

desirous of sweating those engaged in the industry, but they do take exception if they see that they are overcharged because of wasteful methods, whether of production or of distribution. We have put a good deal of public money into the dairying industry. I said the other day that the Agricultural Bank is the biggest dairy farmer in Australia, has the largest interests in dairy farming. The job is too big for the proposed board. There is the most urgent need for better supervision over all the group settlers engaged in dairying. The difficulty is that those settlers have already lost hope. Something will have to be done to give them both better supervision and more continuous expert advice, with the object of reviving hope in them. If they are convinced that there is no hope, of course they cannot work and will not try to. Apart from those who will participate in this proposal, there is the bigger question of what is going to happen to those who have to continue producing at purely a butter-fat price throughout the South-West. I leave the Bill for the time, in the hope that the Government will reconsider it and will recognise its inherent weakness. The board as at present proposed to be constituted cannot possibly cope with the enormous task set by the Government. The responsibility is, after all, the Government's responsibility; and however the board may be constituted and whatever responsibility its members may be given, I shall look to the Government—I care not which Government—to stand between the board and the people, and between the board and the industry they seek to control. Therefore the Government will not relieve themselves of responsibility by merely passing that responsibility on to the board. Though they authorise the establishment of a board, the Government will have to accept responsibility for the actions of that board. I am sure the Minister recognises that fact, and will give the industry and the public the protection to which both are entitled. I hope he will do that by retaining the power of supervision that has formed part and parcel of other experimental-control measures. I support the second reading of the Bill, and shall reserve further comments until we deal with the measure in Committee.

On motion by Mr. McLarty, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.22 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 21st September, 1932.*

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

### QUESTION—WORKERS' HOMES LEASES.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Chief Secretary: Is it the intention of the Government to introduce legislation this session to provide that land upon which workers' homes have been erected under Part III., Workers' Homes Act, may be converted into freehold land?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: No.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, leave of absence granted to the Hon. J. J. Holmes (North) for six consecutive sittings on the ground of urgent private business.

### MOTION—MINES REGULATION ACT.

*To disallow regulations.*

Debate resumed from 14th September on the following motion by Hon. J. Nicholson:—That the additions and amendments to Regulations under "The Mines Regulation Act, 1906," published in the *Government Gazette* on 27th May, 1932, and numbered 1529/17 and 1010/30, and laid on the Table of the House on 16th August, 1932, be and are hereby disallowed.

HON G. FRASER (West) [4.37]: I intend in very few words to outline my attitude on this motion. In the first place, notwithstanding that there are in this Chamber at least nine members representing goldfields constituents, none of them thought fit to move this motion; it was left to a city member, whose electorate has no mines and is not in contact with the people concerned, to move that the regulations be disallowed.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You do not question his right?

Hon. G. FRASER: No, but I say it is surprising that the motion should have come from a disinterested party.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Do not say disinterested.

Hon. G. FRASER: Well, not any of the factions concerned saw fit to move.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Are we here not interested in the whole of the State?

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, of course, but one would have expected a motion like this to come from persons representing the industry. That phase of the question weakens the arguments of the hon. member who moved the motion. Another phase of the question is that, so far I have not heard or read of any protest against these regulations from any of the parties chiefly concerned.

Hon. E. H. Harris: What would you call parties concerned?

Hon. G. FRASER: The mining companies and the miners themselves.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Then unless you are the owner of a mine, it does not apply to you.

Hon. G. FRASER: Oh yes, it does. If at any time any regulations not in the best interests of the mining industry are brought forward, either the mine owners or the miners register their protest against them. So far I have not heard or read of a protest against these regulations from either of those parties. The only real point raised in opposition to the regulations came from those members who declared there should be a difference observed between the large mines and the small mines, but so far I have heard nothing advanced to show what is the difference between a small mine and a large mine. I take the view that whether it be in a large mine or in a small mine, the life of the miner is equally valuable.

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: Is not that so with all of us?

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, that is so. Many members say the regulations are necessary, but contend they should not apply to a small mine. It is indifferent to me whether the miner be working in a large or in a small mine, for I say he should receive the protection the experts considered necessary when they brought forward the regulations.

Hon. E. H. Harris: But it is impossible for the regulations to operate on every mine. Apparently you have not considered that point.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, I have considered it, with the result that I am opposing the motion.

Hon. J. Cornell: Not all factory laws apply to all factories.

Hon. G. FRASER: That may be, but mines are in a different category. There are in the metropolitan area very few factories to which the Factories and Shops Act does not apply. A lot depends on the definition of a factory, but not so in respect of a mine. There is no doubt as to what a mine is.

Hon. J. Nicholson: There is in the Factories and Shops Act a definition of "factory."

Hon. G. FRASER: But there is only one definition of a mine. You can have a lot of girls working in a room, and call it a factory, but you cannot adduce the same argument in respect of a mine. For the few reasons I have given, I intend to oppose the motion.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.42]: It is most desirable that miners and prospectors should, as far as possible be protected from the danger of accident in handling detonators. It has been proved on our big mines that capping fuses on the surface has minimised detonator accidents and has made safe the handling of detonators. There are two probable causes which may contribute to accidents during the attachment of detonators to fuses in underground places where artificial light is used:—1, the risk of glowing particles from the light coming in contact with the composition in the detonator tube, and 2, the introduction of grit, which is very difficult to control where men are working underground at ordinary mining practices. The regulations have been framed in the interests of the men using explosives. The risk of accident, a number of which have taken place in our mines within the last few years during the attachment of detonators to fuses, can be practically eliminated if this work is performed in a clean place in the daylight. It is imperative that a good light should be available for this work in order that the persons handling detonators can easily see whether they are free from sawdust and grit, and can affix them to fuses under the best conditions. Naked lights near detonators are a real danger, and for this reason it is considered that men working underground are at a disadvantage as they work by the aid of artificial light where it is difficult to prevent

the introduction of grit into the detonator tubes during the operation of affixing them to fuses. The number of men employed on a mine does not affect the question in the slightest. It is to the advantage and for the protection of individuals that provision should be made that detonators should only be attached to fuses at such places where the introduction of grit or any other foreign material can be safeguarded against. Prior to the framing of this regulation the Laka View and Star, the Sons of Gwalia, and the Wiluna Gold Mines had already adopted the practice of preparing rods on the surface, and it is gratifying and illuminating to note that not one accident has occurred in the use of detonators attached to rods, as carried out by those mines. The extra cost to small mines or prospecting shows would be infinitesimal as the number of rods used would be limited, and therefore they could be easily prepared by some employee; and the time occupied would be trifling. In prospecting shows, if it is not already done by the majority of men, the rods could be more efficiently prepared on the surface and taken below—rather than that the work should be done underground—and at no extra cost at all. In the interests of the men working underground it is advisable that every possible risk should be eliminated. There will be no extra expense or any hardship whatever inflicted by the regulation in so far as prospectors and small mine owners are concerned. With regard to the transport of carbide, this regulation makes provision for calcium carbide to be taken underground either (1) in lamps or (2) in water-tight receptacles. It also provides that no person shall store or leave calcium carbide underground on going off shift, and that spent carbide shall be placed in properly covered receptacles and taken to the surface as often as necessary. This is a very necessary regulation. The use of the carbide lamp is rapidly replacing the use of candles, and it is necessary that the health and safety of the miners should be safeguarded in connection with its handling. Spent carbide is a most objectionable commodity underground. It has a very pungent odour and is capable of emitting fumes which are detrimental, in mine atmospheres, to the health of the miners. Then there is the added danger that a proportion of the waste from the lamps will still be capable of generating gas. In

very few instances will the charge be completely exhausted—in fact, the miners will not wait until their lights fail before recharging them—and it is essential that adequate precautions be taken to minimise the danger from explosion arising from this cause. The fumes from spent carbide may cause headaches and other disabilities which, although not serious, are annoying and preventable. With reference to set times for blasting, the most dangerous dust created in a mine is from blasting operations. It is most essential that times for blasting should be regulated in order to protect underground workers from fumes which not only contain poisonous gas but man-killing dust.

