

you kindly give me your version of the situation. Awaiting an early reply, I am sincerely yours, Frank J. Cheney.

As Mr. Lovekin has said, on the face of it that statement is perfectly reasonable. But parallel with it was published an extract from a speech delivered before the Proprietary Association of America—the owners and manufacturers of proprietary medicines—by the same Mr. Cheney—

We have had a good deal of difficulty in the last few years with different legislatures of the different States. I believe I have a plan whereby we will have no difficulty whatever with these people. I have used it in my business for two years, and I know it is a practical thing. I, inside of the last two years, have made contracts with between fifteen and sixteen thousand newspapers, and never had but one man refuse to sign the contract, and by saying to him that I could not sign a contract without this clause in it he readily signed it. My point is merely to shift the responsibility. We to-day have the responsibility of the whole matter upon our shoulders. . . . There has been constant fear that something would come up, so I had this clause in my contract added. This is what I have in every contract I make: "It is hereby agreed that should your State, or the United States Government, pass any law that would interfere with or restrict the sale of proprietary medicines, this contract shall become void." In the State of Illinois a few years ago they wanted to assess me three hundred dollars, I thought I had a better plan than this, so I wrote to about forty papers, and merely said: "Please look at your contract with me and take note that if this law passes you and I must stop doing business, and my contracts cease." The next week every one of them had an article. I have carried this through and know it is a success. I know the papers will accept it. Here is a thing that costs us nothing. We are guaranteed against the 75,000 dollars loss for nothing. It throws the responsibility on the newspapers. I have my contracts printed and I have this printed in red type, right square across the contract, so there can be absolutely no mistake, and the newspaper man can not say to me, "I did not see it." He did see it and knows what he is doing. It seems to me it is a point worth every man's attention. I think this is pretty near a sure thing.

Hon. A. Lovekin: If anyone wrote a letter to the papers here on those lines, I know what the reply would be from every paper in the State.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I do not doubt it, and that is why I took the opportunity of following the Leader of the House, in order that other members might give us their version of the condition of things in

this State. However, I have only described what has occurred in America.

Hon. A. Lovekin: We are not in America.

Hon. H. SEDDON: America is a very big country, and this evil has existed there widely.

Hon. A. Lovekin: America is noted for graft.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I would not be doing my duty as a member of this House if I did not state what has occurred elsewhere in order that we may have the matter clearly and satisfactorily dealt with so far as Western Australia is concerned. Having read out those extracts and pointed out the evils and dangers existing in other countries, I will close by saying that I consider the best interests of our people will be served by dealing as indicated with the proprietary medicine companies, and making them print on their bottles and packages exactly what is contained in them. If any of those proprietary remedies are of real benefit, the makers of them can take advantage of the patent laws to secure protection for what they are manufacturing. In my opinion the best interests of the people of this State will be served by the maintenance of the regulation, and therefore I oppose the motion.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.45 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 24th September, 1924.

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

SELECT COMMITTEE, METROPOLITAN MARKETS.

Extension of Time.

On motion by Mr. Mann, the time for bringing up the select committee's report was extended for one month.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Richardson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. C. C. Maley (Irwin) on the ground of urgent private business.

PAPERS—SANDALWOOD DEALING.

On motion by Mr. Panton ordered: That all papers in connection with the purchase and selling of sandalwood under the present agreement and previous thereto be laid on the Table of the House.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Jury Act Amendment.

2, Bunbury Road District Rates Validation.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—TRADE UNIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

MOTION—RADIOGRAPHER, COMPENSATION.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [4.38]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that a special allowance should be made to Mr. W. J. Hancock, late Government electrical engineer, to compensate him for loss and suffering endured through his honorary work as radiographer at the Perth and Base Hospitals.

I do this largely because I was associated with Mr. Hancock many years ago. I became Minister for Works in 1904, just at the time when Mr. Hancock was beginning to develop what might be called the disease that has now increased to such an extent that he is totally incapacitated and is perpetually suffering as the result of his work with the X-rays at the Perth Hospital. Mr. Hancock has been a public servant of Western Australia for 36 years. He came to this State as an Imperial officer, and in his capacity as an engineer was associated with various activities throughout the State until a year or two ago.

Mr. George: He came to the Telephone Department.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes, a State department at that time. About two years ago he retired on a pension. I do not propose to go into the question of the pension, for that is a separate matter; but what I do desire the House to consider is the fact that for 22 years Mr. Hancock was honorary X-ray operator at the Perth Hospital. It was about 1895 that the X-ray was first brought into public prominence by, I think, Dr. Rontgen. In 1896 Mr. Hancock, who was a student of electrical appliances, read of this discovery and made representations to London inquiring for particulars. In consequence of what he learnt, he determined to get an equipment for experimental purposes on his own behalf. For a considerable time he experimented at his own workshop, where he discovered that it was possible for him to use the ray for medical purposes. He was then invited by the Medical Department to transfer his apparatus and his activities to the medical branch, and was given a room in which to continue his experiments. Subsequently he was advised by the Medical Department to transfer his activities to the Perth Hospital where, as I say, he operated the X-ray for 22 years. In 1905 he was appointed honorary radiographer to the Perth Public Hospital, and was re-appointed every three years after that in the same capacity up to 1920. Between 1896 and 1920 he took from 20,000 to 40,000 exposures. This shows it was not a kind of pastime with him, but an active application of work in the interests of medical science. This work was recognised as being of practical assistance by all those in authority at the hospital. During this time he was using the original equipment he obtained from the Old Country. He used this plant up to the time he was appointed honorary radiographer. It was first installed in his workshop in Murray-street. In 1906 he purchased a more powerful coil and the latest type of tube. On his advice when block B—that is one of the expansion blocks at the Perth Public Hospital—was being designed he himself designed a larger room capable of providing better accommodation for himself and his equipment.

Mr. George: What was his regular employment at that time?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: He was Government Electrical Engineer. All this extra work he did in his spare time. It was started after 4.30 in the afternoon, and continued very often till 9 o'clock and 10 o'clock at night. He did not allow it to interfere with his ordinary calling, but spent his own time in carrying out this practical and extensive medical work in an honorary capacity. In 1913 he recommended that the hospital board should get the latest type of powerful X-ray plant. Others were experimenting throughout the world, and Mr. Hancock put forward this recommendation so as to keep abreast of

the times. The new plant arrived in 1914. He just had it installed when it was commandeered by the military authorities. He then had to fall back on his old plant to enable him to continue his work. During the war he had an anxious time at the Perth Hospital owing to the difficulty of obtaining equipment, fresh plates, and the necessary chemicals to enable him to carry on. After the Base Hospital at Fremantle was established he was appointed honorary radiographer there, and carried out a great deal of work at that hospital. In the early stages of the use of the X-ray he took his plant to the country districts, and visited such hospitals as Bunbury and Kalgoorlie. He gave lectures to scientific societies in an endeavour to educate others to the advantages of the use of the X-ray system of investigation. It was in 1903 after a few years of experimental work that he discovered his hands were being affected. Just about this time he came under my notice as an X-ray experimenter. I remember him coming to my office one day, when I was Minister for Works, with his fingers tied up. He told me he thought the X-ray work was affecting his hands, but was of opinion that the disease would be confined to his finger-nails, and therefore took very little notice of it. I expressed doubt as to whether it was wise for him to continue the work seeing that it was obviously doing him harm. At that time he had two fingers bandaged. That convinced me he was taking a degree of risk. In 1905, just after his appointment to the honorary hospital staff he took his leave, and visited England and the Continent. While there he devoted much of his time to inquiring into and examining X-ray work that was being carried on in London and Paris. He also visited many British hospitals in order to obtain further information upon the work. He attended lectures at the London hospital, and took the opportunity of consulting leading experts concerning the affection to his hands, this by now having spread to a much greater extent. He discovered that there was also a falling off in his general health. He consulted the experts in London as to the possibility of the injury being permanent, and whether it would endanger his life. He found he was not alone in this form of suffering, and that the early experimenters had been affected in the same way. Some of these people had had their fingers amputated, and in one case a man lost his hand. The same serious injury had been suffered by them all. He was told that so far as medical science could say there was no remedy for the disease, and that it was brought about solely by the use of the X-ray plant. He also found that although he was away for some time from the work the disease was by no means retarded, and that there would be no advantage gained in giving up the work on his return to Western Australia. The more modern plants are

fitted with protectors, and the operator runs practically no risk.

Mr. Latham: None whatever.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The early experimenters were not protected in this way, but they took the risk that Mr. Hancock took and suffered accordingly. Mr. Hancock's present position is that he is a total physical wreck.

Mr. Taylor: I think he is laid up altogether.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. He is confined to his room, and is obliged to have a nurse in constant attendance. A pension has been granted to him by the State Government, but he has not received all he thinks he might have received. He wanted to get his pension computed according to his total length of service, and to have included in his service that portion due to him as an Imperial officer. The State Government could not see their way to do that. He had four years in the Imperial service. Both the Mitchell and the Collier Governments were sympathetic with him to the extent that he has been given the pension that has been granted to other civil servants, but he has received no special consideration on account of his Imperial service.

Mr. George: His pension was settled about two years ago.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Since then there has been some further inquiry into it, and he has received a slight increase. I raise no objection concerning the pension although I think there is a precedent, and he states there is, for his desire is to have his Imperial service added to his State service. That concession might with full justice be granted to Mr. Hancock, because of his valuable services to Western Australia.

Mr. George: It would not make much difference.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not wish to introduce that subject into the debate. Suppose he had arrived at the age of 60—he was under 60—when he had served his term as a public servant, and had retired with his full pension, he would, like any other civil servant, have expected to enjoy that pension for many years, and that it would be sufficient to enable him to maintain himself and family. I think his pension is £369 a year. Out of this, however, he has to pay all his medical expenses. There is the expenditure of £4 4s. a week on a nurse, and the cost of maintaining her. There are the other expenses associated with the medical and other attention he is receiving. I understand the medical attention is given largely in an honorary capacity by those who were associated with him in his work at the hospital. Members, however, must realise that there is a big drain upon his pension because of his condition of health consequent upon his X-ray work. Had Mr. Hancock devoted his time and study to remunerative instead of honorary work, he might have built up for himself a means of supplementing his pension, and in his old age

could have enjoyed not only the pension, but the accumulated wealth he might have obtained as a result of the fees he could have received for his work. He did not, however, choose to sell his services. Again, if Mr. Hancock, on arriving at the age of 60, had not suffered as the result of injuries sustained during his honorary work, he could have devoted the practical knowledge he had gained in that honorary work at the Perth Hospital to private practice, and thus earned something to supplement his pension. Mr. Hancock is comparatively a young man; that is to say, compared with other public servants who have been retired. Yet to-day we find him a physical wreck, a man who cannot leave his room. I could say more. I have discussed the case with medical men of standing, second to none in Western Australia, and they declare definitely and distinctly that the ailment from which Mr. Hancock now suffers is directly attributable to his association with the X-ray. They go even further, but my tongue is tied, and I cannot disclose the additional information. But as one who has met Mr. Hancock recently, and has known him for many years, I can say that it is really pathetic to see a man who, as the result of honorary work, has become a physical wreck, compelled to remain there and accept the advice of his physicians and his family, unable to do anything for himself. Therefore, I am asking the House to give Mr. Hancock a special allowance. He has done 22 years of honorary service. He has experimented with the X-ray. He was the first to establish an X-ray apparatus in Australia. But he was not purely an experimenter devoting some of his spare time to the Perth Hospital. He gave practical application to his work, and did splendid service at the hospital in his spare time. Now his family are not sufficiently provided for, because that which he did in an honorary capacity has rendered his condition such that a large percentage of his pension must be devoted to medical and nursing care.

Mr. George: Did he not get any recognition at all from the Commonwealth Government?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No. I believe that representations are being made by the Royal Society of Western Australia, and by other scientific bodies throughout Australia, to obtain for him some special consideration. Personally, I hold that in return for the honorary work Mr. Hancock did at the Base Hospital the Commonwealth should extend to him some consideration.

Mr. Taylor: We tried abroad, you know.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I know that, and I know also that the hon. member served on a committee in that connection. Hope has not yet been abandoned of obtaining some recognition from the scientific societies in various parts of the world. In addition, representations are still being made to the Commonwealth Government. But the major portion of Mr. Hancock's work was

applied to the relief of suffering in Western Australia; it is here that he played his great part, and that the actual results of his skill and knowledge are to be seen. It is the Perth Hospital that has got of his best, that secured the major part of his spare time. Therefore I feel a great obligation rests on this State to extend to Mr. Hancock some consideration. It will have been noticed that he was awarded the gold medal of one of the leading scientific bodies of the world, a branch of which is established in Western Australia. His scientific work has been recognised by such societies up to the full extent they can recognise it. They are making representations in other quarters, and now I want to make representations to this House. I followed the man's work. In the early stages of it I warned him. I saw his work expand and grow, and to-day I see him, as the result of his honourable service, a complete physical wreck. He did the work in a purely honorary capacity, and he would have gone to his grave satisfied with his honorary work if his financial and family circumstances permitted it. Even to-day he is not enthusiastic as to this appeal. However, we all have to recognise that those depending on us must receive our special consideration. Mr. Hancock's dependants could have lived happily and comfortably had it not been for this work; but to-day that which should be available for them has to be distributed amongst others. Accordingly, I make this appeal, feeling sure that at least to the extent of the medical and nursing skill he needs in his old age and decrepitude, his services will be recognised by this Chamber.

Mr. LATHAM: I heartily second the motion.

On motion by Hon. S. W. Munsie, Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

MOTION—REVENUE.

Protecting the State's Interests.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [5.9]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House it is urgently necessary that an organisation should be created to protect the State's interests from a revenue point of view.

This is a difficult motion to move. When one asks for the creation of an organisation to do a thing, it indicates there is something that wants doing and that it is not capable of being done by the person who asks that it should be done. If I were to speak with general knowledge and give the House definite data regarding the revenue position of the State, I would be told, "Why have somebody else to do the work, when you can do it?" I cannot do it. On the other hand, if one does not give a certain amount of information when moving a motion of this nature, members ask, "Why move the motion? What is there in it? Is it worth while taking up the time of the

House with a question upon which you cannot give detailed information?" Full information is not available to me, and yet it is necessary to express some thoughts and fears that will influence the Chamber to take a serious view of a serious question. I have repeatedly given notice of this motion. On several occasions it has been discharged from the Notice Paper, but only to be replaced there. Once or twice the discharge of the notice has been due to my absence, but mostly it occurred because I wanted certain returns, for use in making my case. Unfortunately, however, for me, although the House has consented to the returns being produced, I have waited for them until I at last find it essential to proceed even without them. Consequently I am not in possession of the main foundation upon which to build my case. I shall leave it to hon. members to imagine, as my speech proceeds, what the returns would disclose. By means of those returns I wished to bring to the notice of hon. members the enormous grip that outsiders have upon the mining and commercial activities of Western Australia. I am of opinion that if we could calculate that grip in pounds, shillings, and pence, it would explain the difference between profit and loss on our revenue account. In other words, I believe that if the domination of Eastern Australia over the commercial and mining life of this State could be properly investigated and expressed in pecuniary terms, there would follow the disclosure that the amount which we have lost and are losing would wipe out our deficit and put us on the right side of the ledger. It is because of this belief that I have launched the motion. The wording of the motion means nothing; it is purely words. The object of the motion is the main thing. I simply say that an organisation ought to be created. I do not care what is created, but I do hope to be able to demonstrate that something is essential in the interests of the State, if we are to obtain for the State the full results which, from a revenue standpoint, are the State's due.

