do not want to say that Nevanas & Co. were philanthropists?

Mr. GEORGE: The Labour party have no time for philanthropists, so I do not suppose they were. So far as Nevanas & Co. are concerned, there is a précis on folio 33 without date in which they are referred to as a firm of experts. The Minister for Agriculture in New South Wales recommended them to do the construction, and the Agent General reported them as reliable and transacting large business in a sound manner. The Agent General wrote—

I have made personal inquiries from various banks and firms and understand that the company named are very respectable, of good standing, meet their engagements promptly, and generally their methods of business are highly satisfactory.

The board, in their recommendation, said, "Provided Cabinet is satisfied as to the company's financial standing," and so on. From that it is evident that the Government felt quite satisfied as to the bona fides of the company, both as to being able to carry out the contract from the financial point of view, and so far as their expert knowledge as contractors was concerned.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Did not we make all necessary inquiries?

Mr. GEORGE: The Honorary Minister will persist in interrupting. If his constituents had made inquiries about him, they would never have inflicted him upon this House. Hon. members will remember that during the Address-in-reply this matter was referred to and one or two members spoke of Nevanas & Co. as a company of adventurers. One hon. gentleman, I think the member for Geraldton (Mr. Heitmann), stated that they had not a £5 note amongst them, but the most condemning part came from the Minister for Works, who, I may say, with regard to his portion of the affair, showed that he went into the matter with sound, solid common sense, and, so far as was possible, I think, did his duty.

Mr. Carpenter: Why qualify it like that?

The Minister for Works: He always does his duty.

Mr. GEORGE: I could not qualify the hon. member for Fremantle (Mr. Carpenter). On the 28th June the Minister for Works wrote to Nevanas & Co. and after asking various things, which I think he was justified in doing, he said, "Your company has not the power or the means to carry out this contract." The question at once arises whether the conclusion to which the Minister for Works had then arrived should not have been reached before a matter of this sort had proceeded to such a length.

The Minister for Works: A lot had happened before that.

Mr. GEORGE: A lot of water had gone under the bridge—a lot of very waste water indeed.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We are getting some of the waste water now.

Mr. GEORGE: I am sorry I am not at the flushing gate as I would see that there was sufficient to carry the Honorary Minister out. We have the right to ask why the firm of Nevanas and Co. were called in. How did it come about? How did the firm come to be introduced? When were they introduced? Who vouched for them as being experts in this particular work? There is nothing on the file to show anything in that direction, except the reports from the Agent General and from the banks, and I have not the slightest doubt that if a report were asked from the banks since Nevanas and Co. received £8,000 or £9,000 from the Government of Western Australia, their financial report would be very much better.

The Minister for Works: I do not think so.

Mr. GEORGE: Nevanas and Co., as I pointed out, on the Address-in-reply, never owned any works, never built any works, but are simply traders in frozen and canned meats, rabbits, tallow, wool, hides and skins, and dairy and other Australian and New Zealand produce. There can be no mistake regarding that, because I have it from what appears in a copy of their articles of association in this morning's *West Australian*. We find that Nevanas and Co. of Melbourne, were

registered on the 13th May, 1914. It is a branch of Nevanas and Co. of London, who are said to have a capital of £26,000, and Nevanas and Co., of Melbourne, have a nominal capital of £30,000 of which 20,000 shares are held by the governing director, Mr. Nevanas, showing conclusively that Nevanas and Co. of England, are importers of meat and, for reasons best known to themselves, have established a sister or daughter company in Australia for the purpose of carrying on the same business. I do not know whether provision for this is comprised in their articles of association. The Solicitor General has said that they could not, under the articles of association, enter into contracts. I do not know how they deal with the profits they have made, because from the Government they have received 3 per cent. on plans or £4,650, and 5 per cent. profit on material, £3,194.

The Minister for Works: Is that all profit?