The regulation provides four periods on day and afternoon shift for blasting—noon, 4 p.m., 8 p.m., and midnight. Special permission may be obtained for blasting obstructions in ore passes, etc., or in the interests of safety. There is nothing unreasonable or detrimental in confining the ordinary times to periods of four hours during the two working shifts. The regulation may possibly cause some inconvenience to tributaries, and perhaps to small mine owners, but it is part of a preventive system against the contraction of miners' diseases. When the tremendous toll of human life that the disease has taken, the huge sums of money that the taxpayer has to find to compensate men withdrawn from the mines, and the misery caused to the men themselves through being debarred from their means of livelihood, are borne in mind, justification for the regulation is established. The preservation of life and health is worth a lot of inconvenience. The regulation dealing with dust and ventilation is a most necessary one. The modern and approved rock drills create dangerous dust when boring. Some of the dust is so infinitely fine that it cannot be laid by the radially applied water. It is so fine that the mucous membrane will not arrest it, and it finds its way to the lungs. Probably the dust formed in boring with machine drills is the second most dangerous source of dust creation in mining operations. The most serious source is from blasting. Men who are working the machines should be protected from the dangerous dust created, and the only possible means of doing it in development ends is by the use of blowers. It is most desirable that, in dead ends, Venturi blowers

should be installed when a distance of 20 feet has been reached in a face away from the through air current.

At present Venturi blowers are used in a large number of development places, and of course the pipes have to be dismantled for a certain distance back before firing, to protect them from damage. It is no more difficult to dismantle the pipes from a face 20 feet from the through airway than it is from a face 120 feet away. The atmosphere in a face 20 feet from a through airway can be just as dangerous as the atmosphere in a face 120 feet away. This regulation will not apply to prospecting shows or small mines not using compressed air.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Does the regulation say so?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It cannot apply because there is no compressed air in such a mine. The second portion of this regulation dealing with the appointment of dust and ventilation officers by mining companies refers only to those mines which the departmental officers consider should appoint them. The regulation is intended to apply to the large mines and will not be applicable to any small mines or prospecting shows.

Hon. H. Seddon: Will they be scheduled?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. The sole object is the preservation of the health of the miners. There is provision also for a record of inspection so as to check negligence and ensure vigilance. These regulations are an honest attempt to provide not only congenial, but life preserving conditions. Any obstacles to their consummation are indirect attacks on development along lines of human sympathy and healthful industrial progress. The contention of inconvenience pales into insignificance when compared with the compensating benefits of health and hygiene. I oppose the motion.

HON. SIR CHARLES NATHAN (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.53]: But for the remarks of Mr. Fraser, I would not have spoken to the motion. On a question of this sort members who are not intimately associated with the particular industry that is the subject matter of the debate have to be guided very largely by the views expressed by those other members who know more about the subject. On the other hand, we are privileged to exercise a vote which carries

just as much weight as do the votes of those who know more about the industry. In endeavouring to inform our minds as to the proper course to take in this matter, we should be able in an intelligent manner to follow the arguments placed before us. I have listened attentively to the various speakers, particularly to those who are associated with the gold mining industry. I refer especially to Mr. Cornell, Mr. Harris, Mr. Seddon, and Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams certainly gave a most graphic description of the industry. At one time he almost made me shudder, and seemed likely to blow himself up.

Hon. J. Cornell: Mr. Williams is the only member who has worked underground on a big mine.

Hon. Sir Charles NATHAN: And it almost seemed as if he would send himself underground again. I was impressed by what he said. Some of the things he said, however, were discounted by Mr. Cornell, who, whilst admitting that the regulations were good, suggested that the Minister might consider the possibility of scheduling them so that they would not apply to small mines. Mr. Seddon and Mr. Harris were both definite in the views they expressed. We have to admit that all these gentlemen are just as careful about their responsibilities, and just as keen as anyone else on safeguarding human life. The Minister's speech assisted only to place me in a still more awkward position. If I were to vote against the regulations, after what the Minister said, I should almost feel I was aiding and abetting cold-blooded murder. The Minister's remarks are somewhat discounted by the fact that although mining has been carried on in this State for 40 odd years, and although I know that carbide lamps have been in use under very difficult conditions, it seems to me it has been left to an American engineer to institute safeguards on the mines which only now the Mines Department are proceeding to follow. In view of the fact that these regulations are being carried out principally on the larger mines, the Minister may be inclined to review the position as it affects the smaller mines. The department are only now moving in the matter, and it seems to me that nothing serious can happen if the regulations for the moment are placed on one side, and the department are given an opportunity to consider the views expressed by members.

The Chief Secretary: Does not the hon. member think we have had serious results already?

Hon. Sir Charles NATHAN: Has that been the case?

The Chief Secretary: What about miners' phthisis?

Hon. Sir Charles NATHAN: Then those regulations should have been suggested years ago.

Hon. J. Cornell: In the case of some of them, 25 years ago.

Hon. Sir Charles NATHAN: Possibly the regulations may be set aside for a few days in the hope that the department may be able to meet the wishes of those members who know their subject, and are charged with a responsibility towards their constituents. Assuming that such a delay would not do any harm, I propose to vote with them on the subject.

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

#### **BILL—SPECIAL LICENSE (WAROONA IRRIGATION DISTRICT).**

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

#### **ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.**

*Eleventh Day.*

Resumed from the 15th September.

**HON. E. H. GRAY** (West) [5.4]: I desire to associate myself with the congratulations that have been extended to you, Sir, on your re-election to the Presidency of this Chamber, and to express my personal appreciation of the manner in which you have carried out the duties associated with the position. Those of us who have had the privilege of attending public functions at which you have been present in your official capacity, have been gratified at the manner in which you have upheld the prestige of this Chamber. I sincerely regret the passing of members of this Chamber. The late Mr. Lovekin was a remarkable man in many ways. He was a powerful ally, and my experience of him during the eight years with which I was associated with him proved that on a number of occasions. He was always ready to respond to calls for assistance in connection with any activity, and to pave the way to enable one to receive assistance from other sources as well. The State has lost a great citizen in the passing of Mr. Lovekin. It is also regrettable that the Parliamentary career of the late Mr. Allsop should have

been cut so short. I knew the late gentleman in Kalgoorlie, where he was held in very high esteem. I desire to express emphatic disapproval of the latest move on the part of the Government in connection with their policy to dispose of the State enterprises. The latest announcement—the projected disposal of the electricity plant and power house—I sincerely hope is not meant to be taken seriously. I cannot imagine any Government or people even contemplating such a thing. Surely no body or society other than perhaps the Employers' Federation, would support a preposterous proposal of that kind. I am of opinion that if it is persisted in, it will deal a fatal blow to all secondary industries in the State. At the same time the disposal of the power house would be a terrific blow to the public who use current in their homes.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It is under private control in England.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Even so I doubt whether it is being produced any cheaper in England than in Western Australia. I am certain there will be a united protest from every section of the community if the Government insist on carrying out their intention. Reading the history of past monopolies, I should say that the Government would be digging their own grave if they carried the idea into effect.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You would not shed a tear over that, would you?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It would not be in the best interests of the State to dispose of the department. If the Government will not announce that it is their intention to abandon the idea, I trust that public meetings in protest will be held all over the State.