Mr. George: This motion is directed against the Federal Government, is it not?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No. I will deal with the subject if members will let me go my own way. Within the next few days, or possibly weeks, we shall have the Budget delivered; and in that Budget the Treasurer will give us a good deal of information regarding the State's revenue. But it is my experience that the Treasurer cannot possibly give absolutely detailed information as to whether the revenue that he forecasts represents all the revenue that the State is justly entitled to receive. When the Budget has been launched, the discussion, again according to my experience, will be confined mainly, if not absolutely, to the expenditure side. As a fact, in this State we have become merely critics of expenditure. We have all studied expenditure. It is my view that in our desire to criticise expendi-

ture, we have altogether lost sight of the income side. As I indicated in my opening remarks, I am of opinion that it is on the income side we are suffering to-day, and not on the expenditure side. Just to emphasise that expenditure side, let me point out that we members know that the man in the street seldom, if ever, speaks of loss of revenue by the State. But on every street corner we meet the critic of expenditure.

Mr. George: That is right.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Again, Press criticism in this country is mainly criticism of expenditure.

Mr. George: That is easiest.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Over and above it all, when members themselves begin to criticise, they devote—and I myself devote—attention to expenditure again. On top of all that, Parliament has created an organisation to check expenditure. We have an Auditor General, who is responsible to Parliament, and whose duty it is to report to Parliament mainly on the expenditure side, to carry out an unceasing investigation into the expenditure of the State. It may be claimed by hon. members that we have the Treasury and officials connected with that department charged with the responsibility of not only looking after the expenditure side, but of investigating and checking revenue returns.

Mr. George: They don't miss much.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I agree with the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) on that point. As a matter of fact it is impossible to miss anything from the expenditure standpoint, but he will agree with me that the Treasury is not in a position to investigate in detail matters of revenue. Take the Railway Department for instance. The expenditure side is investigated by special auditors but the revenue side does not receive the same special detailed investigation that the railway expenditure does. I would like to see the same attention given to revenue. That is not done now.

Mr. George: It is. It is looked into very carefully day after day. The Minister for Railways can tell you that.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The railway revenue is investigated by the audit staff of the Railway Department, but the Auditor General investigates the expenditure side on behalf of Parliament.

Mr. George: That is so.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No one outside the Railway Department is responsible for the investigation of revenue matters.

Mr. George: The Auditor General could not do it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is quite true. It is not part of his duty.

Mr. George: Nor is he trained in railway finance.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That, too, is a contribution to the case I am putting up. This trouble is not confined to the railways. It applies also to the Harbour Trust. The

expenditure side is subject to a detailed review; the investigation of the revenue side is the responsibility of Harbour Trust administration. The same applies to the Lands Department. The revenue side of the operations of that department is a Ministerial responsibility and that revenue is not subject to an investigation by any outside authority. On the other hand, those in control of the State trading concerns have to report to Parliament and detailed information is given as to the business of those concerned, the earning capacity and so on. That is the responsibility of the Minister and his officers. The investigation is limited to that. There is no other authority regarding revenue, as we have on the expenditure side.

Mr. George: Greater experience is required to deal with those concerns and you have not got the men trained for it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is the position. I want to make members realise that we must do something, even though it be difficult. I believe I shall be able to convince members on that point. It has been agreed between the member for Murray-Wellington and myself that it is impossible for anyone to go into these departments and check the revenue. On the other hand it is possible to check the expenditure, and that has been demonstrated over many years.

The Minister for Lands: The Auditor General always checks receipts.

Mr. George: But the member for Guildford refers to the policy of working.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is so.

The Minister for Lands: If we were to enforce collection, we would be in a bad way.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am coming to that point. I hope to convince hon. members.

The Minister for Lands: I have been convinced ever since I have been in my position.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Then we should see whether we cannot arrive at some means of achieving our end, although it may be an unpleasant duty. If we do not do that, we shall be forced to do something else.

Mr. George: It is not a matter of what is pleasant or unpleasant. If it is a duty, it must be done.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I want to provide that someone shall investigate the revenue in the same way as expenditure is investigated now. Let me give hon. members one or two illustrations. Take the writing-off of revenue by departments. The member for Murray-Wellington will know that there are certain revenue items, even in the Railway Department, that have been allowed to accumulate owing to differences of opinion and ultimately they have been written off. Some of those items could have been collected but have been written off. That represents a loss to the State.

Mr. George: Many of them are dead twigs on a tree.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I presume the hon. member has had the experience of

officers recommending that certain amounts should be written off.

The Minister for Lands: Those recommendations are investigated before a Minister agrees to writing off the items.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The member for Murray-Wellington no doubt, has investigated those recommendations and he may have said, "No, we will not write those items off; we shall collect them." He would show determination and I suppose it has been his experience that often money has been collected although officials have recommended that the amount be written off.

Mr. George: Experience would affect the position.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That has been the experience probably of every administrator of a Government department. After receiving such recommendations, Ministers consult other authorities who advise approaching the matter in a different way, and ultimately the money is collected.

Mr. George: That is a common experience in ordinary life.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is so. That in itself is evidence that what can apply as between the Minister and his officer, can also apply as between the Minister and an expert outside authority. If a man versed in the detailed expenditure of revenue items, just as we have one versed in the examination of expenditure, were available, the Minister could refer revenue items suggested to be written off to that revenue authority and it is possible that by this means many thousands of pounds would be saved to the State. Just as the Auditor General reports to Parliament with reference to expenditure, causing Ministers and their officers particularly to be careful regarding all expenditure matters, so some authority is required to operate similarly with reference to revenue.

The Minister for Lands: You want to establish some authority over Ministers!

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Exactly, as we have regarding expenditure.

The Minister for Lands: You must get other Ministers.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I believe we could get the best results by appointing a Minister for revenue. I do not care what the authority I seek to have established may be called. I want to get some authority appointed to protect the State from the revenue point of view. I want someone who is an expert on that side of the finances so that a better system will obtain than at present operates.

The Minister for Lands: Every Minister can put on the screw if he wants to, but you would not agree to him doing it. It would not be possible.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Minister for Lands considers that Ministers would not do it.

The Minister for Lands: I say he could not do it if he wanted to. It would not be possible in the interests of the State.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is the point of view from which I want the question approached. I want someone in the position to protect the interests of the State, rather than leave those interests to be protected by individual Ministers in charge of individual departments. Parliament does not allow it regarding expenditure and we should not, and cannot continue, to allow it to be the responsibility of individual Ministers respecting the revenue side. Parliament must have some medium to get detailed information respecting revenue just as we get those details regarding expenditure.

The Minister for Lands: If some details were given of my department in this House, there would be a row.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not say we require to have an investigation that will probe every little detail and later have an exposure here. I want the work conducted along the lines that the Auditor General follows, so that Parliament shall be in a position to know what is going on through that expert's reports.

Mr. George: Care will have to be exercised that you do not lift the responsibility from Ministers.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I may want information on certain important questions, but I do not know where to get it now. Members must realise that is the position regarding revenue matters; there is no one to whom we can go for definite information. If we wish to discuss matters of expenditure we can go to the Auditor General, who is the servant of Parliament, and is there for that purpose. We cannot do that regarding revenue.

Mr. Taylor: The Under Treasurer is pretty good.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: He can give members general information, but no details. If I went to the Under Treasurer and asked him some questions about the Lands Department revenue, he would refer me to the Minister for Lands. Yet if I wished to know something about the expenditure side of the operations of that department, he could give the necessary information.

Mr. Taylor: That is after the money is expended.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is true. If we had some similar provision regarding revenue, however, we might, judging from the experiences of the previous year, be able to protect the State against losses in subsequent years. Let me give one or two illustrations of matters I would like to know. Some we can find out; others we cannot. Take mining propositions: mining generally in this State is largely dominated by the Adelaide Stock Exchange. Suppose we find a mine in Western Australia, those interested usually go to Adelaide to float it. We read in the "Daily News" recently of a man named Carlson, who had found a proposition at Cue. He supplied particulars in Perth,

and within a very short time a mining operator had taken the proposition to Adelaide to float it.

Mr. Taylor: That is the best place; Adelaide stands to us.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is exactly the point. Suppose that proposition turns out as well as we all hope it will and becomes a payable investment, a dividend is declared in Adelaide and we pay to Adelaide. Suppose it is a failure and those of us who take up shares—thousands of people in Western Australia do so—are called upon to pay calls, we deduct from our income tax in Western Australia the amount of call paid to South Australia. It is an illustration of heads I win, tails you lose.

The Minister for Agriculture: The calls are not paid to South Australia.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If it is a success the dividend is declared in South Australia and the tax is paid in South Australia. If it is a failure, calls are made in Western Australia, and we deduct from our income tax before we pay in Western Australia the amount of the call paid to South Australia. See how it operates! If it is a success, we lose; if it is a failure, we lose.

The Minister for Agriculture: How would you alter it? By enabling us to collect the dividend in Western Australia?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I shall come to that. I am endeavouring to show that we want someone to carefully review all these matters of State interest. It is not a matter that the Minister for Mines can investigate. It comes under his knowledge in a general way. Actually it comes directly under the knowledge of the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation. He is the only officer who would know definitely of it. But the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation, though a good, loyal, enthusiastic Western Australian, is a Commonwealth officer, and his first duty is to those who employ him and who maintain his employment. Being a Federal officer, the best of his consideration would be given to Federal matters. It does not matter a great deal to him whether we pay or who pays. If the money be paid in South Australia, the Commonwealth gets it just the same as if it were paid in this State. Regarding the other phase, however, if my contention be right, he may have knowledge of it, but it is not a question upon which he should make special representation. We want some other authority to investigate these things; we want someone else to investigate the revenue problems of the State. Take the banks of Western Australia: they, like most of our commercial houses, are Eastern States propositions operating with branches in Western Australia. I should like to be able to go to some authority and have explained to me exactly how the banking institutions in this State pay their income

tax or dividend duty tax. I should like someone to advise me of the details, so that I would understand exactly how they pay, and whether they pay the full amount that Western Australia is entitled to receive in proportion to their profits and activities in this State. I should like to know whether we get paid on the full amount of money that goes through the banks here, or only on the amount invested in Western Australia. Say the member for Murray-Wellington has a certain amount of wealth and puts it into a bank in Perth; suppose he directs that a certain amount be invested in Victoria.

Mr. George: Try someone else! You will have my creditors after me to-morrow.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Just as I could discuss an item of expenditure with the Auditor General, so I should like to be able to discuss with some authority whether the member for Murray-Wellington would contribute on the total amount put into the bank or only on the amount invested here, and whether taxation on the amount invested in Victoria would be credited to that State.

Mr. George: You need not worry; I have not a penny in Victoria.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No doubt the hon. member is like myself; every man in the agricultural industry is operating on an overdraft. I want to know where I could get such information. Members may say the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation investigates such matters and could give me the details. As a matter of fact, he cannot; he is not allowed to.

Mr. George: He has got it all the same.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes; if he were purely a State officer operating purely on State considerations, he would give a different amount of attention and a different kind of attention from what he gives in his dual office. From the point of view of the Federal authorities, whence he draws his salary, it does not matter whether the banks pay in Western Australia or in Victoria. It is all the same. But as regards this State's quota, it is a totally different proposition. If we do not get it here, we lose it. I want some organisation charged with the responsibility of watching such matters closely, so that we shall have a guarantee that we are getting our full pound of flesh in the way of revenue. There is another problem. On this I cannot speak with any more confidence than on banking. I do not know, and I cannot find out. Take shipping: we have overseas vessels calling at Fremantle and trading along the Australian coast. They discharge some cargo here and on going away pick up cargo. They collect a certain amount of revenue in Western Australia. There are activities by the shipping company in this State both coming and going. How would such a company pay to Western Australia?

The Minister for Lands: They have to pay their tax before they leave.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: But where can I go to get information as to how the amount is arrived at? Who is there to investigate in detail and criticise whether we are getting our full percentage of revenue on the cargo handled by the company? How easy is it on a huge load carried by a vessel from the other side of the globe to drop a percentage here and pay the remainder in Victoria? How easy is it to give a little less to Western Australia and a little more to Victoria, especially when there is a big inducement for that to be done. I do not say it is done; I do not know whether it is, but I am positive the inducement to do it is there. Wherever there is an inducement, we need to have someone to see it is not done.

Mr. George: Do you think the ship-owners would allow you to investigate their concerns like that?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: They have to permit it from a Federal point of view. I do not say that any State Government could investigate it at present. I do not think any State is worrying a great deal about it, but I want Western Australia to worry about it, because this is the State that is suffering most. What we lose here is gained in Victoria. Victoria need not worry. Very likely Victoria, from a shipping point of view, is getting a certain amount of Western Australia's share. We are in a position to lose on all these transactions.

Mr. Mann: In the Eastern States it is suggested that our Harbour Trust dues are a second tariff.

The Minister for Lands: They are no higher than those in the Eastern States.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not dealing with that phase. I want some authority to investigate Harbour Trust fees, but I am dealing with the revenue from the boats that call at Western Australia.

Mr. George: You want them to pay for the privilege of doing a service?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No, I want them to pay the full percentage of revenue on the results they get by calling at Western Australia.

The Minister for Lands: They do that now.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: They earn revenue and I want some authority to guarantee to Parliament that on their earnings both coming and going they are paying a full percentage of tax to this State.

Mr. George: You would never get that unless you established a clearing house.

The Minister for Lands: They have to do it now.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: But are they doing it in such a way as to give satisfaction to Western Australia? They might be; I cannot say they are not, but there is no

one to whom I can go to get the information.

Mr. Teesdale: What about the Harbour Trust authorities?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: They have nothing to do with it.

Mr. Teesdale: They know the tonnage that the boats bring.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: They get paid for the tonnage, but as to whether it is the tonnage upon which they should be paid and whether we are getting the amount of revenue from a taxation point of view is another question. I suppose in a general way they could give the information.

Mr. Teesdale: It is the only body that could give it.

The Minister for Lands: The taxation officers have to check everything done in that way.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: These matters no doubt are investigated by an officer, but I want them checked and investigated in detail. The member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) spoke of the Harbour Trust. The Auditor General investigates its operations from an expenditure point of view. He cannot investigate the detail of its earning capacity for the very reason that he is not specially charged with that duty. I want someone to be specially charged with the duty. Reverting to banking, we get revenue from the banking operations conducted in Western Australia, but I venture the opinion that we get no revenue from the operations of the Commonwealth Bank in this State.

Mr. George: You do not expect to.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: In this State our funds are largely deposited in the Commonwealth Bank. If we invested our money in the private banks, there would be earned a certain amount of revenue from an income tax point of view. But we do not get anything from it when it is invested in the Commonwealth Bank. We should investigate the position as to whether the return we get from the Commonwealth Bank compensates us for the loss resulting from the money going there. We should make the investigation, having in view the protection of State revenue. These matters should be constantly watched by an expert. Let me give one or two illustrations showing how matters operate in the State. Let me instance the case of five deserters during the war period. They were brought before the court at Fremantle and were fined £25 each with an alternative of imprisonment. Two of the number elected to pay the fine, and the Commonwealth thus collected £50. The other three decided to "take it out," and Western Australia provided for them during their term of imprisonment. That is obviously unfair.

