

happen very often. With regard to the presidential position, hon. members are pleased to think that I have filled it with satisfaction. I think they may also have some satisfaction in the way I have represented them as President in other directions, and I feel that they have no cause for complaint. As Chairman of the Joint House Committee hon. members will find that I leave the affairs of that committee in a most satisfactory condition. We have had the help of capable men on that committee for years past and it will be found that the funds have been dealt with as satisfactorily as hon. members could hope. I was able to achieve one of my objectives, and hon. members have the satisfaction of knowing that their corridor has been made as comfortable for them as possible. With the help of the members of the committee, a great improvement has been made there, and I hope later on to take advantage of those conveniences myself. I thank hon. members for their kindly remarks. I hope to be associated with them during the next two years, and I trust that, with our united efforts, we will continue to conduct the business of the State with as much advantage in the future as in the past.

House adjourned at 6.28 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 5th August, 1926.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—CHARITIES DEPARTMENT.

State Dependents.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Hon. J. Cunningham (Honorary Minister): 1, What was the total number of children dependent or partly dependent, on the State, irrespective of the cause, on the 30th June, 1926? 2, What was the total number of adults dependent on the State at the same date?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM replied: 1, 3,897 children, 2, 1,529 adults.

Unemployed Relief.

Mr. LATHAM asked the Hon. J. Cunningham (Honorary Minister): What amount was paid through the Charities Department to the unemployed for the respective months of May, June, and July in the years 1924, 1925, and 1926?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM replied: 1924—May, Nil; June, Nil; July, £7 5s. 1925—May, £717 14s. 3d.; June, £949 17s. 6d.; July, £1,288 13s. 1926—May, £651 15s. 6d.; June, £976 12s.; July, £1,346 4s. 6d. Assistance granted in 1925 and 1926 is due to the change of policy of granting relief in deserving cases which previously had been refused.

QUESTION—MIGRANTS DEPORTED OR REPATRIATED.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Lands: 1, What number of immigrants have been deported or repatriated from the State for the five years ended 30th June, 1926? 2, What were the reasons actuating the Government in taking action in this direction? 3, What was the total cost involved? 4, Did the State carry the whole of the financial obligation for this action? 5, If the Commonwealth Government financially assisted the State in this work, to what extent did they do so?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, 175. 2, Migrants were repatriated on medical reports that they were likely to become permanent charges on the State. 3, £5,316 8s. 6d. 4, No. 5, £2,829 18s. 6d.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, MEEKATHARRA STOCK TRAIN.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it his intention to consider the advisability of giving preference of road to the special stock train ex Meekatharra in

order to further expedite the transportation of stock? 2, What is considered to be the maximum speed per hour, having regard to absolute safety, for trains proceeding to and from Meekatharra?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, The time tabled for special stock trains, Meekatharra to Midland Junction, is 36 hours 40 minutes, and as this is understood to meet the wishes of those concerned, no alteration is contemplated. 2, An average speed, including all stops, of 18 miles per hour.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, DAGLISH ESTATE.

Mr. RICHARDSON asked the Minister for Works: 1, How many applications from owners of land in the Daglish estate to have water laid on to their blocks have been received by the Water Supply Department? 2, Do the Government intend to have link mains laid into the estate? 3, If so, when will a start be made with the work?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Three applications before link mains were decided on in March, 1926. None since. 2, Yes. 3, When reticulation extensions therefrom are authorised, which will be subject to funds being available and revenue being sufficient to cover annual expenses on each reticulation extension.

QUESTIONS (2)—REPURCHASED ESTATE, CUMMININ.

Files.

Mr. LATHAM asked the Minister for Lands: Is it his intention to lay on the Table of the House the files dealing with the purchase from Mr. S. J. McGibbon of the Cumminin station property and its subsequent disposal?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: If the hon. member desires it on motion, I have no objection.

Rents payable.

Mr. LATHAM asked the Minister for Lands: What is the amount of rent payable annually by each holder of land in the Cumminin station property?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

Loc. No.	Name.	Annual rental, including interest.		
		£	s.	d.
21567,	21568,	21302—	Allen,	
	E. M. and K. . .	..	187	18 8
21569—	Fitzpatrick, G. E. . .	..	86	17 2
21571—	Elliott, E. H. . .	..	168	18 0
21572—	Street, O. D. T. . .	..	372	7 4
21570—	Cocks, H. . .	..	150	8 0
Total annual rental . .		£966	9	2

QUESTION—PRISON FARM, TO ESTABLISH.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Hon. J. Cunningham (Honorary Minister): In view of the comparative idleness of prisoners held in Fremantle Gaol, is it proposed to take steps to establish a prison farm, and if so, when?

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM replied: The matter is being favourably considered, and steps will be taken when a suitable opportunity presents itself.

QUESTION—ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND COMMONWEALTH GRANT.

Mr. STUBBS (without notice) asked the Premier: 1, Will the annual Commonwealth grant recently given to this State for developmental roads lapse if the Bruce Government's Federal Aid Roads Bill is defeated? 2, If so, is it contemplated to make provision for expenditure on the part of the State for the necessary works which would be carried out if the Commonwealth grant were continued?

The PREMIER replied: 1, As to what will happen so far as the Commonwealth is concerned should the Commonwealth grant or the Federal Government's proposals lapse, I am unable to express an opinion. The Commonwealth might continue to make grants from revenue as has been done during the past two years, or it might not do so. I have no information whatever as to what the intentions of the Federal Government are in the event of their present proposals being defeated. 2, As to whether in the event of Commonwealth grants not being available the State Government will make provision for road construction, I am unable to give a definite answer; but I presume we

shall have to carry on a programme of road construction as has been done in past years. That programme would, of course, be on a scale considerably reduced as compared with what would be the case if the Commonwealth grant were continued.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier--Boulder) [4.41]: It is to be expected, I suppose, this year as in past years, that members will avail themselves of the opportunity of the debate on the Address-in-reply to express their opinions upon the many questions which concern the public interest at the moment. Usually on the Address-in-reply there is a stocktaking, or general review of the State's operations for the preceding year; and on the whole I think it is of advantage to the people generally, who are the taxpayers and whose interests we are here to serve, that they should at the close of this debate have a better knowledge of the State's affairs than they had previously. Perhaps it would be expecting too much that all the speeches or comments on an occasion such as this, in the last session of a Parliament, would be entirely disinterested; but there is scope for useful comments, and for criticism where members honestly believe criticism to be justified. A discerning people will, however, be able to separate the wheat from the chaff. They will be able to distinguish comments that are intended to be useful from criticism which partakes mostly of the character of political fault-finding. Last evening the House was treated to the periodical wail to which it has been accustomed for some years past. In the course of about three hours the Leader of the Country Party was unable to find anything, or scarcely anything, in the actions and the work of the Government that he could commend. I believe he did approve of one comparatively small act of the Government, in regard to the agreement with the Young Australia League for the settlement of boys on farms. The House, however, has become accustomed to the hon. member's attitude, for it is not only when he is in Opposition, as he has been during the past two years, that he voices complaints in long

and wearying speeches. For two or three years while sitting on this side of the House, allegedly supporting a Government, his speeches were characterised by the same note of complaint. Members, too, will be aware that this tone of complaint began early in 1921; and in view of what hon. members have had to endure since, I almost feel that the present Leader of the Opposition rendered a signal dis-service to the House when he declined to listen to the pleading request of the member for Katanning in that memorable letter of his asking to be taken into the Government.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. member got down on his knees and crawled.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That was a confidential letter and should never have been published.

The PREMIER: The then Premier was not impressed by the hon. member's appeal to be permitted to attain one of the ambitions of his life, namely, Cabinet rank. I have read that letter over again, and I am rather surprised that the touching nature of the appeal contained therein did not influence the good nature of the Leader of the Opposition, more especially as it was pointed out there that their views, not upon the big outstanding questions affecting the State, but in regard to the development or future of Nornalup were on a par. I do not know quite what was in the mind of the hon. member about the future of Nornalup; whether it was to be developed as a nice holiday resort for fishing purposes, or what scheme he may have had in mind. But, notwithstanding this piteous appeal, the Leader of the Opposition remained cold-hearted, and from that day forward, whether the Leader of the Country Party has sat behind the Government or in Opposition, he has indulged in pettifoggery, snarling, fault-finding, in a manner similar to that he displayed last night. First of all, the Governor's Speech was too long, and had had the effect of wearying members. Then the hon. member proceeded to read the Speech from beginning to end, practically every paragraph of it; and although members were comfortably seated, I venture to say they were much more tired of it than they were when the Governor finished it a week ago. The hon. member roamed the political landscape in search of reasons for fault-finding, but ever he came back to the same point. He had his mind on certain constituencies, and

he talked of certain electorates. When dealing with group settlement he became almost eloquent in praise of the standard and class of men he had found amongst the group settlers. He said he was going to fight for justice for them, and he occupied half an hour in detailing alleged grievances of those people in the group settlements. It is as well to remember that, had the group settlements been left to the hon. member and the members of his party, they would not have been in existence to-day. When those settlements were inaugurated by the Leader of the Opposition, and until he left office, he received nothing but complaints and fault-finding in respect of them from the Leader of the Country Party.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Helpful criticism.

The PREMIER: Yes, helpful criticism—everything was wrong from beginning to end. As a matter of fact, the official organ of the Country Party, so late as last December, attacked the Government for doing what it described as squandering millions of pounds on group settlement in the South-West. That organ said the money should have been expended in the outer wheat belt, and that we were squandering millions of pounds in the South-West. Now the party is busily engaged with an organiser in each of those electorates where group influence predominates. I doubt if the Leader of the Country Party ever visited a group settlement until during the recent Council election, when he went travelling through them looking for votes.

The Minister for Lands: Previously he had been to Denmark only.

The PREMIER: I warn the member for Nelson and the member for Sussex that there is a Country Party organiser abroad in both those electorates.

The Minister for Lands: And one at the Peel Estate.

The PREMIER: Yes, and Murray-Wellington is on the list also. Wherever group influence predominates, those organisers are now to be found. In this morning's paper Dr. Saw is reported as having said that, whilst the two parties sitting opposite in this House were in serious conflict at the last election, at the present moment the most cordial relationship existed between them. That relationship, I venture to say, on the part of the Country Party, is the kind of relationship an

assassin might have when studying the best manner of putting a stiletto into his victim; or the cordial relationship a cannibal chief might feel when feeding his victim for the next feast, and while the pot is boiling on the fire. That is the kind of cordial relationship existing between the Country Party and the members for Nelson, for Irwin, for York, for Murray-Wellington, for Sussex, and for Wagin. There is a Country Party organiser abroad in each of those electorates, and also in Moore, where a candidate is already selected.

Mr. Latham: I do not know why you are giving them so good an advertisement.

The PREMIER: I am warning my unsophisticated friend not to be misled by this cordial relationship while the dagger is being sharpened.

Mr. Davy: To whose advantage is the warning, yours or ours?

The PREMIER: To your advantage; for I confess I would infinitely prefer to see the members who hold those seats at present retain them after the next election, rather than see those seats won by members of the Country Party. That is the reason for the warning.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That is the truth at last.

The PREMIER: I have never disguised it. The reason for it all is, as expressed by the Leader of the Country Party last night, that those hon. members are not capable of adequately representing the farming community in this House. The Leader of the Opposition—I do not know why he should be allowed to escape this campaign—and the members for York, for Wagin, and others, are not really capable of properly and adequately representing the farmers in this House. That was the reason given. The member for Irwin (Mr. Maley), I venture to say, in actual practical achievement has ploughed more of the lands of this State, and himself reaped more wheat in one year than the whole of the Country Party have done in the whole of their lives. Yet the electors of Irwin will be told that their interests can only be served by changing the hon. member, because he does not understand the farmers' difficulties, and returning a member of the Country Party. That is the kind of cordial relationship awaiting those hon. members. The Leader of the Country Party said the finances should have been

better than they are, that whilst the deficit has been reduced, there should have been a surplus. There was a very distinct note of regret in the hon. member's voice, in the tone of his expression; and it was not because the finances are not as good as he would like to have them, but because they are not infinitely worse.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Because there was not a surplus.

