

**Legislative Assembly,**

Wednesday 3rd September, 1913.

**QUESTIONS (3)—PERTH TRAMWAYS.***Sale of Tickets.*

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

**PAPER PRESENTED.**

By Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): By-lays of the Toodyay roads board dealing with trespass and poundage fees.

**BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.**

Introduced by Mr. McDonald and read a first time.

**QUESTION—RACING CONSULTATIONS.**

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that a sweep of 20,000 subscribers on the Kalgoorlie Cup and largely in aid of charity was drawn last night? 2, Is he aware that large sums of money are being weekly sent out of the State to Tasmania? 3, In view of the fact that some people will always gamble, will he favour the running of a State lottery, or allow reputable persons, who would be guaranteed, to run same, and by that means gain much needed revenue for our own State?

The PREMIER replied: 1 and 2, Yes, but not officially. 3, The Government do not propose to make provision as suggested.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS for Mr. Heitmann asked the Minister for Railways: What are the reasons for the alteration in the system of selling tram tickets?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: To enable the staff concerned to more effectively carry out their duty of collection; the sale of ordinary concession tickets in bulk at reduced rates (excepting workmen's tickets, which are still obtainable from conductors) has been transferred to suburban stations, the car barn, and the office at the Town Hall.

*Position of Superintendent.*

Mr. LEWIS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is the present occupant of the office of Superintendent of Tramways permanently appointed? 2, If not, when is the permanent appointment to be made?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, Probably within the next six months.

*Employees' Agreement.*

Hon. FRANK WILSON asked the Minister for Railways: Is it the intention of the Government to carry out the terms and conditions of the agreement existing between the tramway employees and the company, pending arrangements for a new agreement with the Commissioner of Railways?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: Yes.

**QUESTION -- POLICE STATION, HIGHGATE HILL, QUARTERS.**

Mr. LANDER asked the Premier: 1, Will he cause an inspection to be made of the quarters supplied to the officer-in-charge at the Highgate Hill police station, to ascertain if it is possible for the occupants to occupy same under hygienic

conditions? 2, Does he intend to make some provision for better police protection for Mount Lawley and East Perth districts?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, It is considered that the present police protection in the Mount Lawley-East Perth district is sufficient.

#### QUESTION — AGENT GENERAL'S OFFICE, EMIGRATION OFFICER.

Mr. LANDER asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been drawn to a paragraph which appeared in last Friday's issue of the *West Australian* as follows:—"Mr. R. L. Gilbert has returned to the charge of the Government Emigration Department at Victoria-street, after an absence on his long leave of four months, during which, by the consent of the Government, his services were utilised by the Midland Railway Company of Western Australia in promoting their ready-made farm scheme. The time was short for working up a scheme of such magnitude, and it is an obviously difficult matter to sell prepared farms existing so far off, but Mr. Gilbert's success was such that the company asked for an extension of his leave in order that he might complete his valuable work. This, however, the Agent-General could not see his way to approve?" 2, Will he extend the same privilege to all other civil servants on long service leave, so that they can add to their salaries? 3, Is it desirable that a member of the staff of the Agent-General in London should be associated with a private company's land sales in this manner?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. The arrangement was entered into between the Agent General and myself, as representing the Government, at the time I was visiting London. 2, Each case is dealt with on its merits. 3, This instance was not so much a matter of selling a private company's land as assistance rendered for the purpose of ensuring to the State a suitable class of settler, in connection with which Mr. Gilbert has had considerable experience.

#### QUESTIONS (2) — INEBRIATES' HOME.

##### *Inmates on leave.*

Mr. FOLEY asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been drawn to a report current in the City that certain inmates of the Inebriates' Home are in the habit of coming to Perth and returning there in a more or less intoxicated condition? 2, If so, has anything been done to prevent this practice? 3, If not, will he cause inquiries to be made?

The PREMIER replied: 1, On three occasions three separate inebriates have returned to the institution the worse for liquor, but it is not correct to say that inmates are in the habit of so doing. 2, If an inmate breaks his parole in this manner he is not allowed out again, except in special circumstances and in the care of friends. 3, Answered by No. 2.

##### *Interviewing patients.*

Mr. FOLEY asked the Premier: Have patients in the Inebriates' Home permission to interview other patients for Press purposes?

The PREMIER replied: No.

#### QUESTION — ELECTRIC POWER SCHEME, PLANT.

Hon. FRANK WILSON asked the Premier: 1, Having reference to the Government electric power scheme, is it a fact that orders have been placed for the plant and machinery in London without tenders being called locally, in the usual manner, for the same? 2, If so, were public tenders called in London or elsewhere? 3, What is the value of orders placed?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. The provision of the plant and machinery for the Government Power Station was left almost entirely in the hands of the firm of Merz and McLellan, and, on their advice, and with the concurrence of the Agent General and myself, when in London, tenders for various reasons were not called locally, the principal reason being the urgency of the matter, and the fact that only a limited number of firms could supply the necessary plant and material. 2, Yes. 3, £188,521.

## MOTION—POSTPONEMENT.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex): In regard to the motion standing in my name on the Notice Paper having reference to the reports on the hull of the s.s. "Kwinana," I should like, with the permission of the House to postpone its consideration until after the motion also standing in my name and referring to balance-sheets of the State trading concerns has been dealt with. I have no intention of proceeding with the third motion standing in my name, which asks that agreements or contracts of any kind in connection with State trading enterprises entered into by the Government be laid on the Table of the House.

Motion, by leave, postponed.

## MOTION—STATE TRADING CONCERNS BALANCE SHEETS.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) moved—

*That there be laid upon the Table of the House at the earliest possible moment after the close of the financial year—1, A balance sheet in connection with the State steamers. 2, A balance sheet in connection with State butchers' shop. 3, A balance sheet in connection with State hotels.*

He said: I should like to have included in the motion, a balance sheet in connection with the State live stock department, or the State stock dealing department. The motion is couched in such terms that every member can support it. It seems to me desirable that we should have this information, and the Government themselves, I think, should not take exception to a motion of this nature. It will not embarrass the Government in any way, and unless they wish to keep back this information from Parliament and from the people, who are undoubtedly entitled to it, I think it should be supplied. If the results of the operations of the State enterprises referred to in the motion are good, as one would hope, then I presume the Premier and his colleagues would be only too ready to blazon it forth to the whole of Australia and the world gen-

erally. They would like to take credit for having initiated these State enterprises, and prove by figures duly audited that they have been successful in their operations. If, on the other hand, the operations of these enterprises are bad, and we have grave reason to suppose, up to the present at any rate, that they are bad, then the sooner we know all about it the better, and the sooner the people know the actual result of this speculation in their name, the better it will be for all concerned, and for the Government themselves, because steps may then be taken to remedy what has proved disastrous. From remarks dropped by the Premier the other evening when we touched upon one portion of our State Steamship Service, I am inclined to think he is going to crack his whip over the heads of his followers and ask them to vote this resolution down. I hope I am mistaken. He accused members on this side of colossal ignorance, because we ventured to insist that certain information ought to be forthcoming, colossal ignorance of the State Trading Concerns Act, providing for the proper keeping of these accounts, and for the publication thereof in due course. I may here remark that I heard an interjection by the Premier to the effect that he was in no way compelled to give any accounts in regard to these trading concerns this year. Now I venture to dispute that attitude, notwithstanding that he may be, perhaps, legally entitled to refrain from having the accounts published for some time yet to come; because I notice that these concerns, amongst others, were only gazetted under the Trading Concerns Act of 1912 on the 21st May last, and, therefore, I suppose the Premier holds that his year begins from that date, and that, consequently, he need not produce these balance sheets until the early portion of next year, if then. I want, however, to impress upon hon. members opposite that there is such a thing as public opinion. public opinion which, more than anything else, controls the acts of Ministers of the Crown, controls those Ministers whether they like it or not, or whether or not they are strictly within

the four corners of some legal document or Act of Parliament which has been passed by members here assembled. And public opinion demands that we should know something in regard to these trading concerns at the earliest possible moment. The motion does not bind the Government to bring down these accounts to-morrow, or even next week, but it will be an instruction to them to hurry up and have the documents prepared—they ought to be prepared now—and published in record time. I would point out that we have now passed some three months since the close of the financial year, and three months is all too long a period for accounts of this description to be delayed from publication.

The Premier : Three months ?

Hon. FRANK WILSON : We are getting close on to it, anyhow.

The Premier : We have not reached two yet.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : Well, I will say two months. Two months is all too long a period over which to withhold the publication of accounts of this description; one month is ample. Almost the largest private trading concerns which could be compared with these undertakings would have their balance sheet out within a fortnight of the close of their financial year. Certainly they would be prepared and published within a month. There is no large stock to take account of, no stocks to balance and value and write off depreciation upon; they are practically cash concerns, and ought to be as easily balanced almost as the monthly Treasury figures which are given to us through the Press on the morning of the first day of each month. The Premier may claim, as he did by interjection a few days ago, that they have to be audited. I admit that. But it must be done in the same manner as private concerns are audited. It is idle to produce that as an argument for withholding these accounts. If we enter into the realm of trading in competition with our citizens we must be prepared in the interests of those citizens to have our trading concerns and the accounts kept in a way similar to that

in which they are kept by those private individuals. Special auditors accustomed to the auditing of commercial accounts ought to be engaged to look after the affairs of these trading concerns. Special auditors ought to be constantly examining the accounts and books of these trading concerns. Every month some audit officer ought to be in attendance to see that the books are right up to the mark, the accounts properly kept, and payments duly made; then, at the end of the year, it would be an easy matter to produce the balance sheets which, so far, have not been placed before us. Accounts can be kept very accurately on monthly returns, more especially in connection with State steamers and butchers' shops which trade practically for cash alone. Those books could be kept up every month and balanced every month. I mentioned the other night that the manager of the State Steamship Department had said emphatically that those accounts were kept, so far as the steamers were concerned, that each trip had its balance sheet prepared, the same as is done in the Adelaide Steamship Company's office in regard to their steamers. So it appears to me no argument can be brought forward in support of refraining from giving this most necessary information to the public at the earliest possible time. The time has arrived, I maintain, when the people are entitled to know the true position of affairs. Curiosity is rife, anxiety is increasing day by day, and the longer the Government keep these things back the more will they be condemned by the outside public, and the more suspicion will they create in the minds of the public that these departments are not carrying out all that was promised at their inception. There has been misrepresentation with regard to these enterprises, undoubtedly; misrepresentation from time to time as to the profits earned. There has been evasion with regard to the management. Occasionally we get some interview or semi-interview or inspired paragraph in the newspapers that such and such is to be the case, and eventually we find that noth-

ing of the sort has occurred. Take the alteration of management the other day. First it was pooch-pooched by responsible Ministers; yet within a very short time we find that the management has been transferred, as was hinted at, to the control of the Fremantle Harbour Trust secretary and his staff.

The Premier: That was never stated.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No, it was stated that they were not going to do it. The Colonial Secretary said distinctly per the medium of an inspired paragraph, that nothing of the sort was intended, that they had not been transferred. Yet within a short time that transfer was made.

The Premier: That is not correct.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Reticence and secrecy have been the prime features in connection with these undertakings, as indeed, I am sorry to say, they have been in connection with everything of importance which has transpired during my friends' occupancy of the Treasury bench. And these remarks apply just as much to the butchery concern as to the steamship service. The necessity for the motion is patent to everyone, patent by reason of the fact that the State enterprises so far have not given the results which Ministers almost guaranteed. Certainly they prophesied them with strong confidence. Sufficient information has leaked out from time to time, and has been disclosed by the Treasury figures month after month during the past 12 months, to cause serious unrest, if not alarm, amongst those who are best able to judge what the ultimate results of those ventures will be. A loss has been admitted, so far as the State Steamship Service is concerned, and the figures have endorsed that admission. Up to the end of last year we have lost something like £30,000 in round figures on our steamship service.

The Premier: You will say £100,000 next.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Premier has lost pretty well £100,000 on his capital account, but I am talking of the actual result of his trading. And let

me remind the hon. member that £30,000 would go a long way towards providing work for the workless, and keeping the unemployed off our streets, together with those who are inundating the Labour Bureau, seeking the employment which the Labour Government pledged themselves to provide, but which they have not provided.

The Premier: Stinking fish.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Well, they belong to the Premier, and he has to get rid of them somehow or other. The July Treasury figures show a loss of something like £3,000, while the August figures for the first time show a small margin of profit of £2,333—if they be accurate.

Mr. Gill: Do you not know that they are accurate?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I want the balance sheet to find out whether they are accurate. Hon. members are not doing their public duty if they do not support me in the demand for these documents which ought to be public property. If private individuals were treated in this way, shareholders in big undertakings, the managers and directors thereof would very soon get their walking tickets, and be told to make room for better managers who would give more consideration to the shareholders. We are all shareholders in these concerns. Our money is invested in the undertakings, the people's money, and the people want to know the result of this investment, and whether it is beneficial and profitable to carry on or not. Of course we know that at this season of the year steamers are carrying full shipments of live stock at payable rates, and it would be a pity indeed if, under such circumstances, we could not show some margin of profit. When we are carrying full shipments of live stock we have no loading or unloading charges; our cargo walks itself upon the vessel, and in due course walks back again upon the shore at the port of discharge, that is, if it is in a condition to carry itself on its own legs. I wonder what is going to be the position in regard to these steamers in the off season, from November to March next; I wonder if these steamers are still going to show even this small margin between revenue and expenditure

which the Premier was so proud of, and which he referred to the other night as a £2,000 profit, indicating that the tide had turned and that we were now in a fair way to make the venture successful.

The Premier: When did I say that?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: In the House the other night. In the Treasury figures we have no heading in regard to the State butchery enterprise, and I fail to see why we should not bring the revenue and expenditure of that enterprise within our Treasury accounts as is done with the State steamers. Why does not the Premier have these figures published so that the public may see what is being done in that regard? The Colonial Secretary, some time back, between December of last year and January of this year, claimed that the butchers' stalls had made a profit of something like £300. The other day the Premier claimed that the profit was £800, and I want to know about the stock department's figures.

The Premier: What about your coal mines?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Premier need not be personal. My coal mine is all right, and it is a very sound undertaking. I suppose the Premier would like to invest some of his hard earned capital?

The Premier: Oh, no.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I can assure the Premier he has not got a hope; I would not have him as a shareholder.