The Minister for Lands: It is the Commonwealth law and we cannot get out of it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Where an obvious injustice is being perpetrated we want somebody who will grip it. If in the State a similarly obvious injustice was being done, the Auditor General would pounce on it and report to Parliament, and the matter would be referred to by members as an injustice. It is said that we cannot interfere in a case such as the one I have just quoted, because it is the practice.

The Minister of Lands: It is the Commonwealth law.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If we had someone to investigate all these matters, and they were reported, and the Press wrote about them, we should in that way get some reform, just as we bring reform in connection with expenditure. But all these matters, in my opinion, are small compared to the activities within the State, of the commercial concerns to which I have referred, and a return regarding which I expected to have when I submitted the motion. To fully realise the position from the point of view of the commercial house, we must bear in mind that it is a question of the relative payment of taxation in the various States. From the Federal point of view, taxation is uniform and it does not matter whether it is collected in one State or another. When it comes to the States the position is different altogether. I have before me figures relating to taxation on income in Victoria and similar figures respecting the taxation on income in Western Australia. I am not going to give all the details. I shall just select a few to let hon. members see the difference there is in the taxation between the two States. On an income of £500, the tax in Victoria is 4d., and the amount collected £4 6s. 8d. In Western Australia it is 5½d. and the amount collected £13 3s. 8d. On an income of £2,000 the tax is 5½d. in Victoria, and the amount collected there £45 10s. 8d. In Western Australia on a similar income the tax is 17½d., and the amount collected £167 14s. 2d. I will omit a few figures and refer to an income of £8,000. In Victoria the tax on that is 6½d., and the amount collected £216. In Western Australia it is 55d., and the amount collected £2,118. The inducement therefore in regard to companies operating in Victoria and Western Australia is to show the maximum profit as being made in Victoria, and the minimum profit in Western Australia. The incentive is to pay the taxation in Victoria or any of the other States where, with the exception of Queensland, it is much lower than in Western Australia. Even in Queensland it is not as high as it is in Western Australia. So that hon. members may readily grasp the details that have been prepared for me, I propose to give them to "Hansard" for inclusion in tabular

form in the report of my remarks. The table which is appended is illuminating—

Income.	Victoria.			Western Australia.		
	Rate in £.	Tax.		Rate in £.	Tax and 15 per cent. Super Tax.	
£	d.	£	s. d.	d.	£	s. d.
500	4	8	0 8	5½	13	3 8
1,000	4½	18	15 0	9½	45	10 5
2,000	5½	45	16 8	17½	167	14 2
3,000	6	75	0 0	25½	366	11 3
4,000	6	100	0 0	33½	642	1 8
5,000	6½	135	8 0	42	1,006	6 0
8,000	8½	216	13 4	55	2,118	2 2
Maximum Tax— 7d. in £.				Maximum Tax— 4/7d. in £.		

Mr. Mann: How would you suggest getting over the difficulty of the wholesale house being in Victoria and the retail house in Western Australia?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is why I want the return. I desire to show the enormous number of wholesale or even retail concerns that are operating in Western Australia, but whose headquarters are in the other States. If I had secured that return the hon. member would have realised what a large number of Eastern States firms were operating in Western Australia, and the extent to which Western Australia is suffering in consequence. Take the concerns that are manufacturing in Victoria and distributing in Victoria, and those that are manufacturing in Victoria and distributing only in Western Australia. We do not know whether the manufacturers' costs charged up to Western Australian concerns or to Western Australian distributors are the same as manufacturers' costs that are charged up to Victoria. It is possible for them to increase the manufacturers' costs in Victoria, and to sell at such a price in Victoria as to make it only possible owing to competition in the particular line to sell in Western Australia at a minimum of profit. The price is the same as compared between competitor and competitor in Western Australia, but the amount of profit in Western Australia is reduced because of the increased manufacturers' costs. The big profit is shown as having been made in Victoria, and the result is that the Victorian Taxation Department gets revenue that really belongs to Western Australia, though the amount they get is considerably less, by reason of the lower taxation in that State, than the

amount that would be paid in Western Australia. The inducement therefore is to make the maximum profit where the taxation is low, and the minimum profit where the taxation is high. It is not a difficult matter to realise what can be done in that regard. When hon. members see the figures they will realise what inducements exist to do what I have outlined. I cannot give a specific instance of what I have related, but there is no question about it that the inducements are there, and I want some authority to investigate the matter with a view to protecting the State's interests from a revenue aspect.

The Minister for Lands: You can do it only under the Federal law.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am not advocating that the Western Australian income tax should be reduced. I believe our graduations are sounder than the graduations in the other States. I believe that we have gone into the matter more scientifically and that those least able to pay, pay the least. When you get to Victoria the graduations are totally different, and those in the best positions pay the least. Again regarding the Eastern States concerns, we should endeavour to ascertain how they charge up the Western Australian expenses of management. We want some means of investigating that; we want some authority over and above what we possess to-day, so that means may be found for protecting the State. I have also had prepared a return showing the revenue received in the period 1911-24, and the loan expenditure for the same period, as well as the interest on loans and the increase or decrease per annum in regard to revenue, loan expenditure and interest. Again, I am not going to weary members by giving the details at this stage. I will, however, just take one or two figures. In 1913 the revenue was £4,596,000. That showed an increase of £629,000 over the revenue of the year before, representing an increase of 15.88. The actual expenditure of loan money in that year amounted to £3,423,022, the increase over the year before being £1,078,000; the increase representing 36.03. The interest paid during that year was £963,000, an increase over the year before of £107,000, or 17.71 per cent. The return gives the increased revenue and the percentage of increase, and also the loan expenditure and the interest. There is no other way of arriving at a conclusion than by comparative figures. There were some years when we had a decrease in revenue as compared with the preceding year and so, too, with the loan expenditure. But taking the whole of it—and I propose to put this table into "Hansard"—when I

had the return prepared I tried to gather from it some definite case to present to the

House. I candidly admit I could not do it. The table is as follows:—

**RETURN OF GENERAL REVENUE, LOAN EXPENDITURE, AND INTEREST PAYABLE ON LOANS
FOR THE YEARS 1911 TO 1924.**

Year ended 30th June.	GENERAL REVENUE.			LOAN EXPENDITURE.			INTEREST PAYABLE ON LOANS.		
	Amount.	Increase on previous year.	Percentage increase.	Amount.	Increase on previous year.	Percentage increase.	Amount.	Increase on previous year.	Percentage increase.
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1911 ...	3,850,440	1,484,368	809,982
1912 ...	3,966,673	116,233	3.02	2,344,070	859,702	57.92	856,226	46,304	5.72
1913 ...	4,596,659	629,986	15.88	3,423,020	1,078,950	46.03	963,412	107,126	12.51
1914 ...	6,205,343	608,684	13.24	2,893,169	539,851	15.77	1,333,996	170,584	17.71
1915 ...	5,140,725	64,618	1.24	2,521,608	361,561	12.54	1,287,680	153,884	13.67
1916 ...	5,356,978	216,253	4.21	1,584,642	926,966	37.16	1,398,680	110,820	8.80
1917 ...	4,577,007	779,971	14.56	855,183	729,459	46.03	1,490,153	91,473	6.54
1918 ...	4,622,536	45,529	0.99	1,054,178	198,995	23.27	1,573,686	83,513	5.60
1919 ...	4,944,850	322,314	6.97	1,049,736	4,442	0.42	1,658,051	85,285	5.42
1920 ...	5,893,501	948,651	18.58	2,663,320	1,613,584	153.71	1,747,592	88,641	5.34
1921 ...	6,789,565	926,064	15.79	2,586,404	76,916	2.89	1,913,628	166,036	9.50
1922 ...	6,907,107	117,542	1.73	2,454,925	131,479	5.08	2,156,311	242,683	12.86
1923 ...	7,207,492	300,385	4.35	3,389,299	934,374	38.06	2,351,152	194,841	9.04
1924 ...	7,866,595	658,103	9.13	3,936,833	547,534	16.15	2,607,416	256,264	10.90

* Decrease.

The figures are illuminating, but it is impossible for me to make a case in which the revenue increase should bear a certain relation to the interest increase or the loan expenditure increase. I tried to see whether there were any means by which a comparison could be drawn, but for me it was impossible. I could not do it. However, it is interesting to find that from 1911 to 1924 the revenue increased by 104.28 per cent., whereas interest on loans during that period increased by 221.91 per cent. In other words, our interest Bill went up 100 per cent. as compared with our increase in revenue. Whatever other conclusions may be arrived at, we are going backwards. We are not making headway at all. In 1911 it took 22.05 per cent. of our revenue to meet the interest bill, whereas in 1924 it took 33.15 per cent.

Mr. Mann: Did the revenue increase correspondingly?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The revenue increased by 22.05 per cent. and the interest by 33.15 per cent. No longer is the public debt synonymous with loan expenditure. The public debt to-day is loan expenditure plus our deficiency. If we take the public debt we arrive at a worse figure than that revealed by considering the position from the loan expenditure point of view. I am not sure whether the interest given in the "Statistical Abstract" includes the interest paid on the funded deficiency. When the Bill to fund the deficiency was going through, I remember that it created an obligation to pay a sinking fund, but I do not know exactly how the interest applies. I cannot imagine that the funded debt is earning interest. So, the interest bill, as disclosed, would be the total interest bill paid, whereas the loan expenditure does not disclose the actual public debt. Another phase that should give one some concern is the fact that as our

loans fall due we have to redeem them by borrowing other money. Consequently, loans that used to bear interest at 3½ per cent. or 4 per cent. are being redeemed with money costing us 6½ per cent. In view of that the percentages I have quoted become considerably worse as the loans fall due. Members will ask what all this is about; why fret about it; why move the motion; what reforms do I advocate?

Mr. Teesdale: You are a thought reader.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I expected that from the analytical mind of the hon. member. What I want is this: we are not getting our maximum revenue, and while we are not getting it nobody is trying to calculate the amount we are losing, and whether that loss is worth chasing, whether it is not advisable to create an organisation that will try to so adjust matters as to bring to Western Australia its maximum revenue.

Mr. Teesdale: Are there not losses that we could get at much more easily?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The hon. member is again on losses. We have had many losses. For instance, it is easy to say that we lost £300,000 on the Fremantle dock.

The Minister for Lands: Easy to say it, but it is not true.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I was rather unfortunate in the selection of my illustration. Nevertheless, I had some connection with that loss, and I think a close investigation would prove that my figures were not far out.

The Minister for Lands: You, as Minister for Works at the time, said the loss was, not £300,000, but £200,000.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Well, I am prepared to accept that and say £200,000 went into the sea. One could put his finger on many other losses incurred. At the same time one could put his finger on considerable gains we have had in Western Australia.

However, I am not dealing with that phase or the question. Year by year we are losing revenue to which we are justly entitled and that we must have if we are to make the State financial. The financial drift will never be overcome by a review of expenditure. Successive Governments have tried it. I have heard members say that all that was wanted was a change of Government. Some years ago we were told that such a change was essential from the financial point of view because of the greater commercial knowledge and business acumen amongst the members of the then Opposition. The new Government were duly installed, yet were unable to do any better than their predecessors had done. Successive Governments have tried to solve the problem and have failed. I am convinced that if we had some organisation, if we could concentrate public thought, capture the assistance of the Press and constantly watch the revenue side, just as to-day we watch the expenditure side, the position of Western Australia would quickly improve. In other words, we require an authority to watch revenue in its every detail, just as we have an authority to watch the detail of expenditure. The Minister for Lands asked whether we could do this. He said we could not do anything without an alteration of the Federal authority. What I am after is this: There is gradually but surely growing up in Western Australia a general acquisition of the wealth of Western Australia for the interests of Eastern Australia. The incidence of taxation is encouraging that. Taxation is never reviewed in Victoria, because Victoria has an enormous amount of wealth attracted to her. We have in this State men who boast that the wealth they made in Western Australia is now invested in Victoria; adding that the difference between the taxation they have to pay in Victoria and would have to pay in Western Australia is sufficient to maintain them and their families in luxury. We have the same thing in the agricultural industry. Men whose wealth has been built up by the Agricultural Bank, men who started with Agricultural Bank money, whose whole asset has been created through the assistance rendered by the State, have amassed wealth and have invested it in Victoria. I could give many such illustrations, and probably other hon. members could give more. Even if what the Minister for Lands says be true, if we cannot do anything in the matter, still there must be an end, a stop. Things are becoming worse. We cannot reduce our taxation, because if we do our revenue will suffer. Some may argue that if we alter the incidence of taxation we may compensate our direct loss by holding in our State the wealth now going to Eastern Australia. We require somebody to investigate that, to watch the incidence of taxation. The financial problems of the

world are changing and it may be that the incidence of taxation in this State requires reviewing more frequently than is done at present. But nobody is charged with the responsibility of looking to that.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, the Treasurer is doing that.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I know that, but I also know that the Treasurer can only do it from the figures supplied to him by the department.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Before tea I was pointing out that the Treasurer and the Treasury staff probe into and investigate revenue problems. I maintain, however, that their investigation is limited to matters that are submitted to them by the various departments. All financial information filters through from those departments to the Treasury. That must be so. The Treasury must be the authority on all matters of finance. The point is that the information given to the Treasury is not investigated by someone whose special duty it is to inquire into all revenue problems, instead of different persons investigating departmental revenue problems. I admit I have not given the House much information on this point, because I cannot get it. One can go to an authority and get information in regard to State activities, more particularly from the expenditure point of view, but one cannot go to any authority and pick out any individual and say, "that individual can educate you upon matters of State revenue." There is a great inducement for people to pay as much as they can of their income tax outside Western Australia, and as little as possible within the State. Members have admitted by interjection that there are people in Western Australia who live here on the profits they make on their investments outside, as compared with what they would be earning if their investments were made within the State. We have a few organisations that are purely State organisations. I refer particularly to the organisations that are dealing with commercial matters. The concerns that are purely Western Australian are competing at a disadvantage with those registered outside. These firms and companies will sooner or later be forced, from the point of view of self preservation, also to register outside Western Australia. There are firms and companies operating in this State that would show an additional profit of £5,000 or £6,000 if they registered, say, in Victoria. They would not have to make any alteration in their business.

Mr. Griffiths: That is the information you were seeking when you asked for the return.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. There are only a few big commercial firms concerned in Western Australia that are purely of

local origin. Such firms would save many thousands of pounds—in one case it would run into £5,000—if they registered in Victoria, and they could still carry on the same business as they are doing to-day under their local registration.