The PREMIER: When the Government took office, the Leader of the Country Party expected that at the end of three years we should have wrecked ourselves financially. That was his hope. And because his hope is not being realised he is disappointed and can only express the view that the finances should have been better, and that there should have been a surplus. He talked of the per capita indebtedness of the State, and showed how it has increased during the past two years. What does he want? The per capita indebtedness of the State has increased because we have been borrowing money and expending it in a manner approved by the House. Had the Government borrowed the money and spent it in the way we were urged to spend it by the very quarter from which the complaint now emanates, the per capita indebtedness of the State would have been doubled. Going back to the discussion on the Loan Estimates last year, we find that the whole of the complaint was that there were not many more millions provided on the Estimates for expenditure on public works and in other ways throughout the State. So, to quote the net increase of the debt per head of the population means nothing at all. It will increase much more in the years immediately ahead of us, no matter what Government may be in office, if the State is to take advantage of the signed agreement for the introduction of migrants and the construction of public works, both of which necessarily involve the expenditure of large sums of money.

Mr. Stubbs: We cannot have the pudding and eat it too.

The PREMIER: No, we cannot.

Member: The assets also have increased.

The PREMIER: Yes, of course they have. The Leader of the Country Party talked of the Harbour Trust charges. Those charges have not been altered since the surcharge was imposed in 1917. The surplus cash from those charges went into the

Treasury last year, as it has been doing ever since there has been a Harbour Trust. I do not know whether the hon. member, in commenting upon this and other things at every possible opportunity, endeavours to convey to the people of the State that these charges, or, as he said, a surplus of £140,000—which it was not; it was £130,000—last year, represented charges imposed by this Government. I think that is the idea in the hon. member's mind. He argued that, because 66 or 68 per cent. of the charge went upon cargo owners, it meant the owners of those goods passed it on in prices, and therefore it involved an increase in the price of articles or commodities. But last year, when it was pointed out that the Government had reduced the railway freights by £45,000, the hon. member argued that that made no difference whatever in the cost of the goods carried over the railways. So, according to the hon. member, when we reduce charges, it does not have the effect of reducing the cost of commodities upon which those charges are levied, but when we increase charges it has the effect of increasing the prices of the commodities so affected. The hon. member cannot have it both ways. He turned to the Ravensthorpe smelter, too. He seems to be the political garbage carrier of the State. He collects all the kerbstone information. To anyone who has a complaint he lends a willing ear. He acts as a gramophone in the House for all the disgruntled, dissatisfied people in the State. His speeches generally consist of reading letters, reading extracts from newspapers, reading something all the time, ex-parte statements which he puts before the House as facts, apparently without attempting to verify any one of them. When a complaint is made to him, he does not go, as do most members, to the Minister or to the department concerned, ascertain the facts of the case, and reply to his correspondent. No, he nurses it until the House meets and then, if he thinks he has a charge to make against the Government, pours it out here. Last night he referred to the Ravensthorpe smelter case, a case which is sub-judice, because an appeal is pending to the Privy Council, and it was highly improper to discuss it in the circumstances.

The Minister for Mines: Certain aspects of it are subject to appeal.

The PREMIER: Yes. He was under the impression that the Government were refus-

ing to pay to the people concerned something which ought lawfully to be paid to them.

Mr. Corboy: That was absolute rot.

The PREMIER: The persons who sued the Government—the action was started during the term of the previous Government—refused to accept the decision of the High Court given 12 months ago, and have been pressing the present Government to vary the verdict of the court, because it does not suit them.

Mr. Corboy: They asked for the variations before the present Government took office and could not get them then.

The PREMIER: Because the decision of the court does not suit them and because they did not get the money they expected, they are asking the Government to set aside the decision of the court as it affects some of the litigants as against others. Of course no Government could undertake the responsibility of ignoring a decision of the court, as some of the other litigants would then have a case against the Crown for not complying with the decision of the High Court.

Mr. Corboy: And the Government would have to pay twice.

The PREMIER: Yet the Leader of the Country Party picks up that case and comes here without knowing anything about it. He takes up the case of the Sunshine Harvester people, and talks of the attitude of organised labour in this State being opposed to piece-work. He does not know, though he ought to know, that as a general set policy of Labour, there is no opposition to piece-work. As a matter of fact a considerable amount of work is carried on and a very large number of men are employed in various callings in this State on piece-work. The coal miners work on piece-work; the gold miners work on piece-work; a large number of timber workers are on piece-work; shearers, bricklayers, plasterers, and many others I could name undertake piece-work. He, however, gives us something from a newspaper of a complaint by Mr. McKay, here again taking up a complaint without inquiring into its merits. He wants to know why the engineers' unions in Western Australia do not fall into line with the engineers of Victoria. What has Victoria to do with it? Does anyone say that we in Western Australia, whether employers, employees, or any other section of the community, should do exactly as is done in Victoria. The fact is that the engineers' organisations in this

State have never worked on piece-work and have never been asked by the employers to do so. Consequently the unions concerned, when approached in this matter, replied, "We will carry on in your works as in all other engineering works in Western Australia."

Mr. George: You can have piece-work only where there are large repetition orders.

The PREMIER: It was the only reasonable answer that could be given, and there was no need to ask the Government to advise the engineering unions to do something they had never done in the past.

Mr. Marshall: It had nothing to do with the Government.

The PREMIER: Then the Leader of the Country Party made a cry about the apprenticeship system and said the unions were preventing all the boys from learning a trade. One amazing statement he made was that fathers were preventing their sons from getting an opportunity to become tradesmen. The hon. member ought to know—and he must know because on this point he has been corrected in this House over and over again—that the question of apprenticeship is and has been determined by the Arbitration Court. It is one of the issues when a case is brought before the Arbitration Court, just as other issues are, wages, hours of labour and other conditions. It is not a matter of the attitude of the unions towards apprentices that governs the question. The matter is determined by the court. The hon. member would have the people of this country believe that the number of apprentices is limited below what he considers to be reasonable, because of the attitude of the Labour organisations.

Mr. Sampson: The main effort of the unions always appears to be to limit the number of apprentices.

The PREMIER: It is not. It has been admitted by men competent to express an opinion that the apprenticeship system in vogue in Western Australia is the best in the Commonwealth. It is governed by the circumstances. The hon. member said there was one apprentice to three tradesmen. The number of apprentices depends upon the trade and upon the circumstances. In one trade it might be one apprentice to six tradesmen, perhaps one apprentice to three tradesmen, or perhaps one apprentice to every journeyman. The Arbitration Court decides the number, and whatever the attitude of the Labour organisations might be

it would not influence the court. Does the court accept the advice of the unions on the question of wages?

Mr. Davy: Of course it does.

The PREMIER: It does not.

Mr. Davy: If they come to an agreement and it is registered, it may become a common rule.

The PREMIER: The hon. member means that if the employers come to an agreement with the employees?

Mr. Davy: Yes.

The PREMIER: If it is a matter of agreement between both parties, why does the Leader of the Country Party convey the impression that the limitation of apprentices is entirely due to the attitude of the Labour organisations?

Mr. Davy: I am not attempting to justify that contention.

The PREMIER: That is the point.

Mr. Davy: But other people might not be able to get into a certain trade on account of an agreement between the employers and employees.

The PREMIER: In the case cited by the hon. member, there would be a mutual agreement between the two sides.

Mr. Davy: Yes, to the detriment of the third party—the public.

The PREMIER: I am merely dealing with the attitude of the Leader of the Country Party in endeavouring to heap the whole of the blame and responsibility for the limitation of apprentices on the Labour organisations. It is a matter that is decided by the Arbitration Court according to the circumstances. Again, the hon. member spoke of the Arbitration Court being a court of persecution, because employers are brought before it and fined for trivial offences. We know from our reading of the newspapers that many employers have been fined very lightly, but have also been compelled to disgorge large sums of money due under awards of the court and withheld from the employees. In any case the court is administering the law which this Parliament passed last session, and it is altogether wrong at this stage, when a new court has been established and is functioning in a manner that I believe will give a greater measure of industrial peace from now on than we have ever experienced before, for any member, much less the leader of a party, to refer to the court as a court of persecution. If there should be persecution or if injustice should be done to any employer,

the fault lies with Parliament that passed the law and not with the President of the court who has to administer it. I do not propose to bother further with the hon. member.

Mr. Richardson: You have done very well.

The PREMIER: Although he detained the House for just on three hours—

The Minister for Lands: That was to qualify for the leadership of the Opposition.

The PREMIER: Length is always a feature of his speeches and we are generally able to judge what their length will be. I want to advise the Leader of the Opposition, who has a kindly feeling to all members, to recollect that if he should feel impelled to speak at great length, we are always only too willing to listen to him, but he should bear in mind that we shall afterwards be inflicted by a longer speech from the Leader of the Country Party. His speeches are published in the "Primary Producer," which speaks of the hon. member as the real Leader of the Opposition. He spoke for half an hour longer than did the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You have recognised that in your reply.

Mr. Corboy: The Premier has been generous and has flattered him.

The PREMIER: If, with the passing of years, parties should be transferred to opposite sides of the House, I shall rely upon the Leader of the Opposition displaying that good sense which he showed in April, 1921, when he received that famous letter from the Leader of the Country Party.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The position might then be reversed.

The PREMIER: Let us hope at least that if we have to endure the hon. member in this House, the country will never have to endure him as a Minister.

Mr. Corboy: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition stated, in quite a friendly way, that the Government must have been bankrupt of ideas, because a paragraph appeared in the Speech relating to the sinking fund on the goldfields water scheme loan.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I said it was ancient history.

The PREMIER: It was, and it was not inserted with a view to claiming credit for it, because the credit is due to those who went before us, 25 years ago, and who made that wise provision. The Leader of the Op-

position, however, knows that the Governor's Speech is read very carefully in places outside of Western Australia. It is read in England by people who are interested particularly in the finances of the State. The goldfields loan will be due in January or February of next year, and we shall be going on the London market at about that time, as we usually do, for a new loan of two or two and a half millions, and I thought that the time was opportune to remind people in the Old Country that while we were asking for a new loan, an old loan had fallen due and there was sufficient money in the sinking fund to meet it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A good tale is always worth repeating.

The PREMIER: That reference in the Speech was not inserted because we were bankrupt of ideas. As the hon. member says, a good tale is worth repeating, especially as some years have elapsed since it was mentioned, and I am not sure that it will not bear still further repetition. It is stated in some quarters that finance has been made easy for the present Government, because of the grants received from the Commonwealth. I wish to state that whatever the present financial year may have in store for us, during the two years we have been in office, we have not been aided in the slightest degree by any grants from the Commonwealth Government. The financial results of the past two years stand absolutely on their merits, and we have not been assisted in any way by grants from the Commonwealth. The grant from the Commonwealth will be made available this year, but for the two years that are passed that has not been so.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We have had over £40,000 for roads, and other little bits.

The PREMIER: That would not affect the revenue Estimates. Had that money not been made available from the Commonwealth, and had we expended it ourselves, no doubt it would have come from Loan money. That £48,000 grant does not affect the revenue.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Finance has been made easy. You have not had to borrow to that extent.

The PREMIER: So far as borrowing is concerned, it meant that we had £48,000 that we need not have borrowed. I am talking of the Revenue Estimates and Expenditure. In that respect we have not been assisted in the slightest degree. The Leader of the Country Party (Mr. Thomson) said that had it not

been for motor competition there was no doubt in the world the Government would have increased railway rates. I do not know how he could divine what might be in the minds of Ministers. When asked to justify that he said that several years ago, when the railway finances were not in a very sound position, the Government of the day had increased railway rates.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was when wages were materially increased. This was done to meet the increased costs.

The PREMIER: I am not speaking of the merits of that action. There was an increased expenditure on the railways of £250,000 because of the rise in wages, and the Government had to meet that by imposing increased charges. There is no ground for the assumption of the Leader of the Country Party in the case of this Government. Far from increasing rates or receiving financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government, notwithstanding the frequent assertions of the hon. member that taxation is increasing all round, the position for the past two years has been that the deficit has been covered by a sum of £140,000. This has been achieved without any increase in taxation except £30,000 from an increase in the land tax, which was more than balanced by a remission of £45,000 in the reduction of railway rates.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You imposed a land tax and income tax upon the farmer that he did not have to pay before.

The PREMIER: The increased amount received from the land tax was £30,000, and the reduction in railway rates for the full year amounted to £45,000. No increased taxation has been imposed by this Government; on the other hand, there has been a reduction in taxation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There have been some increases.

