

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 15th October, 1920.

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

QUESTION—FAIR RENTS COURT.

Hon. T. WALKER asked the Premier: Is it the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill this session to establish a fair rents court?

The PREMIER replied: The matter will have consideration.

QUESTION—RAILWAY PROJECT, CARNARVON-KILLILI.

Mr. ANGELO asked the Premier: Have any steps yet been taken to give effect to the resolution unanimously passed by the House on the 15th September last that a report be obtained as to the advisability of constructing a railway from the port of Carnarvon to the junction of the Gaseoyne and Lyons Rivers?

The PREMIER replied: No, but steps will be taken as soon as possible.

QUESTION—CARNARVON JETTY, DREDGING.

Mr. ANGELO asked the Minister for Works: In view of the increasing importance of the port of Carnarvon, will he obtain reports from his engineer and from the Chief Harbour Master as to the advisability of deepening the water around the Carnarvon jetty by means of dredging, thereby enabling ships of deeper draught to use the port?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: Yes.

QUESTION—WHEAT PRICES.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Premier: 1, Has he yet received the statement from the Australian Wheat Pool setting forth its

claim as to local consumption? 2, Can he state the price paid for wheat and flour sold to the Egyptian Government?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, This cannot be stated at present.

QUESTION—ARBITRATION COURT CONGESTION.

Mr. GREEN asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Is he aware that the Shop Assistants' Union of Kalgoorlie and Boulder applied to go before the Arbitration Court over three months ago? 2, Will he arrange to have the case heard whilst the President of the Court is on the Goldfields, immediately after the conclusion of the miners' arbitration case?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes. 2, The President of the Court has been communicated with to this end.

QUESTION—INSPECTOR MANN'S RETIRING ALLOWANCE.

Mr. JONES asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Under which regulation of the Police Benefit Fund was ex-Detective Inspector Mann paid retiring allowance or superannuation? 2, What was the amount so paid to him? 3, Was any further amount paid to this officer in lieu of leave? 4, If so, how much?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Regulation 6. 2, The amount due to him under the Police Benefit Fund regulations, he being a contributor to that fund for 22½ years. 3, Yes. 4, £165 10s. 3d.

QUESTION—PARLIAMENTARY OFFICIALS' SALARIES.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Premier: In view of the discussion which took place in Committee of Supply on the 23rd and 28th ultimo, and of the promises made by the Premier that he would take into consideration the question of increasing the salaries of certain Parliamentary officials, does he intend to bring in Supplementary Estimates this session to increase these salaries and the salaries of the other officers of Parliament?

The PREMIER replied: I will do whatever is necessary.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. O'Loughlin, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Hon. W. C. Angwin (North-East Fremantle) on the ground of urgent private business.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

1, Time of Registration Extension.

- 2, Friendly Societies' Act Amendment.
- 3, Broome Rates Validation.

BILL—CORONERS.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD.

Recommittal.

On motion by the Attorney General, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clause 2.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Application of Act:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I move an amendment—

That before "and" in line 1 of paragraph (c) the words "or under Section 12 of the Agricultural Bank Act 1906" be inserted.

I have previously explained the reason for this amendment. It is simply to bring the temporary inspectors under the Agricultural Bank Act within the definition of public servant.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Bill again reported with an amendment.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. P. Collier and read a first time.

MOTION—TRIBUTING IN MINES.

To inquire by Royal Commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.45]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House, a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into and report upon the methods and general system which obtain in regard to tributing in the gold mines of the State.

We were informed in the Governor's Speech that it was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill to amend the Mining Act during the present session. I understand that the proposed amendment has to do mainly, if not entirely, with matters relating to tributing. It may be urged by the Minister for Mines that, inasmuch as it is the intention of the Government to introduce legislation of this character before the close of the session, any proposal for an inquiry such as that contained in my motion would have the effect of delaying the introduction of legislation and

possibly deferring it altogether. I think it can be shown that an inquiry such as I propose would be one that would occupy very little time indeed. I consider that all the information that would be necessary to enable the Government, and indeed the House, to pass effective and equitable legislation of this character could be secured in not more than a fortnight. After all, the points of importance are not numerous although they are vital to a considerable section of the mining population. If the Government agree to the passing of this motion, I would suggest that commissioners be appointed from within the service. That would tend to reduce the expenditure to a minimum. I am not enamoured of Supreme Court judges as Royal Commissioners. Generally when Parliament decides on the appointment of a Royal Commission, quite regardless of the subject of the inquiry, the practice has been to appoint a judge of the Supreme Court. Even though it may be considered that a judge is best qualified to conduct an investigation of this kind, I think, with regard to matters affecting mining, it will be conceded that there are men in the Mines Department possessed of the necessary technical and practical knowledge to conduct the inquiry that I propose.

Mr. Harrison: Would there not be members in this Chamber capable of adjudicating upon such a question?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not think it would be wise to appoint hon. members to conduct such an inquiry, because there will be strong differences of opinion on the part of various sections of people on the goldfields on the question, and hon. members would have to make recommendations and afterwards legislate on the matters involved.

Mr. Hudson: We have had the experience of the Royal Commission on State children.

Mr. Munsie: You will get the report, all right!

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe the State Mining Engineer would make a suitable man to conduct an inquiry of this kind. All the evidence could be taken within the period of a week, and if an additional week were allowed for the preparation of the report, the whole matter could be completed within a fortnight or three weeks at the outside. The matter of delay is not one which ought to weigh with the Minister. I do not think the officers of the Mines Department are at present in possession of sufficient information as to the developments which have occurred with regard to tributing on the Kalgoorlie and Boulder mines of recent years to enable them to assist the Minister in drafting a satisfactory Bill. Conditions have been imposed from time to time with regard to tributing on the goldfields, which have been passed by practically unobserved by some of the officers of the Mines Department. It is, therefore, all the more necessary that an inquiry should be held to enable these officers and the Minister to present to this House effective and equitable legislation.

Mr. Griffiths: How many men are engaged in tributing in gold mines?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe there are at least 700 men in the Kalgoorlie and Boulder mines at the present time. The number is unfortunately ever increasing. A few years ago, prior to the closing down of the big producing mines, the number was comparatively small. Each year, however, it has been added to considerably, and at present I believe there are nearly 500 men employed on the Perseverance Mine alone, to say nothing of the other mines. The total would, therefore, be quite 700. On present appearances that number will be doubled because as the number of tributers increases in those districts where there used to be large producing mines, it is, unfortunately, evidence that the mines themselves are drawing near to extinction. That is the inevitable phase of mining. Within the next year or two there will be at least a thousand men employed in tributing on the Kalgoorlie and Boulder mines.

Mr. Griffiths: No wonder you want an inquiry.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope the hon. member will vote for my motion.

The Minister for Mines: Why do you not suggest the hon. member as one of the Royal Commissioners?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is true the Minister for Mines is a member of the Country party and I am glad that he has joined up with that party. Seeing that the Country party now stands for the mining as well as the agricultural production of the State, I am sure the Minister will follow his leader and support the motion. I also hope there will be no divided allegiance, at any rate on this question, and that the leader of the Country party will not take one course and the Premier take another course, because the Minister would then be in a false position. I hope that all sections of that party will be in agreement on this point.

The Minister for Mines: We will have a preliminary caucus meeting to avoid a disagreement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The caucus meetings, to which the Minister is now subject, cannot so readily be called caucus meetings within the House, because to call such meetings would necessitate bringing together men who are now in remote country districts. A caucus meeting could not be called at 24 hours' notice. Perhaps that is a good thing. The conditions under which tributing is carried out are wholly favourable at present to the mine-owners. Every condition that is imposed favours the owners, practically without regard to the interests of the men concerned. Tributing agreements may be terminated at short notice. Notwithstanding that an agreement may provide for a certain term, sometimes running into as long as six months, there is in the latest agreement, which the owners have called upon the tributers to sign, a provision that the agreement may be altered or varied by merely posting a notice to that effect for a week. I do not know whether that complies

with the Mining Act, where it is laid down that the tribute agreements have to be registered.

Mr. Mullany: It is a direct contravention of the Mining Act.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Tribute agreements have to be registered, but what is the value of the registration if a week after registration of the tribute agreement, which lays down the conditions existing between the men and the owners for a period of six months, the company may vary it by posting a notice on the mining property and do that without the knowledge of the registrar? Of course, the department has to be satisfied that the conditions are equitable, but the registration is of no practical value to the tributers.

Mr. Harrison: Have the tributers any interest in the surface works?

Hon. P. COLLIER: None whatsoever. I think I will be able to satisfy the hon. member on that point. In the Oroya Links Mine the agreement may be terminated by giving a month's notice, although the original agreement may have provided for a six months' term. A party may have worked at a dead loss for perhaps three months, or part of the term, in anticipation of making good over the whole period by discovering an ore body as a result of their developmental work. If they have carried on a considerable amount of dead work the company may terminate the agreement by giving a month's notice. That is so far as the termination is concerned. The company may also vary the agreement with regard to the charges, royalty, etc., by giving a week's notice. In addition to that, the tributers have to find all the tools, pipes, and practically all the material required for their operations. Tributes are let only for a set period instead of, as has been claimed for so many years, a block being let to a tributing party under contract made with the owners, and the men having the right to work out that block regardless of the time occupied in doing so. That is the claim persistently made by tributers for a number of years, but it is one which has not been conceded by the owners up to the present. The tributers are not free to have their ore treated wheresoever they may desire. They must have it sent for treatment wherever directed to do so by the manager of the mine concerned. If a party is tributing on one mine and the manager of the mine chooses to impose a charge of, say, £2 per ton for treatment, the tributers, although not more than 100 yards away there may be a plant which is prepared to treat the ore for £1 a ton, are not permitted to send their ore there. It must be sent for treatment wherever directed by the manager. The tributers have to pay all charges, including the lease rents, insurance under the Workers' Insurance Act and also contributions under the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. They have also, of course, to man the lease. They are practically responsible for all the charges upon the mine. The company are

able to extort a huge sum of money by way of charges that may be levied on what is called a sliding scale, or what may be termed progressive charges, that is to say charges for treatment according to the value of the ore.

Mr. Harrison: Do you not think that is the most equitable?

Mr. Munsie: It is the greatest robbery.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has been the means of enabling the owners to rob the men concerned. If ore worth, say, 15dwts. can be treated profitably for £1 per ton, surely ore worth two or three ounces per ton should be treated at the same rate. It does not cost any more for treatment; still a profit can be made on it and that difference should go into the pockets of the tributers.

Mr. Harrison: Have the tributers not an advantage from the mine having been previously worked?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is the other way about; the country is getting the advantage from the work carried out by the tributers, because tributers are only permitted to enter mines after those mines have reached the non-paying stage.

Mr. Harrison: The rich ore might be 1,000 feet deep.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It might be a million feet deep. On the notice which is issued to the tributers this is what is set out.

The list of the treatment and other charges to be deducted from the price of gold ore purchased by the company is posted up at the registered office of the company at the underground manager's office, at the store, and at the underground change room.

And this is the iniquitous part—

But the company reserves the right to vary the list from time to time in part or in the whole. No alteration will be made or enforced until the proposed new scale of charges has been posted up on the mine at the various points named above, for not less than one week.

The scale of charges is then set out. For sulphide ore commencing at 15dwts., 20s. per long ton, and the amount increases by small sums until when the contents are 25dwts. the charge is 27s. 6d. per ton. On ore containing over 25dwts there is an advance of an additional 6d. per dwt. up to a maximum of 40s. per ton. That is to say, on ore worth 50dwts., the company are enabled to charge 40s. a ton. That is where it is contended by the men concerned that they are being robbed, because the company do not deny that the charge of 20s. per ton which is imposed for ore worth 15dwts. is not profitable. The very fact that they agree to treat the ore for 20s. is in itself evidence that that is a paying rate, and simply because the ore is of richer value, the company take to themselves the right to increase the amount from 20s. to 40s.

Mr. Teesdale: You want a flat rate.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, a rate which will be a payable rate, say, £1 or even 23s. or 24s. a ton, quite irrespective of the value of the ore. It is contended that the mine owners are not entitled to charge the extortionate price—for it can be called nothing else but that, or profiteering—

Mr. Pilkington: Is that the usual agreement?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

Mr. Pilkington: Is there a royalty charged as well?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; they have two barrels, one can be sure of that. They are like the man who generally runs a swing and a merry-go-round; what he does not get on the swing he picks up on the merry-go-round. In addition to the charges up to 40s. a ton for 50dwt. ore, there are other charges; there are charges for compressed air. It may be said that some charge for compressed air is equitable, inasmuch as a service is rendered for the amount which is charged, but as to whether the charge is fair would be the subject of inquiry at the hands of a royal commission. At any rate the price charged now for compressed air is one machine one shift per day, £10 per month; one machine two shifts, £20; two machines one shift, £20; two machines two shifts, £40. These charges are open to modification in mines where development work, such as winze sinking or driving is being done. In addition to that, charges are made for hoisting. These are as follows:—From the 100ft. to 500ft. levels at the rate of 2s. 6d. per long ton; from the 700, 900, and 1,100ft. levels at the rate of 2s. 9d. per long ton; and all levels below 1,100ft. at the rate of 3s. per long ton. The Minister for Mines who has a good deal of practical knowledge of this matter, will himself say that that rate is an extortionate one. He will know from his practical knowledge that these hauling charges on mines that are concerned in tributes can be described as nothing less than profiteering. There are other charges as well. A charge is imposed for tool sharpening. I do not know whether any hon. member has had practical experience of sharpening tools, but if the wages to blacksmiths or tool sharpeners on the fields were based upon the charges levied by these companies, I venture to say that some of the sharpeners instead of getting 15s. or 16s. a day would be in receipt of £2 or £3 a day. The prices are, star bits 6d., chisel bits 4d. and points 1d. The member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) will have an idea of the wages tool sharpeners receive, and what they would earn at this rate. I guarantee they would earn much in excess of what is being paid these people at the present time. A blacksmith receives about 15s. or 16s. a day under these charges and the company collect 25s. for his work.

Mr. Harrison: What about the power and the machinery that is used in this work?

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member seems to hold a brief for the company and he is conducting a sort of cross examination on behalf of the mine owners.

Mr. Harrison: I only asked a question.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As a representative of the mining industry the hon. member should display some concern for the men as well as the owners. I understand that the association to which he belongs is broadening its platform; it previously had regard for only the agricultural section. If the hon. member is going to lead his band to victory he will have to show some consideration for the men as well as the mine owners. We shall be glad to have an invasion from our primary producing friends on the goldfields during the next elections.

Mr. Brown interjected.

Hon. P. COLLIER: All sections are provided for except the unfortunate citizens living in the area represented by the member for Subiaco. The hon. members for the metropolitan area seem to be left high and dry; the unfortunate city man will have to scratch for himself in a few months time. In addition to the charges that I have already referred to, there is also a charge which is described as a royalty. What the companies fail to get from the tributer in one respect they take from him in another. The royalty charge is on a sliding scale as well. It commences with sulphide ore up to 9dwts., no royalty; from 9 to 12dwts., $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., from 12 to 15dwts. 10 per cent., and so on. The scale goes to 40 to 80dwts. 30 per cent. and over 80dwts. 40 per cent.

