

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 15th September, 1920.

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

QUESTION—FLOUR AVAILABLE FOR EXPORT.

Mr. THOMSON (for Mr. Piesse) asked the Premier: 1, Has any action been taken by the Government to dispose of the surplus stocks of flour held by local millers either to the Imperial or any other Government? 2, If not, is it his intention to take action in that direction?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes, through the Australian Wheat Board. 2, See No. 1.

QUESTION—BRAN AND POLLARD.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been called to the paragraph appearing in the "West Australian" of yesterday's date, wherein it is stated that flour has been reduced by 12s. 6d. per ton and bran and pollard increased by £1 15s. 0d. per ton? 2, In view of the fact that it is the policy of the Government to encourage the dairying industry, will he take steps to have this anomaly rectified?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. The revised prices of flour, bran, and pollard were approved by the Government on the recommendation of the Prices Regulation Commission. 2, This increase in price is necessary to enable flour millers to export flour in competition with Eastern States millers. The whole of the bran and pollard product will be sold locally. The alteration in prices is necessary to secure supplies of bran and pollard for local use.

QUESTION—CAPEL PINE PLANTATION.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Minister for Woods and Forests, What is the reason for rooting up a large number of pine trees; over approximately 150 acres, at the Capel pine plantation?

The MINISTER FOR WOODS AND FORESTS replied: The species of pine planted failed.

BILL—ROADS CLOSURE.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands and read a first time.

MOTION—RETIREMENT OF J. J. O'NEILL.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Mr. SMITH (North Perth) [4.36]: I move—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the compulsory retirement of Mr. J. J. O'Neill from the position of acting lands resumption officer.

Possibly some hon. members may never have heard of Mr. O'Neill. Mr. O'Neill was an old and valued servant of the State. For 26 years had he been employed by the Government, and during the whole of that time he gave excellent service, as has been testified to by the Minister controlling his department. Members who have come into contact with Mr. O'Neill will bear me out in the contention that he was a most efficient officer. In late years he was employed as Land Resumption Officer, taking the place of Mr. Hall who, I understand, was transferred to another department. In the end Mr. O'Neill was charged with a very serious offence and was adjudged guilty by the Public Service Commissioner. Against that judgment Mr. O'Neill appealed. The appeal board, by a majority verdict, upheld the original judgment. The chairman of the appeal board, it should be understood, was the Public Service Commissioner, who had already given judgment on Mr. O'Neill's case. Surely that is not our idea of British fair play! When a man appeals against a judgment it is generally expected that he shall be tried by some other tribunal, not that against whose judgment he is appealing. Naturally the Public Service Commissioner would maintain the attitude he had adopted in the first instance. It is not to be expected that he would vary his original judgment, because to do so would be to condemn himself. Therefore, I contend that the appeal board which dealt with this case was not one in which Mr. O'Neill could repose absolute confidence. The appeal board, comprising the officer against whose original judgment Mr. O'Neill was appealing, did not arrive at a unanimous verdict. In criminal trials it has always been a British rule that a man should be found guilty only by a unanimous verdict. In this case it was not a unanimous verdict. Therefore, I maintain that Mr. O'Neill did not have a fair trial, and I think he is perfectly justified in now appealing to a higher tribunal for fair play.

Because of that, I am speaking this afternoon on his behalf. Let me tell the House something about Mr. O'Neill's case. As I said in the beginning, Mr. O'Neill was Land Resumption Officer, an officer appointed by the Government to negotiate in land resumption cases. Sometimes he had to purchase land, and on other occasions, when land was compulsorily resumed by the Government, he was empowered to come to some arrangement with the parties in regard to price. The charge arose out of a case in which the Government had decided to purchase a block of land in Hay-street. They had practically agreed to make the purchase, and all that remained was for Mr. O'Neill to interview the agents and finalise the price to be paid. I wish to draw attention to a practice which then existed in the department in regard to arriving at a price in land resumption cases. At the inquiries held, evidence was given of the existence of a very objectionable practice, which I think any Government should be heartily ashamed of. When land was resumed the Lands Resumption Officer resorted to all sorts of mean tricks to beat down the owner of the land in regard to the price. One of those tricks was to remind the owner of the land that if he had sold the land through a land agent, he would have had to pay a commission; and to argue from this that it was only fair that the owner of the land should allow the Lands Resumption Officer a like commission. To this appeal the owner of the land generally agreed.

The Premier: Do you mean to say that the Government authorised that practice, or even knew of it?

Mr. SMITH. I do not know that they authorised it, or even that they knew of it, but that was the practice in the department, and Mr. O'Neill's superior officer knew of it, and his predecessor—the permanent Land Resumption Officer—not only knew of it but apparently practised it. It was a mean, paltry trick to have crept into a Government department. The Government should not have allowed that sort of thing. Yet it existed without a doubt; it was the practice of the department. The Premier indicates that there was no authority for it.

The Premier: I certainly did not know of it, and the Minister for Works did not know of it.

Mr. SMITH: But the practice existed in the department. I have a letter which was written by Mr. Hall, the permanent Land Resumption Officer on the 8th March, 1920, prior to the O'Neill case coming to light.

The Premier: Mr. Hall has not been there for years.

Mr. SMITH: Quite true, but that only proves that the practice has existed for many years.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He was there in 1916.

Mr. SMITH: I will read Mr. Hall's letter, because it will show the House exactly what

was going on. The letter is addressed to Mr. O'Neill, who at that time was hunting for evidence to support his case. He was charged with a very serious crime, and he realised the difficult position in which he was placed. Therefore he desired to produce evidence to prove that he was only carrying on the practice of the department. Naturally enough, he went to Mr. Hall, whose office he was then filling, and asked him to put in writing the practice of the department. Mr. Hall wrote—

In pursuance of your verbal inquiry as to the custom regarding selling commission in negotiations for purchase of private properties on behalf of the Government whilst I was in the position of Land Resumption Officer, and whether the department was aware of the system, I have to say—(a) It was not at all an unusual thing for me to use the argument with a willing vendor, that as he would have to allow commission if selling through an agent at the price quoted, he should deduct that commission from the selling price, for the advantage of the Government. (b) The permanent head of the department should be aware of this, because I was always very frank, especially with the new Under Secretary, in apprising him of my method of dealing and arguments used.

There can be no getting away from that letter. Mr. Hall was the permanent Land Resumption officer; a trusted officer of the department, and he says that that was the practice in the department and that the permanent head was well aware of it. Mr. O'Neill took over Mr. Hall's work, and naturally he was made aware of the practice and continued it. I repeat that it was a mean, paltry practice for any Government to be a party to. They should not have been a party to beating down the owners of land for a few paltry pounds in order to get a lower price. That is what happened in the case in question. Regarding the block of land which the Government desired to secure for tramway offices, everything was fixed except the price, and Mr. O'Neill was detailed off to finalise the purchase price. With the usual practice in mind, he interviewed the land agent and suggested, "What about commission?" A certain firm of land agents had this land on their books for sale; it belonged to a certain estate. Mr. O'Neill interviewed one of the firm, and suggested, I do not know in what terms, "What about commission?" The land agent apparently was much shocked at this proposal, because he was evidently under the impression that Mr. O'Neill was making a demand for a commission to put into his own pocket. Naturally, Mr. O'Neill did not say that the commission was to come off the price to the Government, because, if he had done so, the land agent would have stuck out, and would have declined to sell to the Government at the lower figure. The land agent, however, thought that Mr.

O'Neill was actually making a demand for a commission for himself and, very properly I suppose, he reported the matter to one of the Ministers.

Hon. W. C. Angwin. Do you think that was the reason for it?

Mr. SMITH: I am putting the case as it appears to me. There may be something else behind it. The land agent informed the Premier, and I give the Premier every credit for having naturally been very shocked when he heard that such a practice was in existence. He, too, concluded that Mr. O'Neill was trying to obtain some advantage for himself.

The Premier: I certainly did.

Mr. SMITH: And the Premier did the proper thing in taking steps to put a stop to the practice. He placed the matter in the hands of the detective department. At the time Mr. O'Neill interviewed the land agent nothing was done, as the latter put him off with an excuse to the effect that he could not promise Mr. O'Neill any commission until he had first seen his brother. It was a case of call again. When Mr. O'Neill called again, a detective was in hiding about the office so that Mr. O'Neill should be trapped into making the demand for commission again. Mr. O'Neill turned up, the question of commission was raised and the land agent said that his brother would not agree to the payment of commission to O'Neill. That was the end of it then. The next thing Mr. O'Neill heard was that he was suspended. No money was paid to him. That is where the department made a mistake. If those in authority had really wanted to satisfy themselves that this was a case of obtaining a secret commission, they should have gone further and allowed the money to be paid over. They could then have seen whether Mr. O'Neill gave the Government the benefit of the commission received.

Mr. Johnston: To buy the property would have been a pretty expensive test.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Was not it the practice to pay the cheque less the commission?

Mr. SMITH: I am coming to that. In reply to the member for Williams-Narrogin, it might have been an expensive test, but it would have been only fair to Mr. O'Neill. The few pounds it would have cost would have been nothing as compared with what it has cost Mr. O'Neill. That is what I should have done if I had wanted to catch anyone committing a crime. I would have gone the whole hog. Apparently the land agent was instructed to say that his brother would not agree to the payment of commission to Mr. O'Neill, and the proposed purchase was turned down. The next thing Mr. O'Neill heard was that he was suspended on a charge of having made this demand for his personal benefit. Naturally Mr. O'Neill was very much shocked and demanded an inquiry. At that inquiry he brought forward evidence that he had practised this method of obtaining reduced prices for the

Government, and called three reputable citizens, Mr. Cook, Mr. Briggs, and Mr. Mosey to show that he had made similar deals through them, had made similar demands for commission to which they had agreed, that the money had been deducted from the purchase price to the Government, and that he himself had not benefited by one penny piece. What does that go to prove? To my mind it is fairly ample evidence that Mr. O'Neill was quite honest in the way he went about this business. We can come to no other conclusion.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That was condoned by the Minister, was it not?

Mr. SMITH: Oh no!

Mr. O'Loughlen: Not the three previous cases?

Mr. SMITH: I would not go to the extent of saying that. I suppose that the amount paid for the land was simply submitted to the Minister in the usual way and that the Minister did not go into the details.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Minister wanted the land as cheaply as he could get it.

Mr. SMITH: Yes, the Minister was not concerned about the way in which it was obtained, so long as he did not have to pay more than was absolutely necessary. In the three cases I have mentioned, Mr. O'Neill had beaten down reputable citizens by getting them to deduct commission, of which the Government received the benefit. Yet, at the inquiry, the department was not able to produce one single case where Mr. O'Neill himself had derived any personal benefit. If there had been any such cases, the department could have brought them forward. The department could have gone through each individual case and ascertained how much had been paid and whether any commission had been allowed. No doubt the department made that test and discovered nothing against Mr. O'Neill. At any rate, no evidence of this kind was produced against him. I certainly think that, after the way Mr. O'Neill cleared up that point, he was entitled at least to the benefit of the doubt. That, however, was not granted to him. In making this appeal on behalf of Mr. O'Neill, I would remind members that O'Neill has been punished very severely, and in a way which would have been commensurate with his fault even if he had been guilty right up to the hilt. He has been punished, perhaps, more than any other civil servant. Why, I do not know. The Minister for Works who controls the department has always spoken very highly of this officer. He has described him as an excellent officer who has always done his work well. Yet O'Neill was punished by dismissal from the service and the forfeiture of his rights extending over a period of 26 years. Mr. O'Neill has many friends; he is well known and highly respected, and he has been turned out of the service with this stigma on him, just on account of a verdict on which nobody would hang a blackfellow's dog.

Mr. Robinson: Who gave the verdict?

Mr. SMITH: The appeal board.

Mr. Robinson: Who were the members of the appeal board?

Mr. SMITH: The Public Service Commissioner dealt with the case and found O'Neill guilty.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Guilty of indiscretion.