Mr. GEORGE: No, that represents returns, and is a very different thing from profit. We are only concerned with what the State has paid the firm, and I believe I am correct in saying they received a fee of £1,000 for their advice to the Government. Taking it altogether they have made nearly £9,000 out of a little adventure in the wilds of Western Australia. In connection with the file, there are clear indications that, in addition to the erection of the works, it was contemplated by the Government that Nevanas and Co. should have the management and operation of them when completed. In fact, I think it will be found that the arrangement went so far as to provide that their operations in connection with the management of the affair were to be conducted on a commission basis. It is idle to suppose that such a matter could have got the notice it has on the file unless there had been negotiations for an agreement, and probably the negotiations had even culminated in an agreement. That is another reason why this House should desire to probe the matter right to the bottom in order that we may get to know exactly the meaning of this particular question. The Minister for Lands (Mr. John-

son) appears somewhat prominently in connection with a certain portion of the file, carrying out, no doubt, what he considered his duty on the lines agreed upon. There is a letter on the file dated 22nd March in which he agreed to Nevanas sending to Wyndham a manager and six men with various plant and material to make arrangements to commence the building of the jetty. Nevanas had said in his estimate of costs that the jetty could be built for £30,000. Nevanas's representative, Rodger, who went up to Wyndham shortly after arriving, found it would have been wiser for himself and his principals to have paid more attention to the representations of the departmental officers because, immediately after he arrived there, he stated that the sum allowed for the building of the jetty, namely, £30,000, was about 50 per cent. of what it would cost. With regard to the water supply estimated to cost £30,000, neither Nevanas nor Rodger had ever been over the ground, and in arriving at the tender accepted by the Government, which included £30,000 for a water supply, Mr. Nevanas must simply have made what Mr. Tindale termed a pot shot at it. He had not been over the ground—though he had departmental information and data—and as evidence of that, after the tender was accepted he telegraphed to the North-West for information respecting the water supply at the 3-mile. Had he gone over the ground, which any reasonable man would suppose he would have done before submitting a tender, he would not have needed to inquire into that matter. On the 24th March, according to folio 58 of the file, Nevanas and Co. wrote to the Minister for Lands confirming what had been done, and on the authority of the Minister for Works under date 17th June, we learn that approximately £4,200 was spent in connection with the first outlay in sending men, material, and plant to Wyndham in connection with the jetty. That is to say, men of whom we had no knowledge in connection with work of this kind, though I daresay Rodger is a good man, were sent to Wyndham with material at a cost of £4,200 when the officers of the depart-

ment had been declared unable to produce a plan or supervise and carry out the erection of the buildings. I do not intend to make any comment on that. On folios 62-4 of the file—I do not know whether those figures quite correspond with the file, because there were two sets of numbers and there might be some confusion—there is a letter dated 25th March in which Nevanas and Co. submitted a tender of £155,150. The tender includes eight special conditions and Mr. Nevanas had previously obtained a copy of the conditions attached to the ordinary departmental tender. On the 31st March (folio 86) the Minister for Lands sent the file to the Premier. The Premier had been away. There had been a Cabinet meeting on the 27th and, pending the Premier's return, the matter was held over. In sending the file to the Premier, the Minister for Lands urged a quick decision. On the 6th April Mr. Nevanas, following out his system of push to which the Minister for Works objected, started to push the Premier, and urged him to give a quick and final decision. On the 8th April, the Minister for Lands advised Mr. Beasley, chairman of the investigation board, that Cabinet had that day decided to accept the tender of Nevanas and Co. Yet, according to the file, Cabinet were not asked to accept it until the following day, 9th April. No doubt there is some explanation of this discrepancy, and that explanation is sought. Following on this, the Minister for Lands immediately advised Mr. Nevanas of Cabinet's decision, but Mr. Nevanas evidently went to see the Minister and endorsed a carbon copy of this particular letter to the effect that he accepted the tender on those conditions.

Mr. Carpenter: Are you going right through the file? It is very tiresome.

Mr. GEORGE: I can go right through it if the hon. member desires, but for the purpose of my argument, I prefer to continue on the lines I have chosen. This is a matter as far as it has gone up to April 9th, yet we find in July that the Minister for Works has handed to him by Nevanas two letters from the Minister for Agriculture with reference to the contract be-

fore Cabinet and accepted. If these letters are authentic, then they should have appeared on the file in their proper position. They should have been there to have guided the Minister for Works in his difficult task of dealing with this particular affair. If they are not authentic and did not reach the Minister, I say that Nevanas committed fraud when he produced them to the Minister for Works.

The Premier: You are pre-judging the case.

Mr. GEORGE: We cannot get away from a matter of this sort. There is only one thing or the other to be thought. Either the letters are frauds or, if they are not, we want to know why they are not on the file for the guidance of the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: What bearing would they have on the question?