Mr. Harrison: Evidently profit sharing.

Mr. Munsie: They leave a tributer with nothing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They charge 40s. for treatment and 40 per cent. for royalty. There is this to be said in regard to the excessive treatment charges, that the companies do render some service, but so far as the royalty charge is concerned no service whatever is rendered. The leader of the Country party talks about profit sharing. I have here some returns from one of the principal mines at Boulder where tributary is carried on. The first of these is a return which shows that the party crushed 89 tons for a yield of 24dwts. per ton, or a total of 1090zs., the value of which was £439 19s. There was deducted from that by the company on the sliding scale basis 27s. 6d. a ton for treatment, which made £128 19s. 6d.; the royalty charge was 20 per cent. and that came to £87 18s. 6d.; haulage and other charges totalled £11 1s. 8d., making a grand total charge by the company of £289. That is how profit sharing pans out. The company received no less a sum than £289, and there was left for the tributary £190. That was the result in that particular instance, so that if the company do believe in profit sharing they take care to give themselves the benefit of the doubt.

Mr. Davies: They take the lion's share.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have another re-

turn which shows that a parcel of ore of 101 tons was treated for a return of 950zs. of a value of £381. There was deducted as charges levied by the company for treatment £118 18s. 10d., royalty £57, haulage at 2s. 6d. per ton, £12 18s.; cartage £10 18s., insurance and revenue stamp £6 3s. 4d. and 6d. respectively. Of a total of £381, the company took £213 17s. and there was left for the men £167 9s. 3d. In each case the company took considerably over 50 per cent.—as a matter of fact it was about 60 per cent.

Mr. Griffiths. Did the member for Roebourne say "profit snaring?"

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have another return. This shows that 49 tons were crushed yielding 77 0zs. of a total value of £311 3s. 9d. The total charges—I need not particularise them all—were £182 11s. 5d., so that the men, in fact, secured only £128 12s. 4d. There is another instance where the men did the whole of the work and the company got considerably over half the proceeds. It is the most glaring case of all, because we find that the values of the parcel were higher, and consequently the higher rate for treatment and the higher royalty charges operated. Let us see how this parcel panned out so far as the tributary were concerned. The parcel was of 95 tons, and went 54 dwts. to the ton, the total yields being 258 0zs. valued at £1,035 14s. 3d. It will be seen, therefore, that this was a pretty rich parcel. The deductions made by the company were: treatment charges on the highest scale of 40s., £194 10s. 6d., royalty charges at 30 per cent., £310 14s. 3d., revenue stamp, 1s. 3d., and insurance £4 2s. 8d.

Mr. Teesdale: They never forget the stamp.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Thus, of the total value of £1,036 14s. 3d. the company took £343 6s. 5d., and left the men £492 7s. 10d. This was achieved merely by the agency of this iniquitous system of charging for treatment and levying royalty on a sliding scale basis. Any member who has any knowledge at all of mining, will agree that this is nothing less than impudent robbery. There is no other name by which it can be described. Wherever men have been fortunate enough to tribute where the values are fairly high, as in this instance, they suffer because of the increased charges.

Mr. Teesdale: You would not mind the royalty if the treatment charges were nominal.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, the sliding scale basis is wrong, both regarding royalty and the treatment charges.

Mr. Pilkington: The royalty must be a percentage of the gold won, surely.

Mr. Munsie: Well, let them charge a decent royalty, not one rising up to 40 per cent.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and particularly when the charge of 40 per cent. is applied

in cases where the values are under 4 ozs. It is altogether an excessive charge.

Mr. Foley: They take it on the gross, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, that is another addition. They also make deductions for moisture, and everywhere it is possible to make a reduction in favour of the company it is provided for in the agreement. In addition to taking all this, we must remember that the companies only pay the tributers £4 per ounce for their gold, though, in some cases, they have been obtaining £4 4s. 11d. for it. By this means, they have been robbing the tributers of 4s. 11d. per ounce as well.

Mr. Foley: They are entering into another arrangement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but it is another Shylock arrangement. In the case of the Perseverance mine, for 1919, in addition to the amount they received under these charges I have indicated, they received no less than £12,000 for silver. The men know nothing about the occurrence of silver in the gold ore, or at any rate did not know that their ore contained silver to any quantity. That information was only disclosed in the recent case which was heard before the courts. If Shylock has not been put altogether in the background by that, I am no judge of the Shylock business. In addition to that, however, this company during the past year or 18 months has been paid not £4 4s. 11d. per ounce for the gold, which was the old standard rate, but have been paid as high as £5 13s., owing to the increased price received by the export of gold. The companies have been denying that the tributers were entitled to participate in that increased price. Members will remember that during the progress of the recent court case, where the matter was decided, the judges of the High Court were equally divided, two deciding in favour of the tributers and two against them. Unfortunately, because the case went against the tributers in the State court, that verdict prevailed in the High Court.

Mr. Pilkington: It was purely a question of the meaning of the contract.

Mr. Foley: If we get the contract altered, that is what we want.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not profess to have any legal knowledge, but I certainly prefer the opinion of Mr. Justice Isaacs and his colleague, Mr. Justice Rich, to that of the other judges. I say the whole thing discloses absolute Shylock methods, which should be put down. I have no doubt that the Minister for Mines will say that if such extortionate charges are enforced, he does not agree with them for one moment, and it is his object in introducing a Bill this session, to give tributers a fairer deal.

Mr. Griffiths: Do you say that the inquiry you suggest would take a week, and that the report could be obtained in the course of another week?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I say it would only take a few weeks, and I do not think that

the House will be in a position to do justice to all parties concerned except by an investigation such as I indicated at the beginning of my remarks. As showing the cost of treatment, I would cite the case of the Perseverance mine. All the figures I have quoted have reference to the Perseverance mine, which was the one concerned in the recent court case. In 1912-13 the total costs for everything were 17s. per ton. Now they take £2 per ton for treatment and 40 per cent. for royalty as well.

Mr. Mullany: And they have haulage charges as well.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, as well as many other charges, and yet, covering everything I have mentioned, their costs were only 17s. I admit of course that these costs are a bit higher to-day.

Mr. Pilkington: But would that cover mining?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, everything. Taking a period of one year, the amount necessary to cover all charges of every description was 17s. per ton. In the return I have quoted regarding the rich parcel, while the company was able to get along with 17s. per ton before the war, we find now under the return referred to, that they take over £500 out of £1,000. That is, they have taken about £5 per ton.

Mr. Munsie: And yet they do no mining.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, nothing at all except supervise and supply the necessary plant, and haul and treat the ore.

Mr. Foley: And they get extra charges for haulage as well.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On this parcel, they have made pretty well 500 per cent. more than it actually cost the company a few years ago. Even when we allow for the very substantial increased costs resulting from the war and other considerations, it will be seen that the company have been making enormous profits. This company closed down about three years ago when they reached what was regarded as the non-paying stage. For the last year or two they were operating they showed a profit as low as 1d. per ton, and at other periods went as low as 3d. per ton. They were able to continue operations by putting through a very large tonnage each year. Eventually they got below the low-water line, so to speak, and they closed down. The result was that the mine was let on tribute and the tributers—there are some 400 or 500 of them who are engaged in tributing—have returned in 15 months to the company, which could not make the mine pay, enough to enable dividends to be paid amounting to £76,000 in that period. This was achieved as the result of the gold that they have stolen from the tributers. There is no other phrase that fits the position. It just shows what can be done by tributers as compared with companies. The result is bad from a mining point of view, for where the companies were able to operate with 5dwts. the tributers leave all ore of less value than

that which goes 15dwts. to the ton. This has bad results from the point of view of the State, inasmuch as a considerable tonnage of ore is left in the ground and may be covered up, to be lost to the State for all time. All ore between 6 and 15dwts. is left in the ground by the tributers, because it does not pay them to mine ore of less value than 15dwts. If reasonable charges were made by the companies it would mean that most of the mines around Kalgoorlie and Boulder, and even the Perseverance Mine, would be treating thousands of tons of ore which now have to remain in the ground as a dead loss to the State.

Mr. Foley: The companies may possibly reap the benefit themselves, and get at this ore.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is the position. There is another matter of which I have no personal knowledge—I do not know whether it would or should come within the scope of a Royal Commission such as I have asked for. It is freely rumoured in the districts of Kalgoorlie and Boulder—in fact I have been definitely informed by men whom I regard as reliable men—that when this company closed down because the mine was non-paying, there were very considerable quantities of ore which had been broken and mined there, ore of a fairly high value. I cannot vouch for this, but so it is alleged. We do know that the men who were most successful in obtaining tributes immediately the mine closed down were the officials of the mine when it was working for the company. I believe that highly placed officials secured tributes. I do not know that the general manager is interested and I do not know that he is not interested in any tributes, but most of the officials next under him secured tributes. It is a most extraordinary thing that, while it did not pay the company to mine this ore, some of these tribute parties have had treated very considerable parcels of ores for values as high as 30zs. 16dwts. It is alleged, and I am informed that it can be proved, that a tribute party composed of officials put through a first crushing which went 17dwts., a second crushing which went 24dwts., and a third crushing of 700 tons which went 30zs. 16dwts., and that a thousand tons of this ore was mined and broken before the mine closed down. All that the tribute party had to do was to truck it and haul it.

Mr. Munsie: Someone was in the know there.

The Minister for Works: Quite probably.

Mr. Teesdale: Some of the underground bosses of the company?

Mr. Pilkington: Arranging it in sympathy with the tributers?

Hon. P. COLLIER: As a matter of fact an underground boss and a sampler were in one of the tribute parties.

Mr. Munsie: That accounts for the milk in the cocoanut.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is not the only instance. This broken ore was not hauled until the mine closed down and the tributers got to work. I do not know whether it is as a result of their good fortune in having got good tributes that a few of these men are able to display an outward appearance of affluence by the possession of motor-cars.

The Minister for Mines: In some cases it is only appearance.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe that is so. Judging by their outward and worldly appearance, some of them are doing fairly well.

Mr. Johnston: A motor-car reduces one from affluence.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Some of these tribute parties declined to join in with the other parties which took a case to the court recently. No doubt they thought they would alienate the friendship of the boss, or the man in charge, if they did so, and that possibly their tributes would not be renewed. I am informed that they were quite willing to accept any of the conditions imposed by the company as to the share that should be given to those tributers for the extra amount recovered on account of the high price of gold, but I cannot vouch for this. It is common talk in the streets of Kalgoorlie and Boulder. If it is true, then, as the Minister for Works stated, it can be described in only one way. If it is true that ore was broken and paid for by the company, ore of values as high as 30zs., and the benefit of which went to the tribute parties who were the officials on the mine when it closed down, then I claim that this is a matter for investigation. However, that is somewhat beside the question with which I shall deal in connection with the appointment of a Royal Commission.

Mr. Johnston: Would the commission investigate that charge?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I see no reason why it should not.

Mr. Munsie: We want it investigated if possible. It would probably put a stop to this sort of thing in future.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This shows that a man who happens to be in a highly paid or responsible position on a mine on the Golden Mile which closes down and is subsequently let on tribute, is a fortunate man if he stands well in with the boss when the tributes are going round. That seems to be clear from the operations in connection with the Perseverance mine. If is extraordinary that with considerable quantities of rich ore in the Perseverance mine, it had to close down because it did not pay, and yet under the charges levied for treatment and royalties, a sum of £75,000 was received in 15 months. If the ore was there to be won by merely walking into the stops, it was there to be won by the company before the mine closed down. This is a matter for the concern of the company. If the company is not concerned, it should be.

The Minister for Mines: The company might not be aware of it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps not, but this affects the State as well as the company and the pockets of the company. Again, I say that I have no personal knowledge of the matter. I have been told this by men whom I regard as reliable. I hope that the Minister will agree to the appointment of a Royal Commission. The time necessary to make the inquiry should not be long, and should allow ample opportunity to pass the requisite legislation before the close of the present session. If an official of the Mines Department were appointed to make the inquiry—the State Mining Engineer or the principal registrar who for many years has acted in the capacity of warden in various parts of the goldfields—the cost should not be great.

The Minister for Mines: The under secretary, I understand, has acted as warden.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And so has the principal registrar, Mr. Lang. There would be little cost and I believe the result would be that members would then be in a position to deal with the matter which, in some respects, is somewhat technical.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [5.39]: I propose to take the unusual course of dealing with this question at once in lieu of the common procedure of asking for an adjournment in order to obtain information from the department. My object is two-fold. In the first place I realise the importance of the matter of making proper legislative provision for our system of tributing on the mines, and, secondly, I realise more now than when I entered the Chamber this afternoon not only the urgency but the importance to the mining industry of inquiring into some of the statements made by the leader of the Opposition. I wish the House to understand that this is a matter which can be viewed from very many standpoints. It is not usual for a mine-owner, or what is known as a leaseholder, to properly appreciate his position and the position of the general community. The valuable minerals in our State belong to the State, and for the purpose of convenience, we provide that a person who first pegs a certain piece of Crown land shall be entitled to a lease and to recover the minerals for his own use. For the recovery of these valuable minerals we provide for definite payments by way of lease rents, or a royalty to the State.

Hon. P. Collier: In some places they impose heavy charges.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, but we have allowed to grow in the mind of the leaseholder the impression that he is the State, and that the State does not count in connection with the operations on a lease. Recently in Kalgoorlie, I tried to impress upon all interested that as Minister for Mines, representing the Executive on behalf of the general community, I am a landlord, and that when I lease my land to a tenant,

I am entitled to provide conditions for my protection as landlord just as much as for the benefit of the leaseholder. I am entitled to say that such conditions should be imposed on the leaseholder, and that if the leaseholder introduces a system of tribute by permitting a third party to operate on the lease, these conditions shall be not only for his special benefit, but will protect the best interests of the landlord representing the general community. I have no hesitation in saying that the conditions which have prevailed under the tribute system during the last two or three years, particularly at Kalgoorlie, have not been to the benefit of the State, but have been largely to the detriment of the State. The leader of the Opposition has pointed out that under the tribute conditions now operating, the mine-owner provides a sliding scale for all his charges, including even royalty. I would not be so much opposed to a sliding scale if I were satisfied that the commencing point would be on the basis that no royalty would obtain unless something approaching a living wage were first obtained by the men.