Mr. SMITH: Against that decision O'Neill appealed, and the Public Service Commissioner was chairman of the appeal board. He sat in judgment on himself.

The Minister for Mines: No, he did not. There were other members of the board—Mr. O'Mahony representing O'Neill, and the Under Secretary for Law representing the Government.

Mr. SMITH: Mr. O'Mahoney dissented from the finding. It was not a unanimous verdict, and I repeat that it is the British conception of justice that criminals are only returned guilty on the unanimous verdict of the jury. I would like to direct attention to the extraordinary decision which was originally given by the Public Service Commissioner. He said—

It is reasonable to infer that if Mr. O'Neill had intended to deduct the amount from the proposed purchase money, he would, immediately the question of bribery cropped up, have cleared himself by informing Mr. Robertson what he proposed to do in the event of the £50 commission being agreed to. In view of the fact that it is impossible now to ascertain what Mr. O'Neill's ultimate disposal of the money would have been if obtained, and bearing in mind Mr. O'Neill's long service and undoubted attempts to benefit the Government in the many transactions which have been referred to him, as well as the strong evidence in his favour given by the Minister and the Under Secretary for Works, we recommend that the Government, in lieu of demanding Mr. O'Neill's resignation, which means the loss of his accrued rights, treat him on the same terms as an officer who is being dispensed with as an excess officer.

Mr. Robinson: Was there any evidence that he had received commission and accounted for it to the Government?

Mr. SMITH: He produced three witnesses who had allowed him commission, which was deducted from the settlement. The money was not handed to Mr. O'Neill, who told them to take it off the purchase money when giving their cheque.

Mr. Underwood: If he had done good work he would have been in the service yet.

Mr. SMITH: I maintain that Mr. O'Neill has not had a fair deal. No doubt some civil servants have the ear of the Government and get off lightly. Only the other day a civil servant, who had been guilty of defrauding the Government for years, and coached up his juniors in the same way, and who had admitted his guilt, was reinstated after having been reprimanded.

The Premier: I have not heard of that.

Mr. SMITH: I think I have made out a clear case for some inquiry being made into Mr. O'Neill's grievances. I will reserve any further remarks I have to make until a later stage.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member will only be able to reply to the remarks made during the debate.

Mr. SMITH: I shall not be touching upon new matter, but will reply to the remarks made by the Minister. I have much pleasure in moving the motion standing in my name.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

MOTION—STATE CHILDREN AND CHARITIES ALLOWANCE.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [5.5]: I move—

That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that the Government should increase the amounts payable to institutions, natural parents, and foster parents to 10s. per week.

I do not think there should be any necessity for me to stress this motion.

Mr. Underwood: What are foster parents?

Mr. MUNSIE: Women who take State children and look after them.

Mr. Underwood: No!

Mr. MUNSIE: I am not going to be side-tracked by the hon. member. I know what I am talking about, seeing that we have for the last 12 months served on a select committee and a Royal Commission dealing with this subject.

Mr. Underwood: Who are natural parents? I am a natural parent.

Mr. MUNSIE: Yes.

Mr. Underwood: Would I get 10s. a week?

Mr. MUNSIE: No. Probably the hon. member is not deserving of it, and therefore would not get it. The natural parent, the mother, when the bread-winner is taken away, is to-day allowed 8s. per week for the maintenance of her children, and that has only been given recently. Before that she was only allowed 7s. a week.

Mr. Underwood: Natural parents are not allowed anything.

Mr. MUNSIE: This only applies to cases where the Government are assisting, and the hon. member knows that. What is the good of taking a technical point like that? I am bringing this matter forward because I realise that it is not possible in many instances, where children are being supported by the State at the rate of 8s. a week, for them to be kept on this amount. Further, when the select committee was appointed to inquire regarding the State children and the Charities Department we took a considerable amount of evidence. Before the close of last session members of the select committee were so impressed by what they had seen that they put in an interim report. The main question dealt with in that report was the amount of money paid to natural mothers, foster mothers and institutions. We recommended that the amount should be increased to 10s. per week. Is it expected of hon. members

that they should serve on a select committee of this sort, inquire into the various matters concerned, spend their own time and money in so doing, and make recommendations, and then have their recommendations thrown into the waste-paper basket? If that is going to be the practice it is time the House refrained from appointing any further select committees. When the session opened I asked the Colonial Secretary the following question:—

1, Is it the intention of the Government to give effect to the recommendations of the select committee's interim report on State Children and Charities Department presented on 21st November, 1919, particularly item No. 1, which reads as follows: "The present monetary allowance to institutions, foster parents, and natural parents for the keep of children is quite inadequate. Your committee recommends an all-round payment of 10s. per week for each child until that child reaches the age of 14 years"? 2, If so, when? 3, If not, why not? The Colonial Secretary replied: 1, In most cases the committee's recommendations have already been complied with. I am not complaining about that. Some of the recommendations were complied with, but this one was not. The reply continued—

The monetary allowance to institutions has not been increased. Foster mothers receive 10s. per week for children under one year; from one to two years, 9s.; and from two to fourteen years, 8s. Foster mothers of young delicate babies receive up to 12s. 6d. per week. Natural parents for the keep of their own children now receive 8s. per week in lieu of 7s. per week. The additional 1s. per week per child operated from 15th May last. 2 and 3, Answered by No. 1.

In view of this reply I thought it wise to test the feeling of the House by moving a motion. If hon. members had been given the opportunity that was afforded to members of the select committee and the Royal Commission of visiting all the institutions of the metropolitan area and the country districts, of seeing the dozens of homes of foster parents with their foster children, as well as the homes of natural parents, and heard the evidence that was placed before us, there would have been no necessity even to give notice of this motion. Hon. members must realise that it is not possible for any woman, whether a natural parent or a foster parent, to keep and clothe a child as it should be kept and clothed on 8s. per week. My object is to have the recommendation contained in the interim report put into effect, and the allowance increased to 10s. per week. I believe that, too, is insufficient. We have heard a great deal as to the necessity of peopling our waste spaces and I have heard no serious objection raised by hon. members to any legitimate scheme for immigration. The very best immigrant we can have in Australia is the Australian-born child. For that reason, when the bread winner is taken away, the Government should see that the children are given sufficient to eat and have sufficient clothing to

wear. But the Government are not doing that when they only pay 8s. a week. Queensland and New South Wales have increased the amount paid to the natural mother for keeping her child, and to the foster mother, to 12s. a week. New Zealand at present is paying, in the case of a child under one year, 17s. 6d., and in the case of a child over one and up to 14 years of age, 15s. a week. Here we pay the paltry sum of 8s. The Government will say it is purely a matter of finance. I do not think any member of the Government need fear criticism from any individual in the State as to the amount of money they spend in helping widows and children. At all events, they have nothing to fear from the Opposition, any more than they have from the public. I do not intend to deal very elaborately with this motion, but I have a word or two to say regarding institutions. There is a difference of opinion in matters of child welfare, whether the better means of dealing with children is the boarding out system or an institution. I am not going to discuss the merits or demerits of one system as against the other, but I do want to emphasise the fact that all institutions of the kind in this State are doing splendid work in the interests of the children of Western Australia. From the evidence which the select committee and the Royal Commission have obtained, and from the observation of every member of this House, it must be realised, however, that an institution cannot possibly do as it should by a child on an allowance of 8s. per week. Therefore, I ask that the allowance be increased to 10s. in the case of institutions as well. I ask every member to vote for the motion in order that it may go to the Government either as an instruction or as an opinion of this Chamber. I believe every member will vote in favour of increasing the present allowance to at least 10s. per week.

On motion by the Minister for Mines debate adjourned.

MOTION—RAILWAY FREIGHTS.

Specific Resolution before Increase.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin)
[5.19]: I move—

That in order to retain to the Legislative Assembly the power of controlling taxation, this House is of opinion that no further increase of railway freights should be imposed until a schedule showing the proposed increases has been laid on the Table of the House, and approved by specific resolution.

I feel sure that this motion will commend itself to the House, because every member who has been here for any length of time must feel that by degrees the administration is getting completely out of the control of Parliament as regards taxation and expenditure.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But railway freights are not taxation; they are payment for services rendered.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Increased railway freights are a form of direct taxation, and this has been recognised by a Government of which the hon. member interjecting was a member. Increased railway freights were recognised in an official manner to be taxation, because the Government I refer to stated that they were compelled to resort to them on account of having been refused other methods of taxation. I will prove that presently in the words of the hon. member's former leader.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Railway freights are not taxation.

Mr. JOHNSTON: They are a form of charge for services rendered that can be used even penally as a means of taxation. The hon. member's leader in 1915, when imposing higher railway freights, said that the reason why he was imposing them was that he had failed to obtain other methods of taxation. At any rate, the fact remains that Parliament now has very little control over the Executive in the big matters of administration which really count, and it is up to us to endeavour to regain that measure of control which we have lost.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This is really a motion of want of confidence.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Not at all. It is necessary for the Minister for Railways to come to this House for approval of the appointment of the Commissioner of Railways at a salary of £2,000 per annum. A motion to that effect appears on the Notice Paper.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not anticipate that motion.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I only wish to point out that if that necessity exists for the comparatively small expenditure of £2,000 per annum, this House may well lay it down as a principle that the Assembly must in future be consulted before taxation amounting to a quarter of a million per annum is imposed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot discuss taxation under this motion. The hon. member is dealing with railway freights, and they are not taxation.

Mr. JOHNSTON: No, Sir. The only point to which I would draw attention is that my motion proposes certain procedure in order to retain for the Assembly the power of controlling taxation.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member's motion really deals with railway freights, and that is the point which the hon. member should discuss. He can illustrate, but he cannot discuss the question of taxation.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The point I wish to illustrate under the terms of my motion is that whilst we control direct taxation in every respect, whilst stamp duty on cheques cannot be increased from 1d. to 1½d. or 2d. without a Bill going through both Houses of Parliament, and whilst the duty on receipts cannot be raised from 1d. to 2d. without a Bill going through both Houses

of Parliament, and whilst land and income tax cannot be increased without Parliamentary approval, the Government have absolute power to impose a form of direct taxation, amounting in the last instance to a quarter of a million per annum, and to impose such taxation after Parliament has prorogued, without consulting, or obtaining the approval of, this House. That, in my opinion, is not a proper method of procedure.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You have no confidence in the Government.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I have not enough confidence in any Government this State has had or is likely to have to give them a blank cheque to impose as much as a quarter of a million pounds of taxation through increased railway freights on the people living inland and engaged in the primary industries. I say that before imposing such taxation the Government should first consult, and obtain the approval of, the elected representatives of the people. Last session we spent a considerable amount of time discussing a Dog Act Amendment Bill and similar measures of little importance; and yet a big question affecting vitally the prosperity of the primary industries, and affecting every person living inland on the railway system, can be disposed of without the slightest reference to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Everybody pays those railway freights.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Not so. As a matter of fact, if it were in order, I could prove that the people living in the country districts pay nearly all the increased freights both ways.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Who pays the increase on the wheat? The consumer pays it in every case.

Mr. JOHNSTON: No, the producer pays it. Although the railway figures may show that a great deal of money is paid on account of the railway freights in Perth, that money is paid by big firms who send consignments to the country and who subsequently recoup themselves from the residents of the country areas. I say emphatically that our primary industries are heavily penalised by the increase in railway freights. I believe that eventually a generation will rise up in this country who will look back on the present exorbitant railway freights in the same way as we look back on the toll bars that were at one time placed across the main roads for the purpose of the collection of revenue to pay for the maintenance and improvement of roads. In a new country which has agricultural development and settlement for its objective, in a country like Western Australia which has no rivers to give cheap water carriage to the people inland, it is absolutely essential that there should be cheap railway freights if ever we are to have a big population inland. Ultimately, I believe, it will be recognised that by low railway freights and ample services alone can our policy of land settlement be effected, and that these

means will tend more to increase the revenue of the Railway Department than will repeated increases of fares and freights.