The Premier: You have no chance of getting me.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: How about the stock department? Early this year we had a shipment of cattle from East Kimberley which had been purchased from a stock grower named Farquharson, and when the Government steamer "Kwinana" ought to have been loading his stock at Wyndham, she was knocking about Sydney and Newcastle on some errand and these cattle were detained at Wyndham until they ceased to be fat. They arrived at Fremantle during the summer months and then, of course, they were no good except as stores. It was stated that the Government purchased these cattle in order to avoid an action at law, and that they paid £6 17s. 6d. per head for cattle

which were worth only £4 per head. It is well known that a number of the cattle were condemned by the Government veterinary surgeon on account of being infected with pleuro. Some of the best of the beasts were put up for auction at Fremantle and an offer of £5 per head was made, and that, of course, was refused. Some of the cattle were brought back again a fortnight later, so I am informed, and £3 per head was the best bid that could be obtained. That bid was again refused. During the interim some of the animals died from pleuro, and as hon. members know—it is ancient history now—some were shot and burnt because they could not stand on their legs, whilst 150 of those still remaining on hand were sold at 25s. per head. The point I want to make with regard to this transaction is that when the announcement of profit was made by the Colonial Secretary, there must have been on hand something like 150 head of cattle which had cost the Government £9 per head at least, at Fremantle. Thus, the profit of £300 claimed by the Colonial Secretary on this venture is turned into a loss of, roughly, £850. It seems to me that if we had made a profit of anything like £800, then the live stock account must have covered up any loss such as that on this shipment of cattle from Farquharson. If that is so, I claim that the true result of the butchering business is being hidden up. The butchering business should stand all the losses on shipments of cattle which have been purchased for it and brought down to the southern ports. Yandanooka station, I understand, has been made a dépôt for the butchering business. Have the working expenses of that station or any proportion of the interest and sinking fund charges been debited up against the butchering venture? It seems to me that we are entitled to know, and to know early, how the position truly stands.

The Premier: We ought to consult you before we do anything.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Premier ought. I think it is his duty to consult Parliament before entering upon these ventures. I told the Premier long since that he had acted illegally when he em-

barked upon this undertaking of State steamers, and he certainly did act illegally and contrary to the ordinary usages of Parliament.

The Premier: You would not hold that I could get a better example to follow than yourself.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Premier has never followed my example. That is the mistake he makes. If he had followed my example, he would not be in such a financial muddle as he finds himself in to-day, and he would not have had this country tied up in such a knot as will take his successors some years to unravel after they once tackle it. I was saying that Yandanooka station has been turned into a dépôt for the butchering business, and we want to know what position the Government have taken up in regard to that property. Is ordinary Consolidated Revenue charged up with the interest and sinking fund on the purchase money of that property? Is the cost of maintenance charged up against the butchering business, of which it is an adjunct, or is it kept, as we believe it is kept, separately and entirely hidden up in the general expenditure which is charged up against Consolidated Revenue? The small station owners, which the Premier in his usual way claimed were to be benefited by the initiation of this department and the State steamship service are seriously affected, and have been right through by the erratic running of these steamers. The "Kwinana" entered the trade this season something like six weeks late, and at the present time she is about ten weeks late, and will continue late throughout the season in consequence. These delays ruin the condition of cattle, and it is needless for me to point out that if the department drifts on some ten weeks or three months late in the season, ultimately it will drift into the summer months and that will be disastrous to the bringing of cattle down to the southern markets. The purchase of several thousand head of cattle from the Bovril Company has started somewhat disastrously. The first delivery of some 400 head dwindled down to about 100 head before the steamer was ready to

receive them. They were taken delivery of by the Government agent at Wyndham and were then discovered to be afflicted with pleuro, but despite the Government veterinary surgeon's instructions to the contrary, they were placed on the steamer for shipment to Fremantle. Eventually they had to be taken off again in obedience to instructions to that effect sent up from headquarters. I understand that several thousands of these cattle are to be taken delivery of during the present season, and I would point out that the lateness in the running of the steamship "Kwinana" will mean that the bulk of them will require to be brought down during the summer months, and the result will be disastrous to the Government from a financial point of view and fatal to the cattle, because many of them must die.

Mr. Male: And they have refused to bring down 1,000 head of cattle from other squatters.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I can quite understand that they cannot bring down cattle for outside squatters when they cannot provide accommodation to bring down their own cattle purchased from the Bovril Company. The small retail butchers in the metropolitan area appear to be the only people who are affected by the Government action in regard to the butchers' stalls which have been opened at Subiaco and Fremantle, and ultimately will be opened at Kalgoorlie, if the views of Ministers are given effect to. These small men buy at public auction every week and the Government also buy at public auction to a large degree.

The Premier: The retailers do nothing of the kind—not all of them. The great majority buy at prices as stated, not by auction.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: They do not do anything of the sort.

The Premier: I say they do.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The retail butchers attend the auction sales twice a week, one day for cattle and another day for sheep. The Premier's agent goes there and bids against them, and if the private buyer cannot meet within seven days his payments for the cattle he has purchased, his bid is not taken at the

next auction sale and he is not supplied. Of course, if the Government have a loss on their transactions, instead of their being placed in a position not to purchase again, the public foot the bill and no more is said about it. There was in existence some time ago a large combination of companies owning something like 50 retail butchers' shops extending from Leonora to Fremantle, but they could not be worked at a profit under the rules and conditions laid down by the Arbitration Court; therefore, those businesses were transferred to the managers of the respective branches on certain terms, and it is only because those managers, untrammelled by any arbitration award, could go into their own shops and do a large portion of the work connected with the shops, that they were able to make ends meet and run the establishments at a profit. They have become master butchers and now, forsooth, when they are doing their utmost to serve the public well, and to make a living for themselves, those are the men, the small men, whom the Premier and his colleagues have set out to crush, and those, and those only are the men who will be injured by the competition of the State butchers' shops. I say again that the small cattle growers have not benefited one iota by the introduction of the State steamship service and the establishment of State butchers' stalls.

Mr. Underwood: Rot! That is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I hope the hon. member will not discuss that phase of the question; indeed his remarks are not within the scope of this motion. That matter was discussed on the motion moved by the hon. member for Kimberley last week.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Not the cost of beef.

Mr. SPEAKER: There was a discussion created by the member for Kimberley as to whether the cattle growers have been benefited by the introduction of State steamers. I do not think it is desirable in the best interests of the House to continue that discussion on this motion.

The Premier: The hon. member could not find that out from the balance sheet, anyhow.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I claim that it can be seen from the balance sheet, if the Premier will give me all the detailed information I am asking for. I desire by these illustrations to show how necessary it is that we should have these accounts. The Government claim to be providing certain facilities and conveniences that are benefiting a section of the community, and I am pointing out that they are not being benefitted.

Mr. Underwood: I say they are.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The hon. member can say what he likes.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Underwood: And so can you.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Nobody will take any notice of the hon. member.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am not going to allow hon. members to continue a debate across the floor after I have called for order. The terms of the motion will not permit the leader of the Opposition to discuss the merits of the State steamers' operations so far as assistance to the squatters or other people is concerned. The hon. member has asked for a balance sheet. The hon. member must confine his remarks to showing the necessity for a balance sheet, and the operation of these concerns as trading businesses, but I cannot allow the hon. member or any other hon. member to depart from the scope of his motion and discuss something which has already been discussed on more than one occasion in this House during the session.

The Premier: Every week.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I only wish—

The Premier: Discussed every week.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Will the Premier be quiet. I am addressing the Speaker, and the Premier ought to learn manners. I am only drawing an illustration to show the necessity for having these accounts produced and produced properly. If I can show that the different State enterprises have not fulfilled their



function that surely is a very strong reason indeed why we should have the accounts immediately they can be produced.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member's intention was to show that these trading concerns are not fulfilling their requirements to the country, then he should have framed his motion in different language from that expressed in this particular motion. I do not want to burk discussion, but the purpose of this House is to do the business of the country, and my duty is to conduct the business in accordance with the Standing Orders, using, of course, common sense and discretion in the manner of the observance of the Standing Orders. I am quite prepared to allow the hon. member sufficient scope to discuss his motion in its fullest terms, but it would not be wise on my part to allow discussion to follow on the lines of that already permitted and followed in this Chamber on more than one occasion this session.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Then, Sir, I will get off that point in obedience to your ruling, and just remark that one poor man, a pioneer of Kimberley, who refused something like £3 10s. a head for cattle at Wyndham, had them brought down by a State steamer and had to take 17s. a head for them. I would like to have returns—

The Premier: That will not be shown in the balance-sheet.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If details are given it can be shown who used the steamers, and it will be found that very few outside of the cattle kings have used them. Then, the other day we had this farcical royal commission on the State Steamship Service, and here again is revealed the necessity for having prompt accounts. We have had allegations of mismanagement, departmental mismanagement—I do not want to hit a man who is down—but we have had no report from this royal commission. Whilst the then Prime Minister of Australia was stamping the country during the recent Federal elections quoting a telegram received from the Acting Premier of this State that the State steamers were a profitable

undertaking and had not lost £2,000 a month, and whilst our own Premier was extolling their virtues in the metropolis of the world, the city of London, and whilst we had the Colonial Secretary here denying the criticisms which were written by one "Observer" in the *West Australian*, we had, on the other hand, as a matter of fact, the loss being incurred month by month, absolutely incurred, and now when we have a royal commission appointed to inquire into the general administration of the Steamship Service, appointed, I say rightly, on the charges that were made by Mr. Holmes publicly in the Press, as soon as the manager collapses the commission is disbanded and no report is brought in to satisfy the public as to the truth or otherwise of the allegations. Mr. Holmes pledged his reputation on the charges he made, and proved them evidently up to the hilt, and yet he is denied a verdict. No verdict is to be given as to whether his statements were true or otherwise, notwithstanding that we had responsible Ministers previously denying practically these charges and the Premier himself announcing the success of his undertaking.

The Premier: A man who would stoop to what he did does not deserve a verdict.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Who can find fault with Mr. Holmes for having made the charges? One might criticise the methods he adopted, but no one can find fault with a leading citizen who was using the steamers and contributing towards their maintenance for making the charges which he knew to be well founded. The commission was appointed and was appointed with 75 per cent of its members civil servants, one member only being from outside circles, and Mr. Holmes was asked to appear as plaintiff, if you please.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The discussion has nothing to do with this question. I must ask the hon. member not to depart from the terms of the motion, because it makes my position extremely difficult in confining other hon. members to the question before the House. If I allow the hon. member to depart from the terms of his motion I must allow every other hon. member to do the same.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I wish you would.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to, but I must not do so. If the hon. member brought forward a motion which permitted the royal commission being discussed, I would be only too willing to allow it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I maintain that I can advance any arguments of mismanagement, as such arguments will be a proof that we are entitled to the full figures. If I can show, therefore, that there was mismanagement and misrepresentation, it is all the more reason why the Chamber should vote for the production of these figures.

The Premier: You know members are not going to.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Premier does not know, or has he cracked his whip already? I object to these unseemly interruptions. I am trying to keep on the line of argument, and if I am ruled out of order I shall have to cease, but I maintain, with all due respect, that I can use any argument showing mismanagement and misrepresentation on the part of Ministers as a sound one why the official figures should be produced immediately.

The Attorney General: You are debating the Speaker's ruling.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That is no concern of the Attorney General. I am submitting this with due respect for Mr. Speaker's consideration.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think the hon. member is disputing my ruling wilfully.

The Premier: Not wilfully, but he is.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I want you to give me as much latitude as you can.

Mr. SPEAKER: I must adhere to my resolution not to allow the hon. member to discuss the royal commission. If the hon. member desired to discuss that, his motion should have been put in a different form. If he had worded it "that in the opinion of this House the operations of the steamship service are not in the best interests of the people or the country" it would have given him the scope he desires, but a motion for a balance-sheet does not give him that opportunity.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Then I may refer to the capital cost of the steamers as being a portion which will be included in the balance-sheet which ought to have been produced to this House long ere this. The other night I asked the Premier certain questions with regard to the cost of these steamers, and I find that the "Western Australia," which cost in London £39,500, has increased to £63,633; there is here a difference of something like £24,000 representing increased capital expenditure. Surely it is a matter of moment to know what this £24,000 has been expended on. Surely it is important that we should know whether it is advisable to expend more than 50 per cent of the original cost of the steamer in adding to her capital value more especially when we know that the Government are importing new furnaces to replace those which were burnt down recently, a fact which was commented on as being an everyday occurrence. We know that the "Western Australia" will shortly have to go East to be overhauled and to go through her periodical survey, and we know that when she goes East for that purpose, and also to have these new furnaces put into her boilers, which will necessitate the removal of the boilers, many thousands of pounds will have to be spent on her. I would not be a bit surprised if the expenditure runs from £5,000 to £10,000 to have this steamer reclassified, and is this to be charged to capital expenditure, or is it to be charged to the running expenses of the service? The "Kwinana," purchased for £17,000—very much above her value at the time—has cost nearly £19,000. The "Eucla," which was purchased for £10,500 in the old country, has increased to £13,651. Three thousand pounds has been expended on that little steamer; what for? We want the information. The "Una," which cost £2,000, has up to the present doubled her capital cost and stands at £3,998, and in addition we have stock fittings put down as capital cost to the amount of £2,502, and plant and stock at £2,865. Surely these figures, in themselves, are sufficient for any sensible member of this Chamber to wish to have the true accounts placed before him at the very

earliest opportunity in the wording of my motion, and I would here say, without dwelling unduly on the point, that I think it is just about up to the member for East Perth to make some public statement or some further allegation with regard to one of the biggest swindles perpetrated in connection with the mail service on the south coast.

The Premier: It will not be shown.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It ought to be shown, and the Premier ought to see that a proper explanation is made, and that the hon. member is compelled to prove his contentions, or to withdraw them. The hon. member knows very well that only one company was involved, and certainly if he is honourable about it, he will either prove his statements or withdraw them.

Mr. Lander: Did you give an explanation of the Claremont Asylum contract when you gave it to your son-in-law?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I advise the hon. member to study *Hansard* and he will see that he is making an incorrect statement now, and that I never gave a contract in connection with the Claremont Asylum to my son-in-law.

Mr. Lander: Your department did.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No, it did not; he never had a contract. So we have it that the "Western Australia" is to go to Sydney very shortly to be docked in order to be reclassified. Rumour says that she was at first going to Singapore, in order to have the direct advantage of the cheap labour in that portion of the world. That is hardly believable in view of the white labour policy of my friends on the Government side of the House, but it is an undoubted fact that she will have to be re-surveyed and will have to be ripped open from end to end, or she will not be reclassified.