Hon. P. Collier: And that the maximum point were reasonable, too.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If a royalty is imposed on the basis of the gold recovered, it is tantamount to extracting from an individual something which he is not in a position to provide because the value of the gold is the value of the labour applied to recover it. Gold in the earth is of no value; it is only when labour is applied that it become of value. If the cost of producing the gold is increased by reason of extracting a royalty, that is detrimental to the interests of the State. I pointed this out to the representatives of the Chamber of Mines, and they told me that in such instances they did not charge a royalty. After further discussion I learnt that they did not actually impose a royalty in those cases where the value of the gold won was not sufficient to pay the costs, but it turned out that they always included particulars in their books, so that if at any time the tributer did recover sufficient gold to pay costs, he would be charged. Finally, they admitted that this was so. They contended that if it so happened that a tributer was fortunate enough to recover sufficient gold, then he ought to pay. This might appeal to the leaseholder, but it does not appeal to the landlord.

Hon. P. Collier: He has no guarantee.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The leaseholder has the guarantee because all the gold passes through his hands. He is not like the storekeeper, who supplies goods to a man operating at a period when nothing is being produced in anticipation of being able to recover the value when the produce is grown and the grower is able to pay. In the event of his not producing and thus not being in a position to pay the storekeeper, the latter loses. The position of the leaseholder, however, is quite different. He simply builds up a debit against the tributer; and if the tributer gets sufficient gold

to pay the back royalty, then the leaseholder, who acts as the tributer's banker so to speak, retains the amount of the accrued royalty. We might take a number of such cases as have been alluded to by the leader of the Opposition and infer from them that the conditions imposed on tributers are always harsh. That would be a dangerous inference. Take the case of the Perseverance mine. Whatever amount that mine may have distributed to its shareholders by way of dividends, some people had to be in a position to establish a mine of that size, to furnish the money required for working and plant and machinery. There are many mines of the same character as the Perseverance which have never returned a single penny of the money put into them. We must not view every case from the standpoint of the Perseverance mine, which happens to have paid its shareholders handsomely. Moreover, the man who is now extracting gold from the Perseverance mine can only do so long as the shafts are kept open and the plant and equipment are available to him. Those facilities have to be furnished by somebody, and usually that somebody is a mining company.

Mr. Lutey: But that does not apply in all cases.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Quite so. That is the very point I want to make, that we must not seek to apply the same conditions to all cases. I fear that legislation based on some individual case may be enacted, with consequent injury not only to the leaseholder, but to the State and the tributer as well. I heard no objection from the tributers to fair payment being made to the mines for the various operations and plant that enable the tributer to mine. But what the tributers do object to, and, as I think, rightly, is that they have no redress in the event of the companies imposing hardships on them. It is true that the agreement between the tributer and the leaseholder must be submitted to the mining warden for approval; but when an agreement has been signed by the parties to it and when there is no objection raised to its terms by either party, the warden, who may be without practical knowledge of the subject, will be apt to infer that the agreement must be satisfactory and proper. The tributers, however, say that nowadays they have no option but to accept the agreements as drawn by the mining companies, since otherwise they would get no tribute. After all, tributing is in the nature of a gamble. If a man knows, or thinks he knows, of a certainty in tributing, he will put his money or his labour into it and will accept an agreement notwithstanding that its terms are not wholly satisfactory to him. If he comes out all right, of course he says nothing. But the tributers generally who have to accept these agreements and have no redress whatever, do suffer hardship. This is not a complaint that has been raised only of recent years. The same complaint is and has been heard wherever tributing exists and has existed.

Hon. P. Collier: The complaint is raised especially now because tributing has increased so much lately.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The conditions are imposed by the man on the box seat, in this case the leaseholder, and he acts in accordance with human nature. But the landlord, that is to say the State, is in a position to declare that certain conditions shall not be permitted. On the other hand, of course, if we make the conditions of tributing so difficult from the leaseholder's point of view that he will prefer rather to do just so much work as will comply with the labour conditions, we shall be doing something very much to the detriment of the tributer. I discussed the question in all its phases with the tributers—the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) was also present—and they said, "We know that if we impose conditions which are not satisfactory to the mining companies they will only just do what is necessary to comply with the labour conditions." Such a position, naturally, would not be in the interests of the State. But I suggest that we might set up, either by Act of Parliament or by regulations under an Act, some tribunal which can decide disputes between tributer and company as they arise, judging each case on its merits and ensuring that the scales are held evenly between the two parties. Such a tribunal would probably prove detrimental to no section, but advantageous to all—leaseholder, tributer, and State. If the State permits a man to work a piece of land, for instance, it requires him to work it in a satisfactory manner, in a manner which will not be a menace to the man's neighbours, or to the general community. And that is the principle we must apply to mining. We have this fact staring us in the face, that the tributer, when he gets a tribute for a period of three or six months, does his utmost to follow any rich chute and to take out as much gold as ever he can with the least possible labour, leaving the balance of the wall standing.

Hon. P. Collier: That occurs where the system of leasing for a period is adopted.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Quite so. Take the Great Boulder mine, for instance; and the Great Boulder is not a bit better than many other mines. The Great Boulder has not been operated on the same system as the Lake View, which put up a record of 30,000 ounces per month and left the balance behind to be found unprofitable to work eventually. Thousands of ounces of gold have been put into circulation out of the Great Boulder Mine which would have been left in the ground had the management adopted the system of just following the rich chutes. The State, as landlord, is entitled to see that a mine shall be worked to the best advantage. But the tribute is apt to leave the lower grade ore because he is up against it in point of time, time being the essence of his contract. If he does not

get out all he can in the three months or six months of his tribute, that is the end of him. Therefore we cannot blame him for chasing the rich chutes. On the other hand, what he has left behind in the block will in all probability afterwards be found unprofitable to work. May I also point out that in tributing agreements one finds variations even in the case of agreements made by one mine. I recently suggested to the tributers and also to the representative of the Kalgoorlie Chamber of Mines that most of the difficulties would very likely be overcome by the adoption of a block system of tributing. But, in reply, I was met with certain objections, some of which I think require consideration. The block system is suitable in most cases, but it is not always suitable. I know that in Victoria tributing is let on the basis of 100ft. cube. In one mine 100ft. cube may be a reasonable tribute and may occupy only a reasonable time in working. But in another mine such a block might be utterly unreasonable. In one mine such a block may be only a small chute or body of ore which will only take three months to work. In another mine the whole of the 100ft. cube may be one huge body of ore, and if it were worked by a party of two or three tributers, or even eight or 10 tributers, would take perhaps half a life time to work out. In the case of the Perseverance mine, for instance, a block of that description would take five or 10 years to work; and if all the other tributers in the mine were restricted to two years, we could hardly expect the company to maintain all its workings and plant, properly secured in accordance with the Mines Regulation Act, just to benefit one party of tributers. There are all these difficulties to be faced. It was then suggested that a combined block and time system of tributing should be adopted. In that connection I suggested the establishment of a tribunal to be called a board of assessors. I gave it that name partly for the sake of convenience and partly because we have heard so much of mining boards and of their methods not being always satisfactory. My view is that there should be a block system with a time limit of, say, six months. Then, in the event of the tributer still being prepared to continue operations at the expiration of the six months, he could apply to the board of assessors for a decision as to whether there should be an extension of his tribute. If he could show that he had legitimately worked the block and had done all that could be expected of him, and that there was still gold to be won in the block without detriment to the leaseholder, the board of assessors should be authorised to grant an extension of time. On the other hand, the board of assessors would not grant an extension if the leaseholder proved that a party of tributers had not legitimately worked their block but had been deliberately delaying the work; if he proved, as has even been sug-

gested, that a tribute was being used as a cloak to cover up illicit gold buying. In such cases the leaseholder should be entitled to approach the board of assessors during the currency of a tribute with a view to having it terminated or other conditions imposed. The board of assessors might, for instance, impose a condition requiring that sufficient men should be employed to work out the block properly within a reasonable time. What I fear is that the tributer, in asking for legislation, expects that a complete set of conditions to govern tributing and to make his position clearly and easily understood, will be laid down in an Act of Parliament. My own belief is that such a measure would cause more difficulty than ever. There would be endless complications as the result of an Act of Parliament which endeavoured to lay down a set of rules to be adhered to in every instance. In my opinion such an Act cannot be framed. The most we can do by legislation is, I think, to set up first of all definite conditions which must be recognised by all mining companies, and then to provide regulations, which can be varied from time to time in accordance with the requirements of different districts, and over and above that, to provide, in a board of assessors, a medium through which either party can apply for a variation of the conditions. I am replying at once, because I do not want any delay. If we are to have this question hung up for three or four months the session will be over and we shall still have no means of varying the conditions, which everybody recognises as being unsatisfactory. I have had great difficulty in drafting the Bill. In reply to the questions asked by the member for Sussex in respect of the Oil Bill, I could have said that the delay is due to the fact that the whole of it will be embraced in the Mining Bill. Personally I think that all matters affecting mining should be under the one Bill. I have the Oil Bill ready for incorporation, but the trouble is in regard to these conditions affecting tributers. That being the case, I do not want any commissioner who will take up three or four months inquiring into the subject. If it is felt desirable, for the purpose of securing legislation, that we should have this Royal Commission, we should allow the question raised by the leader of the Opposition to remain in abeyance for the time being and get on with the inquiry into the subject of the proposed legislation. Then, when we get the report of the Commissioner on that point, the Government could decide whether the powers of the Commissioner should be widened to enable him to inquire into other phases of the question. However, do not let us hang up this phase, or it may become so complicated that even the people in London, directors of some of our mines, might ask that they should be heard in the matter.

Hon. P. Collier: The two questions are really separate.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, but I think the second question might remain in abeyance while we have an inquiry into the conditions affecting tributers from the point of view of providing legislation. I see no objection to such an inquiry. I have met both parties, and certainly both were pretty frank. As the leader of the Opposition has said, any report, to be acceptable, must come from a source admittedly impartial. In brief, the complaint of the tributers to-day is that they have no tenure. The mine-owner insists that he must have the right to dismiss a member of the party, or even the whole party. If that is not a breach of agreement I do not know what is. The mine-owners say they must retain that power in case of certain things happening, such as a man dealing in illicit gold. As I see it, both parties are entitled to our protection. To my mind any charge of dealing in illicit gold should be heard, not in open court, but before the board of assessors sitting in camera. It is not in the interests of anybody that such charges should be heard in open court, because even though the case should be promptly dismissed, there will always lurk with the public a remembrance that Tom Jones was regarded by the company as a suspicious character. I do not know how the difficulty can be got over except by the appointment of such a board as I have suggested, to hear these cases in camera. If the debate is adjourned I will be prepared to recommend to Cabinet the appointment of a commission. But to empower that commission to inquire into all phases of the question would entail a delay of at least two months, and so defeat the object of the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lutey: It will be a Royal Commission?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, it will have to be a Royal Commission to obtain the necessary evidence. I am sure the leader of the Opposition does not desire to delay the question.

Hon. P. Collier: My idea is that we should have a report in, at most, three weeks.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, I should think so. The Bill is practically drafted. I suggest that the draft should be accepted by the Royal Commissioner as a basis on which to work. He could then recommend in his report what variations should be made.

Hon. P. Collier: If copies of the draft were sent to the tributers and the mine owners they would then be in a position to discuss the matter with the commission.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so. There are three parties to the problem, the State, the leaseholder and the tributer. For the 15 months ended May last the tributers on the Kalgoorlie belt produced half a million pounds worth of gold. We should not introduce legislation which would reduce that sum to a quarter of a million. It would be very easy to do that. I want to

guard against the possibility of doing anything which will be prejudicial to any party. I have no objection to the proposed inquiry.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [6.8]: I am glad the Minister has conditionally agreed to the appointment of a Royal Commission. I hope the Royal Commissioner will not be an official of the Mines Department, for it would be placing him in a most invidious position. We have in the Mines Department officers quite capable of acting as royal commissioners, but for their own sake I say they should not be appointed.

The Minister for Mines: But surely an officer of the Mines Department would know better than an outsider the conditions affecting the tributers.

Mr. MUNSIE: Still, I hope the Minister will not accept the suggestion of the leader of the Opposition and appoint an officer of the Mines Department.

The Minister for Mines: Whom would you get?

Mr. MUNSIE: I would suggest the police magistrate, Mr. Canning.

Mr. Teesdale: He has no knowledge of mining.

The Minister for Mines: It would take 12 months to educate him on the question.

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not think so. In any case there are others with sufficient legal knowledge and practical experience who are not connected with the Mines Department. The Minister has told us that during the last 15 months the tributers on the Golden Mile have produced gold to the value of half a million. That means a very great deal to the State. The Minister went on to say that consequently we must be careful not to do anything likely to reduce that amount. I agree with the Minister. But if the mining companies in Western Australia are going to insist on the retention of the existing conditions, the House is in duty bound to do something, even though its action might prejudice the quantity of gold won by tributers. In my opinion any system to be laid down should have prominent among its conditions the stipulation that no mining company shall let a tribute until the mine, according to its own management, has failed. While the leader of the Opposition was speaking, the member for Avon interjected "Do not the men receive the benefit of the work previously done by the company?" To an extent they do, but if the Perseverance Company could have succeeded in making the mine pay, not one tributer would ever have got in there. If the company, on finding they could not make the mine pay, had been unable to let tributes, they would have abandoned the mine, and gone into liquidation. As the leader of the Opposition pointed out, the company since going into liquidation has paid £60,000 odd in dividends, money extracted from the tributer. I know from the president of the tributers' organisation that they went to the Chamber of Mines for the purpose of discussing better conditions for tributing on the mines. They proposed that

in the making out of tributers' statements, the royalty should be charged on the net instead of on the gross. It is nothing more than a fair proposition.

The Minister for Mines: Not necessarily.

Mr. MUNSIE: It is, if anything, less than fair to the tributer. But what did the Chamber of Mines do? They went so far as to threaten that if by legislation or regulation the tributers got that concession, every tribute on the Golden Mile would be stopped.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. MUNSIE: Before tea I was dealing with the threat of the Chamber of Mines that if certain conditions were granted it would mean the stopping of all tributes on the Golden Mile. If the tributers are to be given a fair deal the employers and the mine managers will, to an extent, show their teeth, and endeavour to frighten tributers by saying, "We will cancel all tributes." If that does come about the tributer has to put up with it. I do not, however, think the mining directors in London of such mines as the Perseverance, the Brown Hill, the Oroya Brownhill, or the Oroya Links, will allow the managers in Australia to close the mines down and prevent them from getting dividends out of the tributers, which they are getting now, simply because there is a difference of opinion between the managers and the tributers. I take it the Minister for Mines has agreed to the appointment of a Royal Commission conditionally on the Commission being empowered only to inquire into the actual conditions of the tributers, for the purpose of drafting legislation in the interests of the mining industry and tributing generally. I do not know whether that is so or not. If a Royal Commission is appointed I do not mind it first of all inquiring into these conditions for the purpose of submitting a report, which would enable the Minister to draft legislation dealing with tributing, if it is at a later stage going on with the full inquiry. I am anxious for a full inquiry into the tributing system generally, and particularly in connection with the system on the Golden Mile. I am not interested personally in any tribute, and have had to take the views of others who are interested. I do, however, know a majority of the tributers now engaged in that work, and the men say that even to-day there are certain blocks in mines which mine owners are periodically prepared to allow them to work on tribute. If there is a good tribute in any of these mines the average tributer has no hope of getting it unless he takes in with him one of the heads. That has been proved times out of number. It is into these conditions appertaining to tributing, as well as the extortionate royalty and crushing charges that are imposed, that I want the inquiry made in the interests of the general shareholders of the mining companies. On the Perseverance mine a crosscut was put in a few

feet from the old level which had been abandoned, and driven round the workings in the solid country until the men had reached a spot where they knew that a face of really good ore existed. The men who were after that tribute knew of this good face of ore. In the interests of mining generally I want to say that the management of this mine has been lax in not taking this up itself.