Mr. GEORGE: I do not wish to do more than place the facts before the House.

The Minister for Lands: You are drawing inferences.

Mr. GEORGE: I am trying to place the facts before the House without entering into any party matter or making any insinuations.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You are accompanying facts with innuendoes.

Mr. GEORGE: Perhaps if the Honorary Minister was accompanied by a few facts it would do him a lot of good. He needs them badly. We want to know what the board had to do with it. Let us go into the action of the board.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Are you the committee?

Mr. GEORGE: I want to show that the Government officers were very ungenerously treated in the remarks that were made on the Address-in-reply. I am just as strong as any man in the House can be in dealing with any departmental officer who does not do his duty to the country irrespective of what Minister is in power. I am desirous, however, that these gentlemen should have an opportunity, which I am trying to give them, of showing how far they under-

stood the business and carried out their duties.

The Premier: Who is going to judge that?

Mr. GEORGE: I am asking the Premier to judge, and I think before I have finished that he will be so satisfied that he will give me the Select Committee I am asking for.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): You are asking the Select Committee to judge it, but you are judging the case already.

Mr. GEORGE: This is not a Caucus meeting; this is a deliberative assembly.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): We do not get drivelled like that up there.

Mr. Munsie: You have evidently had your instructions.

Mr. GEORGE: On the 17th March the Minister for Agriculture asks for a report on the contract. The Government had a board of expert officers appointed to give advice. The board reported that the examination of the plans, etc., had not been completed on account of lack of time, and that the investigations of the details had not been completed for that reason. They considered that the work could not be done in the time stated on account of the difficulty in the freight of materials, etc. They decided that the cost was greatly under-estimated, and recommended that public tenders should be called. Hon. members on the opposite side of the House on the Address-in-reply spoke very much stronger than I have spoken on the advisability of having public tenders for a matter of this sort. When officers of departments and the members of this House agree it is for the Government to take the matter into consideration.

The Minister for Works: You are going further and giving other advice.

Mr. GEORGE: It was said that important modifications would be required, that the information was incomplete but that this was the best that time would allow of. Members can form their own judgment as to whether it is a fair thing to ask a board of departmental officers to give an opinion upon an important

matter of this sort, on which there is bound to be controversy, and yet not give them the necessary time to go into the plans or complete the investigations in regard to details. The chairman of the board, on the 24th, said that the buildings as per Nevanas's plan were too weak. The answer that will be given to that no doubt will be that a factor in this was the strength of materials. The opinion of the chairman of the board was that they were too weak. On the 25th, the Minister for Lands set the matter before the board again, and pressed them to let him have a report as quickly as possible.

The Minister for Works: That was eight days afterwards.

Mr. GEORGE: The letter was sent at 4.30 on the afternoon of the 25th March, and a reply was sent on the 26th. The report of the board states that they considered the tender was too low. They bowed to the pressure which, apparently, was put upon them by the Minister that they should be as quick as possible in getting through it, and so we have the board hurried on in this matter.

The Premier: You are pre-judging the case.

Mr. GEORGE: I am giving, as far as I can, the text of the affair. I am trying to be as fair as I can be.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): As fair as you can be.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. gentleman could not try to be fair. He does not know how to spell the word. Let me go further. On the 29th March, on folio 70 and 71 of the file, the Minister for Lands writes to the board—

Your letter of recommendation . . . considered at the meeting of Cabinet held on the 27th inst. when it was decided that nothing further be done pending the return of the Premier.

He then goes on to say—

I will be pleased if you would immediately take up with the Crown Law Department the question of preparing a special form of contract,

and he set out the special conditions to be followed in the preparation of such contract. No doubt he would say it was a correct contract to make, that there was

urgency for it, and that it was necessary to be prepared in connection with the affair. If we understand constitutional Government aright, the acceptance of tenders does not rest with the Minister. Such acceptances have to be approved by Cabinet. This State does not place in the hands of any one man the right to deal with the finances, or in any way to accept tenders on these important matters. It is desired that if anyone should take the responsibility it should be Cabinet, whatever Government are in power. We are aware of the existence of these letters which Nevanas produced and upon which he bases his reason for ordering certain materials.

The Minister for Works: I suppose you are aware that tenders are recommended by departmental officers and never go to Cabinet.

The Premier: Why not read from the file instead of from the garbled stuff which has appeared in the *West Australian*?