The Minister for Mines: There are 100 million people in the United States of America, and 42 millions in Great Britain, and our railway freights are not much more than two-thirds of the freights in those countries.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The hon. gentleman has figures which are not available to me, but I cannot forget that there was a time when the present Minister for Mines fully agreed with the view I have to-day tried to express regarding increase of railway freights.

The Minister for Mines: The cost of the railway service has increased considerably since then.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I know that. I quite recognise the difficulty, and at this juncture I am not arguing that the recent increase of railway freights was not inevitable. But if it was inevitable, and if the Government have a case for the increases which would commend itself to the House, they should have come to the House for authority to make those increases in the same way as they have repeatedly come here for approval of increases in direct taxation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member knows full well that taxation is imposed under Section 67 of the Constitution Act and must come before Parliament. The hon. member must confine himself to the motion as regards railway freights.

Mr. JOHNSTON: In regard to the question of railway freights, then, let me point out that in 1915 the government of which the present Minister for Railways was the head for a number of years, and which did excellent work for the people of Western Australia, increased the railway freights, and that in announcing the increase the then Premier, Mr. Scaddan, on behalf of the Government, made the following statement—

We regret, of course; having to do it—That is, increase railway freights. but no other course is left to us but to take advantage of such means of raising revenue.

“Raising revenue” was the term which the Premier of that day applied to that iniquitous increase of railway freights. The hon. gentleman continued—

That is what we tried to point out to the Legislative Council and to others when we endeavoured to raise money by taxing those who could afford to pay for amusements. But it was no good. They would not listen to us, and consequently we have been forced to take this step.

That statement was published in the “West Australian” of the 15th April, 1915. It does credit to the hon. gentleman, and it shows clearly that at that time he had no desire to increase railway freights, and that he would not have imposed a crushing

burden on the people inland but for the fact that his attempts to obtain taxation by other means had failed on account of the reprehensible action of the Legislative Council of that day. That argument, however, does not apply at the present time, since the Government now in power seem to be able to get all their measures through the Legislative Council without any difficulty whatever. At all events, let me express the hope that the raising of railway freights will not become a habit with the Minister for Railways. He raised them in 1915, and he increased them again in 1919; and I confess quite frankly that after hearing the hon. gentleman’s eloquent defence of his action in this respect during the recent Address-in-reply debate, I felt some uneasiness lest he might be in a mild manner threatening this party with yet another increase in railway freights. It was because I read that threat into the hon. gentleman’s speech, and because that threat, real or imagined, perturbed me a good deal, that I thought out this motion, after a good deal of consideration, as a method by which the Government might be prevented from taking such action unless the House agreed to it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Were not railway freights raised in 1917?

Mr. JOHNSTON: There was an increase between 1915 and 1919, but unfortunately I could not ascertain the exact date of it, and so was prevented from looking up any historical records of the apologies offered by the Government responsible. I may say, however, that since 1915 when Mr. Scaddan made that statement the people seem to have become so hardened to the increases that the Government on a most recent occasion did not feel it their duty to give any explanation for having made the increases.

The Minister for Mines. I made a statement to the House.

Mr. JOHNSTON: A passing reference.

The Minister for Mines: It was not a passing reference.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Whatever it was, I can assure the hon. gentleman that the first time I heard of the increases was when they came into force when I was in the country after the House had adjourned. The Minister went away at about that time, and even in his absence, no explanation was made which might have been compared to some of his utterances. I recommend that economy be exercised everywhere and after carrying that out, the Government will have any support I can give them to impose a reasonable measure of taxation, not, however, through the railways. I will not support additional taxation until a policy of economy has been put into operation.

Mr. O’Loghlen: You look for concessions more than anyone else.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I have refrained from asking for urgent and reasonable require-

ments for my electorate owing to our present financial condition.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You will be searching for another party.

Mr. JOHNSTON: When money was plentiful I admit that I interviewed the present member for Albany (Hon. J. Scaddan) on many occasions and he was sympathetic and generous, not only in regard to the requirements of my particular district but of all the agricultural districts of this State.

Mr. O'Loghlen: What gratitude did that Government receive for it?

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Labour Government of that time were given full credit and ample gratitude for the necessary public works that were put in hand by them.

Mr. O'Loghlen: And a few members, instead of giving them credit could have given them support and kept them in power.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is another story and I feel that I would be out of order if I referred to it at the present time. With regard to the last increase of railway freights, that of December, 1919, a week after the House had adjourned, we had a great deal of inquiry and investigation. That, however, was carried on after the deed was done, after the taxation had been imposed on the people inland.

Mr. O'Loghlen: There was no outcry in the country, no indignation meetings.

Mr. JOHNSTON: There were meetings in the Narrogin district and of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, and other influential bodies, all of which passed motions of censure on the whole of the Country party for dilatoriness or inaction in the matter.

Mr. O'Loghlen: And eight months afterwards the Country party take action.

Mr. JOHNSTON: There has been no other opportunity. Parliament has been in recess. We have read in the "West Australian" of meetings of the Country party and other bodies, held in private to consider the question of the railway freights; we read of members of the Country party and Ministers conferring with the Commissioner of Railways on the subject after the deed has been perpetrated. It will be recognised, therefore, that the promiscuous increase of railway freights is treated seriously by the members of the Country party, and is regarded as a matter worthy of the attention of Parliament. The object of my motion is to see that that attention shall be given to the subject in the open light of day before the whole of the people of Western Australia in this House rather than by secret meetings held by Ministers and others with the Commissioner for Railways, and when it is too late to effect any alteration. I know that the Government have a difficult row to hoe, and I have no desire to embarrass them. The Government, however, should submit to the House the increases they desire to impose and show why they are necessary. Then, if a sufficiently good case has

has been made out, the House will give the matter proper consideration.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They would have a difficult job to do that.

Mr. Smith: Are you in favour of removing the railways from political control?

Mr. JOHNSTON: If the hon. member can show me how that can be done, I shall be prepared to listen to him.

The Minister for Mines: May I advise you that your motion is not worth anything?

Mr. JOHNSTON: In 1917, when the present Minister for Mines imposed increased freights on the carriage of newspapers, he made a public utterance.

The Minister for Mines: I tell you that your motion will not be worth anything even if it is carried.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I expect the hon. gentleman is a believer in Parliamentary Government.

The Minister for Mines: The motion is playing off to your constituents; it does not do anything else.

Mr. JOHNSTON: It is the only action that I am aware I am able to take. Parliament recognises the wishes of the House in other matters; it has recognised the wishes of members in the construction of the Esperance Railway, and I would be failing in my duty if I did not bring this subject forward. The House has a right to give a direction to the Government in regard to the matter.

The Minister for Mines: A simple amendment of the Railway Act would have got all you wanted.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I do not know that I am privileged to do that without a Message from the Governor. The hon. gentleman knows that technical objections can always be raised when a member tries to amend existing legislation. If the Minister had made that statement to me when I gave notice of the motion, I might have taken his advice and adopted the method he now suggests. I take it that the hon. gentleman is a believer in Parliamentary Government. He stood at Albany in the interests of constitutional government; it was his desire to see it restored, and I feel sure if the motion is carried we shall have constitutional government restored in this direction and we shall prevent this or any other Government from again repeating the action which was taken in 1915, and which Mr. Scaddan then said he was compelled to take because other methods of imposing taxation had failed to go through. If the motion I have submitted is adopted and there should be a good case for the imposition of increased railway freights at any time, the House in its wisdom may stand to the Government in the matter. If, on the other hand, the House does not approve of the increase, then the Government should not have the right to impose any increase. The motion is simple and clear and I hope it will receive the acceptance of hon. members, especially in

view of the threats made by the Government that another increase in railway freights may be necessary in the future.

On motion by the Minister for Mines debate adjourned.

MOTION—STRAITS SETTLEMENTS AND JAVA TRADE.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [5.43]. 1 move—

That in the opinion of this House, in view of the necessity for the encouragement of production for the provision of adequate markets for the results of such production, it is advisable that the Government of this State should take steps to develop trade and commerce between this State and the Straits Settlements and Java.

This motion is similar in every respect to the motion passed by the Legislative Council last session. That motion was moved by Mr. Duffell on the 30th September, and after a debate it was carried unanimously on the 5th November and sent to this House for its concurrence. Unfortunately, the motion became one of the slaughtered innocents at the end of session. One would have thought that a motion such as this, passed unanimously by another place, would have been taken some notice of by the Government. Apparently nothing has been done. It is unfortunate indeed that no notice was taken of the motion, because during the month of May of this year two of the most important conferences ever held in the Southern Hemisphere, one an engineers' conference and the other a great industries fair were held in Wettevreden, the commercial capital of Java. All countries were invited to send representatives to those conferences, and I understand the Commonwealth and some of the Eastern States did send representatives. Western Australia, unfortunately, ignored the invitation and lost an opportunity of cementing a lasting friendship as well as the opportunity to increase our trade with those important countries. I think the trouble is that, unfortunately, no member of the Government has ever visited Java and the Straits Settlements, and in consequence the Government do not know how important are the markets lying at their very door.

The Minister for Mines: But our business people know all about it.

Mr. ANGELO: In my opinion the cementing of a lasting friendship with the people in Java, and the keeping closely in touch with the British subjects in the Straits Settlements, are very important indeed. When, eight or nine years ago, I visited Java I found there a feeling amongst the Dutch that the Australians, the British colonists, and the Americans—who had not very long before acquired the Philippine Islands—should join with them in friendly trade and in the setting up of some defensive alli-

ance. Like ourselves, they have a big menace not far from their shores. Recently a certain Asiatic nation has decided to dispense with obsolete battleships and build new boats up to 40,000 tons. What is that nation going to do with those ships? It is highly advisable that we in Australia should enter into the most friendly relations with the Dutch up north. Banded together, the two nations could very well form a defensive alliance against any aggressive neighbours who might menace us in the near future. Mr. Kingsmill, the President of the Legislative Council, at the request of the then Premier, visited Java in 1918. On his return that gentleman submitted a report which was considered so important that it was printed.

Mr. Underwood: It would not be worth a struck match.

Mr. ANGELO: It was printed and placed on the Table of the House.

Mr. Underwood: To stop there. There is no greater blatherskite than the Hon. Sir Walter.

Mr. ANGELO: I visited Java and the Straits Settlements in 1911, and I must confess that some of the impression I gained were not similar to those reported by the President of the Council.

Mr. Underwood: No, of course not.

Mr. ANGELO: Probably he, going as a member of Parliament, was furnished with letters of introduction which took him amongst the high officials up there. I for my part carried letters of introduction to the commercial houses, and so perhaps I obtained a better idea of the wonderful trading possibilities than did Mr. Kingsmill. I went right amongst the commercial houses, went as an agent of a commercial houses in Western Australia.

Mr. Underwood: Yes, the State Steamship Service.