Hon. G. W. Miles: But are you not in favour of the Government digging their own grave?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The State would suffer by the Government's proposal if it were put into effect. Of course I would not mind if the Government went out, for in that way it might be possible to prevent the sale of the State enterprises. I am certain that no difficulty would be experienced in financing the power house out of any trouble into which it might have drifted. If extensions are necessary it ought to be possible to raise money to provide them, even though the amount involved might run into hundreds of thousands of pounds. By indulging in pernicious propaganda of this kind, the Gov-

ernment are doing a lot of harm to the State. Therefore I hope the idea will be abandoned. A monopoly of that sort should be maintained and owned by the people of the State, and I cannot find words strong enough to condemn the scheme the Government have in view. I have been surprised that the Government and their party, who for years have condemned Labour's proposal regarding the alienation of Crown lands, have not seen fit to give effect to their policy of converting into freeholds the leaseholds on which workers' home have been built. The leasehold system was introduced by the party to which I belong, and many thought it was the commencement of a new era in the provision of cheap homes for the people. The Government at that time erected under leasehold conditions a fairly large number of homes for workers. This principle was condemned by successive Nationalist Governments, and yet we find that the Government now in power have not seen fit to give the leaseholders the opportunity of converting their properties to freehold. I admit that the leasehold principle has not turned out as was expected. It might have been all right if plenty of money had been available, and it had been possible to extend the policy. Experience, however, has shown that grave handicaps have been imposed on the leaseholder. Only recently within the last week or two in fact, an instance of hardship came under my notice. A widow who recently lost her husband wanted to dispose of her home, which had been built on the leasehold principle. She had lived there for 10 or 12 years. She found it quite impossible to effect a satisfactory sale because of the existing conditions making it impossible for an ordinary financier to offer a fair price. The Government should have introduced legislation to give the holders of leasehold premises the opportunity to convert to freehold if they so desired. Personally I believe in the leasehold principle, though I must admit it has not turned out exactly as I thought it would. Therefore the opportunity should be given to those who desire to do so to obtain the freehold of their properties. A proof of what I am saying may be seen in that area at Claremont overlooking the showground. There are magnificent blocks there, well suited for the erection of good homes. Yet because of the leasehold conditions buyers cannot be found.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is it not because of the cost of building?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No, the cost of building has been reduced considerably, 40 per cent. I have been told, and yet we see no building operations going on in the area mentioned. If the Workers' Homes Board had funds they would be in a position to offer those desirous of selling, the equity of their properties. But unfortunately there is no money for that purpose, and consequently the occupiers must suffer. With regard to the electoral rolls, I suggest that drastic alterations should be made and legislation introduced to provide for the issue of a combined Federal and State roll. The present system is not only costly, but inefficient. The public mind is confused by the complex method of obtaining enrolment for both the State and Federal Parliaments. This confusion applies not only to the average citizen, but to many people occupying high positions. Members are aware of the misunderstandings that have arisen with regard to claiming a vote for this Chamber. Surely a system based on that in existence in Great Britain could be instituted here.

Hon. J. Cornell: What, for this House?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No, for the compilation of the rolls. It should be possible to lodge claims at post offices and with local authorities. A time should be fixed for claiming a vote and the claims could be lodged as I have stated. Where that system is operating it is found to be working satisfactorily.

Hon. J. Cornell: Does not adult suffrage apply to the House of Commons now?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes. The position here is complicated by the fact that it is necessary to compile a roll for the Legislative Council, but I consider that arrangements could be made for taking the vote on the ratepayers' rolls of the various local authorities. We can safely say that the present method is a farce, and it is unfair to any aspirant for Parliamentary honours. I strongly object to it because I consider that the usual method adopted by the State Electoral Office is to try to keep as many people as possible from enrolling.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You suggest that the department do so?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I suggest that the department, instead of encouraging enrolment,

deliberately try to keep people off the rolls as much as possible.

Hon. J. Cornell: Would you encourage them whether they were qualified or not?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No. Thousands of people are qualified and should be enrolled, but they are prevented from enrolling owing to the methods adopted by the State Electoral Office.

Hon. G. Fraser: The department are concerned about getting them off the roll, but not on the roll.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, they are concerned about getting people off the roll, but do not give much attention to getting them on the roll. I had a painful experience during the last eight months and I am justified in referring to it in this House and condemning everybody responsible for it.

Hon. E. H. Harris: What were the circumstances?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: In the first place no acknowledgement card is sent to the claimant when his claim is received by the department. A man may claim to be enrolled and send in his card duly signed, and the claim may be accepted, but he does not know whether he has been enrolled or not until the roll is printed, unless he takes an opportunity to visit the department and make personal inquiry. It is, of course, impossible for hundreds of people living at a distance from Perth to do that. It must cost the State a huge amount to deal with the duplicate claims sent to the department. I discovered that when people who have rightly claimed to be enrolled have not received an acknowledgement card from the department, they have filled in another card and sent it to the department. To deal with those duplications means additional work.

Hon. E. H. Harris: That has always been so, has it not?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I have spoken of it before. Previous to the recent election, matters became acute. I have never witnessed such confusion and obstruction as were exhibited by the State Electoral Office and the Chief Electoral Officer.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Was not the confusion caused by 3,000 or 4,000 claim cards being sent in at the last moment?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do not think so. I was a candidate and was keenly interested in the preparation of the rolls, and I started early on the job.

Hon. H. Seddon: How many cards did you put in at the last minute?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Very few. I had an arrangement whereby the cards were sent to the department every week, and no difficulty was placed in the way of the department's preparing the West Province roll, at any rate. I object to the present methods adopted to keep working-class people off the roll.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What are the methods adopted to keep them off the roll?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The department send out a questionnaire, if at all doubtful about the qualifications of a claimant.

Hon. H. J. Yelland: Are not they justified in doing so?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No, I think it is a waste of time. In a majority of instances the people do not understand the questionnaire. I have discovered that in some cases where answers were sent to the department, the answers were used to prosecute the people who had supplied them. Very few people understand the methods, and it is easy for an ordinary man and even for people in high places wrongly to claim a vote. In April last the department set out to terrorise the people of the metropolitan area—absolutely to terrorise them.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It seemed like it from the number who got on the roll for the Metropolitan-Suburban Province!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do not know anything about the Metropolitan-Suburban Province. I am speaking of West Province.

Hon. J. Cornell: I understand that canvassers were obliging enough to sign cards for people.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I know nothing about that. A man who would do such a thing would be very foolish.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You are generous in suggesting that he would be only foolish.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I cannot imagine any man deliberately signing a card for somebody else. There is nothing to gain by it, but everything to lose.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The candidate might gain by it.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I cannot imagine a man deliberately breaking the law in order to serve the interests of a particular candidate.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Are not canvassers rewarded by the number of voters they put on the roll?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There was no reward in this instance; all the canvassers got was the thanks of the candidate. I was surprised at the action of the department. Five people in West Province were prosecuted.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Out of how many who were eligible to be prosecuted?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: They were the only five who could be discovered, and it took the department a long time to discover them.