Mr. Harrison: That is the reason why one of the heads wanted to be in it.

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes.

Mr. Underwood: How are you to get over that?

Mr. MUNSIE: I do not propose to get over that. The first thing that has to be conceded, as far as the tributer is concerned, is that the mine is out of existence before it is let on tribute. I have five or six tribute agreements here. Wherever a lease on tribute is referred to in these agreements it is referred to as "the demised premises."

Mr. Hudson: There is nothing wrong with that.

Mr. MUNSIE: No. It shows that the companies have been satisfied that the mine is dead.

Mr. Hudson: You have mistaken the meaning of the words.

Mr. MUNSIE: No. I do not mistake the meaning of those who gave the tribute.

Mr. Hudson: You are making a mistake.

Mr. MUNSIE: Not so far as those who let the tributes are concerned.

Mr. Hudson: You are using the words in a wrong sense.

Mr. MUNSIE: The next condition I want is that whatever legislation is laid down no company that lets a tribute should be allowed to take any royalty whatever from the tributers until the tributer is earning the ruling rate of wages provided by any Arbitration Court award or agreement in the industry. This must be conceded before a tribute is of any use whatever. I contend that no mining company, which has worked a property until it is satisfied that it has been worked to a standstill should, if prepared to let it on tribute, take more than a ten per cent. royalty, irrespective of the value of the ore. That is the third condition I want.

Mr. Harrison: You say this after what you have said of these tributers.

Mr. MUNSIE: It is in the interests of the shareholders also that I want the inquiry. In many instances the tributer knows nothing at all about this. If these three conditions are provided I believe that the tributer can get on reasonably well. Some of them, indeed, might do exceedingly well. When a company has finished working a concern and lets it on tribute it should be satisfied to get back the expenses of the officials that are employed on it. More should not be required of the tributers than the ten per cent. I have mentioned. This should be the maximum amount that is allowed, and if the companies get that they will be getting a fair deal. Many of the

tributers on the Golden Mile are advocating the Victorian system. Under that system the company and the tributers work on halves.

Mr. MULLANY: That is varied very often.

Mr. MUNSIE: Very little of late years. I have a copy of the Victorian agreement, and also a copy of the conditions signed by a mine manager in Bendigo. This mine manager said in a note to me that these conditions are general, although at times they are varied in certain instances. The conditions are that a man takes a tribute and finds all the explosives and trucks the ore. He then has to truck the ore to the shaft. The company pulls the ore. If there is carting to be done the company carts the ore and crushes it, and takes 50 per cent. of the total gold won. I will show what would have happened in a case in Kalgoorlie if the Victorian system had been in vogue there. I wish to mention the case of three different sets of tributers. They worked out the figures to show what a difference it would have made to them on small parcels working under that system. Even that system is not fair to the tributer. Nearly all the tributers are squealing about it in Victoria, and very rightly too. If it had been in operation in Kalgoorlie one parcel of 83 tons of low grade stuff would have meant £15 ls. 5d. more to the four men concerned. Another parcel of 56 tons would have meant a difference of £17 ls. 6d. in favour of the men, and a third parcel of 112 tons of even lower grade ore would have meant a difference of £29 ls. 8d. more to the men concerned.

Mr. Harrison: Are the three cases you refer to above the average returns to the tributers in the various mines?

Mr. MUNSIE: No. These cases are below the average. In no instance was it over 17 dwt. dirt. In the case of the rich parcel referred to by the leader of the Opposition, had the company been put to the expense of crushing and working on halves it would have meant a great deal to that particular party of tributers. The Minister for Mines suggests that the Bill that he has drafted should be submitted to the Commission as a basis on which to work for the purpose of bringing in amendments for or against the existing legislation. I do not agree with that proposition. The Minister would be the only member of the House who would know anything of the conditions contained in the Bill. I do not think it is a fair request to ask members to agree to this being the basis on which the Commission should work, seeing that no other member will have seen that Bill.

The Minister for Mines: The mover of the motion suggests a Commission before the Bill is drafted.

Mr. MUNSIE: Certainly, and the Minister suggests that as a basis for the commission to work on they should take the Bill he has drafted.

The Minister for Mines: No.

Mr. MUNSIE: I will not be a party to agreeing to that without knowing the contents of the Bill.

The Minister for Mines: Then you do not agree with the Commission.

Mr. MUNSIE: I do. I want the Commission appointed for the purpose of giving a fair deal by legislation to the tributers, and of also giving the shareholders in mining investments in Western Australia a fair deal.

The Minister for Mines: If you want both you will not have the Commission.

Mr. MUNSIE: The second one can stand over.

Resolved: That motions be continued.

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies) [7.45]: I agree with the leader of the Opposition as to the urgent necessity for legislation on the subject of tributing in the gold mines of the State. I doubt very much whether the carrying of this motion for the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the subject will have the effect which the hon. member desires, that is, to hasten on the introduction of legislation. I was somewhat astounded to-night to hear the statement from the Minister for Mines that he had not yet been able to get a draft of the Bill to deal with tributing. Hon. members will remember that on the Mining Estimates last year, those members representing mining constituencies, including myself, stressed very forcibly upon the Minister the necessity for the introduction of legislation of this nature. I am only quoting from memory—I have not had time to look up "Hansard"—when I say that I believe, in replying to members, the Minister gave an assurance that legislation would be introduced during the session we are now going through to deal with the subject. On the opening day of the present session I asked the Minister whether he intended to bring in legislation to deal with tributing during the current session, and he replied that the matter would be dealt with in a Bill which he proposed to introduce to amend the Mining Act. We have been sitting now for about 10 weeks, and we have perhaps only another 10 weeks to go, and yet from the Minister's own statement to-night we learn that, but for the action of the leader of the Opposition in bringing forward this subject, nothing more would have been heard of it.

The Minister for Mines: That statement is grossly incorrect.

Mr. MULLANY: The Minister stated that he had not been able to get a Bill drafted. Where was he going to get the Bill drafted?

The Minister for Mines: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. MULLANY: I know what I am talking about just as much as the Minister does. The Minister has admitted that he has not been able to get the Bill drafted and this, too, notwithstanding that he gave an assurance 12 months ago that he would submit the Bill this session. Now he takes exception to anyone who dares to question his

attitude and who declares that it looks as if the legislation was not going to be brought forward. That is the construction that I am putting on the position.

The Minister for Mines: Then your construction is quite wrong.

Mr. MULLANY: I am pleased to hear the Minister say that, and I hope that whether the motion is carried or not, the legislation we require will be submitted. The Minister clearly stated that the reason why legislation dealing with prospecting for oil had not been brought forward was on account of the fact that it had not been possible to get the information that was required on the subject of tributing.

The Minister for Mines: I have not said that I will not introduce it this session.

Mr. MULLANY: That was the impression that I got, and I am not the only one who holds that view. We have had the astounding statement from the Minister that there is no one in the department who has the information that is required on which to draft a Bill.

The Minister for Mines: The Bill is not drafted by the Crown Law Department.

Mr. MULLANY: We know that, but we do not look to the Solicitor General for ideas. I gathered the impression that the Minister was unable to get ideas from the department as to what was wanted, and the same impression was conveyed to other members. I have no desire to be hard on the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: I am not worrying.

Mr. MULLANY: We know that the Minister is carrying great responsibilities by reason of the fact that he has to look after the police, forests, railways, industries and other departments, and that he cannot therefore find time to attend to an important matter such as that of tributing. Then, in addition, we have the announcement which was made in this morning's newspaper which shows that some portion of his time has been employed in keeping an eye on the primary producers. I have no desire to oppose the motion moved by the leader of the Opposition, but it would be preferable if the Minister would hasten up the department—I do not know whether it is the Solicitor General's or his own department that has been at fault—and submit the Bill even though it be in skeleton form, and give the House an opportunity to deal with it. Hon. members realise that if we carry the motion, and a Royal Commission is appointed, it will take at least three or four weeks to deal with the matter.

Mr. Underwood: And that will be the end of it for this year.

Mr. MULLANY: That is so. If we wait until the report is made available, what possible chance will there be of getting the Bill through both Houses this session? I suggest that the Minister introduce the Bill without delay and permit the House to discuss it. There is no doubt that we can make a workable measure out of it. The Minister

knows that tributing in Kalgoorlie is on a most unsatisfactory basis. The member for Boulder quoted instances where tributers have worked under a great injustice. I have a couple of instances that I can quote. I do not intend to give the names of the tributers nor of the mines. In one case there was a crushing of 46 tons, the gold contents of which amounted to 76 ozs. of a value of £275. After taking out the various charges on lines similar to those quoted by the leader of the Opposition, the sum received by the tributers was £130. In another case 68 tons were treated for a yield of 113 ozs. of a value of £408, and in that case the tributers received £156.

Mr. Brown: What is the date of that tribute?

Mr. MULLANY: It was in the early part of 1919. Statements such as this must show the necessity there is for legislation to regulate what is going on. The Minister told me that I did not know what I was talking about, but I would like him to know that I have done a considerable amount of tributing on the goldfields. I happen to have an old tribute agreement dated 1911. This shows that I, as leader of a party of men, took a tribute over a lease situated at Menzies. We had at that time a combination of the block and time system. The agreement was binding as from the date of signing until the 30th June, 1911. It was signed on the 4th June, 1910, so that the agreement was for a period of 12 months. I believed, and I still believe to a certain extent, in the block system, where tributers can have full control of the block so long as they care to work it. The leaseholder, however, pointed out to me on that occasion the unfairness of it from his point of view, and I saw the justice of what he urged. At that particular time the leaseholder was unable to finance the property for himself, and he was negotiating with people in South Australia and in Melbourne with a view to selling the property, and he said "If I were to give you that block on the block system, and so long as you were satisfied to remain there, that would bar me from doing any business in the way of selling the lease if anyone were willing to negotiate for its purchase." I could see the justice of that contention. The tribute party could hold up the sale of the lease. That is a point which has to be considered. It is a vital point in connection with what is known as the block system. I have already stated that I believe the basis of a Bill dealing with tributing should be that no royalty should be paid until the members of the tributing party had received arbitration wages ruling in the district in which the parties were operating. I believe there is ample material in hand to set up a Bill in skeleton form. This could be submitted to the House. It would be a great mistake to appoint a Royal Commission at this juncture. With regard to the other phase of the question, that of mine officials acting dishonestly—we can put no other construction on it in the light of the taking of recent

tributes—I regret that two questions have been raised together. That particular aspect has nothing to do with the tributing system as a whole. It would have been wiser to have kept the two distinct. It has been said that men have got in with inside knowledge, and that those men knew they were on absolutely safe ground in going into certain tributes, and from what we have been told and what has been generally accepted from Kalgoorlie by those who are supposed to know, certain people had the knowledge that gold would be obtained. That the tribute there would be highly payable would be well known to those who were “in the know.” They appreciated the fact that they simply had to get there as they would be on a really good thing and they would be prepared to pay almost extortionate charges in order to gain their object. The effect of this has been that the practice has set up a false scale of tributing charges and royalties in Kalgoorlie owing to the fact that these men knew that they were on safe ground and were prepared to pay almost anything to secure the tribute. They have been followed up by others who were prepared to engage in legitimate tributing and take the risk implied in that occupation, and the latter have been confronted with these heavy charges which have made it almost impossible for them to make anything out of it. The others knew where the plums were and paid highly for them. However, in the old tributing agreement at Menzies to which I have already referred, the vital clause was that the leaseholder should receive a tribute of 10 per cent. on all gold won. I agree with the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie) that 10 per cent. is a reasonable offer; it may be higher or lower in some instances, but it would not vary more than five per cent. in any circumstances. I fully realise the difficulty when the Minister says that this particular question is an awkward one to legislate for owing to the varying conditions in mines in different districts. It is quite true that in one mine a party may be working on low grade ore and making fair wages, while another party may be on a small reef of comparatively rich stuff in another part of that mine. Although the latter party may be working on two-ounce stuff where the men in the lower grade ore are getting from 10 to 15 dwts., and though the men in the former instance may be getting good returns, yet the men on the lower grade stuff may actually be in a better position after the payment of charges.

Mr. Harrison: Is it not a matter of contracts?

Mr. MULLANY: The hon. member must not confuse the contract with the tributing system.

Mr. Harrison: But it is an arrangement made in individual cases.

Mr. MULLANY: Quite so, but the suggestion of the Minister that some sort

of board of assessors might be called upon to deal with these points is one worthy of consideration. I do not wish to speak at greater length on this point at the present time beyond further emphasising my contention that it would be in the interests of all concerned if the Minister brought along the Bill which he says is in course of drafting, rather than go on with the Royal Commission at this juncture.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [8.4]: In speaking against the motion proposed by the leader of the Opposition, I do so not because I am against the object he has in view, but I certainly think that it would be casting a reflection on the mining authorities in this State if it were agreed to. I believe there are men in this House with a full knowledge of the mining industry, including the wages and tribute systems as well as of other branches of the industry, who are quite competent to mould any Bill brought forward to suit the interests of all parties concerned. If we are going to have a Royal Commission, I do not desire to discuss many features now. There are some points mentioned by every speaker so far, showing not the necessity for a Royal Commission but for legislation to deal with the tribute system generally. There are other portions of the State beyond Kalgoorlie interested in this matter.

Hon. P. Collier: My motion is not confined to Kalgoorlie.

Mr. FOLEY: I grant that, but the arguments advanced here centred about Kalgoorlie and Boulder. If there is any man who can go round the State in three weeks collecting sufficient evidence to convince those who need convincing in this House, then the motion must be regarded as a reflection on the mining people in this State.

Hon. P. Collier: There are more men tributing on the mines in Kalgoorlie than in the rest of the State.

Mr. FOLEY: And the conditions in other parts of the State are entirely different.

Hon. P. Collier: In what respect?

Mr. FOLEY: In many respects.

Hon. P. Collier: Give us a few.

Mr. FOLEY. I am not going to discuss this matter, particularly if we are going to have a Royal Commission, but I would like to inform the leader of the Opposition that there are many mines, not in Kalgoorlie, where the companies will not grant tributes in every portion of the mine.

Mr. Munsie: No, there are not.

Mr. FOLEY: I defy any member to prove that in the mines further out one can get a tribute in any of the mines that have been worked, and which show even a remote chance of a man getting anything at an early date. How could we expect a man to go round and get information on all these points in three weeks?