Mr. ANGELO: No, unfortunately that service did not exist at the time, or I might have got a free trip. However, there are in Mr. Kingsmill's report some figures of importance. In British Malaya there is a population of 2,600,000 people, and in Java a population of 35,000,000. In addition to Java, the Dutch hold other important islands, such as Sumatra, Bali, Lombok, and Timor. I consider the time has arrived when the Government should take steps to secure the trade with those islands, a trade which geographically at least belongs to this State. Java is only 2½ days steam from Broome, and Singapore can be reached by an additional steaming of 40 hours. America and Japan and the Eastern States are all doing their utmost to secure this trade for themselves. Both in Singapore and in Java I was introduced to the trade representatives of Victoria and of New South Wales. Those States, recognising the wonderful trading possibilities, had already sent their trade representatives to those places. For 10 years New South Wales subsidised the Burns, Philp line of steamers to open up and maintain

the trade. What have we done? So far, nothing whatever. Only a few weeks ago a representative of Messrs. G. S. Yuille & Co., the big meat people in Sydney, came over here to endeavour to open up a trade between Western Australia and Singapore, Java, and Hong Kong. Operating from New South Wales, the firm have already a good portion of that trade. I asked their representative why he had come over here, since his firm already had the trade. In reply he said that his firm recognised that the trade properly belonged to Western Australia, owing to the proximity of this State to the islands, and that, not wanting to lose that trade, his firm if necessary would transfer a portion of their operations from New South Wales to Western Australia. From this it will be seen that the traders of Sydney recognise that we here should be awake to the necessity for securing that trade. Of course any trade we could build up with those islands must later on extend to China, India and other Asiatic nations requiring those of our products which they cannot themselves produce. Production and the securing of suitable markets should go hand in hand. It is of no use the Government crying, "Produce, produce, produce" unless we look ahead to see what we are going to do with our production when we have it. An investor does not build and open a shop unless he is pretty sure that he will be able to sell his products, and we as a State should not go in for production until we have suitable markets for that production. I doubt whether there is any country in the world producing on the same scale as are we which has, as we have, facilities for the disposal of that produce at its very door. There seems to be an idea that the people in the Straits Settlements and Java are not wealthy, that they are mostly indigent natives. On the contrary, notwithstanding that the great majority of them were natives, I found that many of those natives were living in a most luxurious manner, while of course the English and Dutch up there were living in far greater luxury than is the average Australian. They can afford to pay well for our products, and they are most anxious to secure them. Malaya in 1916 exported rubber to the value of £17,240,000, and tin to the value of £7,000,530, or nearly £25,000,000 in two lines alone. When up there I was told by a member of the Council of the Malay States that they had built all their railways out of revenue, that they did not owe a penny, and that they had £3,000,000 to their credit. It will be remembered that, during the war, the Straits Settlements presented the British Government with a battleship.

The Minister for Mines: Look at the cheap labour they can get!

Mr. ANGELO: The average annual imports into Java amount to £25,000,000, and the exports to £40,000,000. These figures suggest the wealth of the country. I found the commercial community of Java most

anxious to do business with Australia. I called on the general manager of the Netherlands Trading Company, who promptly invited me to dinner. To my surprise no fewer than 16 Dutch commercial gentlemen attended the dinner to discuss with me the possibilities of trade. Unfortunately in those days I had not the experience of Western Australia which I have now. However, I talked meat and flour, and did not let on that I knew very little about either.

Mr. Willecock: You could not avoid letting on that you knew very little about Dutch.

Mr. ANGELO: I thank the hon. member for his interjection. It reminds me that as we went into dinner the host said, "Now let this be an English dinner," and during the whole of the three hours spent at the table not a word of Dutch was spoken. Could 16 Englishmen or Australians be found to agree to talk Dutch all the evening? In my opinion it showed how very anxious those gentlemen were to enter into friendly trade with us. Among other lines which we could export to those people is flour, which they want very badly.

Mr. Thomson: And we want to sell the flour.

Mr. ANGELO: Then here is a market for it. In 1907 Western Australia sent to Java 2,464 tons of flour. Last year we sent them 22,000 tons. In a few years the quantity has increased materially, but the latest figure represents but a very small proportion of the quantity which the market is capable of taking. To show the demand for Australian flour there, the Japanese are now selling a cheaper line as the Australian product. This was only found out recently, and that is the reason why I shall suggest later on the appointment of trade representatives to see what commodities are going there ostensibly from Western Australia, but which are not really ours, and also to ascertain what trade can be done, and how best to encourage it. As flour is not produced in these places, there will always be a market for biscuits, cakes and similar side lines from the main flour export. The people of Java and the Straits Settlements want live cattle and sheep and frozen meat. In 1911 I took up 700 sheep, which constituted one of the trial shipments. Since then I have sent up several lots of sheep and I have found that the quality of sheep required there is not the quality which our market demands. Fat sheep are of no use there. I sent up one lot that averaged 50 lbs. and over, and incurred a big loss on them. Another lot, which averaged 34 lbs. and were merely stores, returned a good profit. The natives will not eat fat. They prefer the smaller beasts. I found that Java and Singapore could absorb almost any number of cattle and sheep, but unfortunately at that time there were no facilities for landing stock. This disadvantage could be easily overcome by having floating abattoirs in most of those harbours. At Singapore alone, the third greatest port in the world, something like 30 to 40 steamers call every day. We can imagine the quantity of meat that could be disposed of

if this State had a floating abattoir there. In Java, Batavia was the only port which had wharfinger facilities at that time, but by now there are doubtless facilities at most of the principal ports. Java and Singapore are taking a fair quantity of fruit from this State, both fresh and dried. It might seem extraordinary that we should be sending fruit there, but the people tire of tropical fruit and are very glad to get a change to apples, pears, grapes and other varieties which we produce and which they cannot grow. Tropical fruits do not make good jams. Whoever heard of banana jam, or jam made from any other tropical fruit? There is a big opening for jam exported from this State. Wine is another commodity for which there is a big market. In the past wines have been imported from France and Spain, but those countries are further distant than Western Australia, and that provides our opportunity.

Mr. Pickering: They are taking Western Australian wine now.

Mr. ANGELO: Yes, to a trifling extent. Our Colonial brandies are also finding a market in Singapore.

Mr. Pickering: Whisky is not, is it?

Mr. ANGELO: I was rather surprised to hear from a Dutch merchant, who recently visited this State, that he had endeavoured to place an order for 500 tons of tinned vegetables, and had been unsuccessful. I said, "Surely there is not a very large market for tinned vegetables?" He replied, "We could take 10,000 tons a year if we could get that quantity."

Mr. Smith: Ten thousand tons or tins?

Mr. ANGELO: Tons. Their vegetables are of the sappy kind, such as spinach, and there is a good demand for the vegetables grown in temperate climates. Soap and candles cannot be produced there because there is no fat from the local stock. Leather would be another line which would be in demand because they have no hides. Their buffaloes are frightfully tough in the flesh, but the hides do not make good leather. Although there is a good quantity of timber in Java and the Straits Settlements, there is not available the necessary timber for piles and sleepers. Horses cannot be bred there, and Western Australia would find a good market for horses. Members may be surprised to hear that there is very little fish in those northern waters.

Hon. T. Walker: What do they live on?

Mr. ANGELO: The natives live on rice, and a little dried fish which has to be imported from other countries.

Mr. Underwood: Dried shark.

Mr. ANGELO: I have heard it suggested that we should send them not only shark but whale flesh. In Japan the people are eating whale flesh, and factories are being established in that country for the manufacture of food from the whale.

The Minister for Mines: They say it is good for brains.

Mr. ANGELO: Already cattle and sheep have been sent from Western Australia to

Singapore. In 1912 we sent £19,000 worth of cattle and £10,000 worth of sheep. In 1917 the figures were reduced to £13,000 worth of cattle and £2,000 worth of sheep. The trouble is that we have not been able to get space. I have had four cable messages lately from Singapore asking for sheep and I have wired quotes for shipments provided space was available, but on every occasion no space could be obtained. The Singapore line has granted a monopoly to one firm and that shuts out other shippers. We should be sending tens of thousands of our sheep from the North-West if space were only available. These people insist that, whatever we do, we must send good lines, and it is essential that they should be well got up. A leading merchant of Singapore took me to his shop and showed me what he meant by the expression "well got up." He said, "There I have English jam and alongside it is Jones's jam. In my opinion Jones's jam is twice as good as the other, but I cannot sell it because of the rotten label which Jones's jam carries." These merchants wish it to be impressed upon Australian shippers that only good stuff should be sent, and that it must be put up in suitable packages with attractive labels. By way of return freights we could get tea, sugar, petrol, and transhipment cargo from London. Nearly all our petrol comes from Sumatra. What is essential is a regular service, and that is why I am so anxious that, when the Government are discussing the North-West steamship service, they should consider the advisability of extending it to Java and Singapore. On the occasion of my visit, I found that there were a lot of English and Dutch planters who had made a lot of money, and who were desirous of coming to Australia to live. They said, "We came from England or Holland and have been here 10, 12, or 15 years living in the tropics, and we are afraid to return to the cold temperatures of our own countries. If you had a regular service we would make our homes in Australia and settle our families there, and we could travel up as occasion demanded to attend to our plantations." These people are wealthy and they are prepared to establish homes in Western Australia. They will come here and furnish homes, and I can assure members that they know how to furnish homes. I have been in houses in Java with which nothing in Western Australia can compare for luxury and wealth. These people would spend a lot of money here. They would leave their children here to be educated, all of which would help to improve this State, and to improve our trade relations with those parts.

Mr. Pickering: Is that not an argument for the extension of the State Steamship Service?

Mr. ANGELO: The development of the North-West in the way of the steamship service should go hand in hand with the encouragement of trade with Singapore and Java. If we had a regular service a great

number of tourists would visit Western Australia and our people could travel up there for a change. Anyone going for a holiday looks to make the outward trip by one route and the return trip by another route. A lot of English people would come here via Singapore and would return via the Cape, and vice versa. The establishment of a regular service—and I emphasise that it must be regular—would encourage a lot of people to come here. I ask the Government not to neglect these opportunities any longer. What is necessary is the immediate appointment of trade representatives, one for Java and one for Singapore.

The Minister for Mines: We could not appoint them at present. We have not the shipping space.

Mr. ANGELO: How long will it be before we can work up this trade? We ought to send representatives there immediately in order to secure those markets before they are secured by other countries. Other States are sending representatives there; so are America and Japan. Why not appoint a good man for each of those places to find out all he can regarding the prospects for future trade and lay the foundations on which trade can be developed when we have proper ships and facilities to encourage it? The Minister says he hopes to have some steamers available next year.

The Minister for Mines: I hope the "Kangaroo" will be available.

Mr. ANGELO: There is scope for good preliminary work to be started now.

Mr. Underwood: The "Kangaroo" would not do for that trade.

Mr. ANGELO: It should not be necessary to pay the trade representatives a very high salary. Let them be paid to a large extent by commission on the trade they obtain. Give them a certain salary, and let them make the rest for themselves. I have pleasure in submitting this motion and I trust it will be carried by the House. I hope the Government will give effect to it and not allow it to be passed over as was the resolution passed by the Legislative Council last session and forwarded to this House for its concurrence. I hope the Government will do something, and they will take into consideration the urgent necessity for appointing trade representatives for Java and Singapore almost immediately.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. (Pilbara) [7.30]: Before tea I was listening to the remarks of the member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) in regard to his motion declaring the necessity for Western Australia to obtain a geographically correct share of the trade in what people in other hemispheres are pleased to call the Far East, but which we say is the North. To obtain that trade it is necessary for the Government of Western Australia to establish a shipping service. Without a shipping service it is use-

less to attempt to do anything. The member for Gascoyne has pointed out the geographical position of Western Australia, indicating that this is the only country to supply Java, Singapore, and all those countries which are called the Far East, but which to us are the North. We must realise that the only possible way of doing that is with a State shipping service. The merchants of the East, however—I mean the Eastern States of Australia, and not the Far East, such as other geographers talk about—own the ships, and we are only the last joint in the commercial tail of Australia. If it gives the merchants more profit to send their stuff from Adelaide, Melbourne, or Sydney, notwithstanding that they have to go right round the Continent to do it, owning the ships as they do, they will do it, and the people of Western Australia will have no chance. I am somewhat surprised at the mildness with which my colleague from the North has introduced this motion. He knows as well as I do that Tom Carter of Dalgety's, Shallard of the shipping company, who are the big guns, or the chairman of our Chamber of Commerce, are only sycophants representing the commerce of the Eastern States. He knows that they represent Eastern States firms who own the shipping and own the coal, and he knows perfectly well, too, that if it pays them better to send the ships from the East they will go from the East, and we shall be left. Tom Carter and Shallard do not care a snap of the fingers for us. As a matter of fact they are only sent here as a sort of purgatory.