The PREMIER: A few stamp duties, perhaps.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You make the farmer pay both a land tax and an income tax now.

Mr. George: He did not do that before.

The PREMIER: There has been a reduction in taxation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No fear.

The PREMIER: During the first year we were in office $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. was taken off the supertax of 15 per cent. That meant a reduction of £25,000 a year. The second $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. reduction which continued last year, meant £39,000.

Mr. Latham: You have had more than that from the land tax.

The PREMIER: I have given away the land tax in the reduction in railway rates. Income taxation has been reduced by £65,000. Had the supertax not been abolished, the finances would have been £65,000 better off.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You cannot take credit for that.

The PREMIER: I do. The Bill was introduced by the Government, and passed through both Houses with the consent of the Government.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But what about when it got to another place?

The PREMIER: If we accept amendments made by another place, we are entitled to take credit for the Bill as it finally passes.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think the Premier was very annoyed at the time.

The PREMIER: I felt like the hon. member did many times when he found his Bills dealt with rather harshly there. That reduction deprived us of £65,000 of revenue, and so the deficit for the two years would have been that much less. In the current financial year that 7½ per cent. disappears.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You received nearly £200,000 more last year from taxation.

The PREMIER: Not by any increase in the rate of taxation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There has been an increase in the number of taxpayers, and in the number of taxes collected.

The PREMIER: It would be a sorry thing for this State if our taxation did not increase in value each year. I know that the number of taxpayers is increasing, and that incomes are increasing. The total collections each year are bound to go up. This year there will be between £80,000 and £90,000 given away by the abolition of the other 7½ per cent. supertax. The tax over the past two years has been reduced by the 15 per cent. supertax, which has now been abolished. This will make a difference in this year's finances of between £80,000 and £90,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Oh no!

The PREMIER: I am taking the figures of the Taxation Commissioner. The remission of the 7½ per cent. last year made a difference of £39,000. If we allow for the normal increase of this year over last year

the figure will be between £80,000 and £90,000.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It was agreed to two years ago.

The PREMIER: This Government reduced taxation to that extent.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Now we have the Federal grant, you might go a little further.

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition says that there was not one line in the Estimates that was right.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In the Revenue Estimates there was not one that was exactly right.

The PREMIER: Of course not.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There never is.

The PREMIER: It would be a remarkable thing if it were so.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I said it never could be done.

The PREMIER: It is only an estimate.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I was not £100,000 out.

The PREMIER: I will show the hon. member that he was more than £100,000 out.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No one ever said I was a prophet.

The PREMIER: As the year goes on, if we find we are not likely to realise our estimate in any particular department, we have to endeavour to counteract this by a reduction in expenditure. In the year 1920-21 the Leader of the Opposition underestimated his deficit by £287,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Due to a railway strike.

The PREMIER: Of course there are explanations, and there is justification for the alteration this year. He estimated that the deficit would be £399,000, but it actually was £686,000.

Mr. Mann: His estimate regarding the licenses revenue was cut down by half.

The PREMIER: I admit that there are explanations, just as there are sound reasons why I have been out in some of my estimates. In 1921-22 the Leader of the Opposition underestimated his deficit by £161,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is the way to do it.

The PREMIER: He estimated a deficit of £570,000, but the actual deficit was £732,000. I am not the only Treasurer who has underestimated in regard to his Budget.

Mr. Latham: What about the next year?

The PREMIER: He says that if the taxation had not amounted to £95,000 more than

the estimate, my deficit would have been £200,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was a nice little bit to get.

The PREMIER: I received £95,000 more from taxation than I had estimated. Had my estimate of taxation only been realised it is true I would have had a deficit of nearly £200,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You know that my deficit came down rapidly to £229,000.

The PREMIER: I am coming to these figures. I do not wish to put the hon. member in a wrong light.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I have just seen a beautiful cartoon of myself in the "Worker." It appears from this that the Labour Party try to make out that they only are the financial geniuses.

The PREMIER: In the two years that I have been in office I have never made any pretence to having any special qualifications with regard to finance. I have never attempted to take any credit to myself or the Government.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I have said so.

The PREMIER: But I am justified in endeavouring to show the true position, and the actual financial results achieved during the two years we have been in office. I have never attempted to underrate the abilities of any of my predecessors. I know well the difficulties that Treasurers experienced in those very bad years during the war and following the war. I give full credit to the fact that in the last two years when the hon. member was in office the corner was turned financially. Considerable reductions were made in each of those two years in the deficits to which we had been accustomed. The hon. member said that if I had not underestimated my taxation receipts, my deficit would have been £200,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is true.

The PREMIER: Yes. During the last year in which the hon. member was in office he underestimated his receipts from taxation by £157,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Good. That was still better.

The PREMIER: He wound up the year with a deficit of £229,000. Let me apply his words to himself. Had he not underestimated his receipts from taxation by £157,000, his deficit would have been £386,000. That is precisely the argument he has advanced against me.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I was only trying to show that you were not a prophet.

The PREMIER: In that year, 1923-24, the estimate on account of income taxation alone was £112,000 below actual collections. It is a mighty good thing for Treasurers that sometimes sources of income do exceed their estimates, because very often expenditure increases beyond expectations, and in a manner beyond the control of a Treasurer. Unless sources of revenue came to the assistance of a Treasurer, there would frequently be greater discrepancies. This year the deficit was increased by £45,000 as compared with last year. That was occasioned by a falling off in railway receipts compared with the estimates. Railway receipts were £182,000 below what I anticipated they would be. There is an explanation for that. It was due to the fact that the harvest did not come up to expectations. It was considerably below that of the previous year and much below what I thought it would be when the Estimates were framed. While the shortage in railway receipts was due to the harvest in one respect, it was also due, to a degree, to the overseas shipping strike, which held up vessels in our ports for six or seven weeks. Such an occurrence would have a very material effect upon our railway receipts. Our timber trade was stopped. The timber rates provide one of our most remunerative returns, but they were cut off. Because of these circumstances, the dues received by both the Fremantle Harbour Trust and the Bunbury Harbour Board showed decreases. While there was a falling off in railway receipts to the extent of £17,000, this was short of the estimate by £182,000. Railway expenditure goes up all the time and unless our receipts increase each year correspondingly, we soon get into a difficult position. Railway expenditure must of necessity go up, for causes beyond the control of any Government. The interest bill goes up annually, and every time a new railway is taken over fresh charges have to be taken into consideration. No Government, nor yet any Commissioner of Railways has any control over that expenditure. Last year, for instance, £30,000 additional was expended for water haulage on account of the dry season and the absence of water in the dams throughout the country districts. That item alone is a substantial one. There was an industrial trouble at Collie which lasted for

a little while and it represented a cost to the Railway Department of £5,000. Then there was a loss as compared with the previous year of £38,000 on account of reduced railway freight collections.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course water is hauled every year.

The Minister for Railways: Not to the same extent.

The PREMIER: I made it clear that the expenditure of £30,000 represented an amount more than was expended during the previous year. Of course there is always some haulage of water but during the year I refer to, water had to be hauled all through the agricultural districts. As the Leader of the Opposition rightly pointed out, the expenditure last year was £812,000 greater than in 1923-24, his last year in office, but the revenue also was £942,000 greater. The increased expenditure of £812,000 for the two years was due to two main causes. Under special Acts, £510,000 was expended.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I pointed that out.

The PREMIER: The Government have no control over that expenditure.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, they have.

The PREMIER: Certainly not.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You created the interest bill by borrowing.

The PREMIER: Of course we created it, but the £510,000 of the £812,000 was due to the increased interest bill.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In two years?

The PREMIER: Yes. The hon. member might say that the Government have control over the position because we determine the amount to be borrowed, but he would not contend that the Government should have borrowed any less than they did during the two years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I pointed out that you received recoups to a considerable extent. The public do not pay the £510,000.

The PREMIER: No. There was an increase, under the heading of public utilities, of £256,000. The Government have very little control over that item.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, you have.

The PREMIER: Not much. There are increases in the volume of work done and the Government cannot control that position. There were other causes as well, but the main point is that so long as revenue increases at a greater rate than the expenditure, we are not in a very bad way. It is when the

expenditure is increasing at a greater rate than the revenue, that the State drifts back financially. In two years our expenditure has increased by £810,000 but our revenue has increased by £942,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But £357,000 is due to timber fees and other sources of income.

The PREMIER: There have been increases during the past two years. On education there has been an increase of £15,000 on medical and health requirements £24,000 and on the Police £29,000. The last mentioned was due to an increase in wages.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Still, really speaking, the same policy has been carried on.

The PREMIER: Has it? I shall show that it has not been the same policy. It all depends upon the amount of money the Government are prepared to make available. Matters regarding the police are not affected by the Government, and to a large extent the same applies to education, because any Government must find the necessary money for increased expenditure.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It all depends on what you get for the expenditure.

The PREMIER: That is so.

Mr. Mann: You probably wish that the Hospital Bill had been passed!

The PREMIER: Perhaps I should not have regretted it very much. Respecting State children, there was an increase of £16,000 for the two years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What was the increase for the two years prior to that?

The PREMIER: I do not know; I did not look up those figures for they would have shown our returns to so much greater advantage.

Mr. Sampson: Or to the country.

The PREMIER: At any rate, that is the position. I have said all that is necessary regarding the finances. I can fairly claim on behalf of the Government that after two years in office, the finances of the State are in a sound condition. I do not claim at all that that result is entirely due to our work. At the same time the financial position of the State is infinitely better than at any other period since 1911.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is due to the prosperity of the State.

The PREMIER: And that is due largely to the policy of governments.

Hon. G. Taylor: There is a lot in that, too.

The PREMIER: A very great deal. On actual figures, however, the position is better than at any time since 1911.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Because we worked along the lines of our policy for seven years.

The PREMIER: That is so. The hon. member is in with me in this respect.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But I did it first.

Mr. Mann: You have not found it necessary to change the policy very much.

The PREMIER: Respecting much of it, no. There was a good deal in the policy of the Mitchell Government that we supported while in Opposition, and naturally we have carried on that policy while we have been in office. I am glad to say that there has not been much division of opinion in this Parliament for years past, respecting the more essential things that go towards the prosperity of the State. There is sound foundation for saying that the State to-day is more prosperous than it has been for many years past.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, it is not as prosperous as it was two years ago!

The PREMIER: Of course it is.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Trade is not as good, and money is not as easy.

The PREMIER: Trade is as good and the finances are sound. No one can honestly deny that if he considers the position during the past two years. We have reduced the deficit by £132,000 in two years, and have achieved that not by increasing taxation, but by reducing it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I reduced the deficit by £500,000 in two years.

The PREMIER: Surely the hon. member did not expect to continue decreasing the deficit at that rate indefinitely. If that were so, he would soon have had millions as a surplus.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Certainly I did.

The PREMIER: By the time the hon. member finished up, he had exhausted all the possibilities of increased revenue and decreased expenditure.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, I had not.

The PREMIER: The Government found that the possibilities had been exhausted in many directions. Nevertheless we have improved the position.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The revenue came from the increased production we were working for all the time, and that is what you are working for now.

The PREMIER: Increased production is going on now. Fortunately increased production does not depend upon the policy of Governments; it depends upon the seasons.

Mr. Davy: It would go on better without Governments.

The PREMIER: Especially in a State of primary production such as Western Australia, prosperity depends to a great extent upon the seasons and upon the prices we get for our products exported overseas—two things over which Governments have no influence. Prices make a great difference in the position because if they are favourable, we have another million pounds or two million pounds for circulation, investment and the further development of the State. Hon. members will readily agree that that would make a considerable difference in our position. So it is that I can claim that the State has never been more prosperous than it is to-day. The development that has taken place during the past two years has been indeed great. We have kept the finances within reasonable bounds and we have reduced the deficit. Notwithstanding that, we have faced increased expenditure, particularly in the Railway Department. For fear that someone may misrepresent the position later on, it is perhaps necessary for me to make it clear that the increased expenditure in the Railway Department was not as a result of any usurpation by the Government of the functions of the Arbitration Court. There were automatic increases following the practice that has existed for six or seven years. There has also been a considerable increase in the wages of Government employees during the past two years. The Government have honoured the classification of the Civil Service and paid automatic increases in this instance as well. At the same time there has been a reduction in taxation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No fear.