Mr. O’Loghlen: Supposing it took four or five weeks.

Mr. FOLEY: We are told that time is the essence of the contract, and that if we

want information regarding tributing it is better to wait until next session and let Parliament, no matter who may be here, deal with the question then.

The Minister for Mines: The member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) does not want hasty legislation.

Mr. FOLEY: The member for Menzies wants a Bill brought down in the quickest possible time.

Hon. P. Collier: Your party is not bound by each others views.

Mr. FOLEY: I will consult myself when I go outside. The hon. member is bringing forward an idea that may mean the jettisoning of the Bill during the present session of Parliament; yet I believe that there is sufficient knowledge on mining matters in this House to deal with the question without the necessity for a Royal Commission. It does not matter whether the mines here are complying with the Labour covenants or not, because, as a matter of fact, the tributers are doing it for them and not the companies themselves. In the remote centres, unlike in Kalgoorlie, there are many mining leases held by leaseholders, but worked over by tributers, and the leaseholders are not paying a penny towards these men's wages. That is another matter that we require to have dealt with when this matter is under review. The House should take steps to make the ruling rate of wages apply to these tributers if the tributers are holding the mines for the companies. There is no doubt that if these mines were being worked, the cost would be lower. We may take the figures which have been given to-night as applying in a general way to show the difference between the results achieved between mines worked by tributers and under the company system. There are, however, many of the mines producing a big output in a month, although they are on low grade ore. They put through a big parcel and are able to work the mines. If the Minister insists on bringing down a measure which he says will be all embracing regarding mining throughout the State, he will get sufficient assistance from all parts of this Chamber to develop a Bill which will be suitable to the tributers and the mining industry generally, and which will be of lasting benefit to this State.

Mr. LUTEY (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [8.12]: I hope that the motion moved by the leader of the Opposition will be passed. While there may be members with mining knowledge in this House, who could improve any Bill which might be brought down, I assure the House that it is essential that a Royal Commission, with the powers suggested, should be appointed to go into the questions at issue.

Mr. Foley: A select committee could do that on the Bill.

Mr. LUTEY: No, I want a Royal Commission to get the information. It came as a surprise to me to learn, as the leader of the Opposition stated this afternoon, that

the Perseverance mining people had secured £12,000 for the silver from the ore they treated on behalf of the tributers, and that the men had no knowledge that that ore contained such quantities of silver. It is absolutely necessary to have a body with power to take evidence on oath, in order to get at the actual facts.

Mr. Foley: The Tributers' Union has been in communication with every member.

Mr. LUTEY: I hope the House will agree to the appointment of a Royal Commission. I cannot understand the member for Leonora. At one moment he talks about having a perfect Bill, even if it is not passed this session, and in the next moment he objects to the appointment of a Royal Commission. Why his opposition to a Royal Commission which would make thorough inquiries? The Royal Commission could present interim reports which would enable the Bill to be drafted at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. Hudson: Is not the proposition to appoint a Royal Commission fencing the question?

Mr. LUTEY: No. I have documentary evidence regarding the treatment received by some of the tributers in other mines than the Perseverance. Here is one case—gross weight 46 tons odd, result £735, tributers received £390.

Mr. Foley: We have got all that.

Mr. LUTEY: I could give a number of such cases. It is time inquiry was made so that the public might be made aware of what is happening. This is probably the most important matter affecting the mining industry to-day. Something like 500 or 600 men are on tributes and probably before long other mines will be in the tributing stage.

Mr. Hudson: Whom would you suggest as the Royal Commission?

The Minister for Mines: The member for Yilgarn, of course.

Mr. LUTEY: I hope the motion will be passed.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [8.17]: I oppose the motion.

Hon. P. Collier: Is this party opposition?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: There is no party about it. I speak for my own party. I have opposed Royal Commissions on everything that mattered almost ever since I have been in the House, because I am convinced of the uselessness of Royal Commissions.

Hon. P. Collier: But you have changed sometimes since you have been here.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Very rarely; not so often as the hon. member perhaps. I rose to speak because of an interjection by the Minister for Mines who accused the member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) of a desire for hasty legislation. Neither the Minister nor the leader of the Opposition wants any legislation at all. That is what it amounts

to. It has been suggested by the leader of the Opposition that the State Mining Engineer should constitute the Royal Commission. I can tell members my experience of the State Mining Engineer. If he is appointed a Royal Commissioner, these mines will be well worked out before the House gets his report, and by the time we read the voluminous report which he would present, our grandchildren would be old enough to read it. We require some slight legislation with regard to tributing. It is the duty of the Minister for Mines to bring that legislation down without any Royal Commission. The statement that he cannot get the Bill drafted is one which we are bound to accept and I accept it, but when the Minister puts the blame on to the Crown Law Department, I do not accept that. I think it will be found that the reason the Bill is not drafted is because the Mines Department officials have not sent it to the Crown Law Department. The Mines Department officials are like the State Mining Engineer.

The Minister for Mines: You are only guessing.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: And a pretty good guess, too.

The Minister for Mines: It has been there for weeks.

Hon. P. Collier: For years.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The leader of the Opposition said we should obtain information. If there is any information with regard to gold mining on the Kalgoorlie belt which the Mines Department do not possess, they have not been doing their work and it is time we trimmed our officers up a bit. All the information which can possibly be gained on tributing on the Golden Mile and on questions of the amount of silver obtained from the tributes, should be in the Mines Department to-day, and if it is not known to the department, then we have bad officers in that department. We do not want to go spending time and money and the time of tributers and others in getting evidence by a Royal Commission. That evidence should be, and I do not mind saying that it is, in the Mines Department to-day.

Mr. Munsie: I question whether there is any evidence in the Mines Department regarding the silver.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The Minister for Mines is connected with numerous things, police, State ships, he sent Bennett to England, with mines, railways, and on top of all this he is travelling around the country with a twopenny-halfpenny select committee—

The Minister for Mines: I promise you it is more than a twopenny-halfpenny select committee.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: And pretending to get information, and I undertake to say that his officer, the clerk to the select committee, could have given him all the information beforehand. The Chief Inspector

of Factories could have given him the information before the select committee was appointed.

Hon. P. Collier: That is a reflection on the House.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is a reflection on the Minister.

Hon. P. Collier: The House appointed the select committee.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The House, misled by the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: I had nothing to do with it.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The Commission would simply take evidence and put in time, and I can imagine the State Mining Engineer looking wise—that is his long suit—and collecting information which the department has had for years.

The Minister for Mines: It would be interesting to hear you say something nice about anyone. We have never heard you say a good word for any officer in the public service.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I used to say nice things about the Minister for Mines but I find that I made a mistake. The Royal Commission would be simply a waste of time—I shall not say a waste of energy—and I am sure this matter could be dealt with by legislation during the present session. If a Royal Commission is appointed, we shall get no legislation this session.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder—in reply) [S.23]: I did not intend to offer any remarks in reply but for the ungenerous utterances of the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood). In view of the fact that the Minister for Mines is not in a position to defend one or some of his officers because he has already spoken, it would not be out of place for me as an ex-Minister for Mines to say that the member for Pilbara has undoubtedly traduced an officer of the Mines Department, a man who has served this State faithfully and well for many years. Of course this is characteristic of the member for Pilbara. It does not matter whether he is dealing with the Mines Department, the Department of Agriculture, with Forests, Railways, Works, Lands, Treasury, or anything else. He is well qualified to express an opinion as to how the departments should be run, and he has a thorough knowledge of the capacity of every individual officer in those departments as well.

Mr. Johnston: Gained as an Honorary Minister.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, he sort of galloped through the departments, giving 24 hours in one, 15 minutes in another and seven days in another during the period he was an Honorary Minister in one or more Governments, and by reason of that vast and long experience as an administrator, he is qualified to traduce men holding high and honorable positions in the public service of this State. It is not fair. The hon. member says there is nothing about tributing that is not known. According to him it is

already known in the department and of course the Minister's secretary knows it. So well has the contract between the lease owners and tributers been known that four judges of the High Court recently sitting in this State were equally divided as to the interpretation of a tributing contract. Of course this would not cause the member for Pilbara any difficulty with all the knowledge he possesses, and the hon. member would be uninfluenced by this statement. He holds no high opinion of men of the standing of High Court judges and Royal Commissioners and professors. He would be able to decide in five minutes a question on which four judges of the High Court failed to agree after listening to arguments for three or four days. I cannot refrain from saying there was a tone of spitefulness in the opposition offered to the motion and it has all come from one quarter—not from a new party, because the member for Pilbara does not belong to any party; he is the leader of the Underwood party. The hon. member asked the House on one occasion how he could be expected to follow Mitchell, or how he could be expected to follow Collier, and so he is following himself, but there is wonderful unanimity to-day with regard to the opposition to this motion. I hope it has not been due to any recent happenings or developments. That is all I can say. I hope the fact that the Minister for Mines has accepted or partly accepted my motion and that because we have found ourselves in agreement upon this motion that our friends—

Mr. Underwood: You might remember that all who have spoken on this side were miners.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member is everything. He is not only a miner; he is an expert in pastoral matters, and an expert even in harnessing the tides of the North-West for the purpose of generating electricity. We who have had the honour and privilege of sitting in the House with the hon. member for a number of years know that he is an expert on all subjects under the sun. Of course mining is as easy as falling off a log to him, but the hon. member might extend some consideration to those members of this House who are not so expert as himself. If we should think it necessary to ask for additional information I hope he will not view the question from his own standpoint and say that because he himself is possessed of all the information necessary to enable him to legislate wisely upon this and every other subject, others not so highly qualified should be equally able to consider legislation of this description.

Question put and passed.

MOTIONS DISCHARGED.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.29]: There are a number of motions standing in my name next on the Notice Paper, and as I have no desire to monopolise the whole of the sitting and as I know there is one mo-

tion standing in the name of another hon. member who is anxious to have an opportunity to move it to-night, which opportunity will not be his if the motion is not moved to-night, I do not propose to go on with motions Nos. 4, 5, and 6 of which I have given notice. I shall have an opportunity to deal with them later on.

Mr. SPEAKER: Motions Nos. 4, 5, and 6 are withdrawn from the Notice Paper.

Mr. Willcock: Not withdrawn.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The notices of motion are postponed.

Mr. SPEAKER: No. Standing Order 104 is perfectly clear on the point. If an hon. member does not rise when his notice of motion is called upon, the notice of motion is discharged.

PAPERS—CASE OF S. M. COOLEIDGE.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.31]: I move—

That all papers relating to the case of S. M. Cooleidge, lately an inmate of the Claremont Hospital for Insane, be laid upon the Table.

As I understand that the Colonial Secretary does not propose to offer any opposition to this motion, I merely move it formally.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. F. T. Broun—Beverley) [8.32]: I have no objection to these papers being laid upon the Table.

Question put and passed.

The Colonial Secretary laid the papers on the Table.

MOTION—APPLE EMBARGO, REMOVAL.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [8.33]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the State and Federal Governments should take immediate steps to effect the removal of the embargo existing in England on Australian apples, and that all Australian fruits should be placed in open competition on the market.

A similar motion to this has been passed in another place, and I do not think the motion is one that need be dealt with at length on the present occasion. It refers to the embargo on the price of fruit in London. Hon. members will bear in mind that during the war the fruit growing industry suffered more than any other of the primary industries of Australia. While there have been bounteous crops, the harvest has had to go to waste on the orchards, because for a period of at least two years the industry had to face unfavourable markets. Very largely the fruit has had to be sacrificed. The fruit which went to the local market seldom, on account of the large quantity available for sale, attained a price which left a profit for the producer. Owing to the prohibition in Eng-

land it was impossible during the war period to export fruit in any quantity to London. Even in the absence of the prohibition it would have been impossible to export much fruit, firstly because the necessary shipping space was not available, and secondly because the rates of freight were absolutely prohibitive. London, as we know, is the chief market for fruit. During the recent discussion as to the best market for fruit it was amply demonstrated that London is the most favourable market to which fruit can be consigned. Before the war, of course, there was a very favourable market for our fruit in Germany, but during the war, and since the war, that market has naturally been eliminated. In order to bring home to hon. members the position of our fruit growers, it is necessary that I should quote a few figures relative to export of fruit. During 1913-14, 103,684 cases were exported; during 1914-15, 68,945 cases; during 1915-16, 27,702 cases; during 1916-17, 75,618 cases; during 1917-18, 14,500 cases; during 1918-19, 75,412 cases; and during 1919-20, 199,383 cases. The price for fruit imported into England was fixed at £1 0s. 10d. per case. That price was fixed as a maximum, and did not prevent the exporter of fruit from receiving a less return during periods of glut, when the price fell considerably below the maximum figure. I believe that on some occasions it fell below 15s. per case. The cost of growing and putting the fruit on the market has been collated by large growers in this State, and I will quote a few figures on the basis of growing 100 cases and sending them to the London market. The cost of production is £16 17s. 4d.; cartage ex orchard, £1 13s. 4d.; railage to cool store, £2 1s. 8d.; cool storage, £3 15s.; haulage ex store to boat and handling, wharfage, and shed, £18 9s.; sea freight, £39 19s. 4d.; insurance and shipping charges £1 15s. 5d.; agency, £2 10s.; London charges, £10 12s. 6d.; making a total of £79 19s. 4d. In a normal export season about 200,000 cases of fruit would be exported. On the basis of £1 0s. 10d. per case these 200,000 cases would represent a value of about £160,000, leaving a profit of £48,000 to the growers, or an average of 4s. 10d. per case. That is providing, of course, that the maximum price of £1 0s. 10d. is realised. Apart from drop in price on the London market, which follows on a glut, there is always the risk of damage and other matters militating against the price. Under favourable conditions on the London market it was formerly possible to realise £2 or £3 per case. Under the conditions appertaining to the embargo, however, it is impossible for the grower to obtain the advantage of a higher price. No matter what may happen, he can never receive a greater price than £1 0s. 10d. per case while the embargo is imposed. Any result from improved prices in the sale of fruit accrues to the retailer and not to the grower. Now, the Agent General in his communications to the Government of this State has distinctly stated

that the embargo is evaded in England by putting out mixed baskets of fruit, and on that basis as much as £3 or £4 per case is occasionally realised for our apples. It was decided by the Fruit Controller in England that there should be a margin of 3s. per case allowed between the amount paid to the exporter and the price charged to the consumer. That arrangement, however, has been cleverly evaded by the system of the mixed basket of fruit. Thus the desire of the Fruit Controller has been entirely defeated. As an evidence of the price which might be realised on an open market, let me quote an instance of a consignment of fruit from Mt. Barker, which reached the London market at a time when the embargo was temporarily raised. This shipment of apples reached England at a favourable time, and the price realised per case was five guineas.

Mr. Teesdale: At what date was that?