Mr. George: They would have to register their head offices in Victoria.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. They would have to keep a kind of organisation in Eastern Australia. I know of accountancy firms that are making representations to people outside Victoria, pointing out to them the special advantages and the special savings that would accrue if they registered in Victoria. They are undoubtedly inviting such people to take advantage of the improved conditions of that State, and pointing out to them that it will not make the slightest difference to their business if they register in Victoria. It will, of course, make a difference to Victoria because the tax will be paid there instead of in this State. Many shipping companies are operating here and should be Western Australian concerns, but they are registered outside. Such shipping companies are reaping a big advantage to the detriment of this State. Members may say, "Suppose your contention is right, what is the use of talking about it when it cannot be altered?" The time is coming when it will have to be altered. Just as the operations of Eastern Australian firms and companies in Western Australia increase, so will our revenue proportionately decrease. The position cannot be altered from outside Western Australia. Unless we make representations to the only authority, that is the Australian Parliament, we cannot do anything in Victoria or South Australia. We have to bear in mind that there is this authority that must take cognisance of the fact that we are struggling under grave difficulties. The only way we can bring it home to this authority is to have the detailed information collected by an expert so that we can bring it forward regularly, educate the people regularly, and cause them to talk constantly and perpetually until ultimately we do convince the Federal Parliament that Western Australian conditions require special consideration. A population of 360,000 cannot continue to carry the burden, especially when a great deal of the wealth created by that population goes out of Western Australia into other parts of the Commonwealth.

The Minister for Lands: There is only one way to deal with that, namely, to cut the painter.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The only way to deal with it is through the Commonwealth authorities.

The Minister for Lands: That is likely with all the members over there.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: On one occasion I was discussing State matters with Federal Ministers in Melbourne. I had a conversation with the Prime Minister, Mr. Andrew Fisher, upon the proposed policy of unification. Mr. Fisher was quite candid, and

said that unification must come, that it might be soon or late, but that it would come because of the financial situation.

Mr. Wilson: He did not stop to see it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Slowly but surely we are losing revenue to which we are justly entitled. The drift of Western Australian revenue towards the East is not producing an adequate return to this State. Our expenditure is becoming greater. The Federal authorities are not relieving us from the expenditure point of view, but are constantly making inroads, if not directly, indirectly into our revenue. Just as we are in proportion contributing to the wealth of Eastern Australia, so does our case grow proportionately for special consideration at the hands of the Commonwealth authorities. I do not know how this can best be carried out, but I do say that we must have created in this State some special organisation that will so study the peculiar circumstances and disadvantages under which we are suffering, and so constantly bring them under the notice of this House, that our claim for consideration will receive recognition. Just as we have an Auditor General for the one purpose, so should we have some authority for the other. We want that authority more from the revenue point of view than we want the Auditor General from the expenditure point of view. From the returns furnished to us we can analyse the details of expenditure but we cannot analyse, say, the shipping proposition, or the banking proposition, or find out the number of people who are investing Western Australian capital in eastern concerns. I know that people have a right to do this; would to God I could do it. As this is being done we should know the facts, and knowing the facts we can make out our case for special consideration at the hands of the Federal authorities. We want an organisation to carry out this work, and to prepare and present our case before we reach really desperate straits. Members cannot be blind to the fact that the time will come when we shall be forced to make representations in this direction. We have to make the Federal authorities understand that the wealthy States that are well developed, have great possibilities of revenue, have a surplus that can be obtained comparatively easily without any special burden being placed upon the people, have had a good deal of their wealth created by contributions from the people of Western Australia, and that the wealth of those States must be taxed for the purpose of developing such undeveloped States as, say, Western Australia and Queensland. We must make representations upon that head, and in order to make representations we must have knowledge. We cannot obtain that knowledge to-day, and therefore we require an organisation specially charged with the task of obtaining it. Having obtained it, we can educate public opinion so that the people will talk of this question, so that Federal members will have it continually brought under their notice, and so that the Federal

authorities will be compelled to listen to a practical appeal supported by practical figures which have been prepared by an expert on practical lines. Thus we shall gain some consideration, consideration which is necessary lest disaster should overtake us through our allowing matters to drift. Having studied the question as far as my limited knowledge now permits, I say the time has come when we must create some organisation to protect Western Australia's interests from a revenue point of view.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

MOTION—GROUP SETTLEMENT.

Personnel of Royal Commission.

Debate resumed from the 17th September on the following motion by Mr. J. H. Smith—

"That in the opinion of this House the personnel of the Royal Commission on Group Settlement has not the confidence of the State generally and the South-West in particular, for the following reason:—Because no member of the Commission is thoroughly conversant with the agricultural and other requirements of the South-West, and, further, the chairman is unsuitable because he is prejudiced."

Mr. BARNARD (Sussex) [7.51]: This motion particularly concerns my electorate. I am greatly pleased that the member for Nelson has brought the matter up, because the people of the South-West feel that an injustice has been done to them by reason of the fact that no south-western member has been appointed to the Royal Commission. From time to time they have read in the Press what various members of the Commission have said against group settlement, and they naturally feel that those members are going on the Commission biased against group settlement. My knowledge of the members of the Commission satisfies me that they will enter on their inquiry with a full sense of their duty to the State, and perfectly unbiased. I am glad, also, that members from the wheat belt will be enabled to see the South-West; and I am especially glad that the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) will see it.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I bet I have seen more of the South-West than you have.

Mr. BARNARD: The investigation will afford that hon. member an opportunity of changing his mind, in case he is still biased against group settlement.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Who is your authority for the statement that I am biased?

Mr. BARNARD: The hon. member said repeatedly that the land of the South-West was no good.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: When did I say that?

Mr. BARNARD: On the Address-in-reply.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: No.

Mr. BARNARD: The hon. member said that South-Western lands were so sour that they took seven years to sweeten. I feel sure that, as a member of the Royal Commission, he will learn that those lands are not sour. I feel sure also that the representatives of the wheat belt who are on the Commission will gain the conviction that the South-West is the best part of Western Australia. I had hoped that the personnel of the Royal Commission would be chosen from outside the Legislature. However, as it was selected from Parliament, at least one of its members should have been a representative of the South-West. The mover said that the appointment of the Commission was like a dose of castor oil to me, but he is wrong. I had no expectation of being appointed to the Commission, and for that matter I am pleased that other members will come to see my part of the country and to judge what has been done in the way of group settlements there. I repeat that I am satisfied the members of the Commission will do their best in the interest of the country generally and also in the interests of group settlement.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [7.54]: Personally I regret that I could not be present last week to hear the speech of the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith). I had promised some time previously to visit the Dowerin Show, and I was unable to return in time to hear the motion moved. However, the hon. member had told me about a week previously that he intended to move the adjournment of the House on this question. At that time our Leader was away on the Wongan Hills line, and I suggested that the member for Nelson should let the matter stand over until the Premier had returned. The hon. member did not move the adjournment of the House, but gave notice of motion. He had promised to let me know beforehand.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I did not know that you were going away.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: However, this is merely by the way. Before dealing with the motion, let me say that, as a result of the hon. member's comments, it has been freely stated that under the present Administration this country is going to be run by Royal Commissions.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We have heard that before, you know.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I did not say that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; but that comment has been made in various newspapers as a consequence of this motion. Under the late Government there were during the last two years no fewer than 12 Royal Commissions.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Moved for in the House.

Mr. Taylor: Some of them were select committees.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: At that time the Press had very little to say about Royal Commissions, but because this Ministry agreed to appoint one Royal Commission, there are insinuations throughout the State that the present Government intend to rule Western Australia through the medium of Royal Commissions. I do not mind what newspapers say about the Government, but, whether the Press like it or not, while present Ministers are in office they will govern the country in the manner they think most to the advantage of the State and the people, irrespective of what the Press may think. If the Government consider that the interests of the State demand the appointment of a Royal Commission, they will not keep back that Royal Commission merely because the Press might raise some objection. I had anticipated that the member for Nelson, in moving his motion, would deal with the Royal Commission. A perusal of "Hansard" and of the Press reports of his speech, however, has shown me that his remarks were mainly directed against myself as Minister controlling group settlement.

MR. J. E. SMITH: I did not object to the Royal Commission.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member was scathing in his remarks. I was not surprised at that, because some time previously I had read in a journal an article to the same effect. There are some persons connected with the Press—I am glad to say very few—who when they find that an article of theirs has fallen flat, go to a member of Parliament and ask him to advertise their paper by moving in the House on the lines of the article. I do not say such a thing has occurred in the present case.

MR. J. H. SMITH: You know very well it has not.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member moving the motion is, in such a case, used as a tool to advertise a newspaper.

MR. J. H. SMITH: That is not true in this instance.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not say it is. However, that is the result. The hon. member said—

The Minister in charge of group settlement has to a great extent fallen down on his job. He was almost a greater supporter of the scheme than the Leader of the Opposition to-day.

MR. J. H. SMITH: That is true.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: No member of this Parliament, and no man outside, has been or is a stronger advocate of group settlement than I am to-day.

MR. TAYLOR: You have always been.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Any objection I have taken to the group settlement scheme has been entirely of a financial character.

MR. THOMSON: That is the only objection that has been raised in this House.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have objected only on the ground of the financial position arising out of the agreement entered into in London. Since holding my office, I have endeavoured to keep the question of group settlement out of party politics. I have endeavoured to carry on the work, and to give hon. members, to the best of my knowledge and ability, the true position, to show how group settlement has affected the finances, according to the reports put up to me by the departmental officers. Attempts have been made by certain sections of the Press time after time to make group settlement a party question. This motion is assisting in that direction. I have no desire that group settlement should become a party question; but, if that unfortunately should take place, I shall fight the matter from a party point of view as well. My desire is that the group settlement scheme should be studied by all sections of the community.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL: Do you say that we made group settlement a party question?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I shall deal with certain matters directly. I am pleased the Leader of the Opposition has come into the Chamber, because I am going to refer to some remarks he made the other evening. I would not have done so in his absence. This State cannot afford to make group settlement a party question.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL: You made wheat settlement a party question.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will deal with that directly. When we were on the Opposition side of the House, there were no greater supporters of the settlement of the country and the development of its lands than the members of the Labour Party. Group settlement would not have been in existence now if those who to-day represent the Government had, when in Opposition, taken the same line in regard to group settlement which has been tried during the last few months with a view to forcing the hands of present Ministers and introducing a party attitude into the question. I defy any hon. member to challenge one word I have said regarding group settlements. I challenge anyone to prove that one statement of mine has been incorrect. I have done my duty, whether I have fallen down on my job or not. When I found that the agreement was such, from a financial point of view, that I believed was never intended, I was right in placing members in possession of the facts. Then the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) went on to say—

But on account of some circumstances behind the scenes, he has acted in this way, and appointed a Royal Commission consisting in the main of prejudiced individuals—

I shall condemn the hon. member out of his own mouth later on—

—The clutching of the unseen hand, that has been mentioned here before, is at work.

I do not know to what the hon. member refers. There was no unseen hand in connection with the inquiry into group settlements. Statements made in this Chamber during last Parliament—not by members of the Labour Party—were such that I believe the country was led to understand that some inquiry was necessary. The hon. member himself said in those days, "We can improve our system of group settlement."

Mr. J. H. Smith: So we can.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He also said: "A better system than this could be introduced. The clearing on No. 1 group under experienced foremen has cost £15 per acre. They are bound down to bring the costs within that sum." I want to tell the member for Nelson that the cheapest clearing on No. 1 group has cost £29 per acre, and it has gone as high as £42 per acre.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That is full clearing not partial clearing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then he pointed out that there was a fly in the ointment.

Mr. J. H. Smith: There are several flies in the ointment.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: All this was said before the Labour Party took office and then the member for Nelson was sitting on the Ministerial side of the House. At that time he castigated the ex-Minister for Agriculture because he was not making any attempt to provide stock for the groups when they were ready to receive that stock. Now he complains and asks why is there a necessity for the inquiry. The hon. member himself was dissatisfied with the position at that time, and he felt it was necessary to draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that things were not satisfactory. Is it any wonder that people outside consider that something is wrong?

Mr. J. H. Smith: I do not oppose the appointment of a Commission.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then again, apparently there is only one gentleman appointed on the Royal Commission that the member for Nelson has any faith in.

Mr. Taylor: One in five is not a bad average.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The reason for that was that the hon. member concerned said the Commission was not worth a "tuppenny-hang."

Mr. Latham: He does not say he is in favour of my appointment.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He had doubts about all the others. I am not raising any objection to the hon. member. I am pleased that he has been appointed to the Commission, for I have worked with him and know what he is, but the member for York (Mr. Latham) himself said that

the Government should make a change. He said that the Government should purchase land outside the South-West.

Mr. Latham: I do not think it is fair to quote that against me now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for York instanced land along the Great Southern railway. He was then a follower of the leader of the Country Party.

Mr. Teesdale: All this must be very painful to the member for York.

Mr. Latham: It is not painful but it is very unfair to quote this against me now that I am one of the judges.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then the hon. member went on to advocate the appointment of a select committee to control group settlements. He went further still, and I am in accord with what he said. This shows the element of doubt there was concerning the position at a time when Labour was in Opposition.

Mr. Latham: There is always doubt about big things.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for York told us that if we did not make this scheme a big success, Western Australia's name would be ruined for ever.

Mr. George: We must make it a success.

Mr. Latham: We shall make it a success.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the Labour Party went to the country there was a certain demand regarding an inquiry into group settlements, and on the platform at Boulder the present Premier, in the course of his policy speech, said that we would cause an inquiry to be made along those lines for the special purpose of satisfying the public that group settlements, in all probability, would be successful. If there is anything wrong, let the people know; if there is nothing wrong let them know, and satisfy their minds. I cannot think for one moment why anyone should resent any person being appointed on a Royal Commission of this description. I have no fear regarding any member of the Commission, because the members of it have to report in accordance with the evidence tendered, and the public get that evidence. That is one of the advantages of Royal Commissions, the evidence is published from day to day, and it is printed for members to peruse should they so desire.

Mr. Teesdale: We know something about Commissions. We know of one and have noted the bias and spite and venom regarding that particular inquiry.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know of it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, you do.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Nelson also said—

The Government have appointed a Commission, the members of which are prejudiced, biassed, and bigoted against the South-West. What do members of

Parliament from the South-West who sit behind the Government think of it? Then he made the remark to which the member for Sussex (Mr. Barnard) referred just now. If that statement be correct, I have no proof of it. When an hon. member complains because a South-West member was not asked to go on the Commission, and, as suggested, he was asked to go on it, why did he not do so?

Mr. J. H. Smith: Because I would not sit under that chairman.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At that time the chairman was not appointed.

Mr. J. H. Smith: It was well known that he was to be appointed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I did not know myself at that stage who was to be appointed chairman of the Commission. I did not know it at the time the member for York (Mr. Latham) and the member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) were appointed members of that Commission.

Mr. Latham: We know that.

Mr. J. H. Smith: You had a fair idea, and so had others.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I did not. Here we have an hon. member complaining that the South-West will probably suffer because no member representing that part of the State has been appointed on the Commission and yet that hon. member failed to avail himself of the opportunity given to him by the Leader of the Opposition to be appointed on the Commission!

Mr. J. H. Smith: My electors do not think I neglected my duty.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Why was the hon. member not appointed? The Leader of the Opposition said the other night, "I feel certain no member representing the South-West would like to go on the Commission." In view of that statement I am doubtful whether the member for Nelson did have the opportunity to go on the Commission as was suggested. That hon. member also said—

The group settlement is the basis of our immigration policy, but the Minister in charge has now notified the Imperial Government that no more group settlers are to come here because there is not sufficient land for them.

If the rules of the House would allow me to say so, I would say that is a damned lie.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: On a point of order! I do not think the Minister should be permitted to make such a remark. He should not be allowed to describe another member as a liar.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is true, anyhow.