Hon. J. Cornell: They should not have been prosecuted. The man who witnessed the cards should have been prosecuted.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Those prosecutions would have come in due course. A majority of the cards were signed by me, and it seemed as if the Chief Electoral Officer had set out deliberately to prejudice me during the election campaign. I make that charge seriously because I believe it is true. Any candidate who lends himself to dubious methods in order to get people on the roll prejudices himself in the eyes of the electors. I have been actively associated with the department for the last 11 years and on no occasion have I tried to mislead any officer of the department. I am fairly past middle age now and I find it best to go straight. I have always followed that policy in public life and the public recognise it. No matter to what party a man belongs, when I am conducting an election campaign, everybody gets a fair deal.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Have not you always found honesty the best policy?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You should not have waited until middle age to find it out, surely.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Certainly not. I am stating the experience of my life, that it pays to be straight and it does not pay a member of Parliament to do anything crooked. I object to the department sending out questionnaires and then prosecuting people on the answers supplied. That actually happened.

Hon. J. Cornell: Would the difficulty be overcome if the rolls closed earlier?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do not think so; it would be of no advantage to close the rolls earlier.

Hon. J. Cornell: It would give the department a little more time.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I consider it is the duty of the department, not of the candidate, to enrol people.

Hon. H. J. Yelland: Do not you think there is time enough to look into those things.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I have never lodged a claim without giving a guarantee that it was in order. Many hundreds of people were enrolled for West Province. The depression had naturally caused a large number to move from place to place. I guaranteed every card I could, and if there was any I could not guarantee, I pointed it out to the department. For some reason or other, in my opinion to prejudice me in the eyes of the electors, four people were prosecuted. The first was an old lady, a pensioner, who in every way was qualified to vote. The card was witnessed by me, submitted to the office, and guaranteed to be in order.

Hon. E. H. Harris: What sort of a guarantee was it?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: My guarantee, which would be accepted anywhere.

Hon. E. H. Harris: What was the title to the claim?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Joint householder.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is not permissible.

Hon. E. H. Harris: There is no vote for a joint householder.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Only for a joint freeholder.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member cannot proceed with all those interjections.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do not think it necessary to enter into the details of the qualifications, but joint householder is a permissible qualification, provided he is paying a certain rental. There must be a joint rent book and it must be produced.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is a new dodge, is it not?

Hon. J. Cornell: It is new to me.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The old lady was much concerned.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Tell me how it is worked.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do not think I could teach the hon. member anything about getting people on the roll.

Hon. E. H. Harris: It is quite a new one to me.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: A deputation headed by the Mayor of North Fremantle waited on the Minister and the Chief Electoral



Officer. If anybody was to blame for that claim, I was the individual.

Hon. J. Cornell: Exactly.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: When the Mayor of North Fremantle and I interviewed the authorities, the Attorney-General said the matter was in the hands of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Chief Electoral Officer said it was in the hands of the Attorney-General. That was all the satisfaction I could get. Although the Attorney-General belongs to a different party,—the Nationalist Party—he saw the injustice of dragging an innocent old lady before the court. As a matter of fact she could not be taken before the court as she was bedridden. However, the Attorney-General realised the injustice of treating her as a criminal on a charge that was absolutely groundless, but refused to exercise his prerogative. A questionnaire was sent to a young man and the chief witness called against him by the department was his father-in-law. The card was in order in every respect. He claimed as a householder, and he had every right to do so. He was a complete stranger to me; I did not know him until he came to me in great distress with the summons.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Was the father-in-law the householder?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No, he was a boarder. The third prosecution concerned an old man and the chief witness against him was his daughter. She was ill when the summons arrived and the shock of it made her worse. In respect to both those cases, I went twice to the Attorney-General and wrote to him and to the Chief Electoral Officer and explained the whole of the facts and challenged their right not only to prosecute, but to refuse to enrol the claimants.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You claim that you should have been prosecuted instead of these other people?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If anybody was to be prosecuted, it was I. However, the authorities could not successfully prosecute me on my past record.

Member: You would not be prosecuted on that.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: A young married couple were prosecuted because the husband had given the wrong house number. Just fancy that! I hope the Minister is taking note of all these things, for the purpose of inquiry.

Hon. H. Seddon: Did the husband sign a declaration?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes. He unfortunately put the wrong house number. Being unemployed, and shifting pretty well once a month—because of the landlord, I suppose—he had forgotten the number by reason of his frequent removals.

Hon. J. Cornell: If he was not the landlord, he was not entitled to the vote.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: He was prosecuted.

Hon. J. Nicholson: How about a select committee to inquire into these things?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: These things will stand every inquiry. I regard it as my duty to report such matters, because I think some explanation of them is due from the Government. All these cases, as I have said, were explained in detail to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Hon. E. H. Harris: What number of them?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I have given four cases.

Hon. E. H. Harris: And there were more?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There were dozens upon dozens of cases in which prosecution did not take place. The prosecutions actually brought were, I take it, in the nature of try outs to see how the Crown would get on. Why the Electoral Department should pick the West Province member for this purpose I fail to understand. The department's action caused so much alarm and distress among the people affected that I thought it necessary to take steps on their behalf. The cases came before the police court in Fremantle. The first case was heard by the resident magistrate, Mr. Craig, and was dismissed with costs against the department. What did happen was what I expected would happen, what I told the Attorney General and the Chief Electoral Officer would happen. I foretold to them that they could not successfully maintain their stand in court. Their action not only brought distress and something like ignominy on the people concerned, but cost a fair amount in actual cash—eight or ten guineas—besides the value of the departmental officers' time. I may mention that the department did not pay their own witnesses. They had to pay two lawyers, but were so mean that they did not reimburse expenses to the people whom they had subpoenaed to come to court.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Did the same witnesses appear in all four cases?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No. What I complained of is that I had arranged

with the department that if I lodged a claim which I regarded as in any way doubtful, I would mention the matter to the officer receiving the card. If I was satisfied that a claim was wrong, I destroyed the card myself. Numerous cards have been destroyed by me in front of the Fremantle electoral registrar. The electoral registrar for the West Province undertook that in connection with any disputed claim, instead of the department being put to the trouble and expense of sending out an investigating officer, I would be permitted to make the investigation, thereupon reporting the results to the department.

Hon. J. Cornell: If the hon. member caused a claim card to be filled in improperly and then destroyed it, he is liable to a fine.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If that is so, I am liable to a good many fines. However, this is the arrangement agreed to by the electoral registrar, that cases of doubtful claim should be put on one side, and that I should be given an opportunity of personally investigating them and then putting the claims up again to the registrar; that then, if the registrar was not satisfied, the claim would be rejected, but that in no case would he disallow a claim without informing me of the fact.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is not all this the job of the department, and not the job of the candidate?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The department have not got the money to do it. I point out to the House that the department's policy was to restrict the roll.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You have enlightened me on enrolment. It wants investigation, from what I can see of it!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: In the case of the West Province—my colleague will bear me out in this—the policy of the Labour Party is to get on the roll all the people who are entitled to vote. What I complain of is the way I was treated by the department. That treatment was not fair to me, and not fair to the people who signed the cards which I lodged. The only explanation I can offer is that this was a deliberate attempt to prejudice my candidature in the eyes of the electors. Not only on the eve of the election but just before nomination day, these cases were brought on. Was that fair to the people, or fair to me?