Mr. PICKERING: It was a recent shipment. Probably the apples arrived on a bare market. However, before the war it was quite common to realise more than the price now fixed of £1 0s. 10d. per case. That price is for 42lb. cases; the price for a 37lb. case is 19s. 3d. The desire in England is to reinstate the embargo on the 14th November next, with a price of £1 1s. 6d. for 37lbs. cases and of £1 3s. 6d. for 42lb. cases. These prices appear to be more favourable to our fruit growers, but it must be borne in mind that the Western Australian orchardist is now faced with increased sea freights, increased packing charges on his orchard, increased handling charges, and increased prices of fruit cases. So that really his position will be worse under the new prices than it has been under those now fixed. Indeed, he does not anticipate receiving as large a net return under the new prices as he receives at present.

The Minister for Works: It would be a good idea to get the sea freight down.

Mr. PICKERING: Yes, if we could do it; but the fruit grower desires no favour at all. All he asks for is an opportunity to place his goods on the open market of London. I think I am right in saying that the fruit grower of Australia has made many sacrifices in the interests of the Empire, and that he should now receive a fair deal. For the last seven years he has been unduly handicapped, much more seriously handicapped than any other primary producer. The wool grower, for instance, had a minimum price of 1s. 3d. per lb. guaranteed to him; and a sum of approximately 13 millions sterling is about to be distributed amongst the wool growers of Australia as excess profit. Then take the case of the wheat grower. He has had a guaranteed price of 5s. per bushel. He also is getting an excess profit on his product. Moreover, he secures the advantage of an improved market. But the fruit grower, whose commodity, unlike wheat and wool, is perishable and subject to all sorts of deterioration, is still to continue under grave disabilities. One would suppose that favour-

able conditions would be granted to the producer of perishable articles rather than to the producers of articles that can be held over for a better market. It has been pointed out that under present conditions the cost of landing the fruit in London exceeds two-thirds of the amount realised by the sale of the fruit. That leaves the grower in Australia less than one-third of the price for his return. I wish to remind hon. members that throughout the period of the war there was no complaint made in this House on the score of the sufferings of the fruitgrowers. There was no howling about what they had to put up with. They went through it all uncomplainingly, and moreover they contributed their share to everything in the way of war expenditure—this in spite of the fact that the market on which they chiefly depended had been absolutely taken away from them.

Mr. Lambert: But they are getting better prices to-day.

Mr. PICKERING: Nothing of the sort. The interjection shows what the member for Coolgardie knows about the fruit growing industry. The Honorary Minister in another place, who is charged with the care of the fruit industry, realises that the growers are in a very serious position, and he has had special inquiries made through the Agent General. He and the Agent General realise that great good may result from unanimity of action throughout the fruit-producing States of Australia. All that the fruit-growers desire is a fair field. They ask to be allowed to deal in the open markets of the world on fair lines.

Hon. P. Collier: What about world's parity for the labour they employ?

Mr. PICKERING: They pay what is demanded of them by their employees, and they pay it willingly. I regret to say there appears to be grounds for the assumption that the Americans have had preferential treatment on the English market. It seems appalling that, after the enormous sacrifices which Australia has made in the war, not every possible advantage should be obtained for her in the English market.

Mr. Teesdale: It is nonsense to say that England favours Yankees as against Australians.

Mr. PICKERING: I am the last who would belittle the name of Englishmen.

Mr. Lambert: You do it unconsciously.

Mr. PICKERING: No, I do not. But I say that if England were to do anything unjust to Australia, I would be the first man to stand out against her. Hon. members know that the case I am putting up is a good one. They know that the fruit producer has laboured under great disadvantages during the war. They know that the industry is confronted with great difficulties and that there is a possibility that the coming harvest may be considerably reduced. Hon. members opposite said that if I brought up a case for the fruitgrowers, they would support me. I sincerely hope that members will view this question from an impartial standpoint and realise that an important

industry deserving of every consideration is at stake.

Hon. P. Collier: Is there no party move behind this?

Mr. PICKERING: Not that I know of.

Hon. P. Collier: But a new influence has come into your party.

Mr. PICKERING: Certainly I cannot speak on behalf of our youngest recruit. I trust that the leader of the Opposition will extend to this motion that favourable consideration which he usually concedes to questions having merit behind them. There is no reason for delaying the carrying of the motion, and I trust it will be passed to-night.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott-Nelson) [8.50]: I spoke at some length on this question when dealing with the Estimates of the Agricultural Department. The figures given by the hon. member are correct. The cost of landing a case of fruit in London is 16s. and the highest price obtainable is £1 0s. 10d. For six months in the year the embargo is on, when the fixed price is £1 0s. 10d. For the balance of the year the embargo is lifted. For the six months during which Australian fruit lands in England the highest price obtainable is £1 0s. 10d. When, with the exception of a few cases, the whole of the Australian fruit is in England, foreign fruits come in and, I am sorry to say, the fixed price is then lifted. I am sure a grave error has been made on the part of the English controller of food. Generally speaking, London has been the best market; at the present time it is not so. We are unable to send our fruit to the Continent, but the English buyers purchase our fruit before it lands in England, trans-ship it to the Continent and sell it on open market, reaping huge profits.

Mr. Lambert: Are they dealing with Germans?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I dare say some of it goes to Germany. I do not care where they sell it. That is not the point.

Mr. Jones: But this is disloyalty!

The HONORARY MINISTER: The point is that we are debarred from selling anywhere but in England.

Hon. P. Collier: Why?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Because they will not carry our fruit elsewhere, and we cannot send it on. The English buyers send it on.

Hon. P. Collier: But under the War Precautions Act of Australia you could not trade with any of the late enemy countries, anyhow.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Quite so, but France is not an enemy country.

Mr. Troy: Would you trade with Germany.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, not until—

Mr. Lambert: The price is raised.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member has hit the nail on the head. The point is that, previous to last year, a great

deal of our fruit which reached England brought very fair prices. But, as pointed out by the member for Sussex, certain consignments of fruit, owing to great delays on the journey between here and England, showed considerable deterioration, and therefore brought only a poor price, with consequent loss to the grower. Pears, I may say, brought up to £4 per case during the time the embargo was on, because there was no fixed price on pears. But they got at us another way: they said, "You can ship apples, but you must not ship pears." I had 500 cases of pears lying in cold stores at Fremantle awaiting shipment, but I was not allowed to put them on board. Generally speaking, Western Australian fruit is of higher quality than fruit from any of the Eastern States, and therefore the Western Australian growers are more severely hit by the fixed price in England than are the growers of the Eastern States. Moreover, orchardists who grow special apples, such as Cox's orange pippin, find that their fruit is treated in exactly the same way as coarser types not so much in favour with the English buyers. I trust the motion will be carried. It is indeed unfortunate that such a state of affairs should have been allowed to exist. Many representations have been made, but I trust that if the motion is carried it will have due weight in the right place and the unfortunate dilemma in which the fruitgrowers find themselves will be removed.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—FRUIT REGULATION, TO DISALLOW.

Mr. NAIRN (Swan) [8.55]: I move—

That paragraph (a) of Clause 16a of Part VII. of the health by-laws, made by the local health authority of the municipal district of Perth, dealing with the covering of fruit sold by fruit-hawkers and stall-keepers, published in the "Government Gazette" of the 28th May, 1920, and laid upon the Table of the House on the 22nd September, 1920, be disallowed.

Last month there was laid on the Table an apparently harmless by-law, framed by the municipality of Perth, dealing with the handling and sale of fruit in stalls and barrows on the public streets. In effect the by-law provides that all fruit sold by hawkers or from stalls or barrows shall be kept under gauze or glass. In my opinion the regulation is impracticable and absurd, and if persisted in will do a great deal of harm to both the fruitgrower and the consumer. The average quality of fruit sold on the barrows in Perth is quite equal to that sold in the shops, and anything which will tend to hamper that trade will have my opposition. At one time and another through the season gluts of fruit occur. Undoubtedly the best means of handling these gluts is through hawking and selling on street corners. From time to time strong

opposition has been displayed to the fruit hawker by those whose interests lie in the opposite direction. I am not going to contend that that opposition has any connection with the by-law, but I say the by-law will play into the hands of those who want to crush the sale of fruit in the streets. If by providing that the fruit shall be covered with gauze it is intended to protect the health of the people, I cannot conceive of anything more absurd. No gauze ever made by human ingenuity would keep out a dangerous microbe.

Mr. Lambert: Not the belligerent microbe.

Mr. NAIRN: One might as well put wire netting round the fruit as attempt to keep microbes out in this way. It has been suggested that the fruit should be encased in glass. The moment these stall holders commence to sell their fruit, of necessity they must throw up their shutters and uncover it.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They must have a display.

Mr. NAIRN: Not only that, but they must have access to their fruit. These men are continually opening up fresh cases of fruit at the back of their barrows, and emptying it out in the front of their barrows. Because of this it is impossible to keep it always under cover. One could well imagine when a gust of wind came along and blew the dust all over the place, how difficult it would be for any man, with the best of intentions, to keep his fruit covered. One is almost led to believe that people consume oranges and bananas with the skins on. Of course, people do no such thing. This regulation is of no value and will hamper the barrow fruit trade, as well as injure those men who are earning a decent livelihood.

Mr. Teesdale: And many of them are returned soldiers.

Mr. NAIRN: Quite so. These men will be driven from the streets, and the people of Perth will have to pay up to 200 per cent. more for their fruit than they do at present. The fruitgrowers themselves will also lose a good local market for their products. I hope the House will pass the motion.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott—Nelson) [9.3]: I entirely agree with the remarks of the hon. member for Swan (Mr. Nairn) regarding the barrow fruit. These fruit barrows are absolutely necessary. We require other means of disposing of our fruit than the fruit shops, where the prices are high. The barrows fill a particular want, and give cheap fruit to the public for a small amount. No rents are paid by those who have charge of these barrows, and they can afford to accept smaller profits on their sales than those people who pay high rents for their shops and have flash frontages to them, and who have to charge fancy prices accordingly. Cheap fruit means a larger consumption

from the orchards. It is true that many of these barrows are kept by returned soldiers, and we should do nothing to harass them. Occasionally there is a glut in the fruit market, for it takes very little fruit in a small city like Perth to create one. The barrow men can buy large quantities of fruit and dispose of it at reasonable prices, thereby enabling orchardists to get rid of their surplus. It is absurd to put gauze over the fruit. One might as well have a three-rail fence round it as expect to keep microbes off it by means of gauze. Most fruit has a skin on it. Very few people eat oranges with the skin on, and even apples can be peeled before they are eaten. Further, I have never known of anyone eating bananas without first peeling them.

Hon. P. Collier: Or potatoes!

The HONORARY MINISTER: These are sometimes called Irish apples, and are generally skinned before they are eaten. If people do insist upon eating fruit with the skin on it, it is an easy matter for them first to dip it in water and wash it. This by-law would harass the barrow people, and possibly have the effect of driving many of them out of the trade which is most undesirable from the point of view of the orchardist.

Hon. P. Collier: It is rather discouraging to the City Council, who are doing all this honorary work.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know why they are doing it. It is said that in a multitude of councillors there is wisdom, but I think when they carried this regulation through there could not have been many councillors present.

Hon. P. Collier: If you multiply one fool by 20 you do not get much more wisdom.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is a harassing and useless regulation.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [9.7]: I support the motion. The City Council have somewhat interfered in this connection. I know that the public obtain a fairer deal from the barrows than they do from the shops. I rarely go to a shop for fruit when I can go to a barrow. One can get decent fruit from a barrow, whereas in a shop, although the article exposed in the window may be very good, one generally receives something of an inferior nature. The Perth City Council in their wisdom introduced a regulation compelling the shopkeeper to sell the article exposed in his window at the price at which it was exposed, and believed they were doing a service to the public. The contrary was the case. My experience is that the person who sells fruit in a shop picks it out from somewhere behind the window, and sells the customer an inferior class of fruit. In this case the Perth City Council are acting in the direction in which they are not required to act.

Mr. TEESDALE: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [9.10]: I suppose when the member for Swan brought this motion forward he had in view the welfare of the fruit-grower. With the exception of the member for Mt. Magnet all the support has come from members representing fruit-growing districts. I am not always in favour of everything done by the city council, but I am in favour, during certain portions of the year when particular fruits are in season, of having such a regulation as this enforced. The city council in their wisdom—

Mr. Teesdale: What!

Mr. FOLEY: Have decided that during the time of year when the harder varieties of fruit, such as apples and oranges, which will not be affected to any marked extent by the filth and dirt that pass over them through their exposure on the street, are in season, this regulation need not be enforced. When the matter was brought before the court some time ago it was shown conclusively by the health inspector of the city council that he had no desire to drive these men from the street. Neither have I any such desire, for I think these men do a great amount of good. I have had an opportunity of hearing the report of the health inspector as to the deleterious effect which this exposure has upon the softer fruits, and I was led to the conclusion that it was wise in the interests of the people, who eat the fruit and pay for it, that there should be some such regulation as this.

Mr. Smith: What nonsense.

Mr. FOLEY: Apparently everything is nonsense that is not agreed to by the hon. member. Will the hon. member say that the filth and muck in our streets cannot, if brought into contact with the softer fruits, damage it?

Hon. Sir H. B. Lefroy: How are you going to keep it off?

Mr. FOLEY: I say it does come in contact with the fruit. During the past 12 months there have been six extra positions provided for these barrow men. Most of these men are crippled soldiers. There was no intention on the part of the council to keep them off the streets. The fruit will, therefore, be sold at a cheaper rate, and with less restricted competition than existed before. Every day outside the James-street and other schools, there were several barrows selling not only fruit but ice cream and other things. The health committee of the city council was convinced that all the muck and filth that is in our streets was playing around these barrows, and there was no protection from it. If something is not done to protect the interests of the children who frequent these barrows, those who are responsible are not acting in the best interests of the State. What the Perth City Council are after is

the protection of fruit, and particularly soft fruits from contamination as the result of exposure to dust. This is done purely in the interests of health. In the furtherance of that idea, at the present time the council are compelling every place wherein meat, cooked or raw, or wherever food is displayed for sale, and where there is any possibility of its being contaminated, to provide fly-proof doors. If it is good enough to compel shopkeepers to take this action to protect foodstuffs displayed for sale and to keep their premises clean, it is not a hardship to force owners of barrows to do likewise at certain seasons of the year.

Mr. Smith: Is there any other city in the world where a similar thing is done?

Mr. FOLEY: Yes, but not in Glasgow. The medical officer for the city, Dr. Seed, who by the way is doing good work, has given us evidence, and that evidence has been supported by Dr. Dale, that 99 per cent. of the gastric cases in the metropolitan area are the outcome of eating food which has been contaminated by exposure. I prefer to take the opinion of the health officer than that of the member for North Perth who describes the action of the City Council as nonsense.

Mr. Robinson: Could not the difficulty be overcome by watering the streets?

Mr. FOLEY: The hon. member might give notice of the question.

Mr. Smith: What has the Perth City Council done to provide a pure milk supply?