The Premier: To them or to us?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is purgatory to them, and they think that after working out their souls' sins here, they will go back to the East. They will not do anything at all to help Western Australia, if they think it will be against them when they go back to the East. That is our commerce in Western Australia. There is no doubt about that. The only way to defeat that, to give our people, our producers, a chance to get to their natural geographical markets, is by establishing a State shipping service, and cutting out Dalgety's, Tom Carter, Shallard, the Chamber of Commerce, and all the others. I speak with knowledge on this subject. For some time I was Minister controlling the State shipping service. I went down to inquire why we did not get freights. I found that our shipping manager was secretary of the Fremantle Harbour Trust. The chairman of the Fremantle Harbour Trust was Tom Carter, running an opposition shipping service, a shipping service absolutely in the interests of the Eastern States, or of Holt's shipping line as a mere feeder. They only count Western Australia as an exhaust pipe. If we desire to arrive at what is required by the motion, and to get our fair trade with the islands that are due north of us, or almost so, we can only do so by an adequate State ship-

ping service. The shipping owners of the Eastern States are never going to help Western Australia to get that trade, because they want it for themselves.

On motion by the Premier debate adjourned.

BILL—GUARDIANSHIP OF INFANTS.

Second Reading.

Mr. ROCKE (South Fremantle) [7.43] in moving the second reading said: This measure has no sinister design. It is a very simple one, having for its object the granting of ordinary justice to a mother. Hon. members, if they will look at the memorandum of the Bill, will find that is set out very clearly. The general effect of the Bill is to give the mother certain co-ordinate rights of guardianship with the father of her infant children. Thus, where the mother survives the father, who has appointed no guardians, she will be sole guardian; or if he has appointed a guardian the mother will be joint guardian with the person so appointed. The mother will also be able, by deed or will, to appoint a guardian to act after the death of herself and the father of her infant children, or to act jointly with the father if he survives her, and is for any reason shown to be unfit to be the sole guardian. Last session I hoped to accomplish what I am trying to do now by this measure, through an amendment of the Marriage Act of 1894. I found afterwards that only a phase of the question was being touched. For that reason the Bill was allowed to drop. During the recess I was enabled to make inquiries as to what was being done in other parts. During my visit to New Zealand I looked through the legislation of that country and found this Act, which has been copied, and which I found the New Zealand Legislature had taken from the English Act of 1886. According to the common law of this State, a father has the right to the custody of his infant child, even as against the mother. Even though the child be an infant at the breast, the law gives him the custody of the child unless he does something to forfeit it. The right of the father enables him to delegate his authority over the child to a third person. Against all the world the father himself stands in loco parentis to the child committed to his charge or custody. So it will be seen by that that the mother has absolutely no authority over her own child. During the lifetime of the father the mother has no power, but on the death of the father she is entitled to the custody of her infant child, and in this respect she is altogether in the place of the father, having all his rights and responsibilities, for she is their guardian by nature and nurture. But where a testamentary guardian has been appointed, the mother as such has no right to interfere with the appointed guardian; that is, the father may appoint

a guardian, and if the father were to leave the State on a journey or were removed by death, that guardian would take the place of the mother, who should be by nature and nurture the guardian of her own child. This measure does not seek to deprive the father of any just privilege, but takes from him only the monopoly of privilege and confers upon the mother that meed of justice to which she is entitled by nature. The child, however, is safeguarded all through the piece, because this Bill is designed to give to the court power to appoint a guardian, or, if necessary, to cancel the appointment of a guardian. So that even if the father or the mother were to appoint a guardian who in the opinion of the court was unsuitable, if the appointment were regarded by the court as being against the interests of the child, the court would have power, under this measure, to remove such guardian. The new feature of the Bill is that it provides that where the father has nominated a guardian, the mother shall act as co-guardian with such nominee, but where no guardian has been appointed by the father, or where a guardian so appointed has refused to act or has died, the court shall have power to appoint a guardian to act jointly with the mother, and shall also have power, for good cause, to remove her from the guardianship. Thus in every conceivable way the interests of the child are the prime consideration. At present a mother has no power to appoint a guardian by testament, and the Bill seeks to give her that power, thereby removing the disability under which she is now labouring. The Bill is designed to confer upon her the power to appoint by deed or will a guardian of such of her children as are unmarried, this guardianship to take effect after the death of herself and the father; and the guardians appointed by both parents are to act conjointly. So that the mother's guardianship does not take effect until after the death of the father, who will remain guardian of his children as long as he lives, provided he is qualified to fill that very sacred position. The court has power to remove a guardian after the father's death if such removal is deemed to be in the interests of the child. The mother may also provisionally nominate a person to act as guardian of her infant child after her death, jointly with the father. She cannot appoint a guardian and thereby nullify the rights of the father as he under our legislation is now able to nullify her rights. The father can appoint a guardian and entirely ignore the mother of his child. If after the death of the mother the father is found to be unfitted to have the sole guardianship of his children, the provisional appointment by the mother may be confirmed by the court; and if the court holds that the interests of the child would be better conserved by the removal of the father from the guardianship, the court has power to order such removal. I will now briefly explain the effect of the various clauses of the measure. Clause 2 pro-

vides that upon the death of the father of an infant the mother shall be the guardian of her own child, either alone, or, in the case where the father has appointed a guardian, the mother shall act conjointly with such guardian. If no guardian has been appointed by the father, the court may, if it thinks fit, appoint a person to act as guardian jointly with the mother. Clause 3 is designed to give to a mother the right to appoint by deed or will a person to act as guardian of her child after the death of herself and the father of the child; and when guardians are appointed by both parents they shall act conjointly. Clause 3 also gives power to the mother to nominate provisionally some suitable person to act as guardian jointly with the father; and if it is shown to the satisfaction of the court that the father is unfitted to be the sole guardian of the child, the court may confirm the appointment. Clause 4 extends the authority now possessed by a constitutionally appointed guardian to one appointed under the provisions of this measure. Clause 5 gives power to the court to make such order as it may deem fit upon the application of the mother regarding the custody of an infant, and also to determine the right of access by either parent. Such decision will be based upon the question of the welfare of the child and the conduct of the parents, and will take into consideration the desire of the mother equally with that of the father. Such order will be subject to review on the application of either parent. Clause 6 makes provision for the welfare of the child to be of paramount importance. It gives to the court power to remove any guardian, regardless of the source of appointment. Clause 7 is one which is not in the original English Act nor in the New Zealand Act, but it is in the South Australian Act. It provides that in the case of a person acting as guardian and being possessed of funds by any process of law for the specific purpose of the maintenance or education of a child to whom he or she is guardian, then, if the court shall order that the child be delivered to the custody of its mother, such portion of such fund as the court may deem proper shall be paid to the mother to be expended for the purpose stated. I think hon. members will realise the wisdom of the inclusion of this clause. A person may be appointed guardian of a child, and in that capacity may benefit in some way under a will made by the person appointing him the guardian. It is possible that if the court ordered the removal of the child from the care of such guardian to the custody of the mother then, in the absence of this clause, there might be a refusal on the part of the one-time guardian to recognise any financial responsibility with regard to the child. This clause provides that if money has been left for that purpose, the court may order that money, or any proportion of it, to be handed to the mother for the specific purpose of the main-

tenance and education of the child. Clause 8 provides that no separation deed made between a father and a mother shall be declared invalid merely on the ground that it may contain provision for the control or custody of a child passing to the mother. Clause 9 provides that in the event of parents being divorced or judicially separated, and in the event of the court pronouncing one of the parties to be unfit, by reason of his or her misconduct, to retain the custody of a child or children, the parent so declared unfit shall not be entitled, as of right, to the custody or guardianship of any surviving child after the death of the other parent. Clause 10 is the usual saving clause and Clause 11 is the interpretation clause, while Clause 12 provides for the making of rules of procedure. The Bill which I have endeavoured to make plain to the House merely grants something that we often speak about but do not often attempt to bring into operation. When a matter of this kind is brought forward, members frequently say, "Give us one concrete case to show the need for this alteration which you seek to bring about." There are many such cases, but one which comes to my mind just now will serve amply as an illustration. During the war a man who was an officer in the A.I.F. was killed. Upon his will being read it was found that he had appointed a female relation of his own to be guardian of his child. The female relation sought legal advice, and found that she had the sole right to the child. The mother was deprived of every right which was hers by nature and nurture, and she had to move the court in an endeavour to obtain the custody of her own child. If my memory serves me rightly, custody was sought under a writ of habeas corpus, and was granted. But if the mother had not had the means to make that application, she certainly could never have obtained the custody of her own child. That is a case which occurred not very many yards away from where we are this evening. A genuine and a real hardship was inflicted on a good and affectionate mother in that case, and there must be many such cases. In the particular case which I have quoted it seems that the father had not a true conception of the power which he was conferring upon the guardian of his child. So far as I know, the parents lived in harmony; and probably the appointment was made in the belief that assistance was being rendered to the mother. But when it was too late it was found that the mother was utterly deprived of her child.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The case does not indicate harmony between the sister and the wife.

Mr. ROCKE: No; but I am speaking of harmony between the husband and the wife.

Mr. Underwood: Do you want legislation for these individual cases?

Mr. ROCKE: I am not seeking to legislate for individual cases at all, but for the purpose of granting a meed of justice to every mother. What occurred in the illus-

tration I have given may occur any day to any mother, and this measure seeks to make that impossible. The court has ample power to interfere if the mother's guardianship is not satisfactory. The court has likewise power to interfere if the father's guardianship is not satisfactory. It may remove either, and appoint a guardian whom it deems suitable in the interests of the child. It is indubitable that we have made some advance from the old Roman law regarding the interests of children; but we have made no advance as regards the rights of the mother, who remains in exactly the same position as then. In fact, the Roman law was distinguished for the stern severity with which it upheld the paternal authority. It gave to the father absolute power, even the atrocious power to put his children to death, and to sell them three times in open market. That power was embodied in what is known as the "Twelve Tables," and it continued to be the law for many ages. We have advanced from that so far as the child is concerned, but the mother to-day has no more authority than she had then; and by this measure I am asking the House to give the mother what is her right by nature. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Underwood debate adjourned.

MOTION—FOREST ACT REGULATION, TO DISALLOW.

Debate resumed from the 8th September on the following motion by Mr. Mullany—

That regulation No. 5 made under the provisions of the Forests Act, 1918, dealing with the taking or removal of sandalwood under fourteen inches in circumference, published in the "Government Gazette" of the 23rd April, 1920, and laid upon the Table of the House on the 10th August, 1920, be disallowed.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND FORESTS (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [8.5]: I regret that owing to my having accepted an invitation from the members representing the Murchison electorates, I was last week absent from the House when the motion dealing with the regulations under the Forests Act moved by the member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) was under discussion. I would like to have been present to hear the hon. member's remarks, but I have taken the opportunity to very carefully read the "Hansard" report of what took place, and to note what was said by those who object to the regulations. At first I want to say that if the hon. member was under the impression that either I or the Conservator of Forests deliberately misled him, or attempted to do so, he is labouring under a misapprehension.

Mr. Mullany: Not so far as the Conservator of Forests is concerned.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have asked the Conservator of Forests to explain

how the member for Menzies obtained the impression that he was misled, and the Conservator advises me that while he may have left such an impression on the hon. member's mind there was certainly no intention on his part to do so.