Hon. G. W. Miles: But you had no opposition.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: This arose before nomination day. It is quite likely that the four cases might have taken a fortnight to dispose of if the department had persisted. The legal battle was on at the time of the election; and that was distinctly unfair to me, at any rate. The Minister may be able, as the result of inquiry, to give the reason why the department adopted this course on the occasion in question. I am concerned about the cumbersome method by which the rolls are prepared, and about the inefficiency of the Electoral Department. I am also concerned with the necessity for quickly changing the system, in the interests of economy and efficiency. Now that the Government are hard-pushed for cash is the time for amending legislation to be passed in both the Federal and the State Parliaments, legislation which will secure more efficient methods. I defy anybody to say that the present method is satisfactory.

Hon. E. H. Harris: When you speak of inefficiency, are you referring to the Chief Electoral Officer or to the Fremantle registrar?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am complaining of the way the Chief Electoral Officer runs the department. The matter demands some explanation by the Government.

Member: Who is the Chief Electoral Officer?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Mr. Gordon. Of the Fremantle registrar I say nothing, as he merely acted under instructions. My complaint is against the methods of the Chief Electoral Officer. I do not know why the Chief Electoral Officer told me one story, and the Attorney General, in the Crown Law Department, told me another. The people concerned were all decent people. Had they been ardent Labour supporters, I could have understood the action that was taken; but to pick people who were almost strangers to me, and to use them as means of prejudicing my candidature, is an action that reflects disgrace on any officer associated with it. The Minister may be able to explain the matter. I have repeatedly tried to find out why these things were done, and no satisfactory explanation has resulted. The facts are that the mayor of North Fremantle, who is not associated with the Labour Party, did his best, as the chief citizen of North Fremantle, to get the case against the lady withdrawn. The lady, I repeat, was a stranger to me. Both the mayor of North Fremantle and I approached the Attorney General and the

Chief Electoral Officer, and yet the case went on. That, I say, is a disgrace to the Electoral Department.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Do you submit that all those enrolments were entirely in order?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I submit that there was no wrong claim ever submitted to the department and the name put on the roll.

Hon. J. Cornell: Why?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Here is the position. When a person claims enrolment on the Federal roll, he receives an acknowledgment card. When he claims enrolment on the State roll, he does not get an acknowledgment card. Naturally he thinks—the majority of people think this—that he should receive an acknowledgment card in the other case as well.

Hon. J. Cornell: That acknowledgment card represents compliance with the law as to compulsory enrolment.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There is nothing in the Act to prevent the department from notifying a man that he has been enrolled. They could do that instead of wasting postage stamps on sending out a questionnaire which is not understood.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The Act does not provide for notification.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Many things not provided in the Act could be done without any amendment of the measure. If any investigation is to be made, why cannot the police be sent to make it? The police, however, are sent only when the department think themselves on a sure thing. One man was cross questioned by detectives for half an hour. They were trying to make him admit that I falsely signed the claim card.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Third degree!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, third degree! This was in the house, before his wife. Owing to the cumbersome method of claiming a vote, some people have developed strange ideas. In particular, some wives have developed queer notions as to what they can do for their husbands. I know of a case where a husband had not been enrolled for the State Parliament. A claim card accordingly had been left, and the wife had forgotten to give it to him. Then she signed his name on the card.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Signed his name?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes. She thought that, being his wife, she was entitled to do so. She did it innocently, although her action was forgery. If the State Chief Elec-

toral Officer chose to produce evidence which he could furnish, it would be found that dozens and dozens of wives have done the same thing quite innocently.

Hon. W. J. Mann: All in the West Province?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No; all over the State.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The witness to the signature should have been prosecuted.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: In one instance the wife witnessed her own signature.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The witness should have been prosecuted, instead of the persons actually prosecuted.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It would have been had enough to prosecute me, because I was perfectly innocent.

Hon. G. W. Miles: But the person who witnessed the signature to the claim card by the woman should have been prosecuted.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It was done in error.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The whole thing wants investigating.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes. It will bear investigation.

Hon. G. W. Miles: My word it will!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The detectives went to the woman's house. They could not believe that what had actually taken place, did take place. They were out to try and trap me, if they could.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Who was the witness?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The wife witnessed her own signature. It would surprise hon. members to learn how people come to do these things quite innocently.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Innocently of course! It is done all over the State, and not done innocently.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I have pointed out that it was innocently done. The persons concerned had nothing to gain because those affected were entitled to be enrolled. In one instance, the wife forgot to give her husband the card and she thought she could sign his name for him. I do not blame the police, who made the inquiries, but I do blame the department for having caused them to make the inquiries in the way they were carried out. Why should not the police get at the bottom of the position in a proper manner?

Hon. G. W. Miles: You object to the questionnaire, and yet you say the police should get at the bottom of the trouble.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I contend that the police should have carried out their contract with me.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Did you witness the signature on the enrolment card?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Then how did you come into it?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I undertook to investigate personally any doubtful claims. For over 12 years, I have been connected with electoral matters and I have never yet been guilty of wilfully endeavouring to mislead the Electoral Department. The work of getting people on the rolls occupies much time and it does not appeal to me to indulge in questionable practices. If people who are entitled to vote are not enrolled, they cannot vote.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And if enrolled they are entitled to vote, even though they should not be enrolled.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That sort of thing may apply in the hon. member's province, but in the West Province our electoral actions are all above board.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And yet people who are not entitled to vote are enrolled.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I wish hon. members would allow Mr. Gray to proceed.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It does not appeal to me to indulge in questionable tactics. There are thousands who should be on the roll who are not enrolled.

Hon. G. Fraser: Prior to my election, a person was refused enrolment by the electoral officers but was enrolled, with 152 others, when the claim cards were handed in by the organisers of the National Party.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That is interesting information.

Hon. E. H. Harris interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must ask hon. members to maintain order.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I desire redress, and I claim that the electoral system should be altered drastically along common-sense lines so as to make it more efficient than it is at present. Every citizen entitled to be on the roll should be enrolled, and the department should adopt a policy of encouragement, rather than of suppression.

Hon. J. Cornell: Does the hon. member favour compulsory enrolment for the Legislative Council?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do not know that it could be carried out, but I would prefer that system.

Hon. E. H. Harris: No one else can see how it could be done.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The present system is unjust, costly and inefficient. I trust the Minister will reply to the statements I have made. I have placed the information before members honestly and sincerely believing that the prevailing system is wrong. Those concerned in the incidents I have referred to, should be called upon for an explanation, which should be furnished to the House.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The grave position of the State has been caused by the prevalence of unemployment and I do not consider the present time one in which any member should indulge in idle criticism. On the other hand, it should be our duty to endeavour to help the Government, rather than hinder them. I agree with Mr. Miles in his statement that many people look upon the Government as possessing some supreme and magic power to accomplish anything they desire. That is, unfortunately, only too true. At the same time, we cannot gainsay the fact that while the Government are responsible for rendering assistance to thousands of our people who are unemployed, society as a whole is responsible for the condition of those unfortunate people. I use the word "Society" in its most comprehensive sense, as including all Governments and units of population. The pity of it is that thousands of our people are absolutely callous regarding the conditions in which their fellow citizens find themselves to-day. I believe at present there are 16,000 people out of work, and they include some of our best citizens. Although years ago we could with reason talk about the failure of the capitalistic system, and claim that those who were out of work were the unfortunate victims of a pernicious system, the experience of the last year or so has materially altered the position and thousands of our best fellow citizens are destitute. To anyone who has been in touch with the unemployed, the position is heart-breaking. It hurts to realise that there are thousands of our citizens who are absolutely callous to the welfare of others. In my opinion, the Government do not extend sufficient sympathy to the young people who are suffering from the unemployment difficulty to-

day. The young men especially are the biggest sufferers.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Numbers of them will feel the effects of the depression throughout their lives. A recognition of that fact should make us tolerant regarding anything that the young people may feel disposed to say or do at the present time. The outlook for them is distinctly unfair. The Government may be withholding information from members, but I was surprised at their announced intention to add  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the pound to the existing impost of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. for the purpose of an unemployment tax. That is distinctly wrong, unless the Government have some scheme whereby they will be able to alleviate the unemployment difficulty.