The Premier: Have you been getting into touch with the people over there?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I have been in touch with people of this description all my life.

Mr. Underwood: Have you been to another civil servant for information?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I want to point out where possibly the Premier may

have hidden up some portion of the enormous loss in connection with these steamers. It seems undoubted, to my mind, that a considerable sum has been expended and debited to capital account out of Loan funds, which otherwise ought to have been charged to the ordinary running expenses of the service. The Premier is also exceeding his authorisation by £5,000, according to his own figures. I want to know if he is acting under proper authority by so doing. He is also inclined to say that he acts in a legal manner, but he did not do so when he first purchased the steamers, and evidently he is carrying on in that same policy.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): You never exceeded anything.

Mr. George: Two blacks do not make a white.

The Premier: You are double black.

Mr. George: You are no colour at all.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: With regard to the running of the "Eucla," and the mail service contract which the Premier entered into, possibly the loss in the service is to some extent accountable for that contract. He admits that there has been a loss since the inception, and I have it on fairly good authority that negotiations are in progress with the Federal authorities to replace the "Eucla" with the "Una," a much smaller vessel. It is obvious in his admission—and I do not find fault with him in trying to better the conditions of his contract when he finds it is a losing concern—that he did not ask enough subsidy. Although he may claim, and perhaps justly so, that he has provided the South-East coast with a better service, we, as members of Parliament representing the people of this State, are entitled to know at what cost. It is a well-known fact that the Adelaide Steamship Company, which was running these mails for some years past, and up till this time had run a smaller steamer, had a subsidy of something like £4,000 at the time when the Ravensthorpe copper field was in full swing, and they had the trade in connection with that to look to. The Premier rushes in and pledges the credit of the country to a considerable expenditure, and now he is in the humiliating position

of having to admit that the service is not a paying one, and therefore he has proved his incapacity to run this enterprise in a payable manner and in the interests of the people.

Mr. Lander: Did he lose as much on the steamers as you lost on the Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe railway?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The contractors lost something like £5,000 on the railway. Of course, I can understand the Premier feeling hurt when he finds that his judgment has been wrong, and the venture likely to be disastrous, and let me here say that it is absolutely necessary that he should face the music. It is idle for him to sit back and refuse under any Act of Parliament to produce these accounts. It is idle for him to pretend that he can keep the results secret as long as he thinks fit. He is only the custodian of the public funds; he is only the manager for the people of the State; and the people ask and demand that the accounts shall be produced. I challenge the Premier to keep the accounts back, as he intimated he would do the other night, possibly until next year. I demand that these accounts shall be produced and tabled at the earliest possible moment.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): The Premier promised that.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Premier intimated that there was no need for him to bring in the accounts this year at all, unless he liked. But the Premier has no choice, and the Honorary Minister has no choice either. They forget that they are not individuals dealing with their own personal affairs, but are in office simply as managers of the State enterprises which have been rashly embarked upon, and which have shown such disastrous results up to the present.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): I am glad you put that last portion in.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan): When I see a person go up like a rocket, I generally expect to see the stick come down.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You will come down in due time.

The PREMIER: Evidently the leader of the Opposition, in going off like a rocket, has finished up by coming down like a stick.

Mr. George: He will stick next time.

The PREMIER: I notice the halo keeps chattering. I have no objection to the motion tabled by the leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What a wonder!

The PREMIER: It is not a wonder at all, only a sign of the colossal ignorance of our friends in Opposition. Whether this motion is carried or not I am bound by Act of Parliament to present these balance sheets in due course; whether the motion is carried or not the position is the same, and the motion only shows that our friends opposite are ignorant of the law that was passed only last year.

Mr. George: We do not believe in "due course."

The PREMIER: The hon. member believes in scrap iron.

The Minister for Lands: They scrapped the hon. member.

Mr. George: I will buy your ships when you have got them scrapped.

The PREMIER: We have had trading concerns operating in Western Australia for a number of years, and the hon. member was probably surprised when he found in the *Government Gazette* of the 23rd May this year a number of trading concerns brought under the operation of the Trading Concerns Act, which was placed on the statute-book by the present Government. A Bill for the purpose has been drafted and redrafted time and again, while our friends opposite were in office, and they declined right along the line to introduce it into Parliament. And all this time they were operating trading concerns; all this time the public were just as desirous of receiving information respecting those trading concerns as they are at present.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No, they were not.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is only desirous of using the public for the purpose of getting information as the leader of a party, and assisting his best friends and supporters, the people who assist materially in providing the funds

for the purpose of enabling him to exist as a party, the ship owners, the Employers' Federation and others of that ilk, and of course he comes along and asserts in the House that he is voicing public opinion, and making a demand on behalf of the public. The public are, perhaps, better aware than the hon. member that these balance sheets must be produced, but they are not so foolish as to imagine we are going to produce balance sheets until those balance sheets are properly audited. But, of course, it is another opportunity for parading their desire to keep the present Government on the straight path, forgetful of the fact that only recently they themselves had charge of the Treasury benches, and if they were in earnest to-day the public would expect them at least to turn and produce evidence that when they were in office they did what they are desirous of the present Government doing. There is not a single statement made by the leader of the Opposition in respect to which I could not show that his own Government had been guilty of a similar, or worse, action. The public know that when they were in office they bought a steamship and spent a considerable sum of money in repairing it, but sold it shortly afterwards for half the money they paid, and never made the matter public to this day.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What steamship is that?

The PREMIER: A boat; the hon. member does not know evidently.

Mr. George: Tell us.

The PREMIER: The hon. member could get it from those public servants who know he bought it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): What about the "Venus," which cost £1,600?

Hon. Frank Wilson: That was in connection with the harbour works.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): She was for the North-West.

The PREMIER: I can assure the leader of the Opposition that he will have some difficulty in persuading the public that he is in earnest in saying he desires to get this information in the interests of the public, so long as the public have

knowledge that the hon. member, when he was in charge of the administration of various State departments, was not careful to see that those trading concerns were on a business basis. If the hon. member will turn up the *Government Gazette* of the 23rd May this year, he will find that the following were brought under the Government Trading Concerns Act by present Government; and the Act was placed on the statute-book by the present Government before introducing new trading concerns.

Mr. George: I suppose you found it in a pigeon hole.

The PREMIER: I told the hon. member it was drafted and redrafted times out of number while our friends were on the Treasury bench, and they refused to introduce it.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It was a better Bill.

The PREMIER: In the *Government Gazette* of the 23rd May hon. members will find that the following trading concerns were brought under the operation of the Government Trading Concerns Act, which compels books to be kept in a certain manner, and properly audited balance sheets to be produced to Parliament:—Government refrigerating works, Abattoirs, North Fremantle sale yards, Perth city markets, Government meat stall, Albany cold stores, land clearing operations, Boya quarries, workshops, water supplies, State steamship service, aborigines' cattle station, Perth-South Perth ferry service, milk supply, State hotels (including Rottnest hostel and Caves House). If hon. members will just analyse those for a moment they will discover that ten out of the fifteen were operating while our friends opposite in power, namely, the Government refrigerating works, Abattoirs, North Fremantle sale yards, Perth city markets, Land clearing operations, Boya quarries, Workshops, Water Supplies, Aborigines' cattle station and State hotels. Ten of the fifteen were operating while our friends opposite were in power, but they made no provision for the production of a balance sheet in any single instance, and never issued one; and now they come along and say the public require these

balance sheets, and require them early. We provided an opportunity for the balance sheets to be produced by the measure which we brought in last year. As I have already said, ten of those fifteen concerns were operating previously, and members opposite never attempted to produce a balance sheet for the public information. When the public recognise that they will see how much value they can place on the statement of the leader of the Opposition, that he is in earnest in requiring this information for the public. It is pure hypocrisy, nothing else. Let me also point out that what I said the other night was absolutely correct, that we are not compelled, even under the Trading Concerns Act to produce a balance sheet this year on the operations of the trading concerns for last year, as the Trading Concerns Act was not passed until last December, and it was not brought into operation until May of this year. I want to tell my friend opposite that the Auditor General himself in a conversation with me in my office, suggested that in some cases, though not in all, it would be desirable not to do so, because they had not had the opportunity of getting the books put in order from the 1st July of last year, and these are the books that were operated under our friends opposite, books that will not permit of a profit and loss account being produced for the information of the public. Our friends opposite are the gentlemen who were responsible for those methods, and now they are accusing us of lacking business acumen. Let me tell the leader of the Opposition that we have been cleaning up a good deal of what he and his friends left, and this is one of the things which we have cleaned up. We have told the department that they must get the books put in order, that they must operate from July of last year, and we shall keep faith with the public and produce those balance sheets. In every one of those instances, to which I have referred, we found that it was not possible with the books that were kept to produce a profit and loss account in accordance with the Trading Concerns Act, and then hon. members opposite taunt us with lack

of business acumen. The hon. member should not endeavour to appear to be a schoolmaster by attempting to teach us manners and business acumen. First of all let me tell him that he wants tuition himself. He could do with it badly.

The Minister for Lands : He wants kindergarten instruction before anything else.

Hon. Frank Wilson : I have abandoned the attempt to teach you anything.

The PREMIER : I have no objection to the motion because it is in accordance with an Act of Parliament, and the very fact that the hon. member has moved it shows the absurdity of submitting such a motion for the approval of Parliament.

Mr. George : Why are you protesting so much ?

The PREMIER : I am not protesting; I am only trying to point out what little knowledge the leader of the Opposition has of the Acts of Parliament which he has helped to place on the statute-book. The hon. member made reference to secrecy and reticence on the part of the members of the Treasury bench whenever information is sought. May I here make this remark, that, judging by the manner in which the leader of the Opposition dealt with this matter, the figures he quoted, and the information that he gave hon. members, and in some respects to Ministers, I am satisfied of this, that even if we did desire to keep these things secret we would be unable to do so.

Mr. Lander : You cannot stop the pimps.

The PREMIER : Whether the hon. member is actually responsible for it or not, the fact remains that he has been looking for the information or someone has taken it to him, because some of the remarks he made to-day dealt with matter which left my possession not more than two or three days since. It seems to me that a dishonourable, disloyal, and despicable public servant has taken it to him or he has gone around the public offices spying it out for himself.

Hon. Frank Wilson : Your imagination is running riot.

The PREMIER : It is not. Let me refer to one instance, that of approaching the Federal authorities to allow us to substitute the steamer "Una" for the "Encla" which is undergoing survey, and ask the leader of the Opposition where he got the information he made use of to-day.

Hon. Frank Wilson : Did you approach the Federal authorities ?

The PREMIER : Yes, but I want to know who told the hon. member that I approached the Federal authorities. I am positive the information did not come from the Federal Government because they have not yet received my letter. The hon. member must have got the information from a public servant, and the public servant who would give that information to the hon. member is dishonourable and despicable.

Mr. Heitmann : And so is the receiver.

Hon. Frank Wilson : I absolutely deny that I have received the slightest information from any public servant. I say this in the interests of the public service. No one has ever approached me or spoken to me on the subject.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister) : That might be true, but perhaps someone else did.

The PREMIER : Of course, I suppose, the hon. member would not be likely in his capacity of leader of the Opposition to lose the opportunity of getting information from any source. I have previously explained that the hon. member does not object to picking up information in the street. Frequently he has asserted that certain things have been rumoured about the streets and I suppose under those circumstances I cannot complain if he gets into touch with the service, or if he uses what he hears in the street. In this particular case, however, the information must have been divulged from the public service, or perhaps he got it from someone who obtained it from a public servant, and in connection with the expenditure in detail he must have received the informa-

tion from a public servant. As a matter of fact, I am not controlling any of these concerns, except the State hotels, and the leader of the Opposition has given me more information than I knew myself.

Mr. George : Your Ministers keep you informed.

The PREMIER : It is not the duty of a Minister to run to the head of the Government and tell him everything that is taking place, any more than it was the duty of the hon. member for Murray-Wellington when he was Commissioner of Railways to run to his Minister and repeat to him whatever was happening. How does the leader of the Opposition know these things unless they have been disclosed to him by a public servant ? I can tell the hon. member that some of the information that he has disclosed to-day, as well as that which he disclosed last week was information which never came under my notice, and that when I made the statement with regard to the transfer of the State steamships to the Harbour Trust officials, I was not in possession of the fact that such had been arranged. It was known in Fremantle, the attitude that Mr. Allnutt was going to adopt, before the meeting of the Trust took place.

Mr. George : Then where did I get the information from ?

Mr. Heitmann : In the gutter.

Mr. SPEAKER : I am not going to allow discussion on these lines; it is out of order. The Premier must confine himself to the motion.

The PREMIER : I must respectfully protest. The leader of the Opposition has made certain statements, and if I, as head of the Government, am going to be restricted to the motion when the hon. member has made definite charges, I will not be able to reply to them. He made these charges, and it is true that he could not be called to order until he made them. I now ought to be given the opportunity to reply to them.

Mr. SPEAKER : The leader of the Opposition did not make any statement about having received information from certain sources; he merely made an assertion, and the Premier should confine himself

to refuting that assertion. This, however, the Premier is not doing, but is making statements which have nothing to do with the motion.

The PREMIER: The hon. member made reference to my statement in connection with the handing over of the steamers to the Harbour Trust, and he was not called to order; he completed his point in that direction. I think I am entitled to refer to it.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I did not deal with it; I only referred to it in passing.

The PREMIER: The leader of the Opposition commenced by stating that the Government were reticent and were trying to keep these matters secret. I am trying to point out that even if we desired to do that, it would be quite impossible under the prevailing conditions.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is entitled to follow that line of discussion, but the practice of departing from the motion and making counter charges leads to disorder and to personalities being hurled across the Chamber, which is not in the best interests of the business of this House.

The PREMIER: I regret if my counter charges have caused personalities to be hurled across the Chamber, but as I have to suffer it, I suppose the hon. member will also have to suffer it on some occasions. The leader of the Opposition also stated that I said that during August the State steamships had shown a profit of £2,000. I never made any such statement, and for the life of me I do not know where the hon. member got his information. His imagination is evidently playing up with him again.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You said you made a small profit of about £2,000.

The PREMIER: May I tell the hon. member that we last discussed this question on the 27th August, and the monthly accounts were not made up until the 31st August, with the result that I could not have had the information with regard to the month's operations until after the 31st August, and that this is the first occasion on which we have discussed anything in connection with the State steamship service since the close of last month.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I will accept your denial.