Mr. GEORGE: I am reading from the file, and what I am reading from the *West Australian* has been compared with the file, a copy of which, as it was laid on the table, I have in my possession. It is more convenient to quote from it in this way.

The Premier: You are taking your instructions from there.

Mr. GEORGE: Is that generous of the Premier?

The Premier: It is true, but it may not be generous.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Generosity would be lost on you.

Mr. GEORGE: The letter sent by Nevanas to the Minister for Lands will be found on folio 254 of the file, and it reads as follows:—

Referring to my letter of yesterday, The letter is written on the 26th March, confirming acceptance of tender, I thank you for accepting my tender for the works and water supply as per schedule, and have ordered the supplies of steel, etc., and am proceeding with the placing of orders for machinery, etc.

The Minister for Works: The Minister says he never saw that letter.

Mr. GEORGE: This is one of the things to be reconciled. On the 27th March—and here is another of the letters which ought to be reconciled—we find the following:—

Referring to my letter of yesterday confirming acceptance of tender given on behalf of my company for construction of freezing works and water supply at Wyndham, I would remind you that acting on your acceptance I placed orders here with the Government State Implement Works for 20 miles cast iron pipes, also with a local firm for steel reinforcement wire for concrete constructions, and also gave instructions for our Melbourne house to order all structural steel and corrugated iron required for works buildings.

It is, I think, for the committee to investigate and report as to whether these letters submitted by Nevanas are forgeries or not. Hon. members can form their own idea as to what bearing these letters have on the matter, judging by the fact that Nevanas did order some £63,000 worth of material.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: If there was no original, would it be called a forgery?

Mr. GEORGE: I am not here to chlop about with matters of this sort. For the information of the hon. member, who perhaps has not obtained it before, I would remind him that we have these two letters, originals of which do not appear on the file. If these letters are true and correct where are they? If they are not, then Nevanas and Co. are guilty of fraud.

Mr. B. J. Stubbs: Fraud possibly, but they are not forgeries.

Mr. GEORGE: I say they are guilty if that is so. This is a matter for the lawyers to judge.

The Minister for Works: When I was in Sydney in April I sent a letter which has not been delivered yet.

Mr. GEORGE: That may be so, but I do not think that has any bearing on this case. I want to let the hon. member for Subiaco (Mr. B. J. Stubbs) know exactly what is running through my mind. My opinion is that this is either a case of

fraud on the part of Nevanas, or else, whoever received these letters has kept them back and thereby deprived the Minister for Works of information which he should have had to guide him in his difficult task in connection with this matter. The board were asked to do certain things. The recommendation of the Minister for Lands in Cabinet is to be found on the file, and it is dated the 9th April. I should like hon. members just to bear this part in mind. The recommendation to Cabinet says—

As requested I have carefully considered the report of the expert officers—

These are the officers who, we were told the other day, were unable to produce plans and practically incapable of supervising the erection of the works. The recommendation goes on—

who were appointed to investigate the plans, specifications and proposals in regard to the erection of freezing works at Wyndham.

He goes on to say that they have a tender before them to the amount of £155,150 and that—

This tender, with conditions attached, has been reviewed by the Investigation Board—

I have given the House the time which they were afforded for reviewing it, namely, only a few hours—

and the board recommended, owing to the lowness of the price tendered, and the undertaking to complete the works by May next year, that the tender be accepted.

Yet on the very day on which they say that, the Minister for Works (Hon. W. C. Angwin), being in the Eastern States, a letter was sent to him from the Lands Department, signed, I understand from the file, by the Minister for Lands, after first of all having recommended that the tender be accepted on the report of the expert officers, as follows:—

I have looked through the points raised by the different officers, and my opinion is that they have gone to the utmost extremes in trying to build up the costs of these works, and I do not want them to be taken very seriously.