The PREMIER: Oh yes.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Increased taxation.

The PREMIER: Taxation has been reduced. There is a tendency to make people believe that, because the total receipts from taxation were greater this year than last year, we have imposed additional taxation. Such is not the position. There has been increased prosperity, with consequent larger incomes for those who pay taxation. There

is also a greater number of taxpayers; many who were not within the sphere of taxation have improved their positions and are now paying taxes. That is a good sign.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There are a thousand people writing two cheques instead of one these days—the farmers.

The Minister for Lands: You know that there has been a decrease in taxation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No.

The PREMIER: Of course there has been a reduction.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No fear.

The PREMIER: Yes, fear, and the hon. member knows well that that is so. I am justified in asking the people of the State to realise that the finances have improved, and that, while higher wages and salaries have been paid, a reduction in taxation has been effected.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You got £200,000 more; the people know what they are paying.

The PREMIER: The Government, by their policy and administration, have kept the State progressing, and, if the hon. member likes, in the manner in which we found it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not quite as good.

The PREMIER: The migration agreement, as members know, has been signed by the Government, and we have submitted a schedule of expenditure for £10,612,000, for settlement £6,000,000, and for works £4,612,000. All that we have had approval for is £629,000 for works.

Mr. Stubbs: Over what period is this sum to be spread?

The PREMIER: Ten years. The balance of the amount that we have submitted has been held over for consideration by the Commission.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We have had two and a quarter millions under the migration agreement—one per cent. money.

The PREMIER: Personally, I consider there was no need for the appointment of a Commission to handle this matter.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I agree with you.

The PREMIER: When I spoke to the Prime Minister in regard to the matter he said he could not make the amount greater pending the report of the Commission, because he did not wish to tie their hands. His desire was to leave them entirely free to decide what works should be constructed—drainage, road making, railways, etc.,

which would come within the scope of the agreement. There will be three men coming over here and our requests will receive their consideration. I suppose they will stay here for a week or two, or perhaps a few weeks, and no doubt they will conscientiously try to discharge the duties that have been entrusted to them. At the same time I feel that between the two Governments, State and Federal, an agreement could have been reached on the advice of the officers, professional and otherwise, as to the works that would come within the scope of the agreement, without the intervention of any Commission.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are responsible for the payment of this money.

The PREMIER: Yes, for the expenditure and repayment, and we are also responsible to the people of this State to see that it is wisely expended and that success will follow its expenditure. But if the Commission reports adversely on any proposal submitted by the Government, the report may be adopted.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What the deuce do they want a Commission at all for?

The PREMIER: I do not know, except that we are drifting towards government by Commissions.

The Minister for Lands: I think the "Sunday Times" put it correctly when they said that it was another step towards unification.

The PREMIER: We are drifting towards Commissions in all things, and this Commission will have the effect of delaying matters. Whatever is done will be done in the dark, and we may not know whether we will get the benefit of the cheaper interest, or whether we shall have to pay the full interest. In the meantime, on the groups, there has been a great deal of work done. During the past two years 650 houses have been erected and 47,000 acres have been placed under pasture. There have been 34 schools erected. The number of cows sent to the groups is over 7,000, and in addition there have been sent pigs, horses and other stock. These are matters that I think I am justified in reminding the House have been attended to by the Government. I do so to justify the claim that the administration has been in the interests of the people of the State generally. The advances by the Agricultural Bank, the Industries Assistance Board and for soldier settlement amount to £1,680,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Including group settlement?

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The amount you quoted is less than the average.

The Minister for Lands: It is not.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is.

The PREMIER: I desire to show that every phase of development has been assisted. There has been no wild or revolutionary policy pursued likely to bring the country to ruin, such as was predicted in some quarters. During the past year the land selected totalled two million acres, apart from pastoral leases, an increase of 400,000 acres over the figures of the previous year, showing that the land settlement policy inaugurated by the Leader of the Opposition is still going ahead. The area under crop last year, although the harvest was not so good, was a record, and the prospects for the present year are extremely bright. The agricultural college will be completed in the course of a month or two, and will be opened for the reception of students before Christmas. Experimental farms are being established, and I think it is a great pity that our predecessors did not go in for this policy many years ago.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We did.

The PREMIER: To a limited extent.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We established farms at Chapman, Merredin and Brunswick.

The PREMIER: In districts where they were not needed to the same extent as they were needed in the wheat growing areas.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Merredin farm almost proved that wheat could not be grown there.

The PREMIER: They should have been established where settlement was extending. It is well that we should test the country in this experimental way, and I am sorry that more farms were not established many years ago. There are now four experimental farms being established. One in the direction of Wongan Hills paid its way last year and the result of the experiments there, will be of great value to those who intend to farm lighter lands in that direction. Agricultural water supplies have been extended 150 miles during the past couple of years, and no less a sum than £70,000 has been expended on other agricultural supplies. All this work has been

done in the agricultural districts, notwithstanding that we were not supposed to be in sympathy with the man engaged in agriculture. Railway construction has been carried out to the limit of available funds. There are some members who feel that they have grievances because some of the railways which have been authorised for a few years have not yet been built. It would be impossible for any Government to construct all the new railways in one year. With the other commitments and obligations of the State, particularly with regard to group settlement work, necessarily only a certain amount of money can be made available for railway construction.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There should be more than a third of our borrowed money made available for railway construction.

The PREMIER: We could easily get ahead of ourselves in railway construction, but that work must have relation to the increase in population, otherwise the mileage of railways would become disproportionate to the population, and so would affect the financial position of the whole system. Harbour works have been carried out and the Victoria wharf at Fremantle has been rebuilt with concrete. That should last for all time and should obviate the necessity for annual expenditure in maintenance. A feature of the past year, too, has been road construction. The amount of money provided by both State and Commonwealth totalled £546,000, and in addition to that the State expended £100,000 on roads in group districts. But the £546,000 has been expended under the agreement with the Federal Government, and I should be sorry indeed if anything happened to defeat the proposals now before the Federal Parliament. Members know that in this State, because of the great distances and the scarcity of population, the road problem has been most serious. If a programme such as has been submitted by the Federal Government were carried out for the next 10 years, at the end of that period much of our difficulty regarding road transport would be overcome. It is almost beyond the imagination of many people to conceive what the expenditure of that sum of money would mean.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Over six millions sterling in ten years.

The PREMIER: Yes. From our point of view it is deplorable that the proposal

appears likely to be defeated by reason of the attitude of Eastern States Governments, and possibly to some extent because of a lack of enthusiastic support on the part of some of our own Federal members.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do not think that.

The PREMIER: They are opposed to the tax.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Quite right, too.

The PREMIER: I hardly think the Federal Government could have been expected to find all the money they proposed to expend on roads from ordinary revenue.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The surplus was about 2½ millions last year.

The PREMIER: Yes; but it would be hard for any Government to be assured that over a period of ten years there would be a similar surplus, enabling them to make such an arrangement with the States.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They should have put the tax on when they needed it; not now.

The PREMIER: Personally I am a good deal with the Prime Minister in the speech which he recently made against monopolies. I believe that the people who control the importation of oil into Australia could well have borne the additional tax without increasing the price to the consumer.

Mr. George: They are charging a pretty good price now.

The PREMIER: I have no doubt the Prime Minister was sure of his figures before he gave them to the country, and in his speech he showed where exceptional or extraordinary profits were being made by those in the oil business. He also showed that prices here are altogether out of proportion to those charged in other parts of the world.

Mr. George: It is funny how the oil people have come together. A little while ago they were cutting one another's throats.

The PREMIER: I rather think the oil people put it over a good many of the people in different parts of Australia, as regards the extra cost to be imposed on the man who runs a car.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It does not matter to the oil people, of course, because they will pass it on.

The PREMIER: The Federal proposal is especially favourable to Western Australia in that it would not mean any increase, or only the slightest increase, in our petrol tax. That is not so in the case of

other States, but here we have the tax already. The only increased cost involved in our case would be the additional duties on chassis, tyres, and other parts. During the past 12 years the Federal Government have put away more than £10,000,000 of surplus revenue, which should have gone to the States. In that connection there has been a deliberate evasion of the law, and so the States have been deprived of a sum of £10,000,000. Indeed, it is difficult to know what the Federal surpluses actually have been.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The power of the purse.

The PREMIER: As the late Mr. Deakin remarked, the power of the purse will eventually mean unification. It should be gratifying to members and to all residents of the metropolitan area that practically for the first time in our history we have got rid of bore water. That is the result of a pretty heavy expenditure during the past two years, but the hills water supply is well on the way. Nothing but hills water has been used during the past few months—winter months, of course. I do not know that it will be possible to get through the summer months without bore water. The hills scheme has already meant a considerable expenditure, and that expenditure will go on yet for several years before the work is completed and the future water supply of the city assured.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I am afraid that if we do not have bore water, the rates will "bore" us a bit.

The PREMIER: Yes. The hon. member explained at North Perth that the commencement of the scheme meant additional taxation, that water rates would be increased. The people knew that, and of course they cannot have a large expenditure on water supply for this part of the State and impose the cost of it upon the taxpayers generally, many of whom derive no benefit from the scheme. During the past couple of years we have had a considerable quantity of railway rolling stock under construction. In the Government's first year of office they had to find a sum of £100,000 for locomotives, which were then ordered oversea. Since then we have had about 12 locomotives constructed or under construction in the Midland Junction workshops, and the position now is such that, provided the building of locomotives and rolling stock is carried on regularly each year, provided that we do not allow the supply of stock to get into arrears

and then have to obtain a large quantity in any one year, a quantity with which our own resources could not cope, all our requirements should be supplied by our own State workshops.

Mr. Mann: Your trouble is going to be want of trucks, not want of locomotives.

The PREMIER: Yes. Knowing that there was a shortage of trucks last year and that the experience was likely to be repeated, I allocated early in this year £150,000 to the Minister for Railways to be expended on trucks.

Mr. George: We want another thousand trucks.

The PREMIER: The amount provided will not furnish nearly the number of trucks that the Commissioner of Railways desires. However, it seems inevitable that we shall always have truck shortages. We want to guard against the inconvenience becoming too great. If the State had sufficient trucks to move the harvest within the time that some people desire, this would mean that a considerable proportion of the rolling stock would be standing idle for the greater part of the year. All that we can hope to do is to ensure that we have sufficient rolling stock to obviate serious inconvenience to the people concerned.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They have not had much to complain about up to date.

The PREMIER: I do not think they have. People are apt to rush into the Press with complaints if they are unable to get a number of trucks immediately they order them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The ships are chartered badly.

Mr. George: If there were more trucks, it would save a great deal of maintenance on the rolling stock.

The PREMIER: Of course it would, because trucks are kept on the road when they ought to be in the workshops undergoing repair. But in a growing State like this, where we have so much to do and so few people to do it, everything cannot be done in a year or so. There has been considerable expenditure on additions to the East Perth power house. The amount runs into about £300,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is always stuff on order for the power house. It is never finished.

The PREMIER: Never. Immediately the present additions are completed at a cost of £300,000, the thing will commence again.

But I suppose it is all due to the growth of the city; it shows that we are expanding and that new demands for power are arising in many directions because of the growth of the city.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is a good thing.

The PREMIER: A very good thing. In this connection it is worth mentioning that for the first time in the history of Western Australia there is a proposal to establish a power scheme in the Collic district, and so give the south-western part of the State, at any rate, the benefit of cheaper power than is now available. In Victoria I learned that the power from those great works in Gippsland is carried over distances of hundreds of miles, right down from Gippsland through the agricultural areas. It is a huge scheme.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The coal there is very cheap.

The PREMIER: Yes. The scheme, I believe, cost five millions of money. It will not be self-supporting for another two years, but once that stage is reached, the works will be able to show large profits or else supply power at extremely low prices, which will be of the greatest assistance towards the establishment of industries in Victoria and to her agriculture as well. The sooner we get it into our minds that the use of electric power should not be confined to cities, but should be extended to country districts, the better it will be for us. That discovery has been made in the Old Country, though it was surprising to me to find that some comparatively large towns there, towns not far from London, were using kerosene lamps.

Mr. Sampson: In the Old Country they establish factories out in the country, where conditions are better.