The PREMIER: The hon. member also made some reference to certain condemned cattle, or cattle purchased by the Government for the meat stalls, and he said they were condemned by the Government veterinary surgeon before we purchased them.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Before you shipped them.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is again confusing two points, which are totally different. The Government bought some cattle in Fremantle and they were discovered to be suffering from pleuro. This was about February last, and the hon. member declared that these were the cattle that were condemned before they were purchased.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You bought them at Wyndham.

The PREMIER: No. The cattle the hon. member is referring to were not condemned prior to purchase. It was discovered afterwards that they were suffering from pleuro, and surely the hon. member will appreciate the fact that such a thing might happen even to a private buyer. Cattle may develop a disease after purchase and the buyer, whoever he may be, will have to suffer the loss.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That is the point.

The PREMIER: I can assure the hon. member that these were made a charge against the butchers' stalls. But I do not know whether this is a dialogue that we are indulging in, or whether I am expected to reply.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I apologise, but I was just getting on the track.

The PREMIER: The hon. member, as I pointed out, tried to make the public and the members of this Chamber believe that these cattle were condemned before we purchased them, and I am pointing out that such was not the case, and as they had not developed the disease prior to purchase, we could hardly be blamed if eventually they did develop the disease.

Mr. George: Did not your buyer inspect them?

The PREMIER: I want to say that when the balance sheet is produced it will be found that any loss that may have been made with that shipment will have been



taken into account. We do not propose to write off anything that is a fair charge against the conduct of that business. I may tell the hon. member that we have written off that loss and still show a profit on the operations, and, as I stated at the outset, we commenced to make a profit without drawing a penny out of the Treasury, and to-day we are still showing a profit.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Look at page 144 of *Hansard*.

The PREMIER: I do not propose to look at any page.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You will see there that you stated that the last two months' operations showed a profit of £2,000.

The PREMIER: The hon. member also wants to know whether the interest charges on the purchase of the Yandanooka estate, portion of which is being used for the purpose of holding this stock, is being charged up against that particular stock or the butchers' shops—our meat sales account. Let me tell the hon. member that we are charging up everything which can be properly charged up against it, and in fact a correct balance sheet will be produced. Exactly the same thing is applying now to Avondale, which could not be said when our friends opposite had control of it. The hon. member says that the retail butchers are the people who are affected by our action. I will admit at once that some of them are affected, and I want to tell the hon. member that the consumers in the metropolitan area in particular are affected by our action. They are affected in the direction of saving from 4d. to 7d. per pound by purchasing at the Government meat stall.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Nonsense; I have the figures here.

The PREMIER: I may tell the hon. member that I still purchase a little meat from the Government meat stall, and therefore I ought to know the price paid, seeing that I pay the same as other customers pay. I say again that we have reduced the price of meat by from 4d. to 7d. a pound, and the consumers in the metropolitan area are getting the benefit, while, at the same time, we are showing a profit. When the hon. member made the

statement that the retail or small butcher had been previously buying his meat by auction and I interjected that such was not the case, he again asserted it. I want to tell the hon. member that it was certainly not the case prior to the Government opening their meat stall in the Perth city markets, and bringing their stock down from the North-West and putting them up at auction. The hon. member knows that the great majority of retail butchers in the metropolitan area were only permitted to commence business at the will of certain gentlemen comprising the meat trust existing in Western Australia. And he also knows that those gentlemen, the wholesale butchers, had a monopoly of the abattoirs for killing stock from the North-West or anywhere else, with the result that the small butcher, if he bought on the hoof at public auction, had no opportunity of getting that stock killed and placed in his stall and, in consequence, he had to go to the City market and other places and buy his meat on the hook, meat which was not put up at public auction, but which had the price already fixed upon it when the retailer went to buy it. We have seen this done, and indeed it is being done to-day. The result was that there was no fair competition so far as the retail butchers were concerned. However, when we get our Government abattoirs erected and in full operation in conjunction with our steamers trading to the North-West, which afford an opportunity to the small squatters inland to bring their stock into open markets and have it killed at the Government abattoirs where they cannot be followed up by gentlemen interested in the meat ring, then the time will have arrived when the retail butcher who knows his business will remain in that business, and the consumer also will obtain a material benefit. Under existing conditions it has not been the first-class butcher carrying on the retail business, but just any man whom it suited the meat ring to permit to open a shop and keep it open. And the consumer has to pay all the time. We did not anticipate that one action on the part of the Government would be sufficient for

the purpose of breaking up this meat ring; but we have made sufficient inroads into that meat ring to weaken its position considerably, and as time goes on and our abattoirs come into operation, such a thing as a meat ring in Western Australia will be practically forgotten. The hon. member discussed the question of the steamers affecting the small squatters of the North-West. Rightly it was pointed out that that does not affect the balance sheet, although the hon. member insisted that the balance sheet would show who had been using the steamers.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I did not say anything of the sort.

The PREMIER: The hon. member did, and I interjected that it would not be shown on the balance sheet who was using our steamers. He stated that he wanted it to show the big men who had been using the steamers.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The report will show us that.

The PREMIER: We are not dealing with the report, but with the balance sheet, and the balance sheet will not show the individuals who have been using the steamers.

Mr. Male: Why, you cannot get any freight.

The PREMIER: Well, we had better consider the question of getting another steamer. The hon. member made reference to the charges which had been brought against the management of the State Steamship Service. Those charges to some extent affected the conduct of the State Steamship Service from the point of view of its finances; but not to any great extent, and the less said about it at this stage, I think, the better, simply because it is unwise that one should give vent to his feelings in connection with the attitude adopted by Mr. J. J. Holmes, who to my knowledge has been prominently before the public for the last ten or fifteen years. For a person who has been in public life for ten or fifteen years, and who would go along to the manager of this service, all the time protesting that he was his friend, protesting that we had acted wisely in putting on those steamers, all the time asking for consideration as a

shipper, and then to use the information he obtained while purporting to be a friend, to perhaps for ever damn that individual, is, I think, an action about which the less said the better. It is unnecessary for me to deal with this matter. The public have already come to a conclusion in regard to the action of Mr. J. J. Holmes in this direction, and I think it does not redound to Mr. Holmes' credit. The hon. member said that it was proposed to send the "Western Australia" to Singapore for the purpose of going into dock and undergoing a survey. It may have been proposed; some public servant may have proposed it. But I am not aware of it, and I am quite certain that the Government have not dealt with it, and would not consider it for a moment. The hon. member said it was past belief that the Government should adopt such an attitude, a Government who adhered to the policy of a white Australia. But the hon. member need have no fears on that score. Whether or not we could get the work done cheaply at Singapore is of no moment whatever; we will send it to white labour, and in Australia if it can be done here. The sending of the vessel to Singapore for such a purpose has never been considered by the Government. Just what would have happened if our friend opposite had been here, I would not like to say. Evidently he has knowledge that the work could be done cheaply at Singapore, and it may be that in order—

Mr. Male: You promised to send it to Java yourself.

The PREMIER: But not for the purpose of undergoing repairs. I am not desirous of saying anything further on this question, more than to explain that one cannot complain if our friends opposite take every possible opportunity of parading this question in respect to which they think they have an opportunity of obtaining some little kudos with the public. But I think they will discover when we reach the final results, and the people are asked to express an opinion on the desirability of continuing or discontinuing the operations of these trading concerns, that they will give an emphatic

answer in the affirmative; because by that time, not only from the point of view of showing profits, which is not the all-essential which our friends opposite would have us believe—

Hon. J. Mitchell: It is very necessary.

The PREMIER: It is wise that our trading concerns should, as far as possible, pay for their operations; but the hon. member would not suggest that we should make that a strict rule. We must be also satisfied that they are affording advantages which the public will reap; that from the point of view of the general public they are paying by giving advantages to the public which would not have accrued to them otherwise.

Hon. J. Mitchell: But you cannot get the whole of the public to agree.

The PREMIER: No, not the shipping companies, for instance. But let me point out that we are running State batteries on our goldfields, which have assisted and will continue to materially assist the mining industry. Would our friends opposite urge that because those batteries are running at a loss, without considering interest and sinking fund, we should close down that concern? Is it desirable that we should do it? Hon. members opposite know that it is not the case. They have never looked for profits from the point of view of paying interest and sinking fund charges in addition to affording considerable convenience and assistance to the mining industry. And the same thing might very well apply to our ships. The fact that we have put ships on the North-West coast has been of undoubted advantage to the people, particularly those in the metropolitan area, and perhaps the small squatters of the North-West. And when we can get the small squatters of the North-West to put aside and remove the feeling existing in their minds to-day that sooner or later our friends opposite may come along and put those steamers off, then they will be prepared to stand boldly out and take full advantage of the State steamers. To-day they are afraid of what may happen if our friends should come back to power. If they knew that the steamers were going to remain per-

manently on the coast, the small squatters would come along and give us all the freights we desire for the boats. I want to assure those people of the North-West that whether our friends come back here or not, they will not, in any case, have the courage, even if they were permitted by the public—which they certainly will not be—to scrap those steamers and the other trading concerns which we have commenced. It has never been the policy of the Liberal party to undo what the Labour party has done.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They will scrap them themselves.

The PREMIER: Will the hon. member say now that he is prepared to make it part of the Liberal policy that the States steamers shall be scrapped, the State butchers' shops closed, the State milk supply to the hospitals stopped, and that the other operations included in our trading concerns shall cease? The hon. member has never yet made a pronouncement on it, but has contented himself with heroic utterances when looking for information. He has never made a definite announcement on the subject.

Mr. Male: I would close the shops if I had an opportunity.

The PREMIER: Of course the hon. member would, because he knows they are against his interests as a stock-owner. But it is the public, and not the stock-owners, who must receive first consideration. I want to tell our friends opposite that we have never yet refused to give information either to them or to the public on any subject pertaining to the administration of public offices which it was desirable to give, or which, in the interests of the public, should be given, or which had reached the stage at which the public should be supplied with it; but when they come along and ask for balance-sheets and other information which perhaps is not yet fully prepared, or which should not be given until it has been audited—

Mr. George: Has it not been audited yet?

The PREMIER: I am not sure on that point. We have had such difficulty in straightening up the books in connection with trading concerns operating before we came along that we find a diffi-

culty in producing these balance-sheets. I can furnish evidence on this point if necessary, showing that balance-sheets are hung up to-day because the officers cannot arrive at the true position in regard to the capital expenditure and other things connected with trading concerns which were operated by our friend opposite. We are having very serious difficulty with those trading concerns operated by our friends opposite.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Let us deal with your own. These set out in the motion are new ones.

The PREMIER: Yes, but I propose that the public shall have the old ones as well, and that the public shall have the information on these points in connection with all our trading concerns and not merely a section of them. And I consider that when they do get information in regard to our trading concerns—

Mr. Male: They will stop the lot.

The PREMIER: We are not nervous in the slightest. They will then see the advantage of having these trading concerns and, perhaps, will petition the Government to extend the system. We are, therefore, getting ready to do that. May I say the Government never have had any objection to supplying the information desired, and as the resolution only endorses an Act of Parliament which compels us to supply the information, and as, further, we are desirous of supplying it, I have no objection to the resolution being carried in order that, at the earliest possible moment, these balance-sheets shall be produced.

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

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington): It may perhaps be considered by some members that after the speech of the Premier it is undesirable that anything further should be said on the motion, seeing that he agreed to submit the balance-sheets asked for at the earliest possible moment. Well, I do not intend to traverse either the ground over which the leader of the Opposition went, or very much of that which the Premier himself covered, because it seems to me that a good deal of ground has been covered that it was absolutely unnecessary to touch upon in connection with a motion

of this sort. The Premier has rightly told us that under the Act he has to produce these balance-sheets in due course, but where I differ from him is that "in due course" and "as soon as possible" mean that the House has been sitting for two months and we are still without a balance-sheet. I should like to submit to the Premier that, although earlier in the session, it would have formed a convenient excuse to say that the balance-sheets were not audited, I believe I am correct in saying that the balance-sheets have been prepared for some time, and so far as the audit is concerned, they could have been laid on the Table of the House, and the Premier, if he had thought fit, could have replied to this motion by laying the balance-sheets on the Table to-day.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Where did you get your information from?

Mr. GEORGE: That is a question I shall have the greatest pleasure in answering to my leader in private. On the authority of the Press, who no doubt consulted the Premier in the first place, we know that the Budget speech is to be delivered next week. Are hon. members to suppose for one single moment that that Budget, which we all know takes a considerable time to compile, could be properly put together and submitted to the House unless the Premier were in possession of a proper statement in connection with these trading concerns? How is the Premier, or any Treasurer, to be able to put his figures together and forecast what income he is likely to get in the ensuing year unless he knows thoroughly, and from figures on which he can rely, the result of the trading for last year? Then, why this secrecy, this hiding and keeping of them back? Surely the Act passed by this House, not only by members on the Government side, but also by members on this side and accepted by the other Chamber, was not meant to be a dead letter, and to be put into operation at the will or caprice of the hon. member who occupies the first seat in the Cabinet of the State. The object of passing that Bill was that the trading concerns should be properly looked after and that information should

be laid before the shareholders, that is, the taxpayers of this State, not at what might be called by the Premier the earliest possible moment, but almost as soon as the House met for the present session. And it would be idle for the manager of any business concern to meet either his banker or the owners of that concern, and put them off week after week and month after month by saying that he had not got the balance sheet audited. The hon. gentleman, who has had some experience of these trading concerns, must know by this time that their operations must be carefully and constantly watched, and to come to this House and ask us to believe, and to ask the people, through the Press, to believe that he has no means of telling how these concerns are going by means of the figures that are prepared, is to absolutely confess to this State and the whole of Australia that he does not know the first essentials of business management. It should have been absolutely unnecessary for the leader of the Opposition to more than formally move this motion.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister) : He did not want that.

Mr. GEORGE : Then I can tell the hon. member straight away that the checkmate for these inconvenient questions is to straightway lay the papers and the information on the Table of the House.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister) : It is not a question, it is a motion.