Yet their recommendation was taken so seriously that the Minister could recommend Cabinet that a tender for £155,000 should be accepted. To my mind that discrepancy assuredly is one which cannot very well be reconciled. The House will perhaps pardon me if I say that I have had as much experience as any man in this House with regard to contracts, both in the Old Country and in Australia; and I have never, in the whole of my experience, seen conditions similar to those appearing in this contract. In the first place, Nevanas & Co. are to be paid 85 per cent. of the work done. That is usual. But they are to be paid 85 per cent. of the cost of material brought on to the ground. That is unusual. The usual thing is that 50 per cent. is paid, and I think that condition even now obtains with regard to railway contracts in this State. The reason for paying only 50 per cent. is this: materials have to be held on the ground until it is time to use them, and with many materials deterioration sets in. Accordingly the Government supervisors reserve—and rightly reserve—the right to refuse to allow any material to go into the work unless it is in first class condition. Now, if 85 per cent. of the value of material is paid to the contractor as soon as it is on the ground, it means that the Government are absolutely financing the contractor. It would be an easy matter for a man to have his invoices inflated for that purpose, if necessary. I do not say that was done in this instance. Let us assume that the invoices were absolutely honest. Still, 15 per cent. reserve would not afford sufficient margin to safeguard the interests of the Government in regard to the quality of the material at the time it is used for the work. Then there is another clause appearing with regard to which there should be more explanation than is given by the file. That is with regard to the cost of material. The clause in question is one that I have never seen in any contract that I have had to do with, and in the course of my life I have had to do with numbers. Moreover, I do not think any other con-

tractor has had experience of such a clause. It provides that the contractor is to be paid for material according to the rise and fall of the market. And mark this: the proposition put forward by Nevanas & Co. stipulated simply for the rise of the market. They knew perfectly well that there was not likely to be any fall in the price of material. However, when it comes to placing the proposition here in the contract as a clause, "rise" is amended to "rise and fall."

The Minister for Lands: That was between specified dates, was it not?

Mr. GEORGE: Their tender was to be taken as from the 1st March, and there are no such dates as suggested, so far as I have been able to discover. It may be so, but I have not been able to find such a limitation. There is no date which fixes when the rise or fall is to finish. And all hon. members know, any one who has had to do with ordinary business transactions to-day knows perfectly well, that the price of anything in the shape of corrugated iron, wire, structural ironwork, cement, and similar commodities has been rising by leaps and bounds. I can illustrate that by one particular item which is largely used in connection with these works—galvanised corrugated iron. The price of spelter, that is to say zinc, which is used for galvanising, ruled before the war at about £22 per ton. It has now risen to about £127 per ton. And what is the reason of that? The reason is that the main supply of spelter, which is used for galvanising iron or wire, has hitherto been obtained from refiners in Belgium and in Germany. Although the zinc concentrates which the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. have are available they are not in such a form that they can be applied to the purpose of galvanising. Consequently, the price of all metals which have to be galvanised has gone up.

The Minister for Lands: Would not that consideration justify that clause? Suppose you had put in a tender on the 1st March, and suppose that prices were fluctuating to such an extent, would you

not like to be protected if your tender was not accepted until the 15th March?

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. gentleman puts forward a case, but I must confess such a thing has never come under my notice.

The Minister for Lands: Did you ever know of war time before?

Mr. GEORGE: No.

The Minister for Lands: If you were contracting under the same conditions, you would want the same terms.

Mr. GEORGE: At all events, the condition is a most peculiar one. Another point in connection with the contract is not very clearly shown in the documents on the file. That is the question of supervision by the contractor of his own work.

The Minister for Works: He was not to do that. The work had to be done under supervision.

Mr. GEORGE: Nevanas and Co. put in a tender, and their tender was accepted, and the New South Wales Minister for Agriculture was asked his advice as to giving Nevanas and Co. the supervision.

The Minister for Works: That was before Nevanas had the contract, a long while before that.

Mr. GEORGE: The honourable gentleman will no doubt be able to show that, but this is what the file states.

The Minister for Lands: Do you seriously suggest that any Government would let a contract to a man and allow him to supervise the work himself? Do you suggest that?

Mr. GEORGE: I simply say what the file says.

The Minister for Lands: You read that as from the file.

Mr. GEORGE: I am trying to show the necessity for the placing of further papers on the Table of the House in connection with this matter. I am trying to show the necessity for a select committee to make inquiry, and in order to do that I must state the reasons which appear, at any rate to me, to prove that there is necessity for further investigation.

The Premier: Several files contain what happened before we came into office; and it seems they were lost.

Mr. GEORGE: There is a statement, now.

The Premier: I have been looking for them.

Mr. GEORGE: If the hon. gentleman will take my word, this is not a party question with me. I am trying to keep it from becoming a party question. But I will say this, that if the Liberals were in power, and they had carried out this business, then, if I stood by myself, I would move in exactly the same way as I am moving to-day.