Mr. FOLEY: I can give the hon. member a paper to read on that very question, and I trust that while he is reading it, it will keep him quiet. I attended the conference of health inspectors recently, and at that conference all were in favour of the regulation being applied at those periods of the year when the council were applying it. At that conference there were displayed exhibits of fruit and meat which had been contaminated in the very manner that the regulation seeks to prevent. Not only the Perth City Council, but all the health authorities in the world are spending thousands, if not millions in the interests of the health of the people, not in the interests of the fruit growers, and all authorities tell us that the regulation is absolutely necessary if it is desired to improve the health of the people.

Mr. Johnston: In Melbourne the fruit stalls are established everywhere.

Mr. FOLEY: In Melbourne they may be doing a great number of things, but it is not necessary for us to go to Melbourne to see what is being done there, because in that city the fruit barrows are allowed to stand, not in the streets, but in the right-of-ways off the streets. Bad as the conditions in Perth may be, they must be a hundred times worse in the Melbourne right-of-ways, which are used for a variety of purposes when the barrows are not there.

Mr. Brown: And do more people die there?

Mr. FOLEY: The mortality would be greater here, I have no doubt, if the regulation were not in existence. I want hon. members before agreeing to the motion to bear in mind that the health of the people of the city is at stake, and that it can be, and is being, safeguarded by the enforcement of the regulation. I am with hon. members so far as I can be when the hard fruits are in season. Then it may not be so necessary to protect the fruit from the dust of the city. In any case I contend that whenever fruit is purchased from a barrow it should be well washed or cleaned before it is consumed. The Perth City Council have the interests of the health of the people at heart, and they have no desire whatever to be harsh in the treatment of those who are engaged in the fruit trade.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [9.25]: Than this regulation there is no better example of arrant stupidity on the part of the Perth Municipal Council.

Mr. Foley: You were in a municipal council yourself.

Mr. LAMBERT: It was rightly pointed out by some hon. member that if these bungling bumbles who constitute the municipal council of Perth were to turn their attention to the better cleaning and repairing of the streets it would be more to their credit. Did anyone ever hear of such an absurd thing? The member for North Perth asked how a man could conduct a barrow business when he has necessarily to keep the fruit covered over with gauze. How can he constantly cover and uncover the fruit? The member for Leonora, who I understand occupies some position in the municipal government of this city, referred to the contamination of fruit by dust. Does the hon. member, sanely speaking, desire us to believe that dust has in any way affected the health of the community?

Mr. Foley: You would not say that in Coolgardie on an electioneering tour.

Mr. LAMBERT: Most of my healthy constituents almost feed on dust, and they are a good healthy crowd, too. Gastric trouble to a very great extent comes from the atmosphere: it comes not alone from having anything that may have been contaminated by microbes whether it be fruit, meat, or milk, or if it does not arise from that cause it is the result of breathing through the mouth and not through the nose. To say that the trouble is caused by eating fruit which is purchased from barrows in the street and which fruit may have been contaminated by exposure, is too absurd even for a municipal councillor to suggest. If these bungling bumbles were to devote more attention to the cleaning and repairing of the streets instead of trying to carry out questionable experiments with the public money they would be doing something which would be in the

interests of the health of the community. I do not suppose there is anything more disgraceful throughout the length and breadth of the Commonwealth than the condition of the streets in and around Perth. We have here one of the wealthiest cities in the Commonwealth, the streets of which are a positive disgrace.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member that the city streets are not under discussion.

Mr. LAMBERT: I most respectfully and piously suggest that the condition of the streets of the city has some slight influence upon the dust which we see in Perth, and which the member for Leonora declares contaminates the fruit exposed on the barrows. Let the hon. member go back to his fellow bumbles and tell them that this regulation is altogether unnecessary, that it is totally stupid, and that hon. members of the Legislative Assembly have expressed a desire that the council's first duty should be to repair and clean the streets which are under their jurisdiction.

Mr. Foley: They might take that as from a bumble to bumbles.

Mr. LAMBERT: Then no doubt it would have some little weight coming from me, but I do not think it would gain weight if it were supported by the hon. member. The proposal under discussion shows the futility of municipal government as it stands. The regulation must be totally unworkable. It certainly appears positively stupid to an intelligent man. The exercise of a little common sense in the direction of repairing and cleaning the roads would have more effect. This is a function which is delegated to municipalities, but in most cases it has been delegated to those who are totally unfitted to carry out the administration of the affairs of the city or as a matter of fact even empty houses. We should declare that we will not allow the regulation to interfere with the supply of foodstuffs for the city of Perth.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND FEDERATION.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [9.30]: I move—

That this House is of opinion that the State has suffered great financial loss through the Federation of Australia, and that the time has now arrived when steps should be taken to place the position clearly and strongly before the Ministry of the Commonwealth with the view of obtaining some measure of relief.

Speaking on the general debate upon the Estimates on the 23rd of last month I quoted a large number of statements culled from official publications, from the Press, and also from the official report issued by the Under Treasurer. The object of my speech was to prove that during the 19 years that Western Australia has been a

party to the Federal compact, our monetary loss has amounted to more than 9½ millions. I would like members to realise what that means. At the present time we have a deficit of something over four millions. Had this State been able to collect all the excise and customs duties, and had it been able to impose all the direct taxation which the Federal Government has collected in Western Australia during that period and at the same time carried on all the different departments which the Federal Government have been administering in this State, together with our proportion of the war expenditure which has been paid out of revenue, we would not have had a deficit in this State, but would have been five millions to the good. I do not say that we would have had that amount in cash, but it would have been saved, since the people who have had to pay this Federal taxation would have been able to retain the amount involved.

Mr. Johnston: Have you allowed for loss on the trans-Australian railway?

Mr. ANGELO: Everything has been allowed for in these figures. This is not my opinion only, but it is shared by all our ex-Treasurers who have expressed similar opinions time after time. They have agreed with the opinion I express that the time has come when we should have some fresh arrangement more beneficial to the State. The member for Moore (Sir H. B. Lefroy), when he was Premier, promised to give the House an opportunity to discuss this question. That discussion never took place. In March last year when he was asked to attend a meeting at the Town Hall to discuss this question, he said that he did not wish to attend because Senator Millen was coming to Perth to discuss financial matters and he did not desire to hamper in any way the discussion which might take place. However, he acknowledged that the time had arrived when some fresh arrangement should be made with the Federal Government. The present Minister for Education, Mr. Colebatch, when speaking in the Legislative Council in 1918, made the following statement—

My attitude on this question is that Australia as a whole can prosper only by the successful development of all the Australian States, and that the present interpretation of the Commonwealth Constitution is such as to make the successful development of Western Australia almost impossible.

Later on he said—

I do wish to impress upon members of the House, upon the Press, and upon the people of Western Australia the imminent importance of at once taking up with vigour and purpose this question of the financial relationship of the State and the Commonwealth. No intelligent consideration of our public finances is possible without a thorough understanding of this matter.

Hon. P. Collier: He was not accustomed to speak in that strain when we were in office.

Mr. ANGELO: And I come to another ex-Treasurer, Mr. Gardiner, who was in Melbourne at the time of the Town Hall meeting last year. While there he gave an interview to the Press, which was telegraphed to Western Australia. He pointed out the grave disadvantage that Western Australia was suffering from as a result of Federation, and strongly urged that something should be done to secure an improvement, particularly regarding the amount of money we should receive from the Commonwealth. Then another Treasurer, and ex-Premier, Mr. Scaddan, had a good deal to say on the same subject. He moved a motion at the Town Hall meeting which read—

That the citizens of Western Australia as represented at this public meeting feel considerable indignation at several acts perpetrated by the Commonwealth Government detrimental to the best interests of this State and pledge themselves to utilise every possible means to obtain relief.

Hon. P. Collier: A man in his time plays many parts.

Mr. ANGELO: The leader of the Opposition also had something to say. Speaking on our relationship with the Federal Government, he said that he considered "this question transcended all others in importance and should be debated by the House."

Hon. P. Collier: At any rate, that was strictly non-committal. I only asked for a debate.

Mr. ANGELO: That is what I ask for now. Mr. Gregory also spoke on the subject.

Hon. P. Collier: Well, you certainly have raked up all the great notabilities, including myself.

Mr. ANGELO: I have quoted the utterances of all those who I consider are notable men who have dealt with this subject.

Hon. P. Collier: Well, some of us are not of the chosen.

Mr. ANGELO: All these people have agreed that Western Australia was not getting a fair deal under the Federal regime. Some 18 months ago, at the request of the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Manufacturers, and also representatives in this House, the Under Treasurer, Mr. Owen, was directed to prepare a report. I have a copy of his report which is headed "Financial relations between the State of Western Australia and the Commonwealth."

Hon. P. Collier: What has happened to it?

Mr. ANGELO: It is an extraordinary thing that I have asked eight or nine members of this Chamber if they have ever read the report, and they have admitted that they have not seen it.

Hon. P. Collier: If the matter was of sufficient importance to warrant the report,

time should have been set aside for a debate in the House.

Mr. ANGELO: That is what I say. We got a promise that a debate should take place on this subject three years ago. I brought it forward by asking a question as to whether we would be given an opportunity of debating it, and the Premier of the day agreed that time would be given. It has not been given yet. I was not told when speaking on the Estimates that I was correct or that I did not know what I was speaking about, and nothing has been said about the statement of Mr. Owen, to which I have referred. This is what Mr. Owen said about it, and I would remind members that he would hardly express opinions such as he does and quote the figures he does unless the importance of them deserved the earnest attention of the House. On page 32 of this report Mr. Owen sets out the monetary loss as follows:—

We may now summarise the net monetary loss brought upon the State Government of Western Australia by Federation from 1st January, 1901, to 30th June, 1919, as follows:—

	Gain.	Loss.
Customs and Excise		£7,463,000
Posts, etc. . . .	£1,205,000	
Defence	£1,003,000	
Total of gains . .	£2,208,000	
Net Loss of Western Australia on above services		£5,255,000
Add direct taxation in Western Australia collected by Commonwealth		£2,800,000
Total monetary loss of Western Australia from Federation		£8,055,000

That was up to the 30th June, 1919. From the figures I have culled from the ensuing 12 months it would seem that the Federal Government collected from Western Australia in customs and excise duty and also in direct taxation £2,886,198, and against that we have to put the following amounts: surplus revenue under the Surplus Revenue Act, £414,575; special contributions to the State, £154,430; old age pensions, £188,770; maturity bonus, £34,335; upkeep customs and other departments, £250,000; and our share of defence paid out of revenue, £346,395, leaving a balance against the State of £1,497,693. That added to the eight millions, makes a total that we have lost since entering Federation, of over 9½ millions.

Hon. P. Collier: Of course there have been some indirect benefits.

Mr. ANGELO: We have the trans-Australian railway, but sometimes I think the other States have benefited more through that railway than people here.

Mr. Griffiths: How?

Mr. ANGELO: They are exploiting our markets in every way they can. They get their mails from England and from the Far East faster than before.

Hon. P. Collier: That is all in accordance with our free, open trade policy.

Mr. ANGELO: But if we paid for the whole cost of that railway, we would even then show a considerable loss, considering that we have lost 9½ millions since Federation was adopted. I pointed out in my recent speech a great many of the disadvantages from which Western Australia has suffered. Our factories have disappeared and we have been asked to contribute huge sums in the shape of loans, which, though raised here, have not entailed the expenditure of a penny in this State. Take the issuing of the Government stores and materials; all the manufacturing and purchasing has been in the Eastern States, and the wages have been circulated there. I also drew attention to another important matter, which was that our share in the development of the Northern Territory has amounted to £400,000. Up to the present the Northern Territory has cost Australia six million pounds and our share of it has been £400,000, and we are the only State which has a northern territory of its own to develop. Further, we hear that the Commonwealth Government intend to proceed with the building of the Federal capital. That will cost something like 70 millions of money, and I suppose that our share will be five millions.

Mr. Troy: Is that so?

Mr. ANGELO: That is the estimate. The Government of New South Wales has before the House a motion urging the Federal Government to proceed with the building of the Federal capital immediately. Surely we could do more good if that five millions of money were retained here and utilised for the development of this State. I am not in favour of secession, but I wish to see a better financial arrangement made than that which we have at present. It might be urged that a convention is to take place shortly, that the different States will be represented there, and that perhaps the whole of the Constitution will be put into the melting pot; but I would like members to understand that if a convention is held, Western Australia will have a smaller representation than the other States. We cannot possibly look for greater representation in the convention than we have in the Federal Parliament, and it will be the same old thing over again. The larger numbers of representatives from the bigger States would swamp the few members whom we could send from Western Australia.

Mr. Johnston: Is not each State to have equal representation at the convention?

Mr. ANGELO: Nobody seems to know. Even if we had equal representation, the condition of affairs which prevails in the Senate would be repeated. The other five States would out-vote us. With our small

representation we do not get fair treatment, and the only thing I can suggest is, not that the Government but that Parliament, which represents the people of Western Australia, should send a delegation to Melbourne.

The Premier: Why not all go?

Mr. ANGELO: I suggest that we send two members from the Government side, two members from the Opposition side, and two members representing the Country party.

The Premier: What about the member for Pilbara? He would have to go.

The Attorney General: And members from the Upper House?

Mr. ANGELO: The Upper House has no control over the finances, and as financial matters are the functions of this House, this House alone should choose the delegation. This, however, is merely a suggestion. What I am urging is that some steps should be taken. I would like members of the Opposition to understand that I do not wish this motion to be treated as a party matter. It is not a matter of unification, of federation, or of anything of that kind. We have been badly treated by the Federal Government. The goods which we expected when we joined the federation have not been delivered, and the time has now come when steps should be taken to rectify and improve our position. I have brought this motion forward so that the House might debate it, and perhaps some member might be able to suggest a method by which an improvement can be brought about. We know that some two years ago the then Premier (Hon. Sir H. B. Lefroy) and the ex-Treasurer (Mr. Gardiner) went East to endeavour to secure for this State better treatment such as I am suggesting now, but I am afraid those gentlemen were the wrong sort of representatives to send. The member for Moore is far too courteous and kindly a gentleman to have to cross financial swords with a man like Mr. Watt, and I do not know but that our ex-Treasurer is too jovial a man to be taken seriously.

Mr. Harrison: The Federal Government have shown no friendship to Western Australia.

Mr. ANGELO: Quite so. Six members should be sent from this House. Let us get our case well prepared beforehand, and show that we are determined to get our just rights. We are not asking for kindness but for justice, and if our representatives went to Melbourne determined, and put our case forcibly and clearly to the Federal Government, they would have to come to our assistance and give us a measure of relief. If they did not, it would then be time for the people—

Mr. Johnston: Should not our Federal members undertake this duty?

Mr. ANGELO: What is the use of our five members speaking in a huge Assembly?

Mr. O'Loghlen: They should carry a red flag.

Mr. ANGELO: If the Federal Government did not treat us decently, after putting the case clearly before them, I might be inclined to fall in under the black swan flag until we did get justice, because we must have justice for this State. No harm could come from a delegation visiting the seat of the Federal Government. It would not cost very much.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You do not suggest violence?