Mr. SPEAKER: Do I understand that the Leader of the Opposition takes objection to a personal remark?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was not a personal remark.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Then I take exception to it and desire to say that the member making the statement is a bigger damned liar than I thought he was.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am quite willing to withdraw the statement.

Mr. Taylor: You only said you were going to say it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The fact is that no such message was ever sent to the Imperial Government. I have never communicated on that or on any other question with the Imperial Government, and no such message was sent to the Agent General, to any person connected with the Government, or with any party or with any immigration scheme in the world.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Then you have not shut down on immigration!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Here is the exact wording of the cable we sent to London—

Pending migration agreement being finalised request Australia House not accept migrants for groups until further notice.

Mr. Thomson: It is time the agreement was finalised.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Was I not justified in doing so in view of the position as I found it? I can get land to-day that the late Government could not get for group settlements. I can get land where there is no necessity to build railways, where it is hardly necessary to construct any roads, and where no drainage is required. I can put my hand to-morrow on a hundred blocks on which to put settlers and within the area set out in the agreement. I have had surveyors out looking for land and I have got the land.

Mr. Latham: Repurchased estates?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, Crown lands, and nearer to Perth than where the groups are now. That being so, I want the people of this State to know that the Government pledge themselves to continue the group settlement policy. The Premier sent a cable message to London to be read at the annual Western Australian dinner, telling the people of Britain that we proposed to do so; but when we found that the group settlements were going to cost the State approximately £4,000,000, it was impossible for us to carry on until the new immigration agreement was finalised. The question has been asked, "Why don't you accept the agreement that New South Wales or Victoria secured?" The reason is that we were informed by Senator Wilson, when he passed through Perth on his way to Melbourne from London, that the new agreement that the Federal Government proposed to enter into with the British Government is better than any agreement existing with any State Government in Australia to-day. When I finalise an agreement, I want to have the best obtainable. I will not finalise, if there is a better agreement to be obtained.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Neither would anyone else.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have it on the authority of the Agent General under date 5th August last that he could finalise an agreement from Western

Australia on the basis of the provisions of the New South Wales and Victorian agreements to cover all our past activities.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That was promised, of course.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It was not; this is the first time it has ever appeared in the correspondence. The Agent General continued, "I shall have no difficulty, if you wish, in finalising an agreement to that end." Could we continue group settlement after being told that a better agreement would be available within a few weeks? Would it have been wise to do so? I mention this to show that the Government were in the dark as regards the agreement. When we sent the cable to London asking that no more migrants be despatched to Western Australia pending the finalising of the agreement, there was an ex-army party of 20 men being trained to come to Western Australia. It was represented to the Government that it would be a breach of faith not to accept that party. On the statements that the British and Commonwealth Governments had agreed to Western Australia being placed on the same basis as Victoria and New South Wales, we wired the Federal Prime Minister as follows: "Agreeable to accept this one group if the limitation of £1,000 charge was deleted." On the 1st September, four weeks after the Agent General's letter was written stating that the provisions of the New South Wales and Victorian agreements should apply to our past activities, the Prime Minister wired, "Advice now received from Migration Office, London, regretting British Government cannot accept condition to delete limit £1,000 capital liability group members on faith Western Australia's requisition." Did the Government adopt the attitude that, if they would not delete the £1,000 provision, we would not take the migrants? No, we had more respect for the honour of Western Australia. The previous Government had entered into this undertaking, and so we wired immediately, "We will accept this one group." That will probably mean a cost of £12,000 to £14,000 to the State.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But they cannot select men for groups.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The requisition had been made. We kept faith with those people, and gave instructions for them to be sent along. They will be sailing next month, and when they arrive we shall have land for them to go on. Yet we are charged with stopping not only group settlement but immigration as a whole.

Mr. Teesdale: By the Press, not by anyone here.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But remarks made here on many occasions tend to lead the Press to make the statements that are published.

Mr. George: But the Press always lead; we do not!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have increased the number of migrants com-

ing to this State by 50 per month during the last few months, and nominations are coming to hand in numbers every week. Yet we are charged with closing down on immigration. Unless we get a better agreement than the one we have at present, after the arrival of this next group there will not be another person while we are in office brought out for group settlement.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Then the charge is proved.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is not. I am not one to support bringing migrants here at a charge of £700 per head to the State. The State cannot afford it. It is unfair and unjust—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have said that about 20 times already.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And I shall repeat it as often as I like.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It has nothing to do with the question.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is unfair and unjust for any other Government, British or Commonwealth, to expect us to put people on the land, equip them and stock their farms without our charging them the whole of the cost.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about this blessed motion?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) said the Commission was biased, and he dealt with the members of it individually. He said, "Mr. Johnson is opposed tooth and nail to the South-West and can see no good in it." When Mr. Johnson was Minister for Works he was not opposed to the South-West, and I say with all respect to those who have followed him in office that no Minister has ever done more for the South-West than has the member for Guildford.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I was talking about group settlement.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, the hon. member said that both the chairman and Mr. Johnson were opposed tooth and nail to the South-West and could see no good in it. This statement was made of gentlemen who are so respected that they hold some of the best positions in the State. I have spoken to Mr. Harper only twice in my life, and that was after he was appointed Chairman of the Commission, but I rely not only upon the word of outsiders with whom I have come into contact, but on the statement of the hon. member who condemned him. The hon. member said, "I do not question Mr. Harper's honesty or his ability, but I know he has been on the land himself. His father was a prosperous farmer. He is a gentleman held in high repute."

Mr. J. H. Smith: I was not saying anything against him personally.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What greater recommendation could be given to any man?

The Minister for Agriculture: He is not one-eyed, anyhow.

Mr. J. H. Smith: He is, regarding the South-West.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If he was biassed and prejudiced and through his bias and prejudice would bring in a wrong report, then he could not be an honest man.

Mr. Thomson: Nor could he be a man of high repute.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. Yet the hon. member spoke thus of the man appointed, and no greater recommendation could be given to any person in Western Australia. Could we find anyone in Western Australia who has not said anything for or against group settlement?

Mr. Taylor: Mostly against.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not care where one goes, he would have the greatest difficulty to find anyone who had not said something about group settlement. But we rely upon the honesty of the men appointed to make the investigation. Personally, I do not care who are appointed to the commission of inquiry. I do not think they will find out any more than I myself have found out.

Mr. Richardson: Hear, hear!

Mr. Latham: I quite agree with you on that point.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: However, an inquiry was promised and having been promised there is a possibility of some good emanating from the recommendations that will be made. The Commission might be able to recommend certain alterations in the manner of preparing the farms. If we could bring the cost of preparing the farms down to £1,000—the officers do not think it can be done—we could go on under our agreement. If the Commission could show that the land could be cleared much cheaper than it is being cleared at present, there would be a possibility of continuing under the agreement. An inquiry will be for the benefit of the State. It will not be for the purpose of making a hit at the Leader of the Opposition. I do not think there is any member on the Commission or off it that desires to condemn the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Do not bother about me.

Mr. Richardson: There are one or two people outside.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know there are some outside that would hang me if they could.

Mr. Teesdale: Your turn will come.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not worry about anyone outside. The scheme was started in all good faith. It was thought it could be carried out on the basis of £1,000 per settler. It was thought the interest would be covered by the rebate received from the British authorities.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: So it would.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have obtained a legal opinion on this matter and I am perfectly satisfied with it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It suited you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I object to that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Well, I withdraw it.

Mr. Latham: I think you are wrong on that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Northam has never had a stronger supporter in this House than I from the time he entered the Chamber.

Mr. Teesdale: He recognises it, too.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When I made my statement to the House regarding group settlement I did not do it with the intention of condemning group settlement. I did it because I considered it my duty to advise members of the position. If I had stopped migrants from coming out to group settlements and had not informed members of the exact position, I should have been condemned immediately throughout the length and breadth of the State. I had to inform members for my own safety, because I could not have carried on otherwise. It would have suited me far better if we could have prepared these farms at a cost of £1,000 or less. It would have suited me far better if the two-thirds interest was going into the scheme as a whole, because I was anxious to continue the group settlements.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: So it is.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Members know that I have always been desirous of getting the empty spaces of the State filled by population. The member for Nelson said, "There is a member of the Commission"—I infer he meant Mr. Lindsay—"who, I believe, will possibly give us a fair report, but I believe he will be swayed by his interests in the wheat belt, and in consequence the South-West will be neglected by him." The hon. member need not be afraid of group settlements in the wheat belt unless we can buy land for the purpose. Therefore there would be no gain to group settlement in that direction. The hon. member said he believed Mr. Lindsay would give a fair and just report on the groups.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I did not say he would not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the insinuation is there. The hon. member went on to say that Mr. Lindsay would be swayed because of his interests in the wheat belt.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Naturally.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member added, "I have great respect for Mr. Moore, but his interests are centred in other parts of the State, and I do not know that he will give the South-West a fair deal. I believe the purpose of the Royal Commission is to attack the Leader of the Opposition and to find out all his sins and faults."

Mr. J. H. Smith: So I do, if he has any, I do not know that he has any.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Let us take the position of the gentlemen who

constitute the Commission. Mr. Moore, a member of another place, has spent the greater part of his life in the South-West. He has only one object in view and that is the advancement of Western Australia. Let us see also how the Commission was appointed. If we had adopted the course suggested by the Leader of the Opposition and appointed a chairman from this side of the House, there would have been three on the Commission representing one party. Instead, we appointed two from this side of the House and we asked the Leader of the Opposition to recommend one from his party. Then we asked the Leader of the Country Party to recommend one, and afterwards we considered it advisable to secure the services of a man from outside as chairman, one who did not mix in politics—

Mr. J. H. Smith: He attended a political gathering.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: —a man who was honest and who would be held in high repute and who possessed ability. We selected Mr. C. W. Harper. I knew Mr. Harper's father well as a member of this House. No more honourable man came into this Chamber. So far as I can gather the son is a chip of the old block, and I believe he will act impartially and see that the position at the groups is thoroughly investigated, see that the witnesses will give all the information possible, and I am sure that when he presents his report it will be to the effect that group settlements in the interests of Western Australia must be carried on. I am anxious for the Commission to inspect the groups and see what is being done. I am anxious also to get the advice of the Commission. Just let me point out one thing only which shows the necessity for a change in the policy that has been observed. I told members recently that I thought it would be advisable for the areas to be cleared by piece work. My idea was that clearing should be done before the migrants went there. One or two of the groups have been completed so far as the clearing is concerned, that is to say 25 acres have been cleared and what has been earned by the men engaged in the clearing will enable them to live between the period of the completion of the clearing until they have pastures that will enable them to carry stock. This method of clearing has cost much less than the system that has been in vogue, and the men engaged on the work have been able to earn as much as from £20 to £30 a month. That is one improvement that has been effected.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It could not have been in the same timber.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; and the same class of land. This shows the need there was to effect a change. When the returns came in, the officers of the department said to me, "This means a reorganisation of the whole system."

Mr. Clydesdale: Are the migrants doing the work?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. One man has four or five sons with him. He earned no less than £79 and this was earned at a lower rate than we had paid previously. We had land there that, under the sustenance system, cost £8 an acre to clear. By piecework it cost £4 and the man's wages came to £22 for the month.

Mr. Panton: They were getting experience while they were on sustenance.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I merely mention this to show that there is some necessity for an inquiry. We are effecting improvements already by degrees, and that being so, I feel confident that the members of the Commission will act fairly and honestly by the State. I do not believe that any member of the Commission would undertake work with a prejudiced mind and decide the attitude he was going to take before carrying out the investigation. If anyone did that he would not be worthy of the name of man, and he certainly would not be worthy of a seat in Parliament. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) is afraid that the Commission will do something wrong towards one portion of the State, but he does not appear to realise that if such a thing does happen these people will injure themselves as well. It will not be possible to do damage to one part of the State without doing damage to the whole of it. The Leader of the Opposition said that the action of the Labour Government had very nearly driven settlers off the land. I am inclined to think that those words were drawn from him by way of interjection.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I was referring to the wheat belt.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Let us face the position as fair-minded men. If the Leader of the Opposition did make that statement he could not have thought over it. It was the Labour Party that, in times of stress, kept men on the land. The Labour Party never took them off. I give the Leader of the Opposition every credit for endeavouring to open up the agricultural territory. The work had been commenced when he came in to continue it. He advertised the country and pointed out what it was capable of doing and stressed the fact that land that had been considered almost valueless was capable of producing good crops. In that way he encouraged people to take it up. But when there came the time of drought the men were left on their blocks without water and without feed for their stock. They did not know what to do. Instead of driving them off, as has been suggested, the Labour Party sent water out to them. If the areas were too far to permit of pipes being laid, water was taken to the settlers by train. Not only that, but the Labour Government sent numbers of men throughout the country to sink dams for future use and to bore for water. The settlers were also provided with manure,

seed and assistance generally to help them to remain on their blocks. The same thing happened in 1914. The Labour Government went to the assistance of the men who were in need and afterwards approached Parliament and sought approval of what had been done. Was that then the Government that drove the people off the land? I ask members to reflect on the words of the Leader of the Opposition which were, "Let us face the position as fair-minded men should do." The statement he made was not that of a fair-minded man. Those who were critics at the time and who claimed to be friends of the farmers were not willing to give a helping hand. At the same time the workers realised that their very bread and butter depended entirely on land development and no Government, National, Country Party or Liberal, could have given more substantial support than that given by the Labour Party. The Labour Government were bound to do what they did in self-defence. I was pleased that the Leader of the Opposition said nothing derogatory against the Commission except perhaps this—

If I wanted an inquiry that would not impress the public very considerably, this Commission would suit me very well.

Let us view the position again for a few moments. In the first place the member for Nelson states that the members of the Commission are not conversant with agriculture in the South-West, and he adds further that the chairman is prejudiced. I have already told the House that the chairman is a man of ability, good repute and honest.

Mr. Taylor: He merely said that the chairman was prejudiced.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: How can a man be honest if he is prejudiced? If a man is appointed chairman of a Commission it is understood that he is qualified to perform the duties he has been chosen to carry out, and that he is a man of good repute and honest. He cannot possibly be honest if he is prejudiced before he sets out to make his inquiry. I understand from the speech the member for Nelson made that Mr. Harper visited the Peel Estate. That estate at first did not look too inviting. I myself was a bit prejudiced against it at the start. I saw it first some 30 years ago.

Mr. George: It was not very inviting then.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, and Mr. Harper I believe made some statement at a conference held at which the Peel Estate was discussed. He did not, however, deal with group settlements generally. I have been informed that he said the areas were too small. But now it is the general impression amongst officers of the department that the Peel Estate is going to be the best portion of the group settlements—with all due respect to the land at Manjimup.