Mr. GEORGE : The hon. member is playing on words. It is not a question of which notice was given, but it is a question right through this motion as to how the country stands in regard to those ventures upon which the Government have entered. The Attorney General knows perfectly well, and he is too astute a gentleman to attempt to make any excuses for them, that with regard to a matter of this sort the very best tactics that could have been adopted, those which would have satisfied the House, smashed up the Opposition, and removed the anxiety and nervousness of the people, would have been to lay the

papers on the Table of the House at once. Since the commencement of this session members on this side have been asking for information which we are entitled to get, and we have been met at every turn by the subterfuge that the accounts are not yet properly audited—by any excuse that could possibly be thought of to put off the letting of light into the corners of these particular trading concerns. I have a good deal of information in regard to the running of these State steamships—information not obtained from civil servants, I may say, so that the Government need not have another heresy hunt on this score—which I shall deal with when we get the balance sheet, but I am not anxious to stand up here and deal with the question until I am in possession of the figures upon which I know the Government rely. If the figures they supply to us are such as we can accept, then so much the better. It is not with us a question of whether it is a Labour or a Liberal Government; it is entirely a matter of the people desiring to know how they stand in regard to concerns that are being run in opposition to the wishes of a good many taxpayers, but nevertheless with the money produced by the taxpayers. The Premier, no doubt acting with the concurrence of his Cabinet, and perhaps acting under orders from the unseen authority, which we cannot recognise in this House, has attempted to keep, not only the members of the Opposition, but the people of the State, in the dark. It is a most undignified procedure, and one absolutely unwarranted, and I am satisfied that the people will deal with it strongly.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister) : That is why you are so indignant.

Mr. GEORGE : The Honorary Minister tries to make light of these matters, but I am certain of this, that with the shrewd common sense he has in that noddle of his, if he were a shareholder in a concern and his manager tried to put him off day after day and week after week in regard to how the business was going, he would not be long in making

up his mind as to what he was going to do and how he was going to do it. And we, on this side, small in numbers but representing the bulk of public opinion, in this State, stand here asking for information which we have a right to have given us, and given not grudgingly and as a favour, but freely and as a right. There can be only one explanation of the attitude of the Government, and that is that they are afraid to give us the particulars we seek.

Mr. Underwood : Let it go at that.

Mr. GEORGE : We will let the hon. member go for less than that. In the good old Book, which some of us revere, one can read of two sparrows being sold for a farthing, and I think that one sparrow would be about the hon. member's price. The Government believe that the longer they can keep this information in the background, and the longer they can go unchecked in the running of these concerns, the firmer they will become established, and they do not care how great a muddle they may get into, because they know that it will be the duty of members on this side to unravel it.

Mr. Taylor : It will be a long time then before it is unravelled.

Hon. Frank Wilson : It will be a long time indeed before it can be unravelled.

Mr. GEORGE : The Premier, in the course of his speech, made some remarks to which I must take exception. He charged the leader of the Opposition with touting to get information from civil servants, and practically tempting them to become traitors to those who are in power to-day. The hon. member must know that the civil servant must be loyal to the country, and it is his duty to be loyal whether the Government are Labour or Liberal.

Mr. Underwood : It is his duty, but he neglects it.

Mr. GEORGE : The hon. member may make that charge, but he will find that the civil servants will not neglect their duty at the next election. They will remember their duty to the country, and they will not forget their duty to

themselves, their children, and the people of the State.

Mr. Heitmann : Did they not remember it at the last elections?

Mr. GEORGE : There are temporary aberrations even amongst the wisest people, and the hon. member is a living witness of it, as is evidenced by the remark he just made.

Mr. Heitmann : The aberration is permanent with you.

Mr. GEORGE : Well, if it is permanent with me, I can assure the hon. member there is method in my madness, and I would advise him to study it. I rose this evening to protest against this policy of hush, this policy of hiding, this policy of following out the principle of the ostrich burying its head in the sand, and, whether members be Labour or Liberal, I want them to have the courage to acknowledge the position in which they find themselves. If the Premier is satisfied, if his followers are satisfied, and if the unseen power which gives him his orders, is satisfied—

Mr. Underwood : Oh, McCallum is satisfied all right.

Mr. GEORGE : We on this side will have to be satisfied for the present. But I have told the Premier before, and I tell him again, that though he may baffle the people for some time, he cannot baffle them for all time, and this drawing of a red herring across the trail by saying that previous Governments ran trading concerns of which proper accounts were not kept and presented, is absolutely beside the question. As I remarked before, two blacks do not make a white, and however black the Liberal Government have been in their administration, that does not excuse the present Government for not carrying out the promises they made to the people at the last election. We were to have honest and clean administration of departments. I am not going to accuse them of not giving us honest administration, but I do accuse them of being afraid to take the people, who are their masters, into their confidence and let them know exactly how they stand. I am accusing the Premier and his colleagues and those who uphold him, and the unseen author-

ity too, of having done things that we are entitled to have information about, and yet while they claim that they have given to the State honest administration, they stand up in the House and say "We will not give you the information until we choose." That simply argues that they are absolutely afraid to let us have this information. I said a few minutes ago, and I will repeat it now because the Premier was not then in his place, the Premier knows perfectly well that he has this audited balance sheet, that if he had not got it he could not have made up his Budget speech, and that he has got the balance sheet and has made up his Budget is disclosed by the fact, as published in the Press, that he is going to deliver his financial statement next week. I suppose the Premier would like the House to infer that the information on which I based the question last week dealing with the State steamships was obtained by me from a civil servant. Will the Premier refuse to accept my statement when I say that I did not obtain it from a civil servant? My information came from people who are not connected with the civil service. The hon. gentleman must not think that such things cannot be done for tomorrow it will be made known through the Press that there has been a certain appointment in connection with the harbours. The hon. member knows what it will be. Does he think that this sort of thing can be withheld from the people? Yet the Government keep these things back, and when hon. members ask for information they get such observations and denials as we have heard this evening.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): What will be in the Press to-morrow?

Mr. George: The hon. member knows just as well as I know.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not discussing the question. During the whole of his remarks the hon. member has very rarely confined himself to the motion under discussion. I find that his speech is largely a repetition of a speech which he made last week, and I do not know where it is going to

end. I must insist on the hon. member discussing the motion.

Mr. GEORGE: I thought I was discussing the motion.

The Premier: You are like the babbling brook, you go on for ever.

Mr. GEORGE: Of course, Sir, I bow to your decision. To return to the motion and supplement the remarks I have already made, these balance sheets which we desire to have the Premier has told us he will give them to us, but he has not said when he will give them to us. These balance sheets must have been in the possession of the Premier for some time.

The Premier: That is tedious repetition; you have said that six times.

Mr. GEORGE: And I will say it again.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): Read the motion.

Mr. GEORGE: I have read it. It asks for these balance sheets at the earliest possible moment after the close of the financial year.

Mr. Underwood: Why stonewall on private members' night?

Mr. GEORGE: The question is, when the earliest possible moment will be. The point I was trying to make when I was so rudely interrupted is that the Premier could have produced these balance sheets at any time during the last four weeks, if he had chosen to do so. It is idle for him to deny it, or for his supporters to back up his denial. The balance sheets have been in the possession of the Premier for three or four weeks.

The Premier: Who told you that?

Mr. GEORGE: The Premier cannot deny it.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara): I would like to enter a short protest against hon. members on the other side of the House taking up private members' day by this continual repetition on one subject. I think that private members' day is certainly a privilege, and if properly handled, it is very useful to members of this House, if not to the Government, but to take up the time, as has been done this session every day by a continual repetition of statements in regard to the State steamships, is certainly getting away from the object for which private mem-

bers' day was set apart. The question regarding State steamships will keep; if the ships are the disaster which the leader of the Opposition hopes they are, he will know all about it before the next election, and will be able to put the matter before the electors.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You will know all about it then.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is not only undignified but pitiful for the leader of the Opposition, a man who has occupied the office of Premier of the country, to come forward week after week with a similar motion. We have had six private members' days this session and this matter has been discussed on each of those days.

Mr. George: That shows our anxiety.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It was also discussed during the debate on the Address-in-reply, and the Estimates yet to come will provide another opportunity. I contend that it would be more dignified for the leader of the Opposition to move a straight out motion, a no-confidence motion if he likes, and settle the question. But to come here continually with motions of this description is really astounding, coming from a gentleman who ought to know sufficient to uphold the dignity of this House.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): The hon. member for Pilbara seems to think we are not entitled to ask a second time for information because we do not succeed in getting it at the first time of asking. The Premier stated that he will give us the balance sheets when he pleases. Every one must admire the manner in which the Premier meets the attacks which are made upon him by the leader of the Opposition. He waxed very wroth and pretended to give us information, but really did not do anything of the sort; he only made accusations against the previous Administration. He said we could not expect a balance sheet in connection with the State steamships, because we at one time had bought a boat. We bought a boat, a small sailing boat, to bring down some phosphate from the North coast; but unfortunately the boat would not sail. The outlay, however, was infinitesimal.

The Minister for Lands: It was only a little one.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Like the Minister for Lands, it was small in every way. At any rate, the Premier excuses himself and the investment of £100,000, which might well have been put into other necessary works, on the ground that the previous Government at one time bought a boat. He said, too, in connection with the balance sheet we are asking for, that the previous Government did not keep accounts which would enable him to make up balance sheets in connection with the trading concerns, as he would like to make them up. I would remind the Premier that he has been in office for two years, and that a previous Labour Government administered the affairs of the country for 12 months, and I would further remind him that we put through the Trading Accounts Bill in December last. The Premier brought certain concerns under the operation of the Act on the 21st May, which was six weeks before the close of the financial year. Will his balance sheets, for which we are asking in connection with the State steamers, be made up according to the method set out in the Trading Accounts Act? Is it possible? Can the Premier do as he said, namely, turn back his accountancy staff and have the books rewritten from July last, in order to do what he proposes? Of course he will do nothing of the sort. The Premier will produce his accounts and they will have been kept until the 21st probably, under the Treasury regulations which the Premier knows all about. It is said that these books were not written up as the transactions occurred, that there was delay in writing them up, confusion in the accountancy branch of the State Steamship Department. If that is so, has the Premier anything to boast about? I confess that the Government books are not kept as well as they should be generally, but I assert that so far as the trading undertakings entered into by the previous Government are concerned, we did keep records which were far clearer, judging by all accounts, than any kept by the State Steamship Department.

The Premier: You never produced a balance sheet or profit and loss account for any one of them.



Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier knows full well that we did. I think he demanded a balance sheet in connection with the Government cold storage works, and from time to time statements were prepared and submitted to the House. Did not the Agricultural Bank present a balance sheet? Did not the Premier know in connection with every one of our small trading concerns just what was happening?

The Minister for Lands: We never had the slightest information.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier simply compares with our undertakings this investment of £100,000 on steamers, on which there is a loss of from £30,000 to £40,000 to be added, and the money invested in the State butchers' shops, which includes a considerable amount invested in stock at Yandanooka. At that station there are 1,500 head of cattle being fattened for the butchers' shops.

The Minister for Lands: There are 2,000 now.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: These 2,000 head of cattle cost a lot of money.

The Premier: What about the cows and goats you bought? They cost money.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier compares the State steamers and the butchers' shops, including as they do the State trading department in connection with stock, and each week, or frequently, we see an advertisement that stock is to be sold, presumably on account of the State butchers' shop, on behalf of the Government by some stock agent—the Premier compares these concerns with the cost to the country of the freezing works and abattoirs. Freezing works are a small concern against State steamers, and they are a necessary concern. No one objects to the Government running cold storage works.

The Premier: You ran them in opposition to existing works.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The people who were running similar works were the Fresh Food and Ice Company; those were the only other works in Perth.

The Premier: Did not you build abattoirs where others existed?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I built them at Kalgoorlie because I believe we should

have them everywhere, and I would have had them also at Fremantle and Wyndham. The health of the community demands that abattoirs should be established, but this is a totally different proposition from State butchers' shops and State steamers.

The Attorney General: Where is the difference?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier also said that the previous Government did some land clearing and did not keep proper accounts. I say accounts were kept. There were other ways in which we undertook some trading, for instance, there were State hotels, which made a profit and a fairly considerable profit, though there were just one or two run by the late Government. There are State hotels to-day but if the figures as published are correct those hotels are not paying.

The Premier: Oh, oh!

Hon. J. MITCHELL: If the Premier can prove otherwise he can satisfy us on the point. The Premier interjected about importing cows, and the Government to-day are doing so. I have as much right to refer to these things as the Premier. He wishes the country to believe that he can be excused for not supplying information for which we ask on the ground that the previous Government conducted trading concerns, and he would like the country to believe that they were of equal magnitude to those conducted by the present Government. The position is entirely different. The public want to know what is happening in regard to the Premier's venture respecting State steamers and State butchers' shops. There was no need to establish State butchers' shops; the price of meat last year was lower than it is this year. In addition to selling cattle at Fremantle, the meat market in Wellington-street has been in existence for many years. It is the custom of small butchers to buy supplies at that market largely, just as the Premier does for his butchers' shops. That market supplies meat to a good many butchers in Perth, and the Premier knows as well as I do that it supplied meat at a lower rate last year, be-

fore the State steamers started to run, than it is doing this year. These steamers are costing a lot of money and they have not benefited the meat market of Perth one iota. The State steamers have not benefited the situation at all, in fact meat is dearer because of the steamers. The State steamers were away from Western Australia when they ought to have been on the northern coast. The Premier's explanation with reference to the Farquharson cattle is, of course, some satisfaction to us. We believe that the £2,000 loss on those cattle, or whatever it was, has been written up against the stock account, and that the Premier has made enough to cover the loss on the cattle out of his butchers' shops. But if the Premier has made this enormous amount on the small turnover of those shops, all I can say is that the people must be paying a pretty big thing for their supplies. The Premier denied that these cattle were diseased when he bought them. As a matter of fact they must have brought them diseased from the North.

The Minister for Lands: He did not deny that they were diseased; he denied that it was discovered before he bought them.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: At any rate they must have brought the disease from the North, and an inspection must have disclosed it. The Government, as a matter of fact, had no option in the matter. They had made a bungle, the steamer was at the port, and they were compelled to buy these cattle or submit to an action at law. They made a very bad bargain, just the same as they did in connection with the Bovril Company. What is the Premier going to do with these cattle? We are entitled to know, and I suppose the balance sheet in connection with these trading concerns will disclose the position in regard to this big purchase. These steamers might have done considerable good for the small squatter of the North, and without the loss to the country that is being experienced from day to day. The Premier, of course, can deny this House information but I consider that he is unwise in doing so. I believe he should tell us just what

has happened in connection with these trading concerns, these socialistic undertakings, and the public could then judge whether he should go on with these undertakings as he can only be allowed to do if returned to power 12 months hence.

The Attorney General: He has promised you the balance sheet, what more do you want?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: We want the balance sheet, and we want it now.

The Attorney General: At the earliest possible moment the balance sheets will be on the Table.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do not get annoyed about it; at any rate let him finish his speech.

The Attorney General: It is terribly boring.