The Premier: Yes, I believe you; but thousands would not.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. gentleman may not believe it, but such is the fact. We now come along to the point where the Minister for Works gets hold of the affair. It is put into his hands; and I am very glad for the sake of the country that it was put into his hands, because he evidently had the time, which the other Minister had not, to go into it thoroughly, and he went into it thoroughly.

The Minister for Lands: I suppose you are aware that the Minister for Works had just returned from the East, and that he would have dealt with the matter altogether if he had not been absent from the State.

Mr. GEORGE: I know of a letter showing the kindness of the Minister for Lands towards the Minister for Works, because in sending over a letter to the Minister for Works in the East he said, "If this will delay your return, do not worry; I will look after matters." However, the matter dragged along very wearily. I do not propose to give hon. members all that I have here. For one thing, it would take too long. Nevanas & Co. were to send in certain drawings and specifications by the 22nd April, which they did not do. The Minister for Works pushed the matter along as far as he possibly could, and he finally came to the conclusion which anyone else would draw from the file, that Nevanas & Co. were desirous of being financed by the Government. This, in fact, is proved by

various letters, one of which is shown on the file as having been turned down by the Minister. Although Nevanas & Co.'s acceptance of contract was without conditions, and although they accepted modifications of their tender, they actually had the business self-confidence to try and get the Government to pay them in full for all the work they did, and for all the material they supplied, as they went along. They stated that when they had done sufficient work and supplied sufficient material to make up the 85 per cent., the balance could be kept until the job was completed. Let hon. members think for a moment of the business acumen of a firm that would submit to the Cabinet of experts we have before us a proposition that for every pound spent by the firm in wages or material a pound should be paid by the Government right away.

The Minister for Works: They did not get it, did they?

Mr. GEORGE: No. Thanks to my friend opposite, they did not.

Mr. Heitmann: It is surprising to me that they did not ask for 25s. in the pound.

Mr. GEORGE: I am surprised to find this 85 per cent. proposition, although they did not get it. The departmental officers, however, seem to have missed the point altogether. They certainly saw that Nevanas & Co. were trying to be paid in full, but they did not see that the Government were losing their guarantee that the contract would be carried out. The percentages retained constitute an additional guarantee that the work shall be carried out. The reason for the retentions is this: although a bond or guarantee is obtained at the start of the work, apart from the percentages kept in hand, it is perfectly well known to practical men that as work goes on it has to be kept in its proper strength, so that it can be relied upon. Unless a percentage is kept in hand, in the event of any structural defects being disclosed, there may not be sufficient money represented by bond or deposit to enable the work to be completed properly. I instance this merely to show that Ne-

vanas & Co. were very, very cute. I do not know where Mr. Nevanas originates, but I should say that, wherever he may have been born, his ancestors must have come out of the Levant. His name is very much like others I have encountered there, and his actions are typical of the sharp adventurer to be met with on the coasts of the Mediterranean, on the northern shore of Africa, and the southern shore of Europe. I may say that when the propositions were placed before the departmental officers, these gentlemen had something more to say in connection with the matter. Mr. Cairns, the expert—I think we may call him an expert in regard to refrigerating matters—was not at all satisfied with the machinery; but Mr. Beasley, the Chief Architect, who cannot be expected to have anything but a superficial knowledge of machinery, thinks it will probably be all right. Then, in connection with the negotiations for the cancellation of the contract, we find Mr. Nevanas putting forward a peculiar claim. He was not modest. He appears almost fitted to be a member of a more august assembly than this, because he puts forward such peculiar claims. In this instance he asks for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. commission on £70,000 worth of oil—about 20,000 tons of oil at about £3 12s. 6d. per ton. He asks for commission on that. There is nothing on the file to show whether that oil was ever bought.

The Minister for Works: He did not get that commission, did he?