Mr. Mullany: I will accept that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Conservator pointed out that at the time the member for Menzies approached him in connection with the regulations the question of granting a permit under the Forests Act to any one firm or individual to take sandalwood was under consideration and had not been disposed of. He points out that under conditions then being imposed to limit the output in any one year, it would not have been possible to permit sandalwood pullers operating under the directions of any firm to take sandalwood as implied under the regulations, and when the regulations were altered and new conditions were under consideration, what the hon. member understood did not apply. At any rate I am in the position, as Minister controlling the Forestry Department to take the responsibility for any action of my officers and if the hon. member or anyone else is under the impression that an attempt was made to mislead him I can only express regret. In any case the fact remains that the Conservator of Forests and I want to impress upon the hon. member the fact that there was no intention whatever to mislead him. I desire to say also that I appreciate very much the moderate manner in which the member for Menzies and some other members dealt with the question. They were as moderate as some other hon. members were immoderate. The member for Menzies being a disinterested party brought forward a motion for the purpose of having the regulation disallowed in the interests of a great number of people operating on sandalwood in his electorate and from that point of view he is to be commended. I desire to say exactly the same in regard to the attitude of the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley) and yourself, Mr. Speaker. Quite naturally those hon. members were entitled to take every action they thought necessary to protect the interests of their constituents, but I have yet to learn that there was justification for the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green) using the language that he did when supporting the motion. It may be that there are a few who are extracting oil in his electorate.

Member: And perhaps under his direction.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I want to tell the House that personally I have no knowledge of how long it takes sandalwood on the goldfields or elsewhere to grow to a certain diameter when the tree is 16 inches above the ground and I venture to say that there is not another member in the House who knows this either. I will go even further and say that not a sandalwood getter knows because no one has lived long enough to be able to tell how long it takes. When

hon. members attack the Conservator of Forests and assert that he is ignorant I can reply by saying that there are others in the community just as ignorant. Even those in the trade are equally ignorant. I want members to realise that the sandalwood industry requires knowledge not merely from the standpoint of taking the sandalwood in the bush and putting it on to drays and then carting it to the trucks at sidings, but it requires a knowledge of forestry generally. It requires also a knowledge of trade operations between various countries. These things are not easily understood in Western Australia. Sandalwood as grown in Western Australia has no value in our home market. We do not use it for any purpose except for the purpose of extracting the oil from it. This has been done only recently and to a small extent. I am doubtful whether we have got to that stage when the oil will compare favourably as a commercial commodity with the oil taken from the wood in the Indies. But we are making progress. The main point is that our sandalwood as a commodity must be made available in China. From our point of view it has no value in our own markets. Therefore we are entitled to say that whoever wants the commodity must pay its full value.

Mr. Foley. They must pay this State its full value.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am coming to that. Until this controversy commenced with regard to the proposal made by the Conservator of Forests, I had no knowledge of the trading operations between Western Australia and China in connection with sandalwood, but I have since become educated. It is remarkable how one can become educated on hearing views expressed, and I have begun to realise that there must be something in sandalwood more than the oil that is extracted from it. Later on I propose to explain why, during the progress of the debate some have taken one course of action and some another course. But so far as taking the commodity is concerned, we must realise that Western Australia produces practically the whole of the sandalwood for China. Of course, as the member for Brownhill-Ivanhoe (Mr. Lutey) pointed out, the Chinese may become a Christian nation and will then not require to burn the wood in their joss houses. I am not suggesting that that may not happen, but it is rather a remote possibility, and I do not propose to permit an industry of so much value to Western Australia to be worked ruthlessly because the suggestion is made that the Chinese may become a Christian nation. In the meantime we must accept the position that the Chinese at any cost must obtain sandalwood for religious purposes. In those circumstances we are entitled to see that they pay us the value that we demand for it. If that is the case we have to attend to the question of re-forestation of sandalwood as well as other timbers. If we are going to allow it to be cut out without re-

gard to the future, this industry which has meant so much to us will pass through our fingers and someone will wake up and say, "Why did you not retain this industry for the State, an industry which is of so much value." That could not be done until the Forests Act was in operation. The Conservator of Forests has been approached with regard to the methods that might be adopted in dealing with this wood. It has been pointed out that there are a number of people engaged in the trade. It so happened that there was a big demand for sandalwood and a fair price was being obtained in comparison to what had been secured. The demand was brought about by the fact that the rates of exchange were in favour of the Chinese. I want to emphasise that fact because the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green) left a different impression on the minds of hon. members, an impression which made it appear that they were paying us a fair price. In order to understand the sandalwood question we must realise that the rates of exchange have been against us, particularly during the last few years. I do not know that they are even yet in anything like our favour. The Chinese buy enormous quantities of sandalwood, although their actual requirements are well known from the fact that they have been taking sandalwood from us for 60 years. But going back over the past 20 years, we find that they have been taking and using approximately 4,000 tons per annum from Western Australia.

Mr. Mullany: More than that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not much more; at the very outside 6,000 tons. For the year ended 30th June last we actually exported from Western Australia no less than 14,000 tons, and there was actually pulled in our bush 17,000 tons. Talk about the wily Chinese; of course he will take 14,000 tons if it suits his pocket to do so. The Chinaman has never yet objected to pay 20 dollars per picul in China, but he has been getting it recently for 7¾ dollars per picul. There are 16.8 piculs to the ton, and with the present rate of exchange, the value in pounds sterling of the sandalwood to the Chinese in China is £54 per ton. The sum which Western Australia is getting for the sandalwood is not paying us, because after all the payment which we receive is goods in return. When we turn that £54 into dollars with which to purchase Chinese commodities we find that we are selling sandalwood for very much less than its value. I have with me quite a number of particulars regarding the sales which have taken place in China during the last few months. I know, too, who sold the sandalwood, but I will deal with that later. I have heard something about the first robber in sandalwood. I know that there are people in this community who got on soap boxes in different parts of the State and talk about giving to the labourer the full value for his labour. Take one or two sales. On the 4th March of this

year sandalwood sold in Shanghai brought £54 15s. in sterling per ton, yet owing to the rate of exchange being against us they got their sandalwood at 7¼ dollars per picul, there being approximately 16.8 piculs to the ton. So it will be seen that the Chinamen were gaining the advantage. And they took 14,000 tons, where they annually require at most 6,000 tons. Time after time have I pointed out to deputations waiting on me that sooner or later the boom would burst, and that when it did some of those who had come into the industry just when it suited them would drop the puller very quickly. To-day we have 4,000 tons of sandalwood pulled, and a fair percentage lying on the hands of the pullers, notwithstanding that we know that in China there is from three to four years' supply of sandalwood. In view of that fact I say the State is entitled to demand that, when the rate of exchange is against us, not more than the proper requirements of China shall be supplied; indeed we ought to demand that even less should go out of the State at such a time.

Mr. Underwood: Would this regulation have that effect?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It will have the effect of conserving our sandalwood and securing full value for it.

Mr. Underwood: Is it only because of the rate of exchange?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. I have brought along two samples. One is of 9in. circumference at 16in. from the ground, which is the size of sandalwood that can be taken under the regulations. A fair percentage of a tree such as that is sold in China at a discount; we do not get the actual value of the tree because it is called chips, small wood; because of that and other reasons they make a deduction from the price. Yet that is the size which, under the regulation, may be cut. It is not by any means a large tree.

Mr. Foley: You will not get many trees as big as that on the goldfields.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There are here two points which we require to remember. In the first place we are taking a tree that has not reached a size which will give us the full return for the commodity, and in the second place it is sold on the Chinese market at a discount because it is smaller than the size they require. Again, we are not only losing something immediately, but are losing something in the future as well. We know that at present China is not in such a position that she must take sandalwood of any size; we can afford to say that, while the Chinese are using up their surplus, we will give our trees an opportunity to grow to a larger size. Hon. members will see that in many cases the trees have not reached maturity before they begin to suffer from disease.

Mr. Underwood: But in certain districts it never reaches that size, as it is.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Nonsense! Here is a sample, so what is the use of saying

that? The hon. member says there are certain parts of Western Australia in which the tree will never reach that size. I want to consider the interests of the State. We can reduce the size of the sandalwood to be cut under regulation to the size now requested, but I venture to say that it will not mean an additional ton being taken within the next two years. In those circumstances is it not better to conserve our interests by allowing a further growth of the sandalwood, instead of merely taking it haphazard without regard to size? If we are to conserve the interests of the industry, I still assert that our regulation is best under existing conditions. But I will give this undertaking, that when the market improves—

Mr. Mullany: Oh, fight it straight out, one way or the other.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am fighting it straight out.

Mr. Foley: No, not now.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am saying that, under existing conditions, I believe it is to our interests to maintain that size as a minimum. I say further that if it can be shown that it is difficult to get sandalwood, that the price is satisfactory, that there are parts of the State where sandalwood does not reach that size, that for other reasons the sandalwood will die off and become valueless, and that those parts of the State are not satisfactory from the point of view of reforestation, then I shall be prepared to allow them to take all the sandalwood in the face. But I declare that if the State is to undertake the reforestation of sandalwood in the best places for the purpose—

Mr. Hudson: As, for instance, on the goldfields.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not care where; it may be at Fremantle.

Mr. Underwood: Or on the wheat belt.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There are places in the wheat belt where sandalwood does exceptionally well. But we have to make provision for plantations, and on the evidence we have I am doubtful if we can get a plantation up to the stage at which we can cut off it in less than 25 years, perhaps more; some say 200 years.

Mr. Underwood: Some—meaning Lane-Poole.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Mr. Lane-Poole is better entitled to speak on the subject than is the hon. member, because he is a practical forester. If we are going to continue to cut out at the present rate of from 14,000 to 17,000 tons per annum, it will not be a case of coming along and saying that the regulation is inflicting a hardship because some pullers have to go out so much farther than they have had to do in the past; it will be a case of saving the industry at all costs. The industry is too valuable to be lost.

Mr. Lutey: Why not declare zones?

Mr. Foley: But you say the industry is of no value to Western Australia.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I said nothing of the sort. I said we were not getting its full value. Last year we cut 14,000 tons of sandalwood, valued at £233,586. If that is not valuable, what is? If now we are not going to maintain that industry, I say we shall be doing something prejudicial to our own interests.

Mr. Hudson: Do you mean that we can cultivate it successfully?

The MINISTER FOR MINES. Yes, certainly.

Mr. Underwood: How do you know that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Because we have made an experiment and found that it will grow all right in plantations. Unfortunately, it was in the wheat area and the land was allowed to be selected for wheat-growing. But in the meantime we have to conserve the continuity of supplies. It is of no use our losing the trade for ten years and then expecting the Chinamen to come back to us. They will have been getting their supplies elsewhere, and we shall not be able to recover our position. So far as we have gone, I think we can recover it, and that, too, on the basis of getting full value for the commodity. I will not object if the House, after hearing my statement, differs from me. All that I am trying to do is to impart to the House the information I have obtained as to what I believe to be the position. If the House differs from me I will not complain, because I shall have done my duty in making my explanation to House. The Premier has given an undertaking that if the motion is carried the regulation shall be withdrawn. I, for my part, gave an undertaking that, for the time being, the regulation would not be imposed.

Mr. Mullany: It is of no value, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, for years the pullers have been taking sandalwood without any regard to the regulations. When we inflicted a penalty by impounding their sandalwood on the trucks, they woke up and declared that they could not go on any longer. Moreover, our sandalwood has been taken without license.

Mr. Mullany: Well, why did you not enforce the regulation?

Mr. Hudson: The size prescribed is an impossible one.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Let the hon. member put a tape round his head and talk about size afterwards. When the sandalwood pullers found that we were at last imposing an effective penalty, they immediately complained against the regulation, which had been in operation for years.

Mr. Underwood: Get Lane-Pool to brand it all, and put your stamp on it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member seems to be obsessed with the idea that Lane-Poole knows nothing about it. If that is so, I do not know why we should be paying him as Conservator of Forests.

Mr. Underwood: He is both ignorant and arrogant.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Let me tell the hon. member that there are other parts of the world where Lane-Poole could do much better than he is doing in Western Australia. Lane-Poole is a trained scientific forester, who has come to Western Australia—

Mr. Underwood: To learn his business.