The Premier: It costs money every time to put in *Hansard* what the hon. member has said twenty times already.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier has promised, and I protest against the delay. It will be two months more, I expect, before we get any information, and in the meantime the steamers are to be run at the cost of the people of this State. We heard, too, during the course of the Premier's speech that he is supplying hospitals with milk and supplying hospitals with meat.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not justified in continuing his discussion on those lines.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: The Premier referred to this milk.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Premier certainly made a reference, but am I justified in allowing the hon. member to discuss every reference the Premier made.

Mr. George: Surely we can reply.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not going to reply in this manner, at any rate. He can reply in accordance with the terms of this motion. Otherwise he will resume his seat.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: For the people of this State I do protest against this secrecy. I protest against the Premier withholding this information. I have nothing more to say upon the question, and I hope the Premier will not make it

necessary for us to bring the matter up again in this House.

The Premier: I will take fine care of that.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: He should supply these balance-sheets each week, if need be, until the people know what they are entitled to know.

The Premier: Without this you would have nothing to talk about.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. T. H. Bath): The leader of the Opposition and his co-leaders have, I think, mistaken their vocation. They ought to be on the boards as actors.

Hon. Frank Wilson: All men are actors.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I would recommend the leader of the Opposition to start right off by presenting "The School for Scandal," as they would make a success of it. The leader of the Opposition as Lady Teazle would, I think, be a howling success. Out of all the chaff which we have had from the members on the Opposition benches, this fact stands out clear, that during the whole time when they were occupying the Government benches and administrative offices, they never attempted to present a balance-sheet in connection with the trading concerns then being run.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What has that got to do with these balance-sheets?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They never took the public into their confidence or published any information in connection with those trading concerns, nor were accounts kept; the position had to be remedied, and at the instance of the present Government a measure was placed on the statute-book providing that properly prepared trading accounts should be submitted to this Assembly. Then we find the hon. member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George), who supported his colleague, the leader of the Opposition, in his attitude in refusing information, to-night tearing a passage to tatters and telling us that two blacks do not make a white, and that we should present these statements.

Mr. George: They do not, do they?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If for seven or eight years these gentleman kept the public in ignorance and heard no cry that the public were desirous of this information—

Mr. George: Were they in office eight years?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then it sounds very much like hypocrisy for the hon. member for Murray-Wellington to talk of the public demanding this information. As a matter of fact, the public know that this information will be supplied, and they are not quite so impatient as the hon. member for Murray-Wellington.

Mr. George: It touches you on the raw, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member evidently imagines that he is going to get some material from these balance-sheets with which to furnish those long, wearisome, and, shall I say inaccurate, speeches which he is so fond of delivering to this House.

Mr. George: They touch you on the raw every time.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They make you squirm.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. gentleman need not worry about our side or the members of the Government; we are not afraid to supply this information to the public.

Mr. George: Then why do you not do it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But we are not going to do it just whenever the hon. member chooses to get up in the House and rail about an indignant public demanding it. We know what the public want as much as the hon. member, and we will supply it when it is required, and not before.

Mr. ALLEN (West Perth): Two questions have arisen in my mind while I have been listening to this and previous debates on the same question, but particularly in connection with the first one moved by the leader of the Opposition with reference to the balance-sheet of the State steamers. It has occurred to me that if the balance-sheet is ready why is

it not presented to this House, and if it is not ready, why is it not ready?

The Premier: Ha! ha!

Mr. ALLEN: The Premier may laugh, but I may tell him that very much larger concerns than this State steamship office closed their financial year on the 30th June, have held their annual meeting, and have declared a dividend, and, therefore, surely in a small concern like the one we have here the balance sheet ought to have been ready before this.

Mr. George: They have not a dividend to declare.

Mr. ALLEN: If that is the reason why we have had no balance-sheet, it is a very poor one indeed. The Premier and his colleagues have, since I have been in the House, frequently refused to give information, and I say that they are only courting a feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction by their secrecy. We have heard to-night a good deal in the way of counter charges and charges against Administrations in the past, to the effect that the present Government are only doing the same thing to-day. But that is not giving us the information which we require, and it is rather a childish way of treating this House. When are we going to get this information? It may be after we have gone into recess.

Hon. W. C. Angwin (Honorary Minister): You will get it in the terms of the motion, "as soon as possible."

Mr. ALLEN: I should like to know what sort of a system the Government have of working this steamship service. I can tell them that with private companies there is a balance-sheet for every trip, and when the trip is finished they know whether they have made a profit or have made a loss, but I doubt if the Government know whether this concern has made a profit or a loss.

Mr. George: They know it has made a loss, and they are waiting for a profit.

Mr. ALLEN: The sooner we get a balance-sheet the better, and if it is going to be a continuous losing concern it is advisable for the House to know, so that it may be decided to cut the loss without further ado.

Mr. Turvey: Are the balance-sheets of these shipping companies to which you refer made available for the information of other companies?

Mr. ALLEN: In this case the taxpayers have been placed in possession of these steamships without ever being consulted about it. I have said before that if it could be proved that the running of ships from the North-West would break up any meat ring I would be in accord with it, but that has not been proved. I do say that the Government are courting uneasiness by withholding information and keeping secret what should be divulged to this House. If the balance-sheet is made up and audited, why do we not get it, and if on the other hand it is not ready, why is it not ready?

Question put and passed.

Resolved: That motions be continued.

#### MOTION—STATE STEAMSHIP "KWINANA."

On motion by Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) ordered: That there be laid upon the Table of the House the reports on hull and machinery of the s.s. "Kwinana"—(1.) Given at the time she was purchased. (2.) At the time of her recent docking at Sydney.

#### MOTION—LAND RENTS, RELIEF TO CONDITIONAL PURCHASERS.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE (Katanning) moved—

*That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that relief should be given to all persons who are holders of conditional purchase land from the Crown, which has been sold at a price in excess of its present value.*

He said: In submitting the motion to the House, I do so fully believing that hon. members will be prepared to favourably consider the request contained in it. I do not approach this matter in any party spirit or with any party motive; I am submitting it knowing that there are a large number of people in this State who have in good faith taken up land from

the Crown at prices which I feel sure will not permit them to make their holdings successful. I realise that the question before the House is a far-reaching one, and I take this opportunity of giving members a chance of expressing their views on the matter. For some time past it must have been made patent to hon. members through the Press and by other means, that there have been complaints on the part of settlers, particularly those in the drier wheat areas, that the prices fixed for lands selected by them have been far above their true value. I desire to get an expression of opinion from the House, so that it may be a direction to the Government, as far as our future settlement is concerned, and so that we shall not continue to make mistakes as has been done in some instances in the past. I feel sure that hon. members on both sides of the House will support this motion, particularly as I remember from the hustings at the last general election some hon. members now supporting the Government made this somewhat of an election cry, and therefore, to be consistent with the views they then expressed on the hustings, they should support the motion; at any rate, I think I can fairly claim their support. I quite expect that during the course of this debate some hon. members opposite will probably try to obscure the true purport of the motion by blaming past Administrations for the present condition of affairs. I am well aware that perhaps past Administrations have erred in unduly raising the price of land. If we look at this matter in a non-party light, we must be fair enough to admit that whatever was done in the past was done in good faith, but I am sure it is not the desire of anyone to unduly harass the people who have in all good faith taken up land with the idea of becoming successful settlers in this State, and to place them now at such a disadvantage by refraining from giving them the relief which they seek. This question, to my way of thinking, is so important that I consider the House should not only grant relief to those who are suffering disabilities, but also should assist the present Government and any Administration

that may follow, in the direction of arriving at what is the true value of the land or what price should be fixed for it. I am not complaining of the system adopted by the late Minister. I think the system instituted by him was very good, but I think to some extent where the system failed was in not arriving at the correct basis of the price. I have no objection, and I do not think that any selector of our agricultural lands would object to pay a fair price for good land within reasonable distance of a railway, and within an assured rainfall area, but what we want to avoid, and what I am afraid many of our settlers are suffering from, is the unduly high price which has been placed upon the more inferior land. I do not want to be misunderstood. Personally I have the greatest faith in the future of our State, and I do not want it to go forward that I wish to depreciate the value of our land; at the same time, it is patent to anyone who has had experience in our agricultural districts that during the inception of settlement large areas of land which we now look upon as of second and third class quality were at that time considered as almost useless, except perhaps for grazing purposes. From a cereal growing point of view these areas gave very little promise, but since the introduction of fertilisers those lands have become productive by having been successfully farmed. In arriving at the price of the inferior lands, the department has not taken into consideration the fact that to bring about a deduction upon which to base their price, the selector would have to spend four or five shillings an acre on fertilisers. Then we have land which is outside the 15-inch rainfall, and I think the House may very well take into consideration the request made by the selectors outside the 15-inch rainfall bearing in mind the last two seasons, one of which was practically a failure in certain parts, while the last did not come up to expectations. The House might well consider, in regard to these people, the granting of some special relief. There are also the settlers who have been affected by the deviation of the Wickepin-Merredin railway. I think that is a mat-

ter which should receive the attention of the Minister at the earliest possible moment, and consideration ought also to be given to those settlers in other localities who find themselves removed more than 12½ miles from a railway. I am alluding to some of the instances where it was thought a railway would go in a certain direction and where it was afterwards found that the selector was left more than the recognised distance beyond the line. I urge upon the Minister the necessity for dealing with these cases.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: And the poison lands.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I shall deal with the poison lands directly. The Minister ought to deal at once with the cases to which I have referred. When speaking in the House the other evening, the Minister stated he was not prepared to consider a reduction in the price of land until he had been able to take an average of seasons, but I would like to remind the Minister that in doing so he would probably be asking the people who are settled on the land under the adverse conditions to which I have referred, to wait for another couple of years. This will very likely mean disaster to them. For the life of me I cannot understand why the Minister does not, at the earliest possible moment, deal with these cases and give immediate relief to a number of deserving people. If the Minister finds upon inquiry and reclassification that the reductions suggested are so small and that it is impossible to make them. I would suggest that he extend the provision contained in Section 136a of the amended Land Act, wherein it is set out that the selector for the first three years should not pay more than 3d. per acre per annum.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Sixpence per acre.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: Threepence per acre. I think.

The Minister for Lands: Sixpence.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: Well, it was threepence per acre per half year, which, of course, is sixpence per acre per annum. That might be extended, I think, from five to ten years according to the

exigencies of the case. And as far as the revenue is concerned, the Government would not be suffering any very great loss, because, up to the present, a number of these selectors have not been paying more than sixpence per acre per annum. Furthermore, that special concession was made so that the selector, in the earliest stages of settlement, should have as much of his capital as possible available for the development of his land. But in many cases we find that these settlers have been out on the land two years, and even three years, without a railway, and therefore, it will easily be seen that they have not been able to avail themselves of the advantage of this provision. Again, one of the failings of all Administrations, not merely of the present Administration, but of all past Administrations, has been, I am afraid, to neglect to keep as closely in touch with our settlers as they should do. There are special difficulties which have to be overcome, particularly in regard to our poison lands. I think the department might very well give consideration to the question of keeping more closely in touch with our new settlers, so that they may see for themselves how those settlers are progressing on their holdings, and, through the medium of an expert officer, give advice to those settlers with a view to the more successful settlement of the land. We find, as is so often the case, that when our people are placed on the land, the one consideration of a Government is the gathering in of revenue. No sooner are the people on the land than the question of increased taxation crops up by way of land tax, and by way of seeing that our local authorities are increasing their taxation, and this, together with the increased cost of production brought about to a great extent by high Customs duties, is very seriously affecting the success of our selectors. I do not wish to take up very much of the time of the House in reminding hon. members of the part which is being played by the selector in this country. All will admit, I think, that the farmer, the man who tills the soil, is a continuous benefactor to the country, and a continuous con-

tributor to the prosperity of the country; because a successful settler takes up virgin country and improves it in such a manner that it become an asset to the State, and as such remains behind him after he has gone. Therefore I say it should be the desire of any Government, and the desire of hon. members, to see that our settlers are successful, and that they are given every possible chance of developing their holdings and becoming prosperous. Now, I wish to deal specially to-night with the question of poison lands. I want to again say that I do not for one moment wish to be misunderstood in regard to these poison lands. We know that most people fight shy of land upon which poison is growing. Unfortunately, we have a very large area lying, more particularly to the west of the Great Southern railway, which, I think, has always been looked upon as the home of the poison plant, more especially that known as the York Road poison. We know that we have poison more lightly spread over other parts of the State, but this portion of Western Australia which I refer to has been one of the most difficult parts to grapple with, in fact at times the difficulties have been almost insurmountable. When once cleared from poison the land will compare with most parts of the Western Australia. We know that it has much to commend it. It lies within an assured rainfall area, and when successfully cleared of poison it is capable of growing cereal crops, particularly oats. Parts of it even now grow good wheat crops, and I am hoping to see the day, when we get a more suitable wheat for the district, when it will be growing very large quantities of wheat. It is particularly well suited for the growing of fruit, and it is also suited for growing fodder crops for stock. It is a good sheep country, and, as a matter of fact, I have been told by experts, by people who are in a position to know, that the wool grown in that district is quite equal to the best wool grown in the western districts of Victoria. Prices obtained on the London market quite recently have been among the highest for

the State's wool, and the wool has compared very favourably with that sent from the western districts of Victoria. I think this is very important indeed, seeing it is an admitted fact that the wool grown in the western districts of Victoria is the best in the world. Therefore, as I say, I do not wish to be misunderstood in regard to the capabilities of this portion of the country. At the same time it has special difficulties, and requires handling in a practical manner to bring it to that condition in which it can be safely stocked and successfully farmed. This was realised by the legislators in the earlier days. As a matter of fact, legislation was in existence providing for the alienation of this land, of a lot of this poison country, at £1 per thousand acres for twenty years. Then later on, even so recently as the Act of 1898, there was a provision by which the price was fixed for poison lands at 1s. per acre. That, of course, has been superseded by a more recent Act in which that section was amended.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That was in 1910, before the present Government came in.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I do not know exactly in what year the section was amended. However, it all goes to prove that for years past the poison bush has been recognised as a serious drawback to the successful development of the country. I am pleased to say that with the improved methods which have come by experience, these poison lands are gradually being brought under subjection. The poison is being successfully cleared, and the land stocked, and in a great many instances cultivated, and is yielding good crops. But to bring this about, a certain amount of capital is needed, and, more than that, men require some experience before they can hope to be successful. The area I refer to more particularly is that lying between Cuballing and Tambellup on the west of the Great Southern railway. Some years ago subdivisions were made to the westward of the Great Southern, more particularly in the Dinninup areas, around Coben Soak, Darkan, Moodariup, and other portions of that country, and a great deal of it has since