Mr. GEORGE: Thank goodness, he did not. Even his oil, in addition to the 20,000 tons, was not sufficient to get him that commission from the Minister. But there is nothing on the file to show that Nevanas had authority to purchase £70,000 worth of oil, if he had done it. There is nothing to show that he did it, but I think we are entitled to know whether any steps were taken to purchase this £70,000 worth of oil. There is certainly some warrant for asking the question, because I find on the file references to some company—their name is not disclosed—who intend to erect tanks to contain this oil, some of it at Fremantle and

some at Wyndham. There is no doubt that if one installs oil engines one requires oil to work them; but the purchase of 20,000 tons, if the purchase has been made, or if even it has been suggested, is to my mind a matter wanting considerable explanation from those who were concerned in it. Even if the oil engines had been erected, they were not supposed to start work until the beginning of next year; and 20,000 tons of oil could not be used at Wyndham in less than about five years.

*[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]*

Mr. Chesson: Palm oil.

Mr. GEORGE: I have not said anything of that sort, and I am not insinuating it. We have a right to know everything in regard to these matters, and the basis of them. That 20,000 tons of oil would be more than would be required for Diesel engines for five years.

The Minister for Works: I turned it down.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister will understand from what I have said that I think he did his duty, and I rejoice that he tackled this matter in a common-sense and businesslike manner. But we want to know something about this £70,000 which we have to provide—

The Minister for Works: There was no oil bought and no commission paid; we have no liability in that regard.

Mr. GEORGE: Then we come again to the £63,000 worth of plant, all of which had not been bought, but which was negotiated for. There were still tenders to accept, and orders to place, and before the Government could assume responsibility for that quantity of plant, etc., it would want to have some evidence to support the statement as to what had been done. When the time came for the cancellation of the contract, Mr. Nevanas put in a claim, and he asked to be paid three per cent. on £106,000, being the value of his bills, etc., and Mr. Beasley, the officer of the department, who had to advise the Minister, said he considered it very reasonable to pay three

per cent. Yet three or four days afterwards, we find that this £106,000 is absolutely forgotten, and the recommendation from Mr. Beasley, which again he says is reasonable, is that three per cent. should be paid on £155,000, and it was paid. Three per cent. is the usual commission for architects and engineers to make in connection with the preparation of plans which include sketch plans, working drawings, specifications, and the calling of tenders. Mr. Nevanas, however, did not produce for the Government, so far as I can gather, any of these things, but he submitted plans which the departmental officers referred to as being incomplete. He never made proper plans. He may have made sketch plans with regard to the waterworks, and in regard to which neither Mr. Nevanas nor Mr. Rogers ever went over the ground.

The Minister for Works: Nevanas did.

Mr. GEORGE: Well, Rogers did not, and he telegraphed to his principal that the water supply estimate of £30,000 would have to be increased by 50 per cent. Mr. Rogers, to use his own expression, was "full up," and wired his resignation to Mr. Nevanas.

The Minister for Works: Will you allow me to tell you that so far as Mr. Beasley is concerned, he must have been perfectly satisfied with the plans as provided. I have never seen the plans.

Mr. GEORGE: I am not charging the Minister or anyone. I want the House to bear with me in this matter while I explain the position as it occurs to me from a perusal of the file, and as far as my ability will allow me. If I were desirous of making a party question of it, I could say a lot of things, but I am trying not to do that. I was explaining that Nevanas received this three per cent. on £155,000, and I think it will fall within the scope of the House to give Mr. Beasley the opportunity of explaining why he recommended the payment of the commission, first on £106,000 and then on £155,000.

The Minister for Works: Do you not think that that is explained by Mr. Beasley's minute?

Mr. GEORGE: I do not think so.

The Minister for Works: He wanted to refer the matter to arbitration.

Mr. GEORGE: The matter he wanted to refer to arbitration was the claim made by Nevanas for £700 for travelling expenses, and Mr. Beasley remarked about that that if it was referred to arbitration his knowledge of arbitration led him to conclude that the department would have to pay.

The Minister for Works: Did he not say, in regard to the plans?

Mr. GEORGE: I think not.

The Minister for Works: Yes he did, and that is the reason why he recommended the payment of the £700.

Mr. GEORGE: Mr. Nevanas wanted the three per cent. on £106,000, and he wanted damages to the extent of £6,500, which the Minister for Works had no intention of paying. That is the position as far as I can make it out. He also claimed commission on cement which he had in course of negotiation, but of course he did not get that. The Minister makes a recommendation to the Cabinet, and Cabinet approves. The Solicitor General draws up the vouchers, someone draws a cheque, and Nevanas goes on his way rejoicing, hoping to find other amiable countries in which he can do as well as he did in Western Australia.