The PREMIER: It would be infinitely better that our secondary industries, as they spring into existence, should be established in the country, so as to overcome the curse from which Australia suffers, that more than half the population of each Australian State is concentrated in the metropolitan area. Our secondary industries should be established in country towns, as the woollen mills are established in Albany. Indeed, I should like to see all our secondary industries, all our factories, established in the country districts.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Where streamlets flow.

The PREMIER: Yes, and where daisies bloom on the hillside. It is a bad thing that country districts should be as they are in some of the Eastern States, with declining populations. In many country districts of Victoria the population is now less than it was 40 years ago. We know that the policy of high protection means building up the cities, since work is concentrated in them; and so the boys and girls of the country families migrate to the cities instead of leading the health, open life of the countryside.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The PREMIER: Before concluding I should like to say that much important work has been done in recent years in point of reforestation. During the past year just on one million acres of land have been permanently dedicated to the future of our forests. That is all important, when we remember that the value of the timber exported last year was over 1½ million pounds. It was really a record in the history of the State. To-day timber is one of our big industries and the source of much wealth production. For very many years the value of our forests was not realised, and very little was done in the way of preserving them for future generations. However, that was all altered with the passing of the Forests Act, and now for many years there has been going on a properly co-ordinated system of work that will ensure the perpetuation of our forest resources for all time. A great deal of pine planting has been carried out also. We have in this State large areas suitable for pine growing; but just as we have been lax in providing our own food supplies, so have we neglected to provide, if not the whole at all events a considerable amount of our own softwood requirements. With the relatively large areas that have been planted in the watershed of the Helena River and in other parts of the State during recent years, it means that after 15 or 20 years, when the first crop will come to maturity, we shall have a rotation of crops that will go far to meet our own requirements. I was surprised to find the large areas of pine up behind the Mundaring Weir, where practically all the valleys and hillsides have been cleared and planted. The whole of the plantation is looking well and healthy. In the course of a few years all the watershed of the Mundaring Weir will be covered with

pinus. As I have said, a million acres of land have been dedicated to our forests, and I hope that another considerable area will be preserved in the same way.

Hon. G. Taylor: Not all for soft woods?

The PREMIER: No, the million acres are for hard woods.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: All jarrah country is protected now; the agriculturists cannot get it.

The PREMIER: There is a considerable area not yet protected.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But it cannot be selected without the Minister knowing whether there is jarrah on it.

The PREMIER: That is so.

Mr. J. H. Smith: A considerable area of that will not be protected.

The PREMIER: It would have been unwise to devote to any other purpose that which ought to be reserved for forestry. The Commonwealth Government have taken the matter of the future of our hard woods into serious consideration and have decided that each State should have at least certain areas reserved. We are still the greatest hardwood growing State in the Commonwealth, despite which we have much below the area of forests that the Commonwealth have allotted for us.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is very easy for them to say what ought to be done.

The PREMIER: Yes, it is another instance of the Commonwealth instructing the State as to what to do with its own resources. Still, if in the future the Commonwealth should be unable to meet its own requirements of hardwood, and bearing in mind that supplies would then have to be brought from other parts of the world, it would become an Australian-wide question of great importance.

Mr. Sampson: It would pay some of our companies to organise tree planting here instead of sending so much money out of the State.

The PREMIER: Over a million and a half pounds' worth of our timber was exported last year; so it will be seen that timber is an important factor in the economic life of the State. I have refrained from saying anything in regard to the Federal Government's proposed withdrawal of the capitation grants to this State. I think the matter might be fully ventilated when the motion now on the Notice Paper comes up for consideration.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But will that be in time?

The PREMIER: I am not sure whether we ought not to suspend the Standing Orders and get on with it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I am quite sure we should not lose any time whatever.

The PREMIER: I had it in mind to ask the House to agree to suspend the Standing Orders in order that the question might be discussed at the earliest possible moment. That has been done in Victoria, where a motion similar to that I have placed on the Notice Paper was carried unanimously in both Houses of the Victorian Parliament.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Let us take it on Tuesday. If you agree, members will know about it, and so will be ready on Tuesday.

The PREMIER: I am willing that members should take this as an intimation. Certainly the matter ought to be discussed before the Federal Parliament closes, which will be next week, for I think it is well that they should know the opinion of this Parliament representing the people of Western Australia. I see no cause to alter the opinions I have expressed ever since the matter was first broached. The conference held in Melbourne, when the Premiers were called together, was really a waste of time, for the Commonwealth Government had determined on their policy before the Premiers met. Anybody who gives serious thought to the matter will recognise that it is the most important question that has come before this Parliament or the people of Western Australia for very many years past. Our financial future is wrapped up in the whole question, for if we should be deprived of a share of the Customs and Excise revenue, we would be at the mercy, not only of the present, but of all future Federal Parliaments. As the late Mr. Deakin so shrewdly prophesied, we would then be within measurable distance of unification. The question of unification ought to be discussed openly and by itself, so that the people might know what they are doing and whither they are drifting. The policy adopted by all Federal Governments for many years past has been one of insidious and gradual whittling away of the rights and sovereign powers of the States, and the making of the Commonwealth an overlord of the State by virtue of its financial strength.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not by virtue of the Constitution.

The PREMIER: No, but because of its financial strength. As with individuals, so with Governments, where the power of money lies, there will the influence of government rest as well. I am certain, though it may not be intended, and doubtless is not intended by those who propose to make the change, that change tends in the direction of unification. Whatever the intention, that will be the inevitable result.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They have the gun; we want the thunder.

The PREMIER: I hope we shall retain as much of our self-governing rights as we can. As said by the Leader of the Opposition the other night, it will be a black day for this State when we are entirely governed from Canberra, or any other centre of Eastern Australia. If left alone to work out our own salvation we have nothing to fear.

Mr. George: We have not done so badly.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But we have had to make awful sacrifices. We have to pay taxes that we should never have had to pay but for Federation.

The PREMIER: That is so. On the Supply Bill I said that the proposed grant of £300,000 per annum for five years had been promised by the Federal Government, but that the grant was included in the Special Grants Bill now before the Federal Parliament, a Bill dealing also with the withdrawal of the per capita payments. I do not know why our grant should have been included in that Bill, for the two questions are entirely separated. Whether we are to get this money from the Commonwealth in future by way of per capita payments or whether, as suggested by the Federal Government, we are to raise the money by taxation, has nothing to do with the question of the special disabilities this State has suffered under Federation and with which the Royal Commission dealt. Yet the two are brought together in the one Bill. I have no definite information from the Federal Government, but so far as one can gather from the Press telegrams, that Bill is going to be shelved until next session.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is in respect to the per capita payments.

The PREMIER: Yes, and the proposal to grant us £300,000 per annum for five years is in the same Bill.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was announced separately.

The PREMIER: It is in the Bill, and if the Bill be dropped, it may be that we shall not get the £300,000. At any rate, unless the Federal Government introduce a separate Bill dealing with this special grant, they will have no Parliamentary authority to pay us the special grant of £300,000 this year.

Hon Sir James Mitchell: Surely they will introduce a separate Bill!

The PREMIER: I do not know why the special grant should have been included in the Bill, because the two matters have no relation to each other.

Hon. G. Taylor: The inclusion of both matters in the one Bill jeopardises the £300,000.

The PREMIER: Yes. It may have been included in the same Bill as a sort of warning that if the measure providing for the withdrawal of the per capita payments were lost, we would also lose the £300,000 grant.

Mr. Latham: It would be a very poor spirit if they did that sort of thing.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I would not like to think that of the Federal Government.

The PREMIER: Neither would I.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They made a definite announcement about the special grant.

The PREMIER: Yes, and that was apart altogether from what might be done with regard to the per capita payments or taxation. It has nothing to do with that question.

Mr. Latham: It was arranged before the Commonwealth decided to withdraw the per capita payments.

The PREMIER: Not the £300,000 grant.

Mr. Latham: Well, the Disabilities Commission sat before the matter of the per capita payments was discussed.

The PREMIER: Yes, but the Government did not deal with the matter of the special grant until about the same time. If the Bill dealing with the per capita payments is going to be shelved, I have no doubt the Commonwealth Government will make other provision in accordance with their promise for the payment of £300,000 to us this year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about the other £150,000?

The PREMIER: That is subject to our accepting their proposals for the transfer of the North-West. That amount is offered by way of payment of interest on the money which has been expended by the State in

the North-West, and which the Federal Government calculate as being £2,700,000. The Federal Government propose to take over £2,700,000 of our debt, and to pay interest and sinking fund on it to the extent of £150,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You will never get that £150,000, anyhow.

The PREMIER: I am not building upon that.

Mr. George: Why not put up the North-West to tender, and see if we cannot do better than the Federal Government are offering?

The PREMIER: While not pronouncing final judgment on the matter, I largely agree with the views expressed by the Leader of the Opposition regarding the North-West. Our experience does not encourage us to hand over any portion of this territory, and certainly we could never agree to hand over a portion of it in the form, as it were, of a blank cheque. We should require to know what the Federal Government propose to do for the North-West. We have an obligation to the people who live there, and who have interests in that part of the State to see that their future interests will be preserved. I anticipate that the Commonwealth Government will adopt the attitude, "We have offered to take over that portion of your territory. In return for that we shall assume certain financial obligations which you have incurred regarding it. As to how we govern it in the future will be a matter for us."

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The Federal Government made an agreement with South Australia that has not yet been kept.

The PREMIER: Yes. I anticipate that the Commonwealth will not indicate to us in any detailed way how they propose to govern the North-West or what they propose to do with it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They would have a little commission.

The PREMIER: Bearing in mind that most of the functions of Government in the Commonwealth sphere are being relegated to commissions of various kinds, no doubt the North-West of this State would be handed over to a commission. As a matter of fact, I think that was the proposal made by Senator Pearce some time ago.

The Minister for Works: That is so.

The PREMIER: I think that was advanced as one of their proposals last year while I was in England.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, that is so—superior men.

The PREMIER: Men with big salaries.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: They have got Mr. Gunn, the Premier of South Australia. Look out or you might be the next!

The PREMIER: If there were such a possibility, perhaps I should not be so hostile. Having in mind the number of commissions being appointed, it is only a matter of time when it will come to the turn of most of us to be included in some commission or other. I am not anticipating that we shall be able to come to an agreement with the Commonwealth regarding the North-West. Still I am prepared to suspend judgment on the matter until we hear further from them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I am in no doubt at all, because they have made their offer.

The PREMIER: But the whole offer is contained in about 10 lines of printed matter on ordinary foolscap, and we could never agree to hand over the North-West to the Commonwealth with no more information than it is possible to convey in 10 or 12 printed lines.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We have no right to hand over the territory or the people to the tender mercies of someone sitting at Canberra.

The PREMIER: Of course not, unless the people of this State, with the endorsement of the people of the North-West, were to agree to it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are all one people.

The PREMIER: Then, if the residents of the North-West did agree to the transfer, it might be a case of our having to save them from themselves. Parliament would have the responsibility of determining finally whether the territory should be handed over.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You would not let the people of Northam and the surroundings, for instance, decide that they were going to cut away from Western Australia and become Commonwealth territory.

The PREMIER: No, unless we thought it would be for the good of the State, generally speaking.

Hon. G. Taylor: We would not let the member for Northam go, anyhow.

The PREMIER: On the same line of reasoning, I suppose the rest of the Commonwealth would not agree to Western Australia getting out of the Federation. They might say "You think it would be a very good thing to secede from Federation, but we are going to save you from yourselves. We shall not allow you to get out."

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The question is, will the Federal Government give our people in the North better conditions, better facilities, and better opportunities than they have under us?

The PREMIER: I do not think they will. Past experience of dealings with the Commonwealth, both in regard to this State and the Northern Territory of South Australia, does not lead us to believe that they will be able to do better by the North-West than we have been able to do.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In dealing with this matter we must be true to this country and to the people of it.

The PREMIER: We shall be true.

The Minister for Works: You limit that expression to this particular matter?

The PREMIER: Not to this matter alone. In the whole of our dealings with the Federal Government and our attitude to the Federation, our first duty is to this State and to the people of this State, whether it be the matter of the transfer of the North-West, the abolition of the per capita payments or any other question we are called upon to decide. Personally I have not much doubt as to the attitude of the great majority of the people of Western Australia on the two matters I have specified. We could not get the same freedom and opportunities to develop our resources in our own way when controlled from Canberra or from Melbourne as we could if controlled by our own people through the Parliament of Western Australia. I hope to have the matter discussed on Tuesday next so that we shall know definitely, so far as this Parliament might be able to speak for the people, the attitude of the people towards this all-important question.