been selected. In my opinion, the areas of this subdivision were too small. I do not think the areas should have been cut up into smaller blocks than from 1,500 to 3,000 acres each. Unfortunately, a great many of these subdivisions were selected by new comers to the State; quite a number of them were immigrants and unaccustomed to the difficulties which the poison presented. To-day we find that the prices which have been charged for that land, for which a few years ago £1 per thousand acres was asked, and more recently a shilling per acre was asked—we find that land has been sold at prices ranging from 8s. to 20s. per acre. Now, I want to see some relief given in regard to the price of these particular lands. I understand that the practice of the department in valuing their land is to value according to the quality of the soil. This may seem to be all right and to be a proper means of obtaining a fair valuation of the land, but when it is looked into it will be seen that the cost of the eradication of poison is not very often taken into consideration. I would like to make some comparison between two settlers, one who has taken up poison land, and another who has taken up land without poison. The selector who has been fortunate enough to take up land without poison, or with very little poison, which can be easily eradicated, is able by fencing and providing a water supply to get a return almost immediately from his land, whereas the selector with heavily poisoned country is not able to stock his land immediately. Even if he is within a reasonable distance of a railway he is only able to put in a small area of crop, and the balance of his land is useless for the next three, four, or five years. Therefore he is labouring under a serious disadvantage compared with the man who has taken up land without poison, and yet in many cases he has paid the same price, because the value of the eradication of poison is not taken into consideration. Furthermore, his capital, which might have been put into clearing and fencing, has to be used in the eradication of the poison before his land is of any use at all. It cannot be argued that the lands I have compared in these two instances

are of equal value. I understand that the department makes very liberal allowance for the eradication of poison as an improvement. That is all very well, but the improvement has to be carried out before the allowance can be made, and it is not allowed off the price of the land. The Government have given assistance to those settlers in the dry areas who have been unfortunate enough to find themselves in financial difficulties owing to the adverse season; they have also gone out of their way to render special assistance to the settlers in the Esperance district, and I want to know why it is that some special consideration is not meted out to those people who are labouring under great difficulties in the poison country. To give the House an idea of what I mean in regard to making allowance for the eradication of poison, I want to give an illustration in regard to prices. Suppose there are two selectors, A and B, each holding land of equal area and of equal quality so far as soil is concerned, and valued at 7s. per acre. A is free from poison, whilst B has poison on his land, the eradication of which will cost, say, 3s. 6d. per acre. When B has grubbed and eradicated the poison, his land, according to the department's system of valuation, is only of the same value as that of A, although B has spent 3s. 6d. per acre upon his holding. I contend that the cost of the eradication of poison should be assessed and deducted from the value of the land, because if B spends 3s. 6d. per acre on his land in the eradication of poison, A's land, which is only valued at the same price as B's, should certainly upon the present basis be worth more. I want the Minister to go specially into that question of the valuation of poison land, in order to see whether special consideration can be given to these people. It is important that some decision should be come to on this matter, so that the unselected land may be taken up and used, so that our railways may be fully employed, and so that we can make the best use of the vacant lands lying idle adjacent to the railways. Of course, it will naturally be asked, Why did these people go into poison country? Some went there



against good advice, others were induced to go there because they saw that some people in that locality were able to make a success of their holdings, and because of the good rainfall. I have every hope, and I honestly believe, that the poison which we so much dread to-day will be eventually all eradicated, and that the district I am referring to will in time be one of the most prosperous and one of the best districts in the State. But we have to get rid of this poison, and we have a number of settlers there, men who started with very little capital indeed, and without experience, and to-day they are asking for relief. I have realised for some time that special assistance must be meted out to these settlers because I have had very long experience of the poison country in that particular district. I do not say it as a boast, but I suppose I have grubbed and cleared, and successfully stocked more poison land than any member in the House, and I know it can be successfully cleared, and I know the value of the country when it is cleared. Knowing this and coming into contact with these people daily, witnessing the difficulties under which they are labouring, and having many requests made to me, I felt it to be my duty to bring the matter before the Government of the day. I have on two or three occasions drawn attention in this House to what I consider the over-valuation of some of these lands. I brought the matter under the notice of the late Minister for Lands (Hon. J. Mitchell) and petitions were sent in from these areas at the same time and prior to that. The member for Northam visited that district in company with myself and others, and spent three days in the Dinninup area and the neighbouring district, journeying as far south as Slab Hut, some 17 to 30 miles south of Kojonup. The then Minister also had an opportunity of meeting a number of settlers from the Dinninup and other areas, mostly new settlers, who had come from the Old Country and had been sent to that area. We met those settlers about nine o'clock in the morning and I have a vivid recollection of their appearance. It was such that I am not likely to forget it very

easily, because disappointment was written on the face of nearly every man. The late Minister, after chatting with them, and going into their difficulties, and after interviewing other settlers in the district, gave me an assurance that something would be done to assist those men. The result was that a board, known as the Poison Board, was appointed.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: That was an electioneering dodge pure and simple.

Hon. J. Mitchell: That is absolutely wrong.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Out of nine sittings six were held in my electorate.

Hon. J. Mitchell: And you got in.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Yes, it helped me.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I would like to take a certain amount of responsibility for advocating that commission, and I do not think the hon. member will accuse me of trying to use it as a political dodge. So far as I personally was concerned, there was no necessity to resort to a subterfuge of that kind.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: No, they did not go down your way.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I have not been hard pressed for my seat, and it mattered little to me whether or not that inquiry would have any bearing on the election. But it did seem to me that those people were deserving of some consideration, and I was anxious that something should be done to give them relief. The board was appointed, and it comprised Mr. Frank Cook, who is one of the Trustees of the Agricultural Bank, Mr. Marshall Fox, who is a district surveyor, and Mr. J. Treasure, who is an old settler born in the Kojonup country and having a wide experience of poison land. The hon. member for Williams-Narrogin mentioned that nine out of twelve sittings took place in the Williams electorate. That is not a fact. The board reported as follows:—

The board sat at the following centres to hear evidence, namely, Narrogin, Arthur River, Fourteen Mile Brook, Darkan, Katanning, Kojonup, Wagin, Williams, Wandering, and in all nine sittings were held, 82 witnesses examined and a verbatim report of the

evidence taken by the secretary is attached hereto.

I may mention that the verbatim report, together with the board's report was laid on the Table of this House some little time ago for the inspection of hon. members. The report says—

In accordance with the hon. Minister's instructions that the board should inspect as much of the unselected poison land as possible lying between Cuballing and Tambellup on the Great Southern Railway, and extending 60 miles west, as shown bordered red on litho. attached, visits of inspection were made to the following localities, viz., West of Slab Hut, portions of the Dinninup Area, West of Darkan, Williams, and Darkan (east of the railway), from Williams to Wandering, and north of Kojonup. It is estimated that there are approximately 1,300,000 acres of unselected poison infested land within the boundaries of the area mentioned above.

I will not read the whole of the report, but I would like to refer to various parts of it. It goes on to say—

The scope of the inquiry was as follows:—(a) The best means of settling the unselected poison country. (b) The area of such country needed to carry sufficient sheep to enable a man to make a good living, say 500 breeding ewes. (c) The best means of improving that class of country. (d) The best methods of dealing with the poison plant. (e) The best class of fencing for poison country, which was risky because of the poison outside the paddocks and also on account of the dingoes. (f) Whether the prices at present charged for poison land were reasonable, and if the prices were based on the land as if it were free from poison, what amount could be taken off for poison clearing.

The board then went on to describe the country—

The country described. The unalienated area consists of practically all second and third class land, with pockets of first class through it, and it is all more or less poison infested; but when cleared of poison and systematic-

ally improved, will, we consider, develop into good grazing country capable of carrying thousands of good sheep, and becoming the home of a number of farmers. Size of blocks and price. From evidence gathered and our personal inspection we feel satisfied that this land should be surveyed into areas of about 3,000 acres, and dealt with under grazing lease conditions (Clause 68). The price charged should be very moderate, say, 3s. 6d. to 6s. per acre as we consider that the work which will have to be put in to eradicate the poison and in general development will amount to a very considerable sum.

Further the report goes on to say—

The board is also of opinion that these blocks should be classified individually, as the poison is thicker on some of them than it is on others. The land should be priced as if free from poison, and the estimated cost of eradicating the poison deducted. The evidence tends to show that the cost of eradicating would vary from 3s. to 6s. per acre on an average block. With regard to a great deal of unalienated country which adjoins land at present settled, in areas varying from 100 acres upwards, we suggest that it should be granted to adjoining settlers, under the same conditions, and at the prices recommended in paragraph 8 hereof; also that the unselected land in the Dinninup and other surveyed areas should be re-valued. It also appears to the board that on some of the already selected blocks, on areas surveyed prior to selection sufficient consideration was not given to the poison when the land was classified, and in such cases we would suggest that an optional valuation should be given to prevent any hardship falling on the deserving settler. . . We are of opinion that poison country is unsuitable for inexperienced men with small means, as a settler in these districts should have a knowledge of stock, and requires capital in order to eradicate the poison, and to finance him while waiting several years before he can stock his land, and obtain a return therefrom. A consider-

able time must necessarily elapse before a settler can obtain a return sufficient to enable him to live and prosper upon his holding.

They further state—

We recommend settlers to grow oats or other fodder to assist in feeding their stock, and in each block there would be some land suitable for producing same, and from evidence tendered it was gathered that this land properly ploughed, and any unturned bushes taken out, would be perfectly safe to grow such fodder.

They also suggested—

If the Hon. Minister sees fit to give effect to our recommendations, we would suggest that an inspector with a thorough knowledge of poison country should be set apart for these poison areas, to inspect the land, and give advice to settlers.

The date of that report was 10th October, 1911. Nearly two years have gone past, and although a reclassification has been made at the instigation of the department, a copy of which I have in my hand, nothing has so far been done by way of granting assistance or relief to those settlers, and I can assure the House and the Minister that these people have just about reached the limit of their endurance. As a matter of fact a number of settlers, quite half a dozen to my knowledge, who were there when the late Minister, the member for Northam, visited the district have had to abandon their holdings, and I regret to say that quite a number of others will have to follow suit unless something is done immediately. Now, what is the result of the reclassification? The board recommended that the price of the blocks should be reduced by the amount of the cost of eradicating the poison, and as far as I can see, that has not been done. Slight deductions have been made on reclassification, some only very slight indeed, though others are noticeable—one was reduced from 14s. 6d. to 10s. per acre, but most of the deductions vary from 1s. to 1s. 6d. and 2s. per acre. Altogether nearly 200 locations have been reclassified all in the Dinninup area, and I want to mention

again that this area is not the only area affected. There are others which I mentioned previously in the Mudiarrup, Darkan—

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Quindanning.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: Yes, the Quindanning and Coben Soak districts. I know two men who quite recently left their land in the Coben Soak district, and the most disquieting feature about it is that such men in many instances have obtained money from the Agricultural Bank, and if their holdings are allowed to remain unoccupied for any length of time there is a probability that they will become overgrown, that suckers will grow up and that the poison will appear again on the land whence it has been cleared and the value of improvements will be seriously depreciated and it will be a serious matter for the bank. Therefore, I take it this is a matter of urgency which cannot be left any longer. In the interests of the country, and in the interests of the people who have gone there in all good faith something should be done to make a reduction at once in the price of the land, at least to the amount of the cost for eradicating the poison so that there will be some hope of continuing on their holdings and eventually making a success of their farming operations.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The Government brought in a Bill to grant poison lands ten years rent free.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: I am glad the hon. member reminded me of that, because I feel sure we have the sympathy of the Minister in this matter. He has already approved of the principle of making special consideration to these settlers, but it was put in such a way that it was of very little practical use. It was introduced by the Minister last session in his Bill to amend the Land Act, which provided for leasehold tenure instead of freehold, and although it passed this House it was not acceptable to members of the Opposition or to a majority of hon. members in another place. Therefore, it did not become law, and it was not available to

give relief to the people referred to, and the mere fact that provision was made in such a measure is of little consolation to the people who are still suffering these disabilities. It does not relieve them of present difficulties; they have to pay their rents and they have to keep going, and as I have already mentioned I want to impress upon the Minister and the House the necessity for taking immediate action in this matter. To my way of thinking, the matter has already been allowed to stand over too long. I am quite sure that after the member for Northam visited the district he knew more about the poison country than before, and I am quite sure that the present Minister does not fully realise the special need for some urgent action to be taken to help these people. I am hoping that the Minister will be able to visit the district. Only yesterday I received a letter from the people at Coben Soak, which I will read. I may mention that I had an opportunity of handing it to the Minister only to-day so that he has not had time to deal with it, but I feel sure the Minister will not mind me referring to the letter because I wish to impress upon hon. members the necessity for doing something at once. The letter is from the Coben Soak Progress Association and is as follows:—

To the Minister for Lands.—At a full meeting of the Coben Soak Progress Association it was resolved to draw your attention to our trouble with the poison land. The country all round is thickly covered with the poison, and we are not able to deal with it without some help from the Government. We had a poison commission around the district some two years ago, but we have not derived any benefit from it up to the present, and unless we get some material help from the Government, a number of us will be obliged to give up our holdings. We respectfully suggest that our rents should be deferred for seven years and then paid in reasonable instalments so that it would give us a chance to get rid of it. The cost of clearing the land is heavy, and in our

opinion this is the best way of helping us out of our difficulty. The poison is so thick in places that a man cannot possibly grub half an acre per day. It would give us great pleasure if you could come down personally and see the difficulty of our position. Trusting you will give this your consideration and give us some help, we are, yours respectfully, Coben Progress Association, Sgd. Jas. B. Hustler, Secretary.