Hon. E. H. Harris: But is not the extra  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the pound being imposed for the purpose of alleviating unemployment?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That may be so, but I am afraid that, with the imposition of that tax, the 27 relief committees operating in the metropolitan area will cease to function, and the unemployed will be in a worse position than before. Already relief committees are feeling the effects of the Government's announcement. If there is to be a tax imposed on a flat rate on everyone's earnings, people who at present contribute will not feel disposed to continue their donations towards the funds of relief committees.

Hon. A. Thomson: You could not expect them to do so.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Of course not. During the past three winters, the relief committees have done a vast amount of work in providing firewood, milk, food supplies and clothing for the unemployed. That work will cease with the imposition of the tax, and the unemployed will suffer. I would like to ask the Government these questions: Will the Government guarantee increased sustenance payments to the unemployed to enable them to pay house rent and provide clothes for themselves and their families? Will they guarantee special measures being taken for feeding infants and expectant mothers? I can speak with authority regarding the work of many relief committees and I know that at Fremantle, expectant mothers are attended to, transport is provided for them, and they are looked after and fed as well. That work involves the expenditure of many thousands of pounds contributed by good-hearted citi-

zens. The State cannot afford to allow such an organisation to cease operations unless some other provision is made to carry on the work. It could be done easily now but if the committees cease to function, it may be difficult in future. Although I do not agree with the system under which milk can be procured at 2d. a pint, the fact remains that milk can be secured at that price, and if the Government intend to proceed with the drastic taxation proposal that has been announced, a scheme should be evolved whereby expectant mothers and children attending the various schools could be supplied with milk. The Government should see to it that the mothers and children are constantly looked after.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Have you formulated any scheme for providing the necessary money?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The Government propose to levy a flat tax on everyone, and that is wrong. A letter appeared in the "West Australian" this morning in which a man from the Old Country stated that the taxation in England ranged up to 18s. in the pound on certain incomes. In view of that, I am convinced that we can go considerably further with our taxation on the higher incomes.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Then you suggest increasing the income tax?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes. I favour increasing the income tax chargeable on the incomes of those who can afford to pay, rather than that this drastic tax should be made payable by people in receipt of the basic wage or on part-time work. At present the latter have not enough money to provide themselves and their families with food and clothing. To levy a tax of 6d. in the pound on people in that position is, in my opinion, a grotesque proposal. I recognise the danger attached to increased taxation.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I hope you do.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: But, surely, in a State like Western Australia we can afford to look after our women and children, irrespective of how short we may be of cash. Surely the people of this State will not admit that they cannot look after the dependants of those who are out of work. Will they suggest that the boys and girls should be permitted to go to school half-starved, ill-clad and miserable? The position is bad enough now, but unless the Government are prepared to adopt some new scheme for the

assistance of the unemployed, the position of the latter will be worse than at present.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you suggest that part of the proceeds of the increased taxation should be used to subsidise the existing relief committees?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am not in favour of the flat tax at all.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Have you worked out what is expected from the proposed tax?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The Government have experts to do that work. In view of the letter that appeared in the "West Australian" this morning, I am satisfied that increased taxation can be levied on those earning large incomes, and the burden should be carried by them and not by that section of the community that is half-starved and destitute.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Do you know to what extent income tax receipts have fallen during the past two years?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I know there has been a very serious decline.

Hon. J. Nicholson: You would be prepared to kill all industry.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No, but is it not better to kill industry than to kill people.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It is not a case of killing people. The trouble is that you are seeking to take something more away from the decent citizens, and you will not allow people to work.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The hon. member is not correct.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You have your Arbitration Court and, as a result of awards, people cannot get work.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No Arbitration Court award applies to the agricultural or pastoral industries.

Hon. G. W. Miles: No, but under your system you will not allow people to work.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That argument was exploded long ago.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Whenever applications have been made to the Arbitration Court for relief in these days of distress, relief has been granted. When that has happened, the result has been that large numbers of adult workers have been dismissed, and that has made the position worse than before. Does the hon. member know, for instance, that when relief was granted to the printing industry, large numbers of adult male and female workers were dismissed and youngsters put on in their places?

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is the effect of your system.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The hon. member's ideas were carried out, relief was sought and received, but the position is worse now than it was before. I should like to pay a tribute to the fortitude of the unemployed generally. The people of the State do not realise how heroically they have taken their troubles. It is remarkable the way in which the women have managed on their meagre sustenance.

Hon. J. Nicholson: They have a hard row to hoe.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: They have indeed, but there is a breaking point. Men in authority have said there is light on the horizon, that we have turned the corner, and all that sort of thing, yet it seems we are now going to take a step that will make the position of the unemployed worse than it is at present. I can assure members we are not going to get out of our troubles by penalising men and women on the basic wage. Now I want to pay a tribute to the young people of the State. If all our citizens realised the conditions of the unemployed as the youngsters have done, there would be a lot more money available to help the unemployed. I do not think any other body of men or women have done more than have the young people in Mills & Ware's factory. For three years they have paid in consistently through a fund for the unemployed, and other youngsters have done the same. Many of these adolescents are receiving only from 15s. to 20s. per week, yet they unfailingly pay in their contributions to the fund. If every adult citizen did the same thing, it would be a lot better.

Hon. A. Thomson: Still that would not solve the unemployment problem.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No, that is so. The trouble is that business people in good jobs do not care what is happening to their neighbours. They ridicule unemployment and the relief committees, and because things are right with themselves they think everything is right.

Hon. A. Thomson: Would not that be an argument for imposing the new tax and making them pay?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, but it should not be imposed on men on the basic wage. Surely a system could be evolved by which

the income tax would be substantially increased, but deductions would be made on a scale to be arrived at after careful investigation, deductions for new works started. What I mean is that we might evolve a scale of deductions under which an ordinary man on the lowest rung of the income taxation ladder would be exempt from this special taxation. A man able to pay would be charged the increased income taxation, but a deduction would be allowed him for the labour he had engaged. This would result in people spending their money, not on picture shows, radios, motor cars, and other useless things, but on renovating their dwelling houses. It would compel people to spend money in repairing their own houses. If every citizen who is in a position to renovate his residence were to engage hands for that work next month, a large number of people now out of work in the metropolitan area would be employed; for, as members know, nearly every other house we see is in need of renovation and is depreciating in value for want of attention.