The Minister for Works: He was not rejoicing much when I saw him last.

Mr. GEORGE: The House would like to know what this experiment has cost, this experiment of dealing with the matter in the way I have shown. We have spent £4,200 in sending Mr. Rogers (Mr. Nevanas's man) and a staff with material to Wyndham, and we know there has been paid between £8,00 and £9,000 to Mr. Nevanas in connection with the matter. We also know that there is a £63,000 liability for stock purchased, and stock which has to come along, and with regard to those purchases we have to complete the work. It is not usual to pay five per cent commission to people of that description until they have done their work. Moreover, brokerage is one per cent. and Nevanas received five per cent., and in addition three per cent. for his plans. There has

gone something like £14,000 plus £63,000 a total of £77,000. This has either been paid or it will have to be paid in connection with this matter, and I contend, from what I have shown to the House in as fair a way as I can, that it is desirable that a select committee should be appointed—

The Premier: As fairly as you have been able, but still with bias.

The Minister for Works: Do you not think it is better to have the £77,000 worth of material rather than pay compensation?

Mr. GEORGE: If the Minister has misunderstood me, at the risk of boring the House I will repeat what I have said. The compensation Nevanas & Co. received was about £9,000.

The Premier: That is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. GEORGE: There was £3,000 for plans, £4,000 odd for commission, and £1,000 for expenses, and in addition to that, the State has paid £4,200 to get the material and Nevanas's men conveyed to Wyndham. There we have £13,000, and the State has accepted a liability to take over material of the value of £63,000, nearly £80,000 that this State has to find. What the loss is to the State is beside the question. I think I have given fairly, ample reasons why the House should appoint a select committee, which would get further information in connection with this matter. The House has attempted to get all the papers, and it is entitled to have them. We thought we had all the papers, but we find that they are not all here. I hope the House will see, for the reasons I have given, that it is desirable we should have all the papers, and I am quite satisfied that all shades of political opinion will agree that a little more light should be thrown on the transaction. I desire to move the motion standing in my name.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [8.42]: In view of the rather lengthy remarks of the hon. member, I want to ask the House to agree to the adjournment of the debate. I move—

*That the debate be adjourned until Tuesday next.*

Question passed.

# RETURN — RAILWAY FREIGHT AND HAULING COSTS, GOSNELLS-MIDLAND.

Order of the Day read for resumption of debate on motion moved by Mr. Robinson as follows:—

*That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing (a) the number of tons of Collie coal brought from stations south of Gosnells to Midland or passing through Midland Junction to any station beyond Midland (all lines) during twelve months ended 30th June, 1915; (b) the number of tons of railway sleepers and timber brought from stations south of Gosnells to Midland or passing through Midland Junction to any station beyond Midland (all lines) during twelve months ended 30th June, 1915; (c) the number of tons of all other freights brought from stations south of Gosnells to Midland or passing through Midland Junction to any station beyond Midland (all lines) during twelve months ended 30th June, 1915; (d) the total cost of hauling the total tonnage referred to in paragraph (a) 10 miles during the same period; (e) the total cost of hauling the total tonnage referred to in paragraph (b) 10 miles during the said period; (f) the total cost of hauling the total tonnage referred to in paragraph (c) 10 miles during the said period.*

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [8.43]: I want to ask the hon. member who moved this motion to agree to its withdrawal. I have made inquiries from the Commissioner of Railways in regard to it, and have been informed that it will be almost impossible to obtain accurately the information which the hon. member desires. It would also be rather expensive to comply with the hon. member's request, because of the limited staff the Commissioner has available, and moreover, the Commissioner suggests that to

comply with the request would serve no purpose, because the particulars which would be furnished would not be accurate, and under the circumstances it would not be desirable to attempt to comply with the request. Further, to supply the information would require the whole of the large records being turned up for the 12 months, because of the fact that the department has been carrying a huge quantity of material for the Trans-Australian railway by different routes, and that has been done merely to suit the department's own convenience. The Commissioner, however, will supply the hon. member with any information he has at his disposal.

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [8.44]: As I understand that as my motion, if carried, will cause some inconvenience to the department, and that, when convenient, the figures will be made available, I will, by leave, withdraw it.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

*House adjourned at 8.45 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Thursday, 26th August, 1915.*

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

## PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Works: Plan of proposed further extension of Newcastle-Bolgart Railway.