The MINISTER FOR MINES. No, but to impress upon us the necessity for maintaining our forests in perpetuity. He has a pretty difficult task to perform, in the carrying out of which he is bound to be abused pretty roundly. Any man who sets out with such a task in a new community is bound to be roundly abused. Mr. Lane-Poole has already given evidence that he has a thorough knowledge of forestry in general, and he has made splendid progress in the obtaining of knowledge regarding our own forests. Whether he knows anything about sandalwood or not—

Mr. Underwood: He does not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Nor does anyone else, including the hon. member.

Mr. Underwood: And you.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, and me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! We are not discussing Mr. Lane-Poole.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member, not I, introduced it.

Mr. Underwood: And you carried it on.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Pilbara must keep order.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the House desires to disallow the regulation, I do not mind. The sandalwood pullers can go on pulling sandalwood and in the end, probably, they will have to find other ways of getting over the difficulty in which we all are placed. Sooner or later the Government must take a hand in the industry, but whether as a State monopoly or not, I am not prepared to say. We require further information from China before we can say what should be done. But in my capacity of trustee I am not going to be pushed into taking over a trade on which we are likely to lose thousands of pounds per annum for a number of years to come. We might recover it, but I think that, under existing conditions, those who have been doing well out of the industry might suffer rather than the State. If they have three or four years' supplies, it is better for us to sit down for a while and suffer the inconvenience, and finally do that which I consider is in the interests of the State and of the pullers of sandalwood.

Mr. Foley: They are getting this at a low price and they will make the price again when the rise takes place.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We cannot permit the present state of affairs to continue. If we do, we shall have boom periods, which have always been in the Chinese interests and not in ours, and these will be followed by slump periods, which

will be all against us and against the pullers. The men who suffer most are the pullers in the bush, and up to date the consideration they have received has not been of a very satisfactory nature. So far as the industry is concerned, we must remember that China must have sandalwood.

Mr. Underwood: Why?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Everybody knows why. While they must have it, and while we can supply it, we are entitled to stipulate the conditions under which it shall be supplied. We are entitled to say that a certain quantity only shall be taken per annum, and we are entitled to thus regulate the price and get full value for the commodity. During the present year they have taken sandalwood at 7½ dollars per picul, and not a great time previous to that, namely, during 1918, they paid as much as 20 dollars per picul and did not complain of the price. I have already explained that a picul represents 16.8 of a ton. If they had paid us during the present year 20 dollars per picul we could, notwithstanding the rate of exchange, have obtained full value for our article as we did in 1918, when the rate of exchange was only 3s. At the time I mentioned, the rate of exchange was up to 8s. 5d. The question of the size of sandalwood I have viewed only from the standpoint of conserving the sandalwood which remains in the State. My object has been to retain supplies for future years, to permit the cutting out of that sandalwood which we believe is mature, and to allow the balance to remain until it matures or, at any rate, until a later period. Any quantity of sandalwood can be obtained to supply requirements, and the balance should certainly be allowed to remain. If the House does not agree to the adoption of that course, I cannot complain.

Mr. Foley: The pullers cannot get the fullest results of their labour unless the State takes over the industry.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Under existing conditions the pullers cannot get the fullest result of their labour. We have to advance against sandalwood, however, and I do not believe we can take over the industry as a State monopoly without finding a quarter of a million of money.

Mr. Foley: It would be a good investment.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: But a little later on, I think we shall probably be able to take it over with only one-twentieth of that money and do it just as well and without taking any risk at all. The trouble is that someone has to suffer in the meantime. That cannot be avoided. I told the deputations that sooner or later a slump would come, and it has come sooner than I expected. In the circumstances I ask the House to seriously consider the question before deciding to disallow the regulation. I have already given an undertaking that the regulation will not be enforced until such time as those men out in the bush have had an opportunity to make themselves acquainted with the regulation and to bring in the wood which they have already cut. I am pre-

pared to give them a fair opportunity to learn that in future they will not be permitted to cut sandalwood of a smaller size than that stipulated in the regulation. In the meantime I hope that the market will clear up sufficiently to enable us, if not to take control of the industry as a State monopoly, to get the pullers organised and thus assist them to get the full return for their labour while the State gets an adequate return for the commodity.

Mr. Foley: The police have been telling the pullers in a good many districts that they must not bring in wood of smaller size.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must allow the Minister to proceed with his remarks.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know of any instance where a single ton of sandalwood has been confiscated.

Mr. Foley: But the police are doing it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We are telling pullers that they must not cut sandalwood of a smaller size than that which has been stipulated. We do not propose to interfere with the cutters until they have been acquainted with the penalty which we intend to impose. The bottom has been knocked out of the market. Those in the trade are not buying sandalwood. Pullers have been bringing in the wood for weeks past, and there is no market for it, and it is left on their hands. The regulation will not hamper the position. It will not hinder the pullers because, at the present time, they cannot get a market for their sandalwood.

Mr. Mullany: They will not pull it if there is no market.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: All we say is that if they do pull, they must pull wood of the size stipulated. Our men have been out in the bush. I do not say that Mr. Lane-Poole has been out in the bush.

Mr. Underwood: Of course he has not. He knows nothing about it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There are many things the hon. member does not know.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. the Minister must address the Chair.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: This is the only opportunity I have had to explain the position of the Government and of myself with regard to the industry. I regret that the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green) took the opportunity in my absence to say things which he might be proud of.

Mr. Green: He would have said them in your presence. You were away as usual.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am here at present, as the hon. member will have cause to know presently.

Mr. Green: You have never explained your position to the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: My explanation is a very simple one, and the hon. member will probably find before the end of the evening that he, and not I, will be on his defence.

Mr. Green: I have never ratted, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, the hon. member does not rat. He is too small for that. He is only a vermin on a rat. I hold in my hand a copy of "Hansard" dated 28th February, 1918, when the member for Kalgoorlie made a very fluent speech in this House on the subject of sandalwood. He had been to China. He did not tell the House and the country that he went there at the State's expense. Oh, no! But he had been to China.

Hon. T. Walker: What has that to do with the question?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Oh, nothing at all. It will be found from the "Hansard" report that I raised no objection to the remarks of the hon. member, although he made statements of dishonesty. Now, however, when it come to imputing motives of dishonesty, I am asked what that has to do with the question. Anyhow, the hon. member went to China and found out about sandalwood. On that occasion he told the House he had a lot of information to impart, and he imparted it.

Mr. Lutey: With a view to getting the Government to take action.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: And meanwhile not forgetting himself.

Mr. Lutey: He strongly advocated action by the Government.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We are all able to advocate things after they have happened. The hon. member knew there was no more chance of the then Government taking a monopoly of the sandalwood trade than there was of him being struck by lightning. The hon. member read a letter which he had received from Mr. Frederick Mow Fung of Hong Kong. The hon. member went on to explain—

He is a native of Victoria, the child of pure-blooded Chinese parents. He was born in the Great Western District and is known to a number of Victorians. The whole of the family have gone to China and made good there. . . . These things, however, are by the way. Mr. Mow Fung is anxious to get in touch with the land of his birth, and I am prepared to help him if the Government are willing to assist. His letter is dated the 10th October, 1916.

Members should not forget that this speech was made on the 28th February, 1918.

And the portion relating to sandalwood reads as follows:—"I note all you have stated, and I sincerely trust you will have in the meantime made further progress in finding out all about this business."

The member for Kalgoorlie then interpolated—I was experiencing great difficulty in getting into touch with the sandalwood getters. I have chased them a few hundred miles on the bike. It is pretty hard to get near them. When you do get near them, they dodge behind trees unless they happen to be armed with guns. Like rabbits, I suppose. I do not wonder at them hiding behind trees if the hon.

member was approaching them on a bike, especially if they were not armed with guns.

The letter continues—"As I have already informed you, I am in touch with some wealthy Chinese here who are prepared to go into this business on a large scale;" Members should mark that he was in touch with wealthy Chinese who were prepared to go into this business on a large scale.

"In fact, some of them have already invested a lot of money with a view to opening up direct sandalwood business with Western Australia, and they have a man named Hector, who I understand has been connected with the trade for a number of years, and until recently was carrying on same in partnership with another man named Paterson. Both of them were up there, and when they dissolved partnership Hector made all arrangements with the Chinese to carry on the business. I shall be glad to hear further from you in connection with this trade, as there is money in it for all of us if it can be worked successfully."

Mr. Green: I offered it to the Government, but you wanted it for yourself.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Does the hon. member deny that he got right into it?

Mr. Lutey: He has been advocating that the Government should take it over.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Did the hon. member play the game?

Mr. Lutey: Did you play the game?

Mr. Jones: You did not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not according to a dirty, filthy rag such as that published by the member for Fremantle, a rag which contained in its first issue a preface by the hon. member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) about truth and integrity? When the member for Kalgoorlie speaks as he spoke last Wednesday, it would be interesting to know how he stands with regard to the sandalwood industry.

Mr. Green: I have never hidden my position.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member nearly hid it in tears on my verandah on one occasion. I am not hiding anything. When the hon. member desires it, we can let in the light of day.

Mr. Green: Say all you desire.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I shall do so.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Green: You have had a pretty shady record in politics.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Of course there is no shade about the member for Kalgoorlie. He is as white as it is possible to be.

Mr. Green: I can always deal with you.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Don't worry; anywhere you like and at any time you like. A man who cannot go on to the Esplanade to address members of the community he is talking of protecting, without having a revolver in his pocket—

Mr. Green: That is a lie, and you know it, you rat.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must withdraw that statement that what the Minister said is a lie.

Mr. Green: I shall withdraw it, and at the same time I ask that the Minister withdraw his statement that I ever went on to the Esplanade with a revolver in my pocket. I deny that in toto.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I did not say that the hon. member did that.

Mr. Green: I ask for an unqualified withdrawal of that statement.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I withdraw; it is one of the many withdrawals that I anticipate will be asked for before the night is out.

Mr. Green interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not threaten.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have before me a record of the debate last week. The member for Kalgoorlie is reported as having said—

Deputations waited on the Minister composed of men who knew something of the industry and consequently were in a different position from the Minister, who of course knows nothing about it.

The Premier: He knows as much as does the hon. member.

Mr. Green: That is not so. I can speak from personal knowledge. From all quarters came protests, because it was thought that, underlying the proposal, was a sinister motive.

Later on he said—

The conditions of the tenders precluded any but a certain firm from tendering, and that, coupled with the fact that at the time of calling for tenders the Minister for Forests was constantly in private consultation with the man at the head of this firm, led us to the conclusion that everything was not straight.

The Premier: I saw practically everyone engaged in the industry. Do you accuse me?

Mr. Green: No, the Premier was absolutely frank and fair; but he did not know all that was going on.

The Premier: Yes, I did.

Mr. Green: The Premier may have thought he did, but as a matter of fact he did not. However, without wishing to make charges against anybody, I feel I should be failing in my duty if I did not state the position. If a Minister who is a shrewd man attempts to do something which is eminently silly—unless he is to get something for it—

The Premier: No, no, do not say that.

Mr. Green: Well, the only stand we can take is to say that he must desist from doing that silly thing, or alternatively reasonable people must be excused from presuming—

The Premier: Not reasonable people.

Mr. Green: Reasonable people must be excused from presuming that money is changing hands.

The Premier: You would accuse anyone of anything.

Mr. Green: In the circumstances I am pleased that the Government did not go on with the proposal, thus saving us from what would have been a public scandal. I do not for a moment think the Premier would be a party to anything unfair or unjust, or in the least corrupt.

The Premier: Neither would any member of the Ministry.

Mr. Green: No, they are all angels.

The Premier: Neither would any member of the House.

Mr. Green: No, but outside of Western Australia we have heard rumours which substantiate the suspicion that there is corruption in Parliaments in Australia. In these circumstances our duty is to speak fearlessly if we see anything that may smack of it, and so save the Premier's Ministry from doing anything that might be construed into being unfair or corrupt.