I am hoping that so far as these Dinnin-up people are concerned the Minister will see fit to make reductions in the price of the land, especially to the value of the cost of eradicating poison; but it does not appear to me, as I have already mentioned, that that has been taken into consideration, and unless it is done, I feel sure that there will be always discontent and dissatisfaction, because these people realise, and every practical man must realise, that where it costs so much to eradicate poison the land is worth that much less. I understand from information I have been able to receive, however, that it is not the intention of the Government to reduce these lands upon re-classification, and, by the way, I would like to mention that, so far as my experience goes, I know only one instance in the whole of my electorate where there has been a successful reduction obtained upon re-classification. Provision is given to the Minister under the Act that he may order re-classification of the land if he thinks fit, and while it may to some extent be appealing from Caesar to Caesar, yet we know that in our Lands Department we have fair men, men who honestly do endeavour to do their best both to give the selector a fair deal and to look after the interests of the country at the same time. This question is so important that I think it would be in the best interests of this country and of the people who consider they have a grievance, for the Minister to take into consideration the appointment of a responsible board or commission. A commission might be made up of a responsible officer from the Lands Department, a respon-

sible officer from the Agricultural Bank, and a practical local man. So far as the local representative is concerned, the State might be cut up into divisions and a practical man might be appointed from the locality that is receiving attention. The duty of the commission would be to go fully into the question of reduction, where re-classification is asked for, and to make such recommendations to the Minister as the members think fit and fair to those selectors who are asking for these reductions. We have a precedent for reduction in price in the past; we have the instance of the lands that were taken over from the Western Australian Land Company. When the Government purchased the whole of the Western Australian Land Company's concession, together with its railway, that reduction was brought about by a request of the settlers, a majority of whom were practically on the verge of bankruptcy, owing to the very high prices that were being charged by the Western Australian Land Company for their holdings. What did the Forrest Administration of that day do? Price was not the first consideration with them; they dealt with these settlers in a most generous manner. They said, "We will put you, tenants of the Western Australian Land Company, in the same position as if you were selectors from the Crown." The price of the land, which in some cases had been as high as 30s. or 40s. an acre, was reduced to 10s. Full value was given to the payments which had been made to the Western Australian Land Company, and the people were put under the same laws as those who had previously selected from the Government.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: With the same improvement conditions too.

Mr. A. E. PIESSE: And the same improvement conditions. We have this precedent to guide us. What was the result of this action? Mr. Ranford was sent down to Katanning, a branch agency was opened there, and that was the beginning of the successful settlement of the lands of this State. While we want to see the State get a fair price for its land, the price should not be the one overshadowing consideration. We want to see that the people are successful,

and it is in the very early stages of settlement that we should give them the greatest consideration. In conclusion, I would like to say I am certain that the Minister does realise—although he has not paid a visit to the district, and I think he will more fully realise when he does—that special consideration is due to these people. With the provisions he made in his Land Bill of last session, I feel sure that he is prepared to meet the settlers in a reasonable spirit, but I would like to have some assurance from him that he is going to recommend that the value of the cost of eradication of poison will be allowed off the price, and I would like to have some assurance from him that immediate action is going to be taken in this matter, that it is not going to be allowed to drift on, so that we shall lose more settlers and add to the difficulties of these people, because I am quite satisfied that, although a great many of them are new chums, people who are not accustomed to the conditions of this country, they have nobly stuck to their holdings and done their best. They have performed their part and now it behoves the Government to carry out their part. There is a very grave responsibility so far as these people are concerned, resting in the first place upon the shoulders of the Government, and upon Parliament as a whole. Therefore, I hope that this motion will receive the favourable consideration of the Government and the whole of the members of this House, and in that case I feel we would be only doing bare justice to those who have in all good faith gone out into that country and endeavoured to carve out homes for themselves and their families.

On motion by the Premier debate adjourned.

#### PAPERS — GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY, TOODYAY EXTENSION.

Mr. A. N. PIESSE (Toodyay) moved:

*That all papers relating to the extension of the Goldfields Water Supply to the Toodyay townsite, together with*

*all papers dealing with the assessment of rural lands adjacent to such extension, be laid upon the Table of the House.*

He said: I have pleasure in moving this motion, and desire these papers for the reason that owing to the passing of the Goldfields Water Supply Act certain ratings have been made on the farming community residing between the town of Newcastle and the goldfields water main. That little Bill slipped through Parliament and became an Act, and it has been a source of annoyance to us ever since it reached its maturity. The scheme was extended to the town of Toodyay on the guarantee system, and I believe that when powers were granted under this Act an assurance was given in the Legislative Council to the effect that this was just a short measure which would be followed soon by a more comprehensive one, and an opportunity would then be given the House to discuss the matter at some length. That assurance has not been kept, much to our sorrow and much to the financial loss of the people holding land on the route of the pipe that I have just mentioned, the extension of the main to Toodyay. We were not consulted; under this Act power is given to the people to express their objections, and if a majority are opposed to the scheme being extended or carried over their holdings, the department has not power to carry out that work. These people were not consulted in the matter and now a rate is levied upon them, in some cases to the amount of £30 or £40. This is a hardship. The water was not required by these people, and in two instances it has compelled small holders to sell their holdings. Members on the Government side are always having a dig at the man who holds a large area, but I would like to point out to them one case in particular. In this case, unfortunately, their action has resulted in a small land holder, an aged widow with ten acres, being obliged to sell because this water rate amounted to £5 1s. 8d., which was considerably more than she could afford to pay. She had

to sell her ten acres, and from the proceeds of the sale she paid the rates. This is a hardship, and had the Government kept their promise with the Legislative Council, there is not the slightest doubt they would not have enjoyed very long the privilege which they enjoy to-day. It will be apparent to Parliament that the Act inflicts an injustice, and its repeal would be a matter of a few moments. In some cases people holding land on the pipe line with millions of gallons of water on their property and coming within an acre of the ten-chain radius, are called upon to pay £11 10s. as a water rate. We complain that this is an unjust rate. It is against the spirit of the Act, because before an extension can be carried out the owners of land, as I have pointed out, those holding two-thirds of the land over which the pipe line extension will be carried, have the right to vote against it. The people of Toodyay have not that right, hence they claim they are paying a tax which is unjust. The scheme was carried out on the guarantee system, and we maintain that the guarantors should be made to make up any deficiency. I understand it is not the intention of the Minister to give us these papers; why, I do not know. I claim that this is a matter which should have full ventilation, and that these papers should certainly be forthcoming. They will prove that we are penalised under the Act, and that the Water Supply Department is at present working under the powers which were obtained for them by anything but creditable methods. I would like to hear from the Minister the reason why he objects to the production of these papers, because it is a matter of serious moment to the people I represent, and I hope that the assurance given to the Legislative Council will be kept, even at this late hour, and that before the close of the session a comprehensive measure will be brought down, which will give us the opportunity to amend this drastic Act now in force.

On motion by the Premier debate adjourned.

**MOTION—PUBLIC SERVANT'S REMOVAL, TO INQUIRE.**

*Case of E. H. Hamel.*

Mr. LANDER (East Perth) moved—

*That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the removal of Edward H. Hamel from the public service of this State.*

It was not his intention to take up much time in debating this question, as most members on the Government side of the House and many on the other side as well, were familiar with Mr. Hamel's grievance. This man, it appeared, was employed in the Lithographic Department for a considerable time. He left the State, and came back under engagement to the department, and from what he stated there seemed now to be a grievance which could not be understood, either by the Public Service Commissioner or by some of the Ministers. Therefore it was thought that the best way out of the matter would be to appeal to the House and request that the circumstances of Mr. Hamel's removal from the service should be investigated by a select committee.

Mr. Taylor: How long is it since he was dismissed on the last occasion?

Mr. LANDER: About three years. Most members had listened to Mr. Hamel's grievance until no doubt they were tired of hearing about it.

Mr. George: Were any reasons given for the dismissal?

Mr. LANDER: The best way out of the difficulty would be by the appointment of a select committee. We would then be able to complete this business. Mr. Hamel had informed him, but he did not know whether it was correct or not, that if the present leader of the Opposition had been returned to power again, he would have been reinstated.

The Premier: Then he will never be reinstated.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I never made such a promise to anyone.

The Premier: I do not think you would either.

Mr. LANDER: He submitted the motion to the favourable consideration of members.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan): There would be no objection, as far as he was concerned, to the appointment of a select committee to inquire into the removal of Mr. Hamel from the public service. He hoped, however, that when the committee met they would not only inquire into the cause of Mr. Hamel's removal, but also into the conditions under which Mr. Hamel was offered a re-appointment to the service, and which that gentleman refused. He had Mr. Hamel's case under his notice shortly after taking office, and having made inquiries he discovered that it was largely to Mr. Hamel's interest that certain things should not appear on the files, but as Mr. Hamel thought he was suffering from a grievance, he (the Premier) endeavoured to meet him by arranging for his readmission on certain conditions. Mr. Hamel refused to accept the offer which was made, with the result that it was not possible to proceed further. Personally, he (the Premier) was not keen on allowing every public officer whose services had been dispensed with, and who felt that he had a grievance, to demand the appointment of a select committee, because from experience, it was found that if such a person was given a select committee and unless the finding was in his favour, that person remained as dissatisfied as ever. On this occasion, however, it was understood that Mr. Hamel had given an undertaking in writing that he would be prepared to abide by the finding of the select committee.

Mr. George: Did the Public Service Commissioner inquire into the matter?

The PREMIER: Yes; the Public Service Commissioner went into the question very carefully, and Mr. Hamel had had every consideration extended to him, but he remained dissatisfied, and now perhaps, for the sake of the peace of mind of hon. members, it might be advisable to agree to the appointment of a select committee. The inquiry would not take up very much time, nor would it cost very much, and it would have the effect of clearing up the matter.

Mr. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret): While he would have no objection to the appointment of a select committee to in-

quire into these grievances, which on the face of them, appeared to have some foundation, from his experience in this Chamber he found that civil servants whose services had been dispensed with by one Government, as soon as a new Government came into office, succeeded in getting that new Government to take up their matter, and then, if the Premier or the Minister controlling the department, did not give them the satisfaction they believed they were entitled to, they then approached a member of Parliament with the view of getting him to move for the appointment of a select committee. There had been no special reasons given in this case for the appointment of a select committee.

Hon. J. Mitchell: They have not been given, but there are reasons.

Mr. TAYLOR: The Premier, who had nothing to do with the removal of the officer, informed the House that he had gone into the case when it was brought under his notice, shortly after he assumed the office of Premier, and that he found no injustice had been done. If the select committee were only for the purpose of satisfying Mr. Hamel—he (Mr. Taylor) did not know the gentleman at all—it was hardly a reasonable proposition that the House should be called upon to consider the grievances of this individual. He hoped, however, if it was appointed, that a precedent would not be established, and that persons with grievances would be led to believe that they could come along and demand the appointment of a select committee. We often met that type of man who had been removed from a position for perhaps a good reason, and who continued to protest until those protests became grievances, and who then went from member to member on the Opposition side of the House, and at the end of two or three years or five years convinced himself to such an extent that the grievances really did exist, and that nothing but a select committee would satisfy him. He (Mr. Taylor) had had some experience of select committees of this kind, and he could almost foretell what the decision would be. The only thing the select committee would do had been explained

by the member who moved the motion, and also by the Premier, and it was that it would satisfy the individual.

The Premier: That is worth a good deal from the point of view of our peace of mind.

Mr. TAYLOR: There was no desire on his part to oppose the appointment of the select committee, but he did not altogether hold that select committees should be appointed for this class of investigation.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): There was some justification for the select committee to investigate this case. The officer was in the Government service for some years; he left the State and went to Victoria, and was sent for to take up his old position. At the end of another four or five years he was dismissed from the service, or at any rate he was retrenched, and he was told that he was not competent to do the work which he had done previously for some years. This man was brought back from Victoria with his wife and half a dozen children. It was right that a select committee should not be expected to inquire into the case of every retrenched officer, but in this instance there was reason for a searching investigation.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara): It was his intention to oppose the motion. He was strongly of opinion that the Government should have the right to dismiss civil servants, and he was convinced that until they obtained that right the Government would never get what they required or deserved in respect to the civil service. While not wishing to go into the whole question of the right of Ministers to discharge civil servants, he desired to put forward the proposition that the civil servant was a workman, the same as any other workman, and that his position should be held on terms and conditions similar to those governing the positions of other workmen. The idea was altogether wrong that because a man, when a boy or youth, managed to get into the civil service he must remain in the service as long as he lived. This system was not working out very well, whether in this State or in other parts of Australia. The popular theory was that it was impossible



to shift a civil servant unless some charge that he had done something wrong could be absolutely proved against him. To avoid doing anything wrong quite a number of civil servants did nothing at all. Of course a civil servant could not be dismissed for doing nothing at all, because he was in his position by Act of Parliament, by usage, by custom, by unwritten law, by the Public Service Act, and by the Public Service Commissioner; but when, in spite of all these things, a civil servant got put out, it was going altogether too far to bring the matter before the House and ask a select committee to sit upon it. There was a great deal of method in the American madness of each new Government changing the civil servants on coming into power. He intended to oppose the motion because he believed the civil servants had any amount of protection at present without coming to the House for more.

Mr. McDOWALL (Coolgardie): It was his intention to support the motion for the appointment of a select committee. Mr. Hamel had spoken to him about the matter, and when the papers were laid on the Table he (Mr. McDowall) had looked through them. Although from the perusal of the papers he had failed to see that Mr. Hamel had a very serious grievance, yet Mr. Hamel maintained that his services had been illegally dispensed with, and by that contention Mr. Hamel had practically charged the Public Service Commissioner with having acted improperly. Under the circumstances the matter should be cleared up, and for that reason he would support the motion, in addition to which there was the further reason given by the Premier, namely, the peace of mind of hon. members. If this matter were finally dealt with it would be a great relief to him.

Mr. LANDER (in reply): It had not been his intention to bring this motion forward with a view to establishing a precedent in respect to dismissed civil servants appealing to the House. Rather had he been moved by the reasons given by Mr. Mitchell, namely, that there was justification for the proposed investigation. When, last session, he had agreed

to move for the papers dealing with the case, Mr. Hamel had assured him verbally that that action would be final. Since then he had taken the precaution to secure in writing from Mr. Hamel the statement that the motion for a select committee would be final. In view of this he thought he could assure the House that if the select committee were granted, finality would be reached.

The Premier: You had better put that written statement before the committee and mark it "Exhibit A."

Question put and passed.

Ballot taken, and a select committee appointed consisting of Messrs. Harper, Munsie, B. J. Stubbs, Wisdom, and the mover (Mr. Lander), with power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, and to report this day fortnight.

*House adjourned at 10 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 4th September, 1913.*

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

### QUESTION—SUPREME COURT JUDGE, NEW APPOINTMENT.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1. Has his attention been drawn to an article in Tuesday's *Daily News*, wherein it is stated that Mr. Keenan, K.C., had been selected as the new Judge? 2. Is there any truth in the said statement? 3. Has Cabinet yet discussed the matter? 4. If not, can the Government, in the interests of honest journalism, do some-