Hon. J. Nicholson: To assist that scheme would you be favourable to suspending the Arbitration Act?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It would not be necessary. We have only to increase the income taxation substantially and embody a scale of deductions for new work—for the labour employed, not for the material. Suppose the labour were to cost £10, there would be a deduction in the income tax to that extent. It would mean a great deal of new employment in the metropolitan area, and in my view it is essentially practicable. And that idea could be extended to new buildings. If every comfortably well-off citizen with a bank balance were to take up this policy, it would be doing a great deal to alleviate the position; and we know—for Mr. Holmes told us so the other night—that there is a great deal of money available for such work. I do not think the local authorities have stood up to their job of finding work for the unemployed. They have been too careless, and the Government have not received value for their money. It is the fault, not of the men themselves, but of the super-visers under the local authorities.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That may apply to the city, but not to the country.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am certain that four-fifths or more of the people on sustenance would prefer to do work rather than receive rations or be put on useless work shifting sand, where they only lose heart. The Government should see to it that every able-bodied man or woman is given an opportunity to work for the money received.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Do you want them to get the basic wage?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, the Arbitration Court wage rate. Something must be done, and I think every member should lend his energies to the solving of this problem. I hope the New Year will prove far better than the present year, and that as the result of the co-operation of the people and the public men we shall be able to get over our difficulties, and that trouble, distress, and destitution will not be so much in evidence in the New Year as it has been in the past.

HON. J. T. FRANKLIN (Metropolitan) [6.10]: I take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on having been again elected President of the Chamber. With other speakers, I am very glad indeed to have you in that honourable position, for I realise of what advantage you are to the House and to members. The advice you give to members, particularly new members, helps them in their deliberations. However, I am very sorry for the loss of those of our members who have passed away. In them we have lost friends who had done valuable work for their constituencies and for the State, men who were well and favourably known for their records. We very much regret their passing. Also I am sorry that some previous members have not been returned from the elections. It is the fortune of war. I am pleased that our newly-elected members are already well-known public men, and I feel sure their coming to the House will be of great assistance, not only to our deliberations, but to the country as a whole. This is a non-party House, and most of us can say we have come here with a full determination to vote according to conscience, for what we regard as the best interests of the State, and to carry out our duties in a manner satisfactory, not only to ourselves, but also to those that sent us here. I would be remiss in my duty if I did not congratulate the Government on the appointment of the committee to investigate the conditions of the great North-West. Ever since coming to the House I have been of opinion that such a

committee should be appointed. I commend the Government on the personnel of that committee, for they are all keen business men with a thorough understanding of the position of the North, and we know they will give it full consideration. I am sure the report they will submit will be of incalculable value to the State, and I hope that when presented it will not be lodged in a pigeon-hole, for I do sincerely trust that their recommendations will be duly considered and that some at least of them will be adopted. I hope the time is not far distant when oil will be found in Western Australia. There is every indication of its being discovered in Australia, and I really think Western Australia will be the first to develop it in an up-to-date and marketable manner.

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

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: Before tea I was referring to the committee which has been appointed to inquire into means whereby the North-West may be developed. The members of that committee are men of vast experience who have put in practically a lifetime in that part of the State. They must have obtained very valuable knowledge relating to the development of the North-West. They are putting in their time most conscientiously in a close study of the subject and their report will no doubt be a most valuable and informative document. A report of that nature should be available to all members and the public. I hope the Government will give it every attention and will see that it is freely circulated. I feel sure that the problem of dealing with the North-West will be solved in the very near future.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It is a big problem.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: Yes. The committee are going most carefully into the matter. We should see that the report is not merely tabled and then set aside.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Quite right.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: In the past there has been too much of that sort of thing. Seeing that the committee consists of gentlemen of great experience who are going to a deal of trouble to prepare this report, something of a practical nature should be done with it. I do not pose as one who knows a great deal about the North, but I have heard that it possesses great possibilities for wealth production. Its development must take time and money, but with wise administration and support on the part of the public I believe something of a practical nature will yet be

done there. Western Australia is looking to that part of its territory for great things. We cannot afford to allow it to remain in its present condition. It is crying out for population. I understand the climate is eminently suitable for Europeans, and it seems that those who have resided there for many years declare that they would rather live there than in any other part of the State. I notice that poor Western Australia is once again in conflict with the Commonwealth authorities, this time in connection with the gold bonus. I wish to enter my emphatic protest against the discontinuance of that payment. I fought for that as a coastal man, and also as an old goldfielder who once was in business in Kanowna. In the old days I realised what a wonderful asset gold was to Australia as a whole. It was first found in this State about 40 years ago and thousands of people flocked here from other parts of Australia. The discovery of gold in this State was of great advantage to the Eastern States in those times. We are the people who require the gold bonus and deserve it, and we have the preponderance of gold in this State. The reason why the goldfields are languishing is not that there is no gold, but because in the past mining was not conducted in a scientific manner. When the first gold rush occurred everyone went to the best auriferous areas. The smaller shows were quickly abandoned because the owners had not the necessary experience and knowledge of mining. When the bonus was first granted a great opportunity was afforded to provide employment for many men who were then on the dole. I refer particularly to the development of prospecting. As a result of the activity in prospecting, numbers of abandoned mines were re-opened and further gold discoveries were made. It seems now that the bonus is to be withdrawn. No doubt some of the mines received payment when they did not deserve it, but it should certainly be continued in the case of those mines that stand in need of it and as a means of encouraging further prospecting. We do not know what possibilities there may yet be in the gold mining industry, or when another Golden Mile may be discovered. I wish now to refer to the proposed reduction in old-age pensions. A few nights ago I presided at a meeting at which a number of old-age pensioners were protesting against the reduction from 17s. 6d. to 15s. I told the meeting that these small pensions ought not be interfered



with. No doubt there are cases where people come up smilingly for their pensions every fortnight, but who are in lucrative positions and are drawing an income larger than that received by members of Parliament. I certainly would not like to see those who are on the bread line, in other words receiving only 17s. 6d. a week, deprived of any portion of their income. Those who are getting the pensions thoroughly deserve them. They are the pioneers of the Commonwealth and blazed the trail for those who came after them. Possibly many of those people did not save when they had the opportunity to do so, or perhaps the opportunity was never afforded to them. I am totally opposed to any reduction in their pensions. I wish now to refer to the dangerous level crossings that are associated with our railway lines. Very often we see in the Press accounts of some serious motor accident. The motorist may have been trying to race the train and get over the line in front of the engine. People certainly seem to like to travel as fast as they can, but that is a dangerous procedure. The motorist should have enough common sense to steady up when approaching a crossing, but many of them fail to do so. We should, however, endeavour to formulate a scheme whereby these accidents may be avoided. I am often struck by the number of times that a main road crosses the railway line. It seems to zig-zag from one side to the other, and may cross the line three times in the course of a mile or so. It should be feasible to straighten out these roads so that they cross the line only once in that mile. This would have the effect of minimising the danger to some extent. There is one particularly dangerous place in my Province, namely, at Rivervale. The time is more than ripe when drastic steps should be taken to do away with that level crossing and convert it into a subway. There is no excuse for the Railway Department to shirk the question. The crossing at Rivervale lends itself to the construction of a subway because the approach is on an incline and there would be no engineering difficulty. We might be told that it is a question of expense, but here I would point out that all the material is procurable in the State and nothing more would be required except labour. The work could easily be done by men now drawing sustenance. It is regrettable that we should have to utilise their services on work that is not reproductive,

and I hope the day is not far distant when we shall be able to pay those men the basic wage so that they might earn their living, as they did before the depression set in. But whilst we are assisting them with the dole it would be better to utilise their services in a manner that would give some return. There is a matter connected with the railways I should like to touch upon and in doing so I wish it to be understood I am not in any way criticising the officials of the department. I realise that from the Commissioner down to the humblest workman, all are competent people. Of course I am aware that if funds were available what I am going to suggest would be done without any hesitation. But whilst we have a number of unemployed on sustenance we could make use of them in re-sleeping and re-ballasting wherever those works are necessary. I have no wish to pose as an alarmist by declaring that the lines are going to ruin.