Hon. G. Taylor: Before you sit down, would you mind giving us the first 20 minutes of your speech over again?

MR. GEORGE (Murray - Wellington) [7.55]: I wish to express my appreciation of a considerable portion of the speech which the Premier has delivered this evening. It has been not only temperate in tone but informative, and has given us many details which will be of great service to members. I do not wish it to be inferred that I agree with everything the Premier has said, but I must acknowledge that he has given from his point of view information which will be of value to all members. Many people, and some members too, have represented that the Address-in-reply is not of much service, but if I may be allowed to express my opinion, I would say it would not be well if the debate on the Address-in-reply were abolished. Even though it occupies a considerable amount of time, it affords each member an opportunity to bring before the House matters which he thinks are necessary not only for his own constituency but in the best interests of the State. Although it may be argued that many of the matters brought forward could well be submitted to Ministers in their offices, the airing of these matters in the House adds force to them. The Premier spoke of the present prosperity and the extra revenue being realised from taxation, and the Leader of the Opposition interjected that the area of taxation had been very much widened by the abolition of exemptions and so forth. There is another reason of which no doubt the Premier is fully aware, which is responsible for so much more taxation being received during the last 12 months, namely that the system that has been in vogue in the Taxation Department for some time has reached such a stage that it has been possible to get the assessments out very much earlier than in previous years. Consequently funds have come in more expeditiously and have thus augmented the revenue of the State. Although I do not wish in any way to raise the question regarding the Commonwealth Government, I should not like this opportunity to pass without giving a few of my views for the consideration of members. The very wording of paragraphs in the Speech itself shows how careful every one of us must be when dealing with matters which can be put almost into the category of the gifts that the Greeks bring that betray us. Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 deal with the proposals made by the Commonwealth Government. The Premiers of the several States met and discussed the matter and decided that they would have nothing whatever

to do with the Federal Government's proposals to abolish the per capita payments. It did not suit them. They were quite within their rights in refusing to accept it. They were representing their people, all classes of people and not a section of any one political colouring, and they exercised their rights. The retort of the Commonwealth Government was to bring down other proposals, and instead of those proposals being such as might have met the objections that were quite reasonably advanced by the Premiers, they did not extend as favourable consideration to the States as did the original proposals.

The Premier: That is so.

Mr. GEORGE: My past experience of Federal Ministers leads me to believe that we have to be very careful what we do with them. The gun is always loaded, and when it goes off both barrels usually hit something. They brought forward this alternative proposal that was less favourable to the States when it should have been more favourable if possible, seeing that it is our money which they have taken from us, and which they are going to hand back to us as a sort of charitable dole. Any proposal they had to bring forward should have been more favourable to the States than otherwise. None of the Commonwealth Governments has given us fair consideration in view of the circumstances in which this State stands. I do not know why this is. I have come to the conclusion that it is not so much the individual Ministers of to-day as it is that we are gradually drifting into a sort of bureaucratic control at the hands of Commonwealth officials. I formed that opinion when I was in the Eastern States with Sir Henry Lefroy and Mr. Gardiner some years ago, when we had various negotiations with the Commonwealth Government. We must look with great suspicion and with great carefulness upon any of the proposals that come from them. A great deal of the trouble that occurs to-day is due to there being two leaders and two parties, when there should be only one leader and one party as opposed to the Labour Party. It makes me wonder how it is possible for a combination of free traders and high protectionists to be on the same side of the House and yet feel they are representing their constituents in the way they ought to do.

The Premier: Page is pulling Bruce down.

Mr. Griffiths: Would they be any better on the other side of the House?

Mr. Marshall: They would be better out of the House.

Mr. Griffiths: You would be.

Mr. GEORGE: Whether it is one party or the other, this State gets the same lack of consideration, and I may be pardoned for being doubtful about any scheme they may put up to us.

Mr. Thomson: This State has had more consideration from the present Federal administration than from any other.

The Premier: The last proposal overshadows the lot, and wipes everything out.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member is welcome to his opinion. I have a right to mine. I had a great deal to do with the fight against Federation. If this beautiful State of ours had only been allowed to carry out its own destiny we would have been on top to-day, and the other people would have been seeking that consideration at our hands which they refuse to give us in our day of need.

Mr. Thomson: I agree with that.

Mr. GEORGE: No country in the world with so small a population has done so much in 30 years since responsible Government as Western Australia has done. If those gentlemen who brought about Federation could only see the result of their efforts to-day, I think they would turn in their graves, though many of them have been dead a long time. The whole trend of the dealings with the Commonwealth Government, and Commonwealth officials from the top to the bottom, is towards an insidious advance by which they can get to know beforehand what is going on in the States, so that they may know where they are when they take over. In the Public Works Department we were doing work for the Commonwealth Government, and doing it well. We were doing it with the staff we had, and were receiving from them, I think, five per cent. commission. We were complimented upon the quality of the work, and the expedition with which we carried it out, as well as for our economical methods. I was told, and other Ministers were told, that so long as we carried out the work in that way the Commonwealth would refrain from starting their own public works. And yet they have done so. They have taken work away from the department, and we have lost the commission which helped to pay the salaries of

that big organisation. We cannot reduce hands because they are needed for other works. The Commonwealth, just as in the case of taxation, started the work to get an idea of the inner running of this big State. There has been some talk of secession. If I felt there was any possibility of this succeeding, I would devote the remainder of my time and as much of my substance as I could spare to help the movement along, but I do not believe we have a chance of carrying it out, though I very much wish we had. The attitude of the Commonwealth people is such that they would merely look upon any movement of that kind in this State, no matter how well it might be supported, with calm content, because they know they have the full power and strength to hold us in the grip in which we are unfortunately clasped. We shall probably be able to say something more about that later. What guarantee is there for the people of the North that the Commonwealth can govern them better than we have done in our way? We have people here who know the North thoroughly. Many of them have been born there and have been connected with it all their lives. And yet we are supposed to believe that gentlemen thousands of miles away can govern the North-West better than can the people of the State to whom it belongs. I would rather be governed by Downing-street, much as that was decried some years ago, than from Canberra. The officials in the office in London were people possessed of trained knowledge, full experience and ample information concerning the State. They had no axes of their own to grind. There is no part of the Federal Government which is connected with New South Wales or Victoria that regards Western Australia, or has treated it from the early days of Federation, in any other way than as an appendage from which they may draw tribute, and upon which they may dump the stuff they cannot dispose of in their own States. It is rubbish to talk about Western Australia in the way they do. I do not care whether it is Mr. Bruce, Mr. Hughes, or Mr. Charlton. They all talk in the same way. On the one hand, they speak as if they were trying to help us, and on the other hand they are trying to cut our throats, in very much the same way as people do in the Levant, the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, where they shake hands with one hand and feel for one's fifth rib with the other.

The Premier: There are some like that in this State.

Mr. GEORGE: Western Australia is a good place. There is a paragraph in the Speech dealing with drainage. Drainage in the South-West is a matter of great importance and should be carried out. It is proposed to spend £205,000 at Busselton. I am glad the Government intend to do so, for it will mean that they will carry out a decision arrived at by previous Governments. I am also glad they can get the funds for the work. The South-West, especially around Busselton and between Fremantle and Bunbury, cannot come into its own or support the population it ought to have without proper drainage. If between Fremantle and Bunbury the coast lands of the State were dealt with by a comprehensive drainage scheme, we could settle 100,000 prosperous and contented people, whereas at present there are only swamps and timber. The quality of the land between the south-western railway and the ocean, many hundreds of thousands of acres in extent, has been proved by pioneers who have lived there and worked there. The disability due to the lack of drainage, the immense rainfall and the flow of water from the Darling Ranges on to the plains, has rendered a great proportion of that area impossible from the point of view of cultivation. Although I congratulate the Minister on being able to get money for work at Busselton, I hope he will not forget this fertile area between Fremantle and Bunbury. This is not so much a small portion of the State; it is a kingdom awaiting 100,000 settlers who, with their wives and families, could prosper there.

The Minister for Lands: If we only had the money what could we not do?

Mr. GEORGE: There is no harm in pegging away at the subject. During the regime of previous Governments surveys were started and carried out to some extent regarding a concrete form of drainage for that part of the State, so that if the happy time came when we had the money, it would be possible to do the work rather than make the attempt, as has been done in other parts of the State, of trying to get water to run up hill.

The Minister for Lands: It has been necessary to make a survey on the eastern side of the line as well, so that there shall be no mistake next time.

Mr. GEORGE: At the South-West Conference at Bunbury in July last a number of important questions were dealt with by men who had been settlers on the land for many years, and who knew what they were talking about. I have here a number of the resolutions that were agreed to. One is—

The Conference endorses the policy of first utilising undeveloped land adjacent to existing railways.

The Premier: That is very sound.

Mr. GEORGE: Another resolution was that it was necessary that a Closer Settlement Bill should be introduced. The Conference also urged upon the Government to undertake a comprehensive drainage scheme for the country between Pinjarra and Bunbury. These matters were fully debated by practical men. They had not much to say, but what they did say carried weight and showed their earnestness and sincerity. Another resolution was that the strip of coastline from Parkfield to the west of Harvey should be opened up for settlement. These conferences have been carried on for 15 years. I think Mr. Money, ex member for Bunbury, has had most to do with them. He has worked with great zeal and persistency in keeping them going, and as the outcome of these conferences great benefits have accrued to the State.

The Minister for Lands: Are these Crown or private lands?

Mr. GEORGE: Last evening we had a long speech from the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson). This has been dealt with this evening by the Premier. However, there are a few points in the hon. member's speech to which I am sure he will not mind my referring. On those points I did not quite understand him. He was dealing with the earnings which it was possible for men to make under circulars 88, 92, and so on; and he instanced that what was considered a fair price by the group foreman for clearing by piece work or contract would be about £9 per acre, whilst clearing done under the group system had cost from £18 per acre upwards. I think the Minister for Lands interjected to the hon. member that there were local differences in connection with various blocks of land, and that therefore the respective costs of clearing could not well be compared. That is quite right. All practical men know it; and the member for Katanning must know it, too. What I could not quite understand was this: the hon. member was arguing, or so I understood, that if the price of clearing by contract proved to

at £9 per acre, and the earlier clearing on the same group had cost £18 or £20 per acre, then in the making up of the accounts the clearing should be charged right from the start at the contract price. I do not think the hon. member can really have meant that, but if he did—

Mr. Thomson: I do not think you could have been listening properly.

Mr. GEORGE: I was listening quite properly, and that seemed to me to be the view expressed by the hon. member. If he did not mean that, it is all right; but if he did mean it, I would like to point out what a nice sort of mess there would be when the Government were settling up these hundreds of cases of group settlement.

Mr. Thomson: I said that if the Government maintained that the men were able to make too much money at £9 per acre, the Government could not reasonably charge £15 per acre in respect of such land.

Mr. GEORGE: I think the hon. member must admit that the cost of clearing the land, whether done by contract or by day work, would be a fair charge against the land and when the accounts were made up. If he argues that the clearing could be done cheaper to-day than it could be done years ago—

Mr. Thomson: I did not argue that at all.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member read a letter from a settler whose name he did not give.

Mr. Thomson: For obvious reasons. The settler might be persecuted if I gave his name.

The Minister for Lands: You gave the number of his block.

Mr. Thomson: No, I did not give it. It appeared in the Press.

Mr. GEORGE: It is just as well to be clear about this. The case in question would not be a case of any of the groups I have had to do with. The Minister for Lands seems to think the member for Katanning himself does not know anything about the case. However, I am informed that the settler who is supposed to be the one to whom the member for Katanning referred, earned over and above departmental charges £5 per week. If he paid 25s. for his forage, he would then have about £3 15s. per week left for himself. When a man is working on a place that is to be his own, and has a house, thus being free of rent, he is not going too badly on those figures.

Mr. Thomson: Where did you get that information from?

The Minister for Lands: I gave it to the member for Murray-Wellington, if you want to know; and it is correct.

Mr. Thomson: The man ought to know what he has been earning.