Mr. Latham: Its geographical position will ensure that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Harper was born in Western Australia. His father was honoured in the State. Everybody respected him. All realised that when Mr. Harper dealt with a question he dealt with it fairly and honestly. His son is of the same calibre, and his opinions will carry weight in Western Australia. He is not actively connected with any political organisation. He is unbiassed in politics and will fill the position of chairman of the Commission with integrity, ability and honesty, and will retain the fair repute the hon. member ascribes to him. I am informed he has had agriculture thoroughly drilled into him. He has been trained to develop land. He has travelled in various parts of the world for the purpose of ascertaining the best methods of agriculture. For a considerable time he has been interested in a farm in the South-West. Consequently I think he will make an admirable chairman of the Commission. The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson), another member of the Commission, has also been long in the State. The Hon. T. Moore, M.L.C., is well respected and has had a good deal of experience in the South-West. The member for York (Mr. Latham) is a farmer and a man who will deal with the question fairly and impartially, and see that every point is brought out. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) is a successful farmer who understands the position thoroughly. Consequently it seems to me no better Commission could have been appointed, none that would more favourably impress the people of the State, for everybody realises that the Commissioners will carry out their duties fairly and fearlessly. I want to disabuse people's minds as to my attitude towards group settlement. I have not altered my opinion one iota. I believe we are going to keep the majority of the group settlers. I am convinced that group settlement will be a success in this State. We have always held that if we can keep even so many as 60 per cent. of the group settlers we shall be doing very well. Sometimes I think we shall do better than that. I have talked to the settlers, and I have talked to their wives.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We all know that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And I know that a very large number of them are anxious to be successful. While they maintain that disposition there is nothing for us to fear. I am anxious for the Commission to get to work as early as possible and throw some light on the subject, showing us how to carry out the project at a reduced cost, pointing out whether the areas of land allotted to the settlers are too large or too small, advising us as to the best pastures to be sown. On this point there is a wide difference of opinion, not only among laymen, but amongst the officers of the department. I want the Commission to tell us what, in their opinion, is the best class of stock for the settlers, and the number

required; to tell us the best pigs to supply; to point out to us the best means of encouraging the settlers to get on to their blocks at an early date and so go on to success. Nobody knows better than I that what is wanted in the group settlements at present is advice for the purpose of showing how the settlers may become successful; of showing them how to deal with their land. I am satisfied that some of our officers whose duty it is to instruct the settlers, who should be rushing in without being pushed, are not always willing and anxious to engage in that task.

Mr. George: That is serious.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I believe it is true.

Mr. George: You ought to get rid of them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not dealing with officers who have been in charge for a considerable time. However, some officers I have had to push on. The Royal Commission on the Peel Estate complained there was not that unanimity between the Agricultural Department and the Group Settlement Committee that there should have been. One officer whom I appointed to that committee objected to go on it. I told him it was his duty to go on, and so he went. And afterwards he went running to the Public Service Commissioner and asked to be kept off the committee. When I know that things like that are going on, I feel justified in saying that some officers are not anxious to engage in the work.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Perhaps they have too much to do.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If that be so, they should say so; they ought to declare frankly that they have not the time to attend to such a committee, and that some other officers should be secured for the purpose. Then one would know where he was. However, I believe the Commission will weigh up all these questions and point out to us whether it is necessary to have experts for the purpose of training the settlers on their farms to enable them to make a success of the work and so secure a living for their wives and families and a comfortable competence when they reach old age. We want men willing to work, anxious to see the scheme prosper. If we can get such men I believe they will bring about prosperity. I am certain the Commission will deal with all these questions fairly and with the one object in view, namely, the best advantage to the State.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [8.55]: I cannot help thinking it would have been more to the advantage of the State and to the satisfaction of the people had members of Parliament been left off the Commission. A unique opportunity has been missed for obtaining help and advertising the State. On deciding to appoint a Royal Commission, the Government would have been well advised to have got into communication with the Governments of the

Eastern States, pointed out how important was group settlement, not only to Western Australia but to the whole of Australia, declared that it was still in the experimental stage notwithstanding which it was already being copied in other States, and asked for the assistance of the respective directors of agriculture.

The Minister for Lands: Had we got such an officer from the Eastern States he would have condemned our lands, because he would not have understood them.

Mr. ANGELO: The Government should have asked the other Governments to make available to us their various directors of agriculture, especially the expert from Victoria who, of course, has dealt with land very similar to that in the South-West.

Mr. Clydesdale: The old cry—"Go to the other States if you want anything."

Mr. E. B. Johnston: "No Western Australian need apply."

Mr. ANGELO: A precedent has been established, for a little time ago when we were appointing the Royal Commission to inquire into the Education Department—

Mr. Latham: And lunacy as well.

Mr. Marshall: There appears to be occasion for a further inquiry.

Mr. ANGELO: —we secured a Commissioner from New South Wales, and I have no occasion for believing that there has been any complaint against his report. It would have been much better if we could have got two or three directors of agriculture from the other States.

The Minister for Agriculture interjected.

Mr. ANGELO: Surely the Minister will not suggest that other Ministers for Agriculture are satisfied with directors who are not real experts! They have all helped the development of their respective States.

Mr. Lutey: And to be of any use here they would have to unlearn all they have learned there.

Mr. ANGELO: We want expert knowledge, and we want unbiased men. If we had had such men inquiring into group settlement they would have gone back to the Eastern States well pleased with our lands.

Mr. J. H. Smith: They have just about as much knowledge of our South-West as have some of the Commissioners already appointed.

Mr. ANGELO: The Governments of the Eastern States would have been only too pleased to loan to us their experts because they are all going to follow with similar schemes, and by sending their respective directors of agriculture over here they would have been able to profit by the mistakes we have already made. I am sorry the Government did not make such appointments as I suggest. Then we should have had expert knowledge, a good advertisement for the State, and a report that no one could have said was biased.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Mr. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [8.59]: I am sorry that so soon after my election I should have to stand up to protect myself against attacks by fellow members. I am particularly sorry that the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) should have made the remarks he did about me.

Mr. Taylor: Wait till you have been here as long as I have been.

Mr. Corboy: Wait till he knows more about you.

Mr. LINDSAY: If only the hon. member had been consistent in his remarks I might have agreed with him. He started well in this strain—

Amongst the members of the Commission to whom I refer is the member for Toodyay. I have nothing to say against that gentleman. I believe he is honest in character and that he is a fair-minded man.

I take it that may be regarded as a good reference for a member of a Royal Commission.

Mr. Clydesdale: You will be lucky if you hold it.

Mr. LINDSAY: The member for Nelson said he was present at a conference at which I opposed the development scheme for the South-West and urged the appointment of a Royal Commission of inquiry. I deny that I said anything against the South-West at that conference, and I did not speak until after the member for Nelson had abused delegates from the wheat belt. That was the first time I spoke and I did so to reply to the member for Nelson. At that conference the hon. member told delegates that Brussels' sprouts grew in the South-West to a height of 6ft. and rape to 8ft. When I replied I said that I was not against the South-West, and I told the member for Nelson that he had not gone far enough, because I had heard that if the settlers planted nails there they would grow into crowbars.

Member: That is not bad.

Mr. LINDSAY: That conference did not carry a motion in favour of the appointment of a Royal Commission, but decided that the matter should be referred to the executive of the Primary Producers' Association and to the Country Party. At that conference the member for Nelson suggested the appointment of a committee of three to proceed to the South-West to inquire into the group settlement scheme. He particularly asked that I should be a member of that committee. This shows that on two occasions he asked me to do what I have been asked by the Government to do now. I will quote an extract from a country paper to show what I said about group settlement scheme. The report was as follows:—

In dealing with group settlement and the Peel estate, Mr. Lindsay said that increased settlement was necessary, and he recognised that the South-West must be developed by group settlement methods.

Knowing the number of failures through lack of system and policy, and the large amounts that would have to be written off the Country Party have endeavoured to get information of the policy of the Government in connection with the South-West, to enable them to assist in avoiding failures similar to those which have taken place in the wheat belt.

That was a statement I made during the elections and I do not think there was anything unfair about it. I do not think it would have been unfair to say that in this Chamber. I did not say anything against the South-West and the extract I have quoted is what I stated in reply to the member for Nelson at the particular conference he referred to. I have been appointed to carry out a job and I am not going to allow my interests in the wheat belt to interfere with those of the South-West. After all, the interests of the South-West are the interests of the wheat belt as well as of the rest of the State. I hope I will do what I should in order to give of my best so that the country may have a fair deal.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [9.5]: I regret that I was not in the House when the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) moved his motion. Had I been here, I would have asked the hon. member to withdraw some of the statements he made, statements that are not based on facts. I regret exceedingly that the hon. member quoted some of my remarks and particularly selected portions that would mislead the House. Had he read all a totally different meaning would have been conveyed.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Were not the words that I quoted correct?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Those words did not convey what I said and the hon. member knew that when he quoted them. He must have deliberately selected them so as to misrepresent my remarks. I will quote some of his statements.

Hon. J. H. Smith: Is the hon. member in order in reading "Hansard?"

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am not sure that he is doing so.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am reading from notes I have made.

Mr. Taylor: You are reading from "Hansard;" you must think we are blind.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Is the hon. member in order?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: He is certainly not in order in reading "Hansard."

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I will refer to some of the hon. member's statements.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The hon. member has torn a page out of "Hansard," and is about to read from it. Is he in order in doing so?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: He is not in order.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Then you should order it to be taken away from him.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The member for Nelson deliberately selected words and sentences which he quoted to the House as representing my opinion. In doing so, he distinctly misrepresented my attitude and distorted my speech. On three or four different occasions I stated definitely that the South-West could be developed, that it was good country, and that the only difficulty was that we had not solved the problem of how best to bring it under cultivation. I said that the country when cleared green was soar. Anyone who knows the South-West must know that what I stated was correct.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Then all that country there is soar.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Instead of spending money to clear the country in the most expensive way to get the minimum result, I said we should adopt a different course and treat the country in the way Nature intended, namely, by ring-barking and permitting Nature to sweeten the land instead of endeavouring to accomplish that end by heavy expenditure and by human effort. Not only did I say that in regard to the Denmark area but to the South-West generally. I went on to say that it was to the South-West that we had to look to overcome those agricultural difficulties that were disclosed in the monthly statistical returns that demonstrated that we were not producing in Western Australia sufficient dairy products to feed our people. I stated there was only one way to overcome that difficulty and that was by developing the South-West. I pointed out that the way we were attempting to do it was not the most economical, nor yet the most expeditious way in which to secure results. I said that by those methods we could not do what we desired at the earliest possible moment. To say that I am biased against the South-West is distinctly misleading and in doing so the member for Nelson knew he was stating something that was wrong. While I was a Minister of the Crown I took as keen an interest in the South-West as circumstances would permit. The difficulties at that time were more grave than they are to-day. I refer to the difficulties as to the relative value of the South-West, from the standpoint of timler production, as compared with agricultural production. We still have that problem to-day though not to the same extent. When I was Minister for Agriculture the difficulties between the Agricultural Department and the Forests Department were more pronounced, with the result that we could not obtain the area of land desired so as to treat the country in the way I suggested to the House it should be dealt with. The hon. member cannot accuse me of bias in making a statement of that description. I investigated the position in the Denmark area, and at that time I was told that, had the country been ringbarked and sweetened before settlement, those who went upon the land there would have been successful from the start. I was anxious to see the land

dealt with in that way. I am prepared to admit that I may be wrong in my contentions, but I consider that that method would be more effective and more expeditious. The member for Nelson knows that when he made that statement he did me an injustice. He should not have said that I was biased against the South-West, or that I had suggested there was no good land there. Had the hon. member read a sentence or two preceding those he quoted, they would have contradicted his assertions. I will leave it at that. I am deeply interested, as a citizen of Western Australia, in the development of the South-West. I was not anxious to be appointed a member of the Royal Commission, but now that I am a member of that body I am grateful to the Government for the opportunity given me to closely investigate the position. My one desire will be to solve the problem of the settlement in the South-West, so that we may secure the maximum settlement in a minimum space of time at a minimum cost. We have to overcome the dairying problem and to increase production in the South-West at the earliest possible moment. As to the member for Nelson's accusations against the chairman of the Commission, I would point out that I have been associated with agricultural matters for a number of years. As a Minister I came into contact with the chairman of the Commission on many occasions. I remember that his father before him was looked upon in this Chamber as one of the fathers of agricultural development. The late Mr. Harper was a man who possibly did more to convince Parliament of the need for agricultural development and expenditure of State funds on that work than any other person in Western Australia. He was constantly drawing the attention of Parliament to that question, and, in order that his son might follow in his footsteps, he gave him a special education to that end. He sent him throughout different parts of the world where he could acquire first-hand up-to-date information regarding closer settlement, intense culture and other such information as is required for the proper development of the South-West. The member for Nelson was not only unfair to me but he did a grave injustice to one who has devoted his life to the development of agriculture in the South-West. Not only has Mr. Harper done his part, as did his father before him, but he started his practical education in the South-West. The member for Nelson mentioned that Mr. Harper was at one time associated with the Ferndale estate, and he tried to ridicule his association with it.

Mr. J. H. Smith: He was an absentee farmer.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: He was actively associated with the work at Ferndale.

Mr. J. H. Smith: And he sold out at the first opportunity.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The hon. member has been distinctly unfair and I regret exceedingly that he made such unfair attacks

upon myself and upon the chairman. Generally speaking he will find that the members of the Commission are just as anxious as he is—probably they are not so capable as is the hon. member—to bring about a satisfactory result from their investigations. We may not do it in quite the way that the hon. member might desire, but we will endeavour to do justice to a portion of the State that must be developed.

Mr. A. WANSBROUGH (Albany) [9.15]: It is not my desire to speak on the motion at length; nor it is my intention to support the motion. The member for Nelson has accused the Royal Commission of being bigoted, prejudiced, and biased. I dissociate myself from that statement.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Of course you have all the facts at your disposal.

Mr. A. WANSBROUGH: The gentlemen appointed to the Commission are Australian enough and broad-minded enough to bring in a report supported by the weight of evidence. I merely wish to dissociate myself from the remarks of the member for Nelson.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
Hon. M. F. Troy—(Mt. Magnet) [9.16]: It is most unfortunate that the member for Nelson should have brought forward this motion, because his speech showed that he was most ill-equipped to deal with the subject with the moderation that it demanded. The hon. member spoke about the unseen hand. When reading the Press report of his speech while returning from Bruce Rock, it occurred to me that he must have had a very bad night before he made the speech. He must have attended the picture entitled "The Clutching Hand."

Mr. Panton: He said he saw the unseen hand.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: His mind must have been filled with hysteria, because his remarks were characteristic of the type of mind associated with hysterical girls, or youths who read the Deadwood Dick class of literature. The hon. member has not conferred upon his constituents any advantage by the manner in which he approached the question. Had a member not associated with the South-West moved the motion, it might have carried some weight with the country, but the country realises that the hon. member represents a constituency that is affected, and that he might have acted thus because his constituency expected him to do so. While that might have influenced the hon. member, why should he seek to cast reflections upon members of the Commission? Mr. Harper he holds in the highest respect, and refers to as a man of character and integrity. What would one expect of such a man? Could one expect anything but the most honest and straightest dealing? Yet this man he says is bigoted, biased and prejudiced. In one breath he pays Mr.

Harper the highest compliment that could be paid him; in the next breath he stigmatises him as bigoted, biased and prejudiced. It is impossible to reconcile the two statements. The hon. member spoke as a hysterical child. Apart from the member for York, who belongs to his own party, there is not a member of the Commission he does not distrust.

Mr. Latham: According to the speech, I am as bad as the rest.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Opposition tell us there is no necessity for a Commission and ask why the Government have appointed a Commission.