Hon. H. J. Yelland: They are in a state of disrepair, all the same.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: But there are places that could well receive attention. If we are told that there are no funds available we can retort that money has to be found with which to pay the dole. Why then not make the people receiving the dole earn what they are being paid? There are places where we know dogspikes will not hold in the sleepers into which they have been driven. The Government have a big stock of sleepers and so there would be no need to cut new ones for these urgent works. But the employment of men on this kind of labour would afford work in the direction of replenishing stocks of sleepers. I hope the Government will seriously consider this matter. On the subject of local industries I compliment the Government on their action in bringing under notice the advantage to be derived by using goods made within the State. I maintain, however, that greater publicity should be given to this question and the slogan "Use locally-manufactured goods" should be taught in the schools, and spoken in the highways and byways.

Hon. G. Fraser: You want to induce the shopkeepers to put up signs that they are selling locally-made goods.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: In the past, the local shopkeepers have depended on merchants for their supplies. Some time back

I happened to be president of the Chamber of Manufactures and I heard from the manufacturers that they had approached the importers and said, "We can manufacture the articles you are selling just as well as the imported article; why not give us a show?" The reply that they got was, "All right, give us a sample and we will sell it as the occasion demands." But that is not what the importers do with regard to the goods they import. It is unfair to a small manufacturer in this State for an importer to say, "You stock your workshops, and we will sell your goods as orders are received." But when the importer wants a stock of the same article which is imported, he has to import a bulk supply and has to find the money for the payment. The man that is struggling here has to find the money to stock up, and all that the others do is to sell the articles after they get an order. Thus they make a profit out of the local manufacturer's exertions. That is not the way in which to assist local industry. I maintain that the importers who sell wholesale should give orders to the local people in a wholesale way and stock their goods in the warehouses. A good deal has been heard about unfair competition from the Eastern States. I contend that Western Australia is the dumping ground for the Eastern States. Goods are sent here in bulk from the Eastern States. Again, if a man starts manufacturing in a small way, dumping takes place until he is crushed out of existence. We had an example of this some little time back. The well known firm of Rayner & Co. spent a good deal of money in trying to establish themselves as manufacturers of jams, pickles and the like, and when they seemed to have a footing, the big manufacturers in the Eastern States dumped similar goods here, and undercut the prices until Rayner's could no longer compete. Then when the local firm had been crushed out, the prices of the imported articles went up again and whatever loss was made, if any, during the period that the dumping took place, was speedily made up. About ten years ago I happened to be president of the Chamber of Manufactures, and at that time a manufacturer of wicker chairs received an order from Kalgoorlie to send a grass arm chair there. One was made and in due course despatched to Kalgoorlie by rail. The freight from Perth

to Kalgoorlie was 5s., the distance, as everyone knows, being 375 miles. The same purchaser in Kalgoorlie imported a wicker chair of similar type from Adelaide and had it sent by rail over a distance of 1,311 miles. Can hon. members imagine what the freight was on that chair from Adelaide to Kalgoorlie? It seems hardly credible, but it cost 1s. 9d. to send that chair over the 1,300 miles. We cannot take that kind of thing sitting down. As president of the Chamber of Manufactures I approached the then Commissioner of Railways, Mr. Short, and he said he was glad I had brought the matter under his notice, and he would certainly discuss the question at the first opportunity with the railway authorities in the Eastern States. If ever he did do so, I do not suppose anything resulted.

Hon. C. H. Wittenoom interjected.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: Regarding secession, I think the time has arrived to take a referendum in order that the opinion of the people might be ascertained. Beyond saying that, I do not intend to discuss secession. The time is overdue for the introduction of a comprehensive measure dealing with local government. The anomalies in the existing Act make it almost unworkable.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It has long been needed.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: Yes, and it has long been promised. Various Governments have promised to introduce it and have not done so. Some years ago the City Council incurred the expense of preparing a Bill—the cost was about £300—and the Bill is still in the pigeon hole, just as I am afraid the report of the North-West committee will be. Ten years ago proposals were made for repairs to the causeway. Mr. Galbraith was then City Engineer. Photographs were taken of the under-structure, including piles, braces, etc., and it was found that the Causeway was structurally unsafe. The Causeway is under the control of the Main Roads Branch of the Public Works Department. The structure has been made fairly secure, but I do not think that Mr. Tindale is in favour of what is being done. He is an engineer of repute and, if he had had his way, I think that instead of tinkering with the existing bridge, and carrying out make-shift alterations, he would have adopted an up-to-date policy, as the former Labour Government intended, and constructed a new Causeway.

Hon. J. Cornell: One consolation is that if the Causeway broke down, anyone could walk ashore.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: Only in parts; there are some dangerous pools near the Causeway. Still, one could always tell when he was on the bridge because of the stench from the algae on the upstream side. I understand that about £20,000 is being expended, and that the Causeway will then meet needs for some years. I consider it would have been better to construct a modern bridge, in accordance with the designs prepared and approved by the Labour Government. I do not say that the present expenditure will be wasted. An up-to-date bridge would cost £300,000 or £400,000, and the time will come when a permanent structure will have to be provided. The Government are considering the advisableness of building another bridge further up the river at a cost of £40,000. If the £40,000 and the £20,000 had been added, there should have been sufficient to make a start to provide a modern structure that would have sufficed for all time. Other members have dealt with matters affecting the welfare of the State, as well as of their provinces. I am pleased that the Government are adopting a progressive policy for the development of the State. I regret the proposal to impose additional taxation because the people are already taxed to the hilt. Many business people, who appear to be in affluent circumstances, are really in difficulties. Further taxation will not get us out of our troubles. On the contrary, conditions will be made worse for those who are at present paying as much as they can afford.

Hon. G. Fraser: The working man has no money to tax.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: I agree, but if taxation is increased so heavily as has been indicated, the working man will have less money, because those who find the sinews of war will be unable to continue their operations. It is possible to tax people out of existence, and I am afraid that will be the result of the Government's proposals. I should like to see a scheme to reduce taxation because that would provide opportunities to make money circulate. I support the motion.

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

*House adjourned at 8.8 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Wednesday, 21st September, 1932.*

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

### QUESTION—JARRAH, PRICES.

Mr. DONEY (for Mr. Griffiths) asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that South Australian timber merchants can supply jarrah at Bunbury cheaper than can local dealers? 2, Is he aware that tenders for timber (jarrah) for building a house at Bunbury were £100 less by Adelaide timber firms than by local firms?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, No. 2, No.

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS.

*As to precedence.*

Mr. SLEEMAN: I wish to enter a protest against Government business being taken at this stage on private members' day. While the Government may contend that the consideration of the Committee's report on a Bill is a formal matter, I have a fair idea that it may be discussed on the third reading and will not be dealt with as a formal matter.

The Minister for Lands: The third reading will not be moved until to-morrow.

Mr. SLEEMAN: It means that members who may wish to speak on that motion will have to remain silent or block private members' business. In order to protect the privileges of private members, I should like to move that the Notice Paper be adjusted to place private members' business ahead of Government business.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have merely followed the usual procedure on the day set aside for private members' business. I assure the hon. member that the third