Mr. GEORGE: I have had some of these complaints made to me by settlers on the Peel estate; but instead of going to the Press, and instead of coming to the House and kicking up a bother, I investigated the various complaints, and after I had got them down to what I thought a common sense basis, I saw either the Minister or the departmental officers with regard to them. Not a single complaint which I brought forward in that manner, and which when examined was proved to have foundation, but was rectified at once. The business of going round among the settlers for the purpose of trying to pick up matters on which to hang political propaganda is too small to take up the time of the House with. I regard group settlement as having become an institution of this country just as much as any other institution we have in Western Australia. I regard group settlement as being far above the politics of either the Nationalist, the Country, or the Labour Party. The nation's money has been invested in the group settlement scheme, and the success of group settlement has to be achieved whether the scheme is carried on by the member for Katanning, or by the present Premier, or by the Leader of the Opposition. To attempt to make group settlement complaints a means of political propaganda is absolutely unworthy of a member of this House.

Mr. Thomson: That is what you are doing. I did nothing of the sort.

Hon. G. Taylor: But you were blamed for doing it.

Mr. Thomson: That does not prove that I did it.

Hon. G. Taylor: You look rather suspicious.

Mr. GEORGE: I read with considerable interest the report of the interview which the member for Katanning and other members of his attenuated party had with the Minister for Lands. Possibly the representatives of the Press could not quite understand the hon. member, any more than I could understand him perfectly last night, or perhaps the Press did not attach as much importance to the hon. member's statements

as he himself did; but so far as I could gather from what appeared in the newspapers there did not seem to be very much in the matter except that some very worthy gentleman, actuated by the purest political motives, had been peregrinating through the different groups and listening to this thing and that and the other and swallowing everything told to them.

The Minister for Lands: The member for Katanning has been only in one district.

Mr. GEORGE: I did not know that. If the hon. member and his party want to do really good work to assist Western Australia, they can do it in connection with the group settlements by clearing up misunderstandings. Most of the troubles on the groups arise from mere misunderstandings. I would suggest that the hon. member and his party, instead of pursuing the course they have adopted hitherto, should quietly go to see the Minister for Lands or his officers and get things put right in the same way as I have done. This business of decrying group settlement will not do any good either politically or socially, nor will it do the country any good. Western Australia has its enemies, its decriers, people whom it does not suit to see Western Australia go forward. In that respect Western Australia resembles every other country. What good can it do either Western Australia or the group settlements when it is reported—especially at Home, where the local position is not well understood—that the Leader of the Country Party and other members of that party have been going round the group settlements and have found them seething with discontent?

Mr. Thomson: I never said anything of the sort.

Mr. GEORGE: I know the hon. member did not say it, but that is the meaning of his actions, and that is the only interpretation to be put upon them.

Mr. Thomson: It is your interpretation.

Mr. GEORGE: It is an interpretation which more than I have given to the hon. member's actions. The man who pursues the course to which I have referred is not acting squarely by the country. There was a certain statement made about a group foreman, that the group foreman would harry a settler out for the purpose of putting another man in that settler's position.

Mr. Thomson: I did not say that.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member did say it. I do not suppose that foremen or supervisors are any less honest, or any less men, than the members of this Chamber. I ask any member what he would think of another member who was found vilifying a Minister in order that he might grab that Minister's portfolio? What would any member think of another member who poisoned the food of a man so that he might take food which belonged to that man, and which was not poisoned, to give it to some other man who had not worked for it? Such statements are utterly unworthy of a member of this House.

Mr. Marshall: They are only worthy of the member who made them.

Mr. GEORGE: I do not say that. I have a great respect for the member for Katanning as a private person, but he is a little inexperienced in the ways of politics and wants to jump too soon.

Mr. Lindsay: How long does it take to become experienced?

Mr. GEORGE: The main discovery I made in the group settlements is that little troubles continually crop up, but that they are troubles which can be put right, and have been put right, and always will be put right. I say that to the credit of the Minister for Lands, who, I am satisfied, is endeavouring just as much as my chief or anyone else to do the square thing by the settlers. The great thing is to complete the drainage scheme and the road system. I know that not only our Government but also the present Government spent a great deal of money in building roads through the various groups. The greatness of the expenditure no doubt has caused Ministers to stop and think how far the matter should go. But I hold that certain representations were made to the group settlers, and that those representations should be faithfully observed. Group settlement is a fine experiment, and one which will turn out a great success; and the representations which have been made to the settlers should be carried out to the full and legitimate end. If money is not available at present for extra roads, they will have to wait; but I do hope that when the money is available, any Ministry that may be in power will regard the making of the promised roads as being one portion of the contract that was entered into with the original group settlers. Some time ago I brought under the notice of the Minister for Lands a case on the Peel estate where I carefully went over the roads, not

only as a member of Parliament but as a man who has had to do with that class of work for a good many years. My representations to the Minister received courteous and full consideration, and so far as he could the hon. gentleman met my requests. I want to thank him here publicly for promising that as soon as he is able to provide the necessary funds, roads will be made in certain groups. It does not matter a button to me if the making of those roads is going to put into the electorate a lot of people who will vote against me at the next election. The satisfaction and comfort and convenience of the people on the group settlement areas are of far more importance than either my return or the return of any other member of this Chamber. Unless we can begin to think apart from ourselves, begin to think of Western Australia as a whole, apart from matters which touch our personal convenience, unless we cease to regard our personal convenience, as being the first consideration, we shall not rise to full strength as men who believe in their country. I shall not say much about what the Premier had the goodness to mention to me concerning somebody who is going round my district organising to destroy my political basis and so forth. I do not know who the gentleman is. However, if there is to be a fight, I shall try to be in good training when the fight comes and give the gentleman in question a good battle. I shall beat my opponents, because even they cannot make my old constituents forget the years of service they have had from me and the respect which they feel for me as a man. I notice that a new Traffic Bill and a new Roads Bill are to be introduced. I am sorry that I have not yet been able to get figures regarding what has been paid for motor car fees in the metropolitan area, or for drivers' licenses, or by way of fines. However, the point I want to submit for the Minister's consideration—possibly he will not agree with my view, but he may think it over----

The Minister for Works: I can give the aggregate amount. It is £54,652.

Mr. GEORGE: For last year?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Mr. GEORGE: The actual amount will not make any difference. My point is this: In the metropolitan area the fees are collected by the police, and they are dealt with by the Minister, who allocates them in what he considers the fairest and best way, to let them be used for making the roads better. By some oversight drivers' license fees were

omitted from that provision in the original Traffic Act. I am anxious that every penny derived from vehicular fees, apart from the expenses incurred on account of police work, shall be devoted to the improvement of our roads. During my term of office an amount was allocated to the different boards and each year an engineer and Mr. Sanderson as well looked over the work and submitted a report. Good work was done in that way. Probably some similar system is being carried out now, but the fact remains that the more money that can be procured for the purpose I have mentioned, the better the position will be. Then there is the question of the fines imposed upon motorists. I do not see why fines should not go to swell the amount handed over to the Minister controlling our roads. I am fully aware that under some particular Act all fines paid in the police court must be contributed to Consolidated Revenue through the Solicitor General. There has been much agitation amongst the road boards regarding that point. Those boards go to the expense of the prosecutions, yet they cannot recover their costs. The fines go to Consolidated Revenue, and the costs somewhere else. Whatever may be said regarding the costs of the prosecutions, I believe the fines could fittingly be applied to the same purpose as the license fees. I have been perusing the interim report and statement of results in connection with the railways, and I notice that the earnings are given as £22,000 below those of last year, while the working expenses have increased by £153,000 and interest by £46,000. These items represent nearly £250,000, to which extent apparently the railways went to leeward last year. No doubt the Minister for Railways and the Commissioner are giving that aspect serious consideration, but it is just as well we should know that that is really the financial position of the railways to-day. Going further with the analysis, we find that while the earnings per train mile have decreased a little over $\frac{1}{2}$ d., the working expenses increased by 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ d. That is a serious position. No doubt some of that increase, as pointed out by the Premier, was due to increases under Arbitration Court awards. In my opinion, however, the greater proportion of the increase has been occasioned by the institution of the 44-hour week in lieu of the 48-hour week. My own experience tells me that such an alteration must interfere materially with economies that might otherwise result in the working of our railways. Then again, I notice that passenger

journeys have decreased to the extent of 753,000. That decrease could be made up between Perth and Fremantle on account of the loss of passengers occasioned by the taxis and char-a-bancs. The astonishing part of it to me is that while there has been that decrease in the passengers carried, the amount of money involved is stated as £2,000 only. On the other hand, the goods and live stock returns have diminished by £24,000. I presume the decreased earnings on account of goods is due to the wheat harvest, but the whole of these items afford a considerable amount of food for reflection. Although I cannot deal as fully as I would like with this subject on the Address-in-reply, I will endeavour to deal with the position more fully when the Estimates are before us. I shall not do so in any carping spirit, but with the object of assisting the railway authorities in the task confronting them. There is another item to be taken into consideration when we note the increased expenditure. I refer to the heading known as "departmental free freight." All the coal, timber, sleepers, rails and so on required for the Railway Department are carried under free freight orders. Last year 45,000 tons were carried under that heading in excess of the record for the previous year, the total being 450,000 tons. That is a very considerable item. While I do not argue that that service should be paid for, I contend it must be taken into account when we give consideration to the railway figures, with a view to finding out what has to be done. During the Premier's speech reference was made to an increase in the railway rates. I was a member of the Government that authorised the increased charges. I do not know whether hon. members see it in the same light as I do, but it appeals to me that a deficit on account of the railways materially affects the general finances of the State, not merely those of the railways alone. Unless rates are raised to meet the deficiency, then the burden must fall on the income and land taxpayers. Thus not merely the farmers but every one of us has to bear a share in carrying the burden. If much of the railway deficit is on account of the 44-hour week, the position is that the men are given four hours less work per week, and the loss on account of that has to be made up by the taxpayers of the State. Regarding the metropolitan water supply, I am pleased to find out what the position was last summer. It has proved that the plans for the supply of water in the metropolitan area were well thought out,

and that what the engineers undertook to do, was achieved. In justice to the engineer who passed away in such lamentable circumstances some time ago, I would like to make reference to criticisms made regarding the foundations of the wall. Those criticisms were heard in this Chamber but more especially in the Legislative Council, where the comments were made by amateurs who should have been ashamed of themselves. They commented on the foundations and upon the clay that was to be used in the core. I have received information from thoroughly reliable sources that a solid foundation has been obtained. Mr. Lawson gave that information to me before he died, and it has been confirmed by the engineer in charge of the work now. I am assured that an absolutely good stone foundation has been obtained for the wall, and the clay, as Mr. Lawson said it would be, is absolutely suitable for the core in the wall. Some reference was made last night to certain building operations that are at a standstill on account of a strike by workmen who objected to a foreman. I do not think such conduct can be defended, not only because the men lose time and wages which they require, but because there must be discipline in connection with such work, just as there must be discipline in the ranks of industrial unions. The president, secretary and committee of a union have to exercise a certain amount of oversight because in carrying out a task, someone must be responsible to see that it is carried out properly. While I deprecate such instances strongly, we must remember that they are not local. The same thing happens in the Eastern States, and in other parts of the world. Recently I received a communication from the Association of Railway and Bridge Builders of America, of which organisation I have been a member for many years, dealing with the same question. It appears that they have been experiencing trouble with their workmen in connection with wages, hours, and work done. So far as I can judge, exactly the same spirit that is evidenced here is displayed in other parts of the world. It is really one of the after-maths of the war. I believe the common sense of the people and of workmen themselves will remedy the position in time, although there may be trouble for individuals while it is going on. A controversy is being waged regarding the insurance question. I will not deal with that now but will wait with considerable interest to hear what the Minister for Works has to say on that point.