Mr. ANGELO: The delegation would put our case to the Federal Government and I think we would receive a certain amount of consideration. Anyhow it would let them know what to expect from Western Australian representatives when the Federal convention meets. I wish to impress upon the House that this is not solely my opinion, but it is the opinion of all those politicians I have mentioned, the opinion of several newspapers in this State, of the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Manufactures, and others.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And they support men who do not advocate a change.

Mr. ANGELO: I would ask members of the Opposition not to make this a party matter.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The Chamber of Manufactures did not treat it as a party matter at the elections. If you swallow De Largie, you will swallow anyone.

Mr. ANGELO: We have been treated badly by the Federal Government.

The Minister for Works: Hear, hear!

Mr. ANGELO: And the time has arrived when this House should debate what steps should be taken to have the injustice rectified.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [9.54]: I do not suppose that any member of the House will object to the motion. I do not know that it will carry very much weight.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Let us get the red flag and march.

The PREMIER: The member for Forrest would look well with the red flag, followed by the member for Gascoyne. I would suggest that we all go and go at once, and put the case to the Prime Minister. We are in need of money and if we can get it, it will be a very good thing. We have suffered great financial loss through federation, but I do not know that we can repair our loss by passing a motion of this kind. The member for Gascoyne assumed that we had never made any representations to the Federal Government. As a matter of fact it has always been recognised by the Federal authorities that we have not been quite fairly treated because, under the Constitution, any surplus revenue is really the property of the States and should be returned to the States. Members will have noticed that the Federal Government expect a surplus of something like six million pounds. This means that the

Government are going to get six million pounds more than they require for current expenditure, and I am of opinion that under the Constitution this amount should be returned to the States. This applies also to surpluses of the past. Every surplus that the Federal Government have had should have been returned to the States. Under the Constitution the Federal Government are not entitled to retain any surplus revenue whatever. During the book-keeping period we paid our share of the cost of government and the balance was returned to us.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They are not likely to return anything while they are piling on charges generally.

The PREMIER: During that period we were fairly treated. We paid our share of the cost of the Federal Government on a per capita basis. Then the Federal Government returned to the States an even amount of 25s. per head of population. That was unfair to this State because our contribution as consumers was very much greater than that of any other State in Australia. That, however, is hardly the point now. The member for Gascoyne assumes that we have never taken any steps to put our case before the Federal authorities, but the question has been mentioned. We have pointed out to the Federal Government that our contribution is too great.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The hon. member is right in losing faith in Premiers' conferences.

The PREMIER: To-day we are getting beyond 25s. per head of the population. We are getting £140,000 a year in addition. We have gone to considerable trouble, too, to compile the facts of our case and these facts have been submitted to the Federal Government. I do not know what else the member for Gascoyne would have us do.

Mr. Angelo: Send over a deputation.

Mr. O'Loughlen: A delegation such as Queensland sent to the Old Country.

The PREMIER: I do not wish the people of this State to conclude that everyone who has been in office since the Commonwealth was established has done other than represent the case of Western Australia to the Federal Government. We have all done it.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The Premiers' conference has not done it.

The PREMIER: Of course it has. The hon. member has not been there and does not know.

The Minister for Works: He will not get there, either.

The PREMIER: If he ever does get there he will learn how useful these conferences are. Since the member for Forrest does not know, I can assure him that we have done our duty in this respect. We have made representations; the situation has been recognised and is being recognised to some extent by the cash payment being made to-day. We are getting something. On the other hand this State has paid very dearly for federation. We were too new when we joined in the federation with the other States. We should have had the population here. Instead of that we are keeping prob-

ably 60,000 people at work in the cities and towns in the Eastern States, people who are paying taxes there instead of being taxpayers here. We can hardly blame the Federal Government for this because they were not responsible for Western Australia joining the federation. I have no wish to discuss the matter at any length. I am quite willing that the motion should be carried, but I do not think it will achieve very much.

Hon P. Collier: If the motion is carried, what steps do you propose to give effect to it?

The PREMIER: The hon. member suggests that we should send a delegation to the Federal Ministry.

Mr. Angelo: From Parliament.

The PREMIER: I think we might manage to fix up a delegation from this House to present our case, if upon inquiry here the delegation found that the case had not been properly put already. I have no objection to the motion.

Mr. LUTEY (Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [10.2]: The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) might have pointed out what step he desires to be taken in this matter.

The Premier: He wants a delegation sent to Melbourne.

Mr. LUTEY: Western Australia has elected certain gentlemen to represent it in the Federal House. It is an insult to members representing Western Australia in the Federal Parliament to pass such a motion as this. The Premier talks about the Premiers' conferences. These were never elected to carry on the business of the Commonwealth Parliament. It has been a wrong procedure all through. I consider that this undermines the status of the representatives of Western Australia in the Federal House. They are the people to whom we should look to further the interests of the State. Evidently members are disappointed with that representation. The question of looking after the people of this State in Federal matters should be left to our representatives. If it was suggested in the motion that representation should be made to our Federal representatives, I would support it.

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [10.4]: Every member will agree with the arguments put forward by the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) as to the bad treatment Western Australia has received at the hands of the Commonwealth. It was never anticipated, when we joined the Commonwealth of Australia, that they would exploit all the avenues of direct taxation which have been exploited by them. They have not left one avenue undisturbed, right down to the taxation of amusements. When the Commonwealth was first established the States voluntarily handed over to the Federal authorities their customs duties, and it was thought that they would be able satisfactorily to run Australia with these funds in view of the few matters which would be under their control, leaving to the States all questions of direct

taxation. It was publicly stated by such men as Alfred Deakin, McMillan, and other leaders of the first Federal convention, that only as a last resort and in cases of dire extremity would the Commonwealth interfere with direct taxation.

Hon. P. Collier: We cannot complain when we granted the power in the Federal Constitution.

Mr. ROBINSON: The power was granted in the Constitution in the belief that the Federal authorities would not use it except in cases of extreme necessity, such as a war. Long before the war, in 1909, the Federal authorities started out on direct taxation, and they have gone on ever since, in order to gratify the whim of Federal Ministers in particular matters that they wished to push on. The subject brought forward by the member for Gascoyne is vital to Western Australia. It is the root of all our troubles in this State.

The Premier: We have been fighting them over every detail for the last 10 years.

Mr. ROBINSON: True. Every State Treasurer has fought this all along the line. Can we suggest any other way by which Western Australia can fight this out and more thoroughly impress its views upon the Federal authorities? The member for Gascoyne has suggested the sending of a delegation to the Eastern States. I have no doubt it would be courteously listened to, but I think it would be like pouring water on a duck's back to tell the Federal authorities what we think of them.

The Premier: We would not get the expenses of the trip out of them.

Mr. ROBINSON: I quite agree. What would be beneficial to Western Australia would be for everyone in the State to be made thoroughly conversant with the exact position of affairs. It should be made known to the people that this is the root of all our troubles. They should be informed of the manner in which the Federal authorities have treated us. We are indebted to the hon. member for having brought this matter forward. I should like the Government to give members an opportunity to discuss the entire subject. A little while ago, when we were discussing the question whether the Perth City Council should have panes of glass or fly paper placed over apples and grapes, every member took the greatest interest in the debate, and the House was full. When the member for Gascoyne began to speak on this vitally important matter hardly any member took an interest in the debate. No doubt everyone was disgusted with the actions of the Commonwealth and were somewhat at a loss to know how we should get relief. I do not suggest that any bonds should be broken, but I do suggest it would be a good thing for Western Australia if this Parliament were to discuss the whole matter from beginning to end. How many members have read and studied this report of Mr. Owen? How many know exactly why it

is we are short in our finances, or why the Commonwealth are exploiting every avenue of taxation, or what right they have to do it and how far they have exploited them? How many members know that year after year the surplus of revenue over and above the expenditure has been put into the coffers of the Federal Treasury, thereby robbing the States? How many people know that the Federal authorities passed a Bill authorising them to do this and to break the compact that they themselves made? I do not know that it would do much good to send a delegation to Melbourne, but I do think much good would be done by giving Parliament an opportunity to discuss the whole question and to set apart a day for such discussion. Let every member study the subject himself and express his views upon it, and let us tell Australia how we in Western Australia think we have been treated.

Mr. Lutey: Have you not members in the Federal Parliament to tell the people this? It is their duty to do so.

Mr. ROBINSON: I do not agree with the hon. member that we are casting a reflection upon our Federal representatives. I think they would join with us—

Mr. O'Loughlen: Of course they would.

Mr. ROBINSON—in endeavouring to uphold the rights of Western Australia. It will do no good here to cast recriminations upon our representatives in the Federal House, or to say whether or not we think they are doing their duty. It is from our pockets that the money has been appropriated by the Federal Government and lavishly expended in the Eastern States. We have to pay the piper.

Mr. Lutey: They are the people who should look after our interests.

Mr. ROBINSON: A report has been made by Mr. Owen, who at the time was Commissioner of Taxation. He has since become Under Treasurer. He is an authority on this subject. Quite apart from the comments and tables, the figures and data, his report is unchallengeable. These figures and that data are not properly understood by members of this House or the general public. I should like to see a delegation of the people of Western Australia sent to the Eastern States. Let every man, woman, and child in the State know the real position of affairs. We have no room on this subject for party differences. I expect to stand shoulder to shoulder with the leader of the Opposition, with the Country party, with the Premier, and with every member of this House on this question. We should work together on a matter which is of such vital importance to us. Let us see that we in this Parliament have a full discussion upon it. Although I am not at this moment prepared to discuss the question from beginning to end, I am endeavouring to show hon. members that something more than a delegation to Melbourne is needed. I should like to hear the member for Kanowna

(Hon. T. Walker) on the subject, as well as the leader of the Opposition. I want to know what the member for Mount Magnet (Mr. Troy) and the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loughlen) have to say about it. Are we going to sit down and let this juggernaut roll over us without offering a protest, and sit idly by while the Commonwealth pass statutes by which they can rob us of these moneys, which the Premier has told us should be refunded to the States? There has been already foreshadowed an alteration with regard to the payment of 25s. per head of the population. The late Treasurer, the member for Irwin (Mr. Gardiner), in his report set out a schedule of figures showing the great loss that will be incurred by Western Australia if this payment is gradually whittled away. There has never been a time when we should stand up to the Commonwealth more steadfastly than now. We have never had our rights, nor have we been fairly considered by the Commonwealth. The Prime Minister comes to this State and talks affably to us while here, but as soon as he goes to Melbourne we are as far forgotten as the people who live in the New Hebrides. We might as well live there as here, for all the consideration we get at the hands of the Commonwealth.

The Premier: When the proposed convention is called together we shall have an opportunity to discuss this matter.

Mr. ROBINSON: Yes, if we have proper representation there, we can discuss the matter. In the meantime we should discuss it here. I do not know who is going to elect the members who will attend that convention.

The Premier: The State Parliament will have to decide that question when the convention is called together.

Mr. ROBINSON: If Parliament were called upon to elect representatives to-day it would hardly know whom to choose. In the meantime would it not be a good thing to have a field day on this question? Let us devote our attention to it before hand, instead of discussing whether we should have glass cases over the fruit that is sold in the streets. After such a debate we would know whom to send to Melbourne to represent us at that convention. With all due respect to those who attended the first convention, I say that they were largely overshadowed by the Eastern States. They suffered from the infliction that Melbourne people always suffer from. They only saw through Melbourne glasses. I want the people to see through Western Australian glasses. There is no room for differences of opinion on this point.

Hon. P. Collier: One has only to be in office for a few years to know what kind of a deal we get from the Commonwealth.

Mr. ROBINSON: We should all stand together, from the Speaker in the Chair to the least member of the House; we should be unanimous.

Hon. P. Collier: We should send the Sergeant-at-Arms over too.

Mr. ROBINSON: We have had fire brand meetings in the Town Hall where people have talked about secession, cutting the painter, breaking the links and other rubbish of the kind, but we have never put forward in our Parliament any good reasons to demonstrate why we are being badly treated. They are bound to listen to us in the Eastern States if we put up a good case. Of course, as the Premier tells us, he and other Premiers of this State have gone over to Melbourne and talked with the Premiers of the other States round the table for half an hour or an hour, and then adjourned, and nothing ever comes of it.

The Premier: Oh, yes; we have got consideration.

Mr. ROBINSON: Some consideration, but not much. We want to make, every man and every woman and every child in Western Australia wants to make, such a fuss about our legitimate grievances that Australia will ring with them; and then there will be a chance of getting matters put straight. We know that if in one of our towns something goes wrong the member concerned is stirred up, and he comes here and makes such a fuss that the matter is put straight. Or if a civil servant considers he has been wrongly dismissed, we spend hours—

The Minister for Works: More like days.

Mr. ROBINSON:—discussing his case, and even give him a Royal Commission. But here is something that affects our national life, and nobody makes a fuss about it. I agree with the motion, but I hope the Premier will give us proper notice so that we may all have an opportunity of coming prepared to have a field day on this subject.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. P. Draper—West Perth) [10.17]: I should not have spoken in this debate but for the remarks of the last speaker. Personally, I deprecate anything in the nature of a general fuss by the people all over the State. This matter is one which requires much more careful consideration than that. If we are going to do any good with any convention or with the Federal Ministers as regards getting what we consider to be our due from the revenue derived by the Commonwealth through the Customs, it will certainly not be by any general agitation. It can only be done, and I think it should be done, by means of a proper, logical statement, carefully prepared with facts and well considered reasons. That is the only way in which we can approach a body like the Commonwealth. The Federal Parliament will not listen to fuss, or to what one man may say in one place and another man in another place. But the Commonwealth will listen if we show good and reasonable grounds for our contention that we have not received our due.

Mr. Robinson: I want no more than that.

Hon. P. Collier: A solid debate in this House could not be called a fuss.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not call what may be said in this House a fuss; certainly not. In considering our relations with the Commonwealth, the fact should be borne in mind that we in Western Australia, a population of about 300,000 souls, are responsible for the development of a third of the continent of Australia. True, we are developing it for ourselves; but we are also developing this third equally for the benefit of the whole of the Commonwealth. This is a fact to which the Commonwealth must give due consideration. Further let me say that I am not an advocate of publishing our case broadcast three or four months prior to its being laid before the Federal Government. The proper method is to submit one's case and allow a reasonable time to answer it, but not six months or twelve months; for many of our critics in the Eastern States may be only too glad to pick any hole they possibly can in any case that we may put up.

On motion by Mr. Troy, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 14th October, 1920.

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

QUESTION—CARNARVON HOSPITAL, STAFF.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY asked the Minister for Education: Is he aware that a Mrs. Mitchell was employed as a cook at the Carnarvon Government Hospital at a salary of £8 8s. per month, and that she was dismissed because she refused to do the washing for the institution in addition to her other duties?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: Mrs. Mitchell shows on Salary Register as Cook-Laundress, Carnarvon, and paid for month of August £8 6s. 8d. at