Mr. Latham: For the reason the Minister for Lands said it was not necessary.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Government of which the member for Northam was a member, appointed a similar Commission in 1916. That Commission read—

To John Owen Giles, Esq., Frank Evans Venn, Esq., Henry Harold Paynter, Esq., and Barnard Lionel Clarkson, Esq. (greeting: Whereas it is desirable that a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into and report upon the position generally of the farming industry in Western Australia, the improvement of the conditions under which such industry is carried on, and the methods necessary to ensure such improvements, the extension of the industry with the view to increase in production to the fullest possible extent, with recommendations as to further settlement of the lands in the South-Western division, etc.

That was signed "James Mitchell, Minister for Industries." Hardly had the member for Northam taken office in 1916 when he appointed that Commission. Why are the Opposition afraid of the Group Settlement Commission? Did members of the Labour Party talk about the unseen hand or the clutching hand when the Agricultural Commission was appointed? We had just left office. We had been five years in office. The Leader of the Opposition was not fair in stating that the action of the Scaddan Government nearly drove the farmers off the land. He knows that is not true. Did not the Labour Government stand to the farmers in a way that made it possible for them to remain on the land?

Mr. Latham: He was referring to the land regulation.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The land regulations were in keeping with the Land Act which the member for Northam assisted to pass. Men came to this State and appeared before the land board and obtained land against the bona fide selector.

Mr. J. H. Smith: On a point of order, has this anything to do with the personnel of the Royal Commission?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I take it the hon. member is drawing an analogy be-

tween this Commission and a former Commission.

Mr. J. H. Smith: A very wide analogy. The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is quite disorderly for the hon. member to interrupt in that way, and I hope he will be kept in order. These men took up land, sold it, and trafficked in it, and yet the law had been enacted by the previous Government, of which the present Leader of the Opposition was a member.

Mr. Taylor: You are referring to Bath's regulation.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, and it had the effect of preventing trafficking in land. When the Agricultural Commission was appointed the Opposition of the day did not object. They did not fear some clutching hand or unseen hand exerting influence to their detriment. They allowed the Commission to operate, and it did so. I hope the results proved of value to the State. What have the Opposition to fear from the Group Settlement Commission? The selection of the members did not rest wholly with the Government. The Government acted as have no previous Government in appointing a Commission. All other Governments have appointed their own Commissions without consulting anyone. The present Government appointed two members to the Commission and invited the Opposition to select two members, and then the Government appointed an outside chairman, a man who has never been a supporter of the Labour Party. With Mr. Harper the member for Nelson sat in the same party for three years and was associated with him. At that time he had no objection to Mr. Harper. His objection arises now since he has severed his connection with the country Party. Could any Government have acted more honourably? For the first time in the history of this State or that of any other State I know of, the Government appointed two members from each side of the House and a chairman from outside.

Mr. Thomson: No, they gave this side an opportunity to appoint two men.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so, and yet the member for Nelson is not satisfied. What is he afraid of? He raised objection to the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson). Does he know that whereas when Sir James Mitchell was in office the settlers at Denmark had to pay heavy rentals, the member for Guildford went down and reduced their rentals and made it possible for those people to live? Sir James Mitchell did not do that. We are accused of playing up to the Country Party. For what purpose, I should like to know? We are not children. I have been in the House 20 years, and I know that on the very day the Labour Party lose their majority, they will go out. I have had experience. We pander to no party; we consider no party outside our own, and we do not propose to. I sat with the Labour Party on this side of the House when the

farmers must have left their holdings but for the support and initiative shown by us. We established boards that now act for the farmers; all the organisation of the pool was created by us. Yet we know that immediately we lose our majority, out we shall go by the vote of members opposite. We labour under no delusions. When the Country Party becomes the dominant party in this House, they will take their place rightly on this side of the House. We expect that from them. But we also expect from the House as decent a deal as we gave members opposite. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) said we should import a chairman from the Eastern States, but the Leader of the Opposition said he did not agree with the idea of bringing a man from the East. Members opposite do not know where they stand. One faces east; another faces west. One wants us to bring a man from the East; another says he does not want a man from the East. Anyhow why should we bring a man from the East? Are not the men in this State competent to judge? What can anyone from the East tell us about our own land? What knowledge have they that we do not possess? The member for Nelson has accused me of having made a speech containing some expression detrimental to the South-West. I repeat what I said at Trayning recently and what I have stated in this House, that in a country like Western Australia with its deficit of over six million pounds, with its small population, its great burden of development and heavy taxation, we should expend our money on those industries that will bring the biggest return. We should build up those industries first, and when they become prosperous with a stable population, they will bear the interest bill to develop the more difficult portion of the State. By that opinion I still stand. As a member of the Government I should be glad to see the South-West prosper. I have sufficient faith in members of the House to know they are not dishonourable men. They have not all got visions of clutching and unseen hands. When put upon their mettle, I am satisfied they would give a fair deal. I hope members will not be influenced by this attack. I hope the chairman will not be influenced by the unworthy attack made upon him. I hope the Commission will do their duty by giving the State the best of their knowledge and ability regarding the settlement of the South-West. The member for Nelson will be well advised to let the matter drop. He has done no service to his electorate although he thinks he may have done.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Is that a threat?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Do not be childish! Another unseen hand!

Mr. J. H. Smith: It might be so.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think the hon. member is normal.

Mr. J. H. Smith: If you were half as normal, you would be all right.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member has been foolish enough to give the country the impression that Parliament is against the development of the South-West, and he knows that is not correct. He has also given the impression that as the representative of Nelson he is afraid of an inquiry into the expenditure in the South-West. If he is not afraid, why is he opposing the Commission?

Mr. J. H. Smith: I am not opposing the Commission. Did I not advocate it on the Address-in-reply?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not only did the hon. member oppose it, but he has spoken in terms of condemnation of the gentlemen who comprise it.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Now you are getting back to the facts. I take exception to the chairman.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: And to the other members.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Yes.

Mr. Thomson: Because no member of the Commission is conversant with the South-West.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Mr. Harper had a place at Ferndale. The member for Nelson condemns Mr. Harper on the ground that he does not know the South-West, and says he has taken more out of Ferndale than he ever put into it.

Mr. J. H. Smith: He sold it at a profit, because the land increased in value. It was unearned increment.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If his objection to Mr. Harper had been that he had lost money in the South-West and muddled his affairs, there might have been something in his complaint, but that was not the case.

Mr. J. H. Smith: He is a land speculator.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member's objection now is that Mr. Harper made money out of his South-West property. He proved that it was a good property, and made a success of it. Are there any members opposite who have properties in the South-West, but have done nothing with them? I know of some who have properties there, but what have they done with them?

Mr. J. H. Smith: That has nothing to do with the Commission.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The less members say about people who hold properties in the South-West and have done nothing with them, the better for themselves. This side of the House has been very tolerant in respect to that matter. Those who talk like this about the South-West should themselves set the example.

Mr. Richardson: Who are all these people?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Some have held land there for years and have done nothing with it.

Mr. Teesdale: A lot of land was held along the Great Western railway, and

nothing was done with it. We recognised that the people concerned could not help themselves.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: When was that?

Mr. Teesdale: At one time.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member made the most of it too.

Mr. Teesdale: It has never been mentioned.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Those people spent their money there and lost it, but members opposite made the most of the occasion. They had maps printed showing the land that was taken up, and had them published in the Eastern States as evidence that the Government of the day had obtained land that others could not get. The less the hon. member says about that the better. I was in the House at the time, and I know how utterly un-erupulous the then Opposition was, as well as the Press of the State in regard to what was a bona fide proposition.

Mr. Teesdale: No one questions that.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It was a decent proposition, in which these gentlemen lost their money.

Mr. Teesdale: You need not bring it all up.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We are quite prepared to give the South-West a fair deal. It is safe in the hands of the Minister for Lands. The House knows the necessity for the inquiry. A few weeks ago for the first time we knew of the existence of the agreement, and its conditions, of which we were in ignorance in the past.

Mr. Thomson: We knew of the agreement, but did not know we were going to spend so much more than it provided.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We knew nothing about the conditions. Because this Government was in office we learned something we had not known before. The member for Nelson would be well advised to say nothing more about the Commission, because of the harm he may do to the South-West and his electorate.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That is a matter of opinion.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: He is casting a reflection upon the members of the Commission and their ability and character, but he desires to be associated with them personally. He says he does not trust them, but will shake hands with them outside. His remarks are a reflection upon them, and his action is not an honourable one. I advise him to let the matter drop.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. GRIFFITHS (Arvon) [9.35]: I do not intend to say much.

Mr. Marshall: You are making big preparations.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Will the hon. member be quiet! The Minister for Lands has stated that the impression has got abroad that things are not all right in the South-West. I can bear out the truth of that statement. When I was electioneering I was repeatedly tackled in almost every centre about the South-West. People said, "Do you not think a Royal Commission should be appointed to investigate what is going on there." All sorts of questions were put to me. When I heard the member for York (Mr. Latham) say he did not think a Royal Commission was necessary I felt constrained to bring forward a little incident that may interest the House.

Mr. Latham: I rise to a point of order. This motion does not refer to the question of appointing a Royal Commission, but to its personnel.

Mr. Heron: You do not like it to come out.

Mr. SPEAKER: There has been a vast amount of latitude allowed during this debate, traversing the need for a Royal Commission, as well as the character and personnel of it, and I do not feel inclined at this stage to curtail the debate.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I thank you, Sir. The interjection of the member for York was uncalled for.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not reflect upon another hon. member.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: In an informal way I came into possession of a little information through a new chum I met at North Fremantle. He invited me to his house. After a while his wife, who had been out shopping, returned home. She said she had met Mrs. Smith, and asked what she was doing in Fremantle. Mrs. Smith said she was not on the block in the South-West with her husband, because she had a position in North Fremantle. She went on to say she was going to save all she could, and her husband was going to do the same out of his allowance of 10s. a day. They knew that when the time came for them to take up their block the capitalisation charge would be too heavy for them, and they intended upon their combined savings to go to Queensland. If on arrival in Queensland they found things different from what they expected, they intended to go back to the Old Country. This shows there is some ground for the appointment of a Royal Commission.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [9.40]: I did not intend to say anything on this motion, because I am to be one of the judges unless the motion is carried. Many members have made it appear that I am not in sympathy with the South-West. That is very unfair. I stated it was not necessary to appoint a Royal Commission to obtain this information. I believe the Minister for Lands can get it quite as well as we can.

Mr. Taylor: He has it already.

Mr. LATHAM: He has the Treasury behind him to enable him to get it. I daresay

the Minister could get the information much cheaper than it can be obtained through the Royal Commission.

The Minister for Lands: I have got a great deal already.

Mr. LATHAM: We have seen a lot of the useful information the Minister has secured. The reason why I said it was not necessary to appoint a Royal Commission was that I feared it could not function in time to report to the House before we were asked to authorise the expenditure of one and a quarter million pounds. It is unfair to suggest I did not think the Commission was necessary. No harm will come of a thorough and exhaustive inquiry by competent and capable men.

Mr. Panton: Such as we have got.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know about that. I am not going to express an opinion regarding the members of the Commission. I will never credit any man with dishonesty until I prove that he is dishonest. We might have got men better qualified for the position, but I have no desire to condemn the Commission when the Premier thinks those who constitute it are qualified to make the report. Any preconceived ideas I may have had I am willing to forget. My only desire is to obtain evidence that will enable us to frame a report so that we may tell the people, if things are not what they ought to be, what should be done to remedy the mistakes.

The Minister for Lands: That is all you want.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes. There is no need for members to say that the gentlemen serving on the Commission are biased or bigoted. People frequently say things without knowing what effect they may have afterwards. Although I have expressed certain opinions on the floor of the House I can forget them in my examination of witnesses, and will judge upon the evidence that is placed before me. I feel I am competent to extract from witnesses the evidence that I think will be telling, so that I may be able to assist in framing a report that will be of service to the country.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [9.43]: I regret that the member for Nelson should have seen fit to move this motion. He was within his rights in doing so, but it would have been wiser had he left the matter alone. By inference he suggested that members sitting on the Cross Benches are opposed to group settlement. Those who are associated with me, and the organisation to which I have the honour to belong, cannot be proved to be opposed to group settlement. We have maintained from the outset of the scheme that we wished it to be conducted on sound and safe lines. When the Minister for Lands made his statement three or four weeks ago, that was the first time this House and the State became acquainted with the true position regarding group settlement. There has been

some misrepresentation. For instance, it has been stated that we were not aware of the agreement. Why, that agreement is recorded in our proceedings. It was actually laid on the Table of the House. The agreement distinctly lays down the maximum amount of money which can, under it, be legitimately charged against a settler, and that maximum is £1,000. I am sure no one will accuse the Minister for Lands of being biased. He gave the House a plain, unvarnished statement of the facts of group settlement. The position disclosed by him is so serious as to justify an inquiry. I have absolute confidence in the personnel of the Royal Commission, which I regard as one of the fairest ever appointed. The Premier gave this side of the House the privilege of nominating two members of the Commission. He did not say to us, "We will appoint this man," or "We will appoint that man." When he approached me, asking me to select a member from the party which I have the honour to lead, he gave no expression of opinion whatever as to who it should be. I know it was expected by some hon. members on this side of the House that I would immediately seize the opportunity to put myself on the Commission. Doubtless I would then have been accused of bias, seeing that I have criticised the administration of the scheme from its inception. I regret to say that, from the facts submitted to us by the Minister for Lands, it appears that my criticisms are only too well justified. However, from my point of view there is a greater issue at stake. The issue is not, as the mover of the motion would have us believe, that the Commission are out simply to make the Leader of the Opposition a scapegoat. The issue is a great one. Millions of pounds of the State's money are involved. Despite the statement of the Minister that he has the information already, I believe the result of the Commission's inquiries and deliberations will be valuable. I believe the members of the Commission will bring in a true report. Further, if they can recommend methods by which the group settlements can be brought within the limits of the agreement as first arranged, namely a maximum debt of £1,000 for each settler, their labours will be of the utmost value to Western Australia. Neither the Country Party nor the organisation to which the members of that party have the honour to belong are, or ever have been, opposed to group settlement, though we have been very dubious about the administration of the scheme. Our doubts are proved to have been justified, in the light of the fact that the maximum under the agreement has been exceeded by £700 up to date.

Mr. Latham: Not many have been exceeded yet, though they may be ultimately.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The cost is less than £1,000 to-day, and the Minister for Lands must admit it.

The Minister for Lands: No. The estimate I gave you was an average.

Mr. THOMSON: I believe the statement of the Minister in charge of group settlement. Not for one moment do I believe that the hon. gentleman would take the serious step of preventing more group settlers from coming here, unless he was absolutely convinced that the figures supplied to him by the departmental officers are correct. The member for Nelson would do well to withdraw his motion. It is wrong to accuse members of this House of being biased.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The member for Nelson should apologise to the chairman of the Commission.

Mr. THOMSON: Certainly it was wrong to accuse the chairman also of being biased. I regret the very suggestion that the Government, in appointing the Royal Commission, desired to make a scapegoat of any member of this Chamber. The members of the present Government stated clearly on the hustings that they would appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into group settlement for two reasons, that the State might know where it stood, and the settlers where they stood.