At the Bunbury conference to which I have already referred, the chairman of the Main Roads Board explained the position regarding the Commonwealth grant and pointed out respecting the money to be made available, that for every £1 of Commonwealth money there would have to be 15s. from the State of which 7s. 6d. would have to be provided by the road boards. He explained that the money that would have to be found could be raised by means of loans. If that is the position, and the subsidies that have been paid for so many years past are to continue, I do not think that arrangement will adversely affect the road boards to any extent. I am afraid there are many people who have not read the provisions of the Main Roads Act thoroughly. They are not aware that before the construction of roads is commenced, the programme of work must be submitted by the Main Roads Board to the various road boards for their opinion. If the opinion of those boards is not accepted, then the road boards will have the right of appeal to the Minister. Their interests, therefore, are fairly well safeguarded. I regret the absence from the Governor's Speech of what is really a matter of importance to Western Australia. I refer to the problem of what is to be done regarding the present state of the electorates throughout the State. A redistribution of seats has been overdue for many years. When Sir James Mitchell was in office, he endeavoured to get such a Bill passed by Parliament but found that he could not do so. I am satisfied that if the present Government made up their minds to introduce a redistribution of seats Bill, they would be able to convince the consciences of a number of their party members that a redistribution is necessary. I have not been able to get the whole of the figures, but those I have at my disposal are up to the 31st December last. From these I find that whereas at the time of the election in March, 1924, there were seven seats, returning, of course, seven members to this Chamber, representing an aggregate of 4,696 electors, in December last they represented 4,337 electors. The seven seats I refer to are Cue, Menzies, Mt. Leonora, Mt. Margaret, Pilbara, Roebourne and Yilgarn. Murray-Wellington has over 5,000 electors on the roll and only one member. As showing the progress made in the South-West, I may say that when in June of 1894 I first contested that seat there were only 290 electors on the roll.

So in 32 years the electorate has gained over 5,000, and by March next, when the general election will be held, I expect there will be 6,000 electors in the constituency. I hope the House will recognise the importance of the representative of that electorate. There are also seven seats, namely Coolgardie, Gascoyne, Hannans, Kanowna, Kimberley, Mt. Magnet, and Murchison with less than 2,000 electors each. In March of 1924 the aggregate for the seven was 8,434 electors, but on the 31st December last the aggregate was 7,678.

The Premier: There are great possibilities in all those electorates.

Mr. GEORGE: Wonderful possibilities. The most wonderful thing about it is that we should have 14 members representing 12,000 electors.

Mr. Lambert: When Murray-Wellington has been able to progress under the disadvantages it has carried, anything is possible in those other constituencies.

Mr. GEORGE: When Providence inflicts on us a seeming disability, sometimes it is a blessing in disguise. Fortunately I did not hear what the hon. member said. Then there are eight seats with electors numbering from 7,000 to 14,600, or an aggregate of 81,477 electors as against the 4,337 for the seven seats I first alluded to. Yet those eight seats have only eight members. I am sure the conscience of the Premier will impel him to attend to this matter as quickly as possible. The member for Canning (Mr. Clydesdale) represents 14,603 electors. Consequently he can very well say to me, "You are representing only 5,000 electors, whereas I represent 14,000; so if you have one vote, I ought to have three." Then there is Leederville with 11,923, and Subiaco with 10,762; East Perth with 8,683; North Perth with 8,593; West Perth with 6,106; and, for the benefit of the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall), Murchison with 1,036.

Mr. Marshall: Will you tell me how it is that the member for a seat with 8,683 constituents can do all their work in 20 minutes a day, whereas it takes me full time to attend to the requirements of my 1,036 constituents?

Mr. GEORGE: I am not arguing for or against any member: I am merely arguing that the time is ripe for the introduction of a Bill for the redistribution of seats. The interests of the various classes of workers, investors and the like, demand

that a readjustment of seats shall be made in accordance with the readjustments of population caused by the fluctuations of employment and attendant causes.

The Premier: What you want is to get a redistribution so as to upset the work of those organisers to whom I referred this afternoon.

Mr. GEORGE: No, no. The Premier has a very vivid imagination, but that is not my object at all. I want the people of the State to have their representation as it should be according to the various interests and the population of the various districts. I am convinced that when the Premier comes to think of it he will to his own self be true, and will acknowledge that there are points worthy of consideration in what I have brought before him.

The Premier: Of course there is a lot to be said on both sides.

Mr. GEORGE: There is a lot to be said on all sides. Whether or not the Premier will be allowed to follow the dictates of his own conscience and convictions in this respect, I do not know; but if the prayers of members on this side are of any avail, we will readily pray for him that before the end of the session he may bring down a redistribution Bill so that at the next election we may have the true voice of the people. We cannot have that while one member represents 14,000 and another represents only 434 persons. We require to get the true voice of the people, so that their representatives here can let us know exactly what is required.

The Minister for Lands: Would you not like a Bill to postpone the election for three or four years?

Mr. GEORGE: No, I do not want that. If the electors should happen to think they would be better suited by members other than ourselves, we must put up with it and wish the men who succeed us good luck in their endeavours to promote the interests of Western Australia.

MR. PANTON (Menzies) [8.53]: Unlike those members of the Opposition who have spoken, I find in the Speech quite a lot of interesting matter, sufficient to give rise to unending debate.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Tell us all about it.

Mr. PANTON: Since the hon. member spent two and a-half hours endeavouring to

do that, and since I do not pretend to have his ability, it would be useless for me to try to tell the House all about it. I am glad the Government have inaugurated a deep boring system in the mines. Although a great deal of pessimism has been indulged in respecting gold mining, I am optimistic enough to believe there is a big future awaiting gold mining in Western Australia. Having some knowledge of the fields, I also believe that the best and cheapest method of finding out whether there is payable ore at depth, is that of deep boring by diamond drill. I hope the operations now being carried on at the north end of Kalgoorlie will be extended to other districts where hundreds of mines have been abandoned after being worked to a depth of 200 or 300 feet. I agree with the last speaker there is quite a lot that one could say about State insurance. In my view the system should have been introduced many years ago. However, as a better opportunity will be afforded when the Bill comes before us, I do not propose to deal with the question at any length tonight.

Mr. Lambert: The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) is a most uncompromising supporter of State insurance.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do not think you are right.

Mr. PANTON: I learn from the Speech that it is proposed to bring down a Bill dealing with hospitals. I do not know what the proposal may be, but I hope it will be for the benefit of the administration of hospitals. Having had some experience as a member of the Perth Hospital Board, I say that Parliament requires to realise the ever growing necessity for an up to date hospital in Perth. There is altogether too little room in the Perth hospital, and in consequence surgical cases, especially on the women's side, are being held up from day to day. I trust that if the proposed Bill is going to remedy that matter it will be on a pretty comprehensive scale. There is another section of the community to which the Government should give very serious consideration, namely, the charitable institutions. The time has arrived when there should be some properly co-ordinated system of looking after our charitable institutions, all of which are doing great work, each in its own sphere. However, owing to the fact that they are all working independently, they are costing a great deal more than they would if we had some system of co-ordina-

tion. I would appeal to the Treasurer on behalf of the blind section of our community. Because we seldom see a blind man or woman in the streets of the city, many people fail to realise the large number of blind people in our midst. I have been associated with both the Industrial School for the Blind at Maylands and with the Braille Society for the past three years, and the longer I am associated with those institutions the more am I convinced of the necessity for greater assistance being afforded by the Government to those people if they are to be given anything like a fair deal. Briefly the position is this: At the school at Maylands there are 56 men and women who, instead of being allowed to sit about in moody condition, worrying over their affliction, have been taken in and transformed into useful citizens producing serviceable articles such as matting, mats, cane grass chairs, hair brooms, and various other articles. Unfortunately it has to be done in competition with articles made by machinery, worked by sighted attendants. It may be interesting to the Leader of the Country Party to know that these blind people have their own union, and it will be pleasing to him to learn that the bulk of them are working on piece work at their own request and at the same rates as are paid for brushware manufactured in the Eastern States. Unfortunately if they were paid on the results of their actual work they would be on the verge of starvation. That is our difficulty. Whilst the more efficient men and women are able to earn £3 and £3 5s. per week, they are but few in number. For various reasons, whether mental capacity or the fact that some of them lost their sight relatively late in life and consequently have not the keen sense of touch found in those born blind, the bulk of those workers are not able to earn sufficient to keep them. Consequently the board has had to add 40 per cent. to what they earn, plus something more for the married men and women. Most of them are married. Of three married couples, both husband and wife are blind. These 56 men and women are manufacturing £11,000 worth of goods each year, but owing to their being blind, the loss on the turnover is approximately £3,500 a year. Consequently the school is going back. We are told that Western Australia is enjoying a period of prosperity and the Speech shows

such an optimistic tone, that one might well conclude that the position of the people of this State is as good as, if not better than ever before. The whole of the workers are receiving higher rates of wages. The basic wage has been increased. Men and women in every walk of life have received advances. Civil servants have been re-classified at higher rates and the police force and in fact the whole of the industrial and professional workers have benefited. Surely then the blind people should participate in the wealth of the State. Unless something is done in the near future to assist the two societies I have mentioned, these blind people will have to be taken out of the school as industrial workers, lose their independence, or work for a much lower rate of wages than they are receiving at present, a rate upon which it would be impossible for them to live. The fundamental principle of the school is to keep these people working. So long as they are working they are happy.

Hon. G. Taylor: They are all anxious to work.

Mr. PANTON: Yes, and they do work. To anyone visiting the school at Maylands, it is an eye-opener to find how happy and contented these people are. I appreciate the assistance that has been given by the present and by past Treasurers. At present we are receiving £2,300 a year from the Government, of which £500 goes to the Braille Society and £1,800 to the Industrial School at Maylands. If these institutions are to continue their work, another £1,000 is required.

Hon. G. Taylor: Would that cover both institutions?

Mr. PANTON: Yes. There was a time when we could appeal to the people of Western Australia and obtain substantial assistance for the blind, but organisers of charitable appeals during the last few years agree that the art of free giving in this State is a thing of the past. Not long ago we organised an appeal for the blind, hoping to raise £10,000, but after six months' strenuous work the net result was £3,000, 60 per cent. of which was obtained by means of art unions and other gambling devices. In Melbourne the Mayoress made an appeal to the public on behalf of the blind and obtained £54,000 in six weeks. That shows the difference between the two States. Much as we should like to carry on without invoking further

aid from the Government, we find it impossible to do so. The Braille Society is carrying on a wonderfully fine work. In Victoria Park we have a rest home for the blind where 20 old men and women are living out their lives comfortably and happily. Other activities of the Braille Society are particularly interesting. We have seven children in the school being educated. One young man educated in the school—he was born blind—is a B.A. The teacher of the school was trained at Maylands. Apart from the 20 old men and women, a large number of blind people are being cared for in their own homes. They are being instructed by the home teacher, Mrs. McGregor, who has devoted practically the whole of her life to teaching the Braille system. It is essential that these people be taught to read and write. Let members imagine for themselves what it would be if these blind people had to sit at home night after night without a chance to read or write. That would be their fate but for the activities of the Braille Society. A large number of ladies who volunteered to learn the Braille system have translated 180 novels for our library. All that organisation and all these activities cost money. An ordinary 2s. novel translated into the Braille system fills 18 volumes measuring 10 x 12 inches. We are grateful to the Government Printing Office for having bound the volumes for us. After three years association with these two societies, I appeal to the Treasurer when framing his Estimates for the ensuing year, to give sympathetic consideration to these people who are unable to help themselves. Another £1,000 will get us out of the wood. We do not pay large salaries; no one is asking for them. The least efficient worker is capable of earning only 16s. per week, and to that we add 40 per cent. The majority of the blind receive the invalid pension of £1 a week, but even that makes up a sum which is very little to live on at present. Most of them are trying to maintain their own homes. That is what we want them to do; we want them to be good citizens of the State. Given sympathetic consideration by the Premier. I believe we shall be able to maintain 56 workers in the institution doing good work for themselves and producing necessary articles within the State, besides keeping a large number happy in their own homes, teaching them to read and

write, and caring for the old men and women. I hope my appeal will not be in vain. With all the money which we have been told is locked up in the bank——

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Premier has a tremendous lot!

The Premier: I am embarrassed to know how to dispose of it!

Mr. PANTON: I am asking for a comparatively small amount. I am glad at having got in early with my request. It is indeed creditable that one can pass along the streets of the city without encountering a blind man or woman begging, and the credit for that is due to a band of unselfish workers in the cause of the blind. We are grateful to successive Governments for the concession of free transport for the blind on tramways and railways, but we do want another £1,000 to enable us to continue our work. If the Premier has any anxiety as to how to dispose of the thousands of pounds of which we have heard, well, he knows my address.

On motion by Mr. J. H. Smith, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1) £1,913,500.

* Returned from the Council without amendment.

House adjourned at 9.10 p.m.