Mr. TAYLOR (Mr. Margaret) [9.54]: I have listened with great patience to the debate on the motion. I have also listened to all the debates which have taken place in this Chamber on group settlement, though I did not take part in any of them. I am sorry that the Royal Commission are starting out under such a heavy handicap. Certainly the present debate will not make the Commissioners feel too satisfied. However, it is only in keeping with 90 per cent. of the statements I have heard and read about group settlement ever since its inception. Nobody has made the bald statement that he is against group settlement. On the contrary, everyone is in favour of it; but the favour is so restricted as to damp the ardour of every group settler who comes out here.

Mr. Richardson: That is the position in a nutshell.

Mr. TAYLOR: If I were a group settler and read the utterances of members of Parliament and certain Press articles, I would feel like walking off the land. There is never a helping hand or a cheering voice to buoy the settlers up with hope of success. Everybody says, "I believe in group settlement, but I doubt very much whether, if this is not done, or that is not done, the scheme will not fail." That is not the way to encourage settlement of the land. If the pioneers of the Eastern States had been dampened by everybody as our new arrivals on the groups have been and are being dampened, I fear the development of the Eastern States would have been greatly retarded. It is true that the pioneers of the Eastern States got no sustenance. However, they struggled for a crust, and they developed their

lands. The member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths) has advertised the fact, in his opinion, that the group settlers are only waiting to make a little wealth and will then get out of the State.

Mr. Griffiths: Should the fact be kept unknown that men on the groups are under such a load of debt that they cannot carry on?

Mr. TAYLOR: If I were speaking to the group settlers, I would cheer them up. I would tell them that in the Eastern States the country was cleared without sustenance, and that the pioneers there sold wheat at 2s. 9d. per bushel and reared families of a fine type. I hope the debate will do some good. With the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo), I hold that the Government would have acted more wisely had they appointed a Commission outside of those who have already expressed views, whether adverse or favourable, on group settlement. It would have been better, because our hope must be that the Commission will give a report which will be accepted by the House as honest and fair. I know most of the Commissioners, though I do not know the chairman, whom I have never met. Notwithstanding any party feeling there may be in the House, I hope that when those members sit around the Commission table to take evidence, they will do their utmost to ascertain where the faults and leakages have been, and to give a faithful report to the House. If our group settlements fail, our prosperity as a State will be retarded for years.

The Minister for Lands: Group settlement will not fail.

Mr. J. H. SMITH (Nelson—in reply) [9.57]: Anyone hearing the speeches made for and against the motion might well believe that I was opposed to a Commission to inquire into the group settlement and the South-West generally. That, however, is quite incorrect. I advocated inquiry, whether by Royal Commission or by select committee. Members seem to have lost sight of the motion itself. The Minister for Lands, when addressing the House, wandered away from the subject as far as possible, and so did every other member who spoke. If I may, I will read my motion—

That in the opinion of this House the personnel of the Royal Commission on Group Settlement has not the confidence of the State generally and the South-West in particular, for the following reasons . . .

and then I give my reasons.

Mr. Panton: That was the trouble.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It has been suggested to me by the Leader of the Country Party and the Minister for Lands that I should withdraw my motion. I intend to push the motion to a division, if I can get only one voice in addition to my own. The motion deals with the most momentous question be-

fore this country to-day. I believe the chairman of the Commission to be biassed, and I still believe that there is an unseen hand behind the whole thing. The Minister for Agriculture talks about a biassed mind. Is there a more biassed mind in this Chamber than the Minister's?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not reflect upon other members.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Minister reflected upon me, Sir, and he was not called to order.

Mr. SPEAKER: Then you should have called attention to it.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Well, he did not call attention to this. Speaking at Trayning the other day the Minister lauded the qualities of the wheat-growing areas and said, "We have the legacy of the South-West to carry."

The Minister for Agriculture: That is quite correct.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Yet he objects to my saying the chairman of the Commission is biassed! The Minister probably is an honourable man, but he is biassed against the South-West, as was shown in his utterances at Trayning. A man can be honourable in many directions and yet his mind be warped. I say the mind of the chairman of the Commission is warped. We had the Minister for Lands saying the chairman of the Commission is not allied with any political party. Immediately afterwards the Minister for Agriculture said the chairman of the Commission was allied to the party to which I once belonged. There was contradiction by one Minister of another!

The Minister for Lands: I said he never took an active part.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: At a gathering called for political purposes he read a paper condemning the whole of the South-West, saying that we could not dairy more than three or four months of the year. The member for Albany (Mr. A. Wansbrough) says he is satisfied with the Royal Commission. I regret that. I am not satisfied with the personnel of the Commission. I realise that the Commission was necessary, for many reasons, but I am convinced that it is a biassed one. To prove that we have difficulties down there. I want to point out that five weeks ago 12 settlers, new arrivals, went on to Group 104 at Northcliffe. Those men have come to Perth because of a strike or lockout in the group.

Mr. Panton: Is the hon. member in order in introducing new matter in his reply?

Mr. SPEAKER: No. The hon. member must confine himself to a summary of the debate and to replying to arguments made.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I expected that the gag would be put upon me this evening.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in accusing anybody of putting the gag upon him.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: At all events, to-morrow I will take steps to—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in threatening to take any steps.

The hon. member will resume his seat while I am on my feet.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: What is the point, Sir?

Mr. Teesdale: The point is that you are not allowed to do what others may do.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must withdraw that statement.

Mr. Teesdale: I withdraw.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Apparently I must not introduce any new matter.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. member is merely replying to arguments; they were all over the place.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Never mind. I will come to the member for Toodyay.

The Minister for Agriculture: On a point of order. The hon. member is guilty of contempt of the Chamber in making sotto voce statements and muttering about withdrawing. I ask the hon. member to respect the decision of the Chair. He is not in order in reflecting on the Chair.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: All this is for the Chair, not for you.

Mr. SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

The Minister for Agriculture: That the hon. member must respect the Chair.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. I have drawn the hon. member's attention to his utterances and told him that he must not threaten the House or be reflective on the ruling of the Speaker.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have not done that.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member will not debate the point.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: If I have shown disrespect to the Chair, I regret it. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) said I had addressed a party conference and heaped abuse upon some of those present who had condemned the South-West. I did so in no uncertain language. I adopted the same attitude then as I adopt to-day. I believe there is a concerted move amongst the wheatgrowers and those in the northern part of the State to prevent the development of the South-West.

Mr. Thomson: Oh, rubbish!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I do not see why an important question like this should be made the plaything of party politics. The Government have appointed to the Commission a biased chairman. Could they not have appointed a man outside of politics altogether? Would not the public have appreciated it, and would not the people of the Old Country, who are sending us their migrants, have approved of it? Why should it be made a plaything, as are so many questions in this House, where men vote against their convictions time after time because the whips crack and they have to do it. That is why I am so bitter against this appointment and contend that members should rise up and condemn the whole thing rather than approve of this ramp that is being put over the State in general and the South-West in particular. I know there is

an unseen hand at work. I will point out from the Minister's own words that this was a premeditated Commission. The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) has reiterated to-night that he is biased against the South-West. He endeavoured to read from "Hansard" with a view to contradicting the statement I made the other night, every line of which is true. To-night he repeated his previous statement that the country is sour, that it takes seven years to bring it into a condition to grow grasses and other fodders. Yet we are settling migrants down there to-day, and they are growing fodders of every description within two years. The hon. member went on to say that he was a special friend of the chairman of the Commission and had known him for many years. There again I see collusion in the whole thing. The hon. member said it takes seven years to make good in the South-West; yet he professes to go down there as a member of the Commission with an unbiased and unprejudiced mind! I am not afraid for the South-West, nor do I fear any influence that the Minister for Agriculture can bring to bear upon the Commission.

The Minister for Agriculture: Well, what is all the noise about; all the shouting and the tumult?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I will do all the shouting I desire, and the Minister shall not prevent me. I am not afraid that the South-West will not come into its own. This great scheme, launched by the ex-Premier, will go on despite all that Beaufort-street may say, notwithstanding that the Minister for Lands has told us he is going to have only one more group, and then no further immigration.

The Minister for Lands: I did not say that at all.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Minister for Lands told us that group settlement would continue, and in the next breath he said that unless the agreement were altered only one more group would arrive and there would be no more immigration. Is that not true? That is what the Minister said. If he has made up his mind on this point, where is the necessity for the biased Commission? I know where the cry for no more immigration comes from. Beaufort-street is behind the whole thing. Although we can bring Italians into the State and find them immediate employment, there are in Perth to-night a dozen men and women from the groups looking for charity. Hundreds of people in Perth cannot get employment. The Minister for Lands spoke for over an hour, yet devoted less than five minutes to the personnel of the Commission. Even then all he said was that the chairman of the Commission had no connection with any political party; and that was contradicted by the Minister for Agriculture. Then the Minister for Lands had recourse to abuse and said that something was a damned lie. I never tell lies: if I do, they are only white ones, and if I make a mistake I am always ready to withdraw. But I want to say this—and we

shall see whether the Minister for Lands declares this to be a damned lie—that since the Minister has been controlling group settlement he has got groups 20 miles out from a railway. Is that a damned lie?

The Minister for Lands: Some were there before I took over the scheme.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: He has groups 20 miles out from a railway in a locality where the Agricultural Bank lost thousands of pounds in 1911 and 1912. Settlers went there and failed after struggling for years, and yet groups are being established there to-day. There is no damned lie about that.

The Minister for Lands: You told me the land was splendid and not to take any notice of that.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No better land is available in any part of the world, but it lacks railway communication. I am not afraid of the future of the group settlements nor of the inquiries that are to be made. The land is the best in the State and the settlers must make good. The Minister for Lands quoted from "Hansard" some of the statements I made last year or the year before in which I referred to the Government having fallen down on their job, and that there was a fly in the ointment. I did make those statements; I had a right to criticise the then Government and I did so. We must make provision for the future and I believe no provision has been made for dairy stock to-day. The present Government have fallen down on their job just as the late Government fell down on their job too.

Hon. J. Cunningham: You are talking a lot of rubbish.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am talking about dairy cows, about which the Honorary Minister knows very little. I have always said that the Minister for Lands was one of the best men we could have as Minister in charge of group settlements, for I know he will make a success of them if he can. Despite what the Royal Commission may say and despite the little strings pulled behind him I believe the Minister will go ahead and make a success of the scheme. I know he has a rough row to hoe at the present time. I am pleased to know that Crown land has been secured for group settlers, possibly nearer to markets than is the extreme South-West. I brought forward the same proposition a considerable time ago, but the late Government apparently had no faith in my recommendation and did not go on with the proposition. I trust his efforts will not be affected by any secret conclave when the matter comes to be dealt with in another place. I trust the Minister will have a solid backing behind him.

Mr. Panton: The Minister for Lands will have less trouble than the Leader of the Opposition had with his party.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I believe the appointment of the Royal Commission is the worst move made in the history of Western Australia, and that the Minister has, to a great extent, fallen down on his job in

appointing such a Commission, more particularly in his appointment of a chairman who, by his public utterances, has proved that he is biased.

The Minister for Agriculture: Is this a public house argument now?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No, it is not, although the backyard of a public house might be a better place for the Minister than here.

The Minister for Agriculture: This is a pothouse debate.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not make use of insulting language like that.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I would like the Government to reconsider the position and appoint a chairman outside the pale of politics. Is there no one in the South-West who knows the conditions there who could be appointed to the Commission?

Mr. Panton: What about yourself?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I do not want to be appointed on the Commission. There is not a man on the Royal Commission who knows anything about the agricultural conditions in the South-West.

Hon. J. Cunningham: What about Mr. Moore?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: He is a personal friend of mine and he has cut sleepers from Jarrahdale to Karridale. But I do not think Mr. Moore would claim to know much about agriculture in the South-West. I would like to see the Government dissolve the Royal Commission. I do not complain of the Parliamentary members; their appointment is in accordance with the spirit of party politics. But we should not have a biased chairman. The Commission is doomed to failure from the very inception because the public know that the Commissioners are biased. The public will know that the Commissioners were appointed to do their duty and it will be known that the chairman has already declared his opinions regarding the South-West. There are some people who are prepared to put in £100,000 in the South-West through the Milk Producers' Association. The scheme is practically completed. Factories will be established throughout the country, and the Government will not be asked to contribute a penny-piece towards the scheme. If the Commission is to make inquiries throughout the country there is a possibility of capital being driven out of the country and those factories that are so essential to the South-West will not be established. If private enterprise is driven out, the Royal Commission will have to make some recommendation regarding Government control, and I do not want any more of that. I plead with hon. members to deal with the question apart from party politics and to see that the wrong is righted. I say nothing about the honesty or integrity of the chairman, for I believe him to be an honest man, but he is biased and I ask the Government to reconsider their decision.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	8
Noes	26
Majority against	18

AYES.

Mr. Davy	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Denton	Mr. Taylor
Sir James Mitchell	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. North	Mr. Richardson
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Lindsay
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Coverley	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Millington
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Heron	Mr. Panten
Mr. Holman	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. W. D. Johnson	Mr. Thomson
Mr. E. B. Johnston	Mr. Troy
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lamond	Mr. Wilson
	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

at the same place? If so, what is the reason? 2, Is it a fact that the State Sawmills charge more for karri than for jarrah dump fruit cases, while other firms charge the same price for both? If so, what is the reason? 3, Is it a fact that agents for the State Sawmills have been informed that karri dump cases are increased in price above jarrah dump cases because fruit-growers prefer karri cases?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, The State Sawmills charge 10s. 9d. per dozen for karri dump fruit cases delivered at Mt. Barker. The charge made by other firms is not known to the department. The department's principal clients state that the jarrah cases supplied to Mt. Barker are not equal in quality to the karri cases supplied by the department. If there is any difference in price this may be accounted for to some extent by the extra railage necessarily paid owing to the longer haulage. 2, The State Sawmills do not supply jarrah dump cases. The department does not know of any other firm cutting karri cases. 3, No.

MOTION—RINDERPEST CLAIMS, COMPENSATION.

Hon. G. POTTER (West) [4.33]: 1 move—

That assuming the Federal Government are paying the State Government only £12,700 in satisfaction of all unsatisfied claims arising from the outbreak of rinderpest, this House is of opinion that the Government should appoint a board to inquire into all claims for compensation and should provide the balance of any sum requisite to meet just claims as settled by the board.

I feel impelled to move the motion if only to strike a note of warning lest grave injustice be done to a section of the community who, in an hour of extremity, stood between the Commonwealth and disaster. No one who was brought within the maelstrom of suffering caused by the outbreak and control of rinderpest can ever forget the great disabilities incurred by those people and, having a full appreciation of the facts, no one can remain indifferent to their future welfare. Rinderpest struck Western Australia with cyclonic force and suddenness. Dairymen, market gardeners, and others in the Fremantle district were working at top pressure preparing for the Christmas market when the news passed round that a strange disease had broken out in a dairy herd in the vicinity of Fremantle. In a few days there was grave apprehension, followed by consternation when it was realised that cattle were dying like flies. There was a great conflict of opinion as to whether the disease was rinderpest. So serious was the position that when news reached Melbourne of the

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	1005

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

QUESTION—FRUIT CASES, PRICES.

Hon. A. BURVILL asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Is it a fact that the State Sawmills charge 10s. 9d. per dozen for karri dump fruit cases delivered at Mt. Barker, whereas other firms charge 9s. 6d. for similar cases of equal quality delivered