Later on the hon. member said—

The Minister for Forests, when confronted by various deputations on the subject, was not himself. I was one of a numerous deputation from both sides of the House which waited on the Minister, and tried to point out to him and to Mr. Lane-Poole how absurd the proposal was, and how little it would benefit the sandalwood getter, in whose interests it was supposed to have been designed. I never saw the Minister for Forests in a more unhappy position than he was at that interview. Yet we have that regulation on the Table to-day, a breaking of faith with the member for Menzies in his interview with Mr. Lane-Poole.

Later on still the hon. member said—

I will endeavour to convince the Premier again. At a meeting of sandalwood merchants, one of them, Mr. Stewart, produced a letter from Hong Kong, from a buyer there—

He did not do so; he only read from it.

—who said that Mr. Paterson had told him that the Government of Western Australia were going to give them, Paterson & Co., the control of the sandalwood industry of the State.

The Premier: What has that to do with it?

Mr. Green: That was just the time when the Government proposed to give a monopoly of the sandalwood trade of Western Australia to a private firm.

The Premier: Were not tenders called?

Mr. Green: Yes, but it would have been impossible for any firm, except that big firm, to have had a monopoly of the sandalwood of this State. Synchronising with that statement we have the fact that the Minister for Woods and Forests was in daily contact, cheek by jowl, with Mr. John, the manager for Paterson & Co.

The Premier: You have no right to impute motives.

Mr. Green: I am not imputing any motives. I am making a statement of fact, namely, that the Hon. J. Scaddan was daily in consultation with Mr. John. I leave it to hon. members to say whether there may have been something at the back of it. Let them draw their own conclusions.

What did the hon. member intend to imply by that? I say right here that the statement that I was at any time either in Mr. John's house or his office or that Mr. John was in my office, or that I saw him in the street or saw him at all from the time when I met him in Mr. Hudson's house, is a living falsehood.

Mr. Green: It is true just the same.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the hon. member can prove that I was ever in Mr. John's office, or that he was in my office, I will forfeit my seat in Parliament. The accusation is a dirty insinuation made for a particular purpose, and there is absolutely no truth in it. I want to see every man protected. I never suggested a monopoly for any one firm or for anyone else. I have with me a minute from Mr. Lane-Poole telling me that it had been agreed that a permit would be issued on tender. The first I knew about this was when I returned from Kalgoorlie. I had never seen Mr. John in connection with it. When my friend opposite came to my house at Mt. Lawley and asked me if I knew what was happening over the proposal I replied, "I only know that they propose calling for tenders for a permit." He said, "Do you know that I am interested in the industry and that it will cripple me?"

Mr. Green: Nothing of the kind.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: He came twice to the house before he saw me. He would not be seen coming to my office at all, but he came to my house.

Mr. Green: I went to your office.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: He said, "Will you see Joyce?" I said, "The position is this."

Mr. Green: On a point of order, I absolutely deny the statement made by the Minister that I ever said that this would cripple me. I ask that he should withdraw this lie.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not say that.

Mr. Green: I ask that the statement be withdrawn. It is untrue.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The rules of the House compel me to withdraw it, and I suppose I shall have to abide by them. Just as the hon. member did, I leave hon. members to draw their own conclusions. Will he deny that he came to my house?

Mr. Green: No.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Will he tell the House why he came to my house?

Mr. Green: Yes, to point out what the regulation meant.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Has the hon. member ever been to my house in connection with other industries? On matters connected with his own constituency of course he came to my house.

Mr. Green: You would not see me at your office.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have never refused to see the hon. member on any occasion. He came to my house at Mt. Lawley and asked me to see Mr. Joyce. I have the greatest respect for Mr. Joyce and his other partners. The hon. member is a member of the firm of Joyce & Watkins, who have been dealing in sandalwood.

Mr. Davies: A White Australia!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I told the hon. member at my house that if I saw Mr. Joyce I would have to see the others. I also said that I would see none of them unless I saw them all together. I claim to be a man of honour. I am prepared to go out of politics if the hon. member can prove that I ever saw Mr. John in his house, or that he ever saw me in my house or in my office, or in any public or private place on this question of sandalwood, until he came to my office with the other members of the deputation. I have known since that these gentlemen had private detectives waiting outside Mr. John's door to see if I went there, but they did not find me there. I was not near the place. Until I heard of the statement that had been made in the House the other night I did not imagine that the hon. member thought I had been dealing with Mr. John in connection with this matter.

Mr. Green: It was in the public Press.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member does not call that dirty rag "The Sunday Mirror" the public Press. There is a minute addressed to me by Mr. Lane-Poole, the Conservator of Forests, dated the 5th February, 1920, in which he says—

During your absence on the fields in January the Premier saw me in connection with the desirability of obtaining a larger revenue from sandalwood—

and then he sets out what happened. That is the first I knew about the calling of tenders for permits. Because we have had a dispute in politics the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green), whose record is so clean, thought he would endeavour to besmirch my name. I claim that there are no Chinese presents in my house. I have never said that a Chinaman was a good fellow at all.

Mr. Green: My record will stand looking at. Yours will not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It will stand this much, that I have never besmirched the honour of another man in the community. I will always protect a man against another who is besmirching him, but I have never besmirched the private character of any citizen, even in a political sense.

Mr. Green: If he was dishonest you ought to do so.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, if he was dishonest. I issue a challenge to the

hon. member. I will put my seat in Albany against his in Kalgoorlie. If he can prove the statement he has made I will go out of politics, on the understanding that if he cannot prove it he shall go out and not I.

Mr. Green: You were with John.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Yilgarn (Mr. Hudson) can vouch for my statement regarding the last occasion when I saw Mr. John, prior to his coming to my office with the other members of the deputation, at that hon. member's house. I will give up my seat in Parliament if the member for Kalgoorlie can prove his statement.

Mr. Green: I have witnesses.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I will ask the Premier to appoint a Royal Commission, and if the hon. member can prove before that Commission the truth of these statements I am prepared to go out of politics. It is due to me that I should defend my character against these statements of the hon. member.

Mr. Green: It is only bluff, as usual.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member need not worry about bluff. In season and out of season the hon. member has pleaded that the labourer is entitled to full value for his labour. Will the hon. member tell the Royal Commission, if it is appointed, how much he has made out of the industry?

Mr. Green: I am prepared to do that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We will have an inquiry. The hon. member and the other traders, who have been talking about the acts of the Government ruining the sandalwood cutter, have been joining the first robbers, as the hon. member called them. He is one of the first robbers. He has not been interested in the subject from the point of view of safeguarding the interests of his electors; but as a member of these first robbers is he interested and from that point of view only. In order to get his own way, and protect his own personal interests, he has attempted to besmirch the honour of another man. He has tried to do this, but has failed. The sandalwood trade of Western Australia is carried on mainly through the agency of agents working on Chinese credit with Chinese firms. Of the ten firms that were operating when tenders were advertised, only two could be regarded as operating on Australian money. The others were purely agents for the Chinese.

Mr. Green: Whose report is that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Never mind. Let the hon. member deny it. The White Australia policy, so well maintained in Australia, provides that no Chinaman shall set up in business except with white people or people of European origin, who are prepared to act as their tools. That is the position of the hon. member, who has made accusations of dishonesty against me. He is a tool for the Chinese. Was the hon. member actuated in making these dirty accusations against me by his interest for

his constituents, or by his interest for his joss bosses in China?

Mr. Green: How funny!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I declare that the hon. member did not have a penny of his own. All the interest he had in the industry was what he could get out of it. The money was put in by the Chinese firms, and he was acting as a Chinese agent. This is his White Australia policy. He is actuated only by his own interests. Then the hon. member gets up, something like an angel standing on a pedestal, and declares that everyone else is dishonest. Let the House draw its own conclusions.

Mr. Green: It will do that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Was the hon. member's interest in his constituents in Hannan-street, or in the office of the firm with which he is operating. I do not object to persons making a profit out of the trade, but I will not allow the hon. member to make statements like that unchallenged.

Mr. Green: You know it is all true.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Let the hon. member accept my challenge. If he can prove what he said, I will go out of office if he will undertake to go out in the event of his being unable to do so.

Mr. Green: I will prove it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not walk in my sleep, and I do not sleep when I am talking either. It is evident that I am keeping the hon. member awake.

Mr. Green: I tried to put you out for crook work.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have heard the hon. member talk about crook work before.

Mr. Green: I have the evidence.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am giving the evidence of where the crook work is, and the hon. member does not deny what I said. I am making definite statements, and he cannot refute one of them.

Mr. Green: There is nothing about my honour in question.

The MINISTER FOR MINES. The hon. member can say less about my honour. I tell the hon. member right here that there never was any single present from China in my house. When the hon. member or any one else makes accusations like this, and begins to throw stones, he must be certain that he is not in a glass house himself. Of course, everyone makes mistakes. I suppose there is not a man living who does not make mistakes. I have had all sorts of accusations made against me. I think it has become fashionable for many people to say that I am putting my hands into the State Treasury and filling my own pockets. People say that I have made hundreds of thousands of pounds out of deals I have made on behalf of the Government. I will tell hon. members that I have never made a penny to which I was not entitled, except from the salary I drew in my official position. Accusations of this nature came from members of this side of the House, as

well as from those on the Opposition side. I am going to take this opportunity of defending my character and of showing that there is not a man in this House, or anywhere else, who has cleaner hands so far as politics are concerned, than I have. I have often gone ahead with unpopular moves when there was a possibility of these things being charged against me. I have known my colleagues absolutely to decline to undertake what we knew to be advantageous propositions from the point of view of the State, because of the sinister accusations that were hurled against us. One result is that to-day we are paying £6 per ton for oil at Wyndham, when we ought to be paying 60s. The position is beginning to stink; and yet we have had a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the Wyndham business, and there was no evidence of anything of the kind suggested. As administrators of the State we have to take the responsibility and the risk. Sometimes we have made blunders. There is not a member of the House who has not done so. But I have never suggested that because a member has blundered he has done it for the purpose of lining his own pockets. I have challenged hon. members to go to the income tax office and see my income tax returns. I have said that if it can be proved that I have had any income apart from my salary and what I have fairly and honestly earned, I will forfeit my seat in Parliament. No one has ever been game to take up that challenge. I make that challenge now to the member for Kalgoorlie, who is a mere sink of hypocrisy. The hon. member suggests that somebody else is doing something that he himself would be disposed to do. In the same way a dirty, filthy rag like the "Sunday Mirror" comes along and says, "What are you going to do about O'Neill? You are downing O'Neill."

Mr. Jones: So you are.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Even the Commissioner of Police cannot take action, while he is under my Ministerial control, without its being suggested that he is acting under my direction. That is all for political purposes. It is all because we are very near a general election. I have never yet suggested, as the hon. member did in 1918, that we were told one week that Germany was defeated, only to find that in the next week she was as strong as ever. The member for Kalgoorlie may have some knowledge of a communication that was sent during the war to a firm in China which was banned. The letter was written on Parliamentary notepaper and enclosed in a Parliamentary envelope, and even then it did not get past the censor. Will the hon. member deny that? I can prove it; we have particulars of the letter. He cannot prove his charges.

Mr. Green: I wish you would prove it. This patriotic stunt is done.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is not a patriotic stunt at all. The hon. member, as I said before, should be careful about throwing stones if he lives in a glass house.

Mr. Green: You are just overdoing it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have never yet made a complaint of fair and honest criticism by any man, but I will not allow the member for Kalgoorlie, or anyone in this community, to besmirch my fair name from the point of view of honesty and truthfulness. I have had opportunities. I said across the floor of this Chamber, when I was sitting in Opposition, to some of my friends who were then on this side of the House and were talking about "the way the money goes," that they were starting in the minds of the public an impression that all the deals of the Government meant that someone was getting a secret commission out of them. I said to them, "It will come back on you some day when you are sitting on this side of the House." Truly it has done so, until a public man can hardly take any action without some dirty, filthy rag asking, "What is he getting out of it?" I was said to have got more out of some deals than actually the Government paid in connection with them. I was said to have got more out of the East Perth power house than the people who built it, simply because I was in London when the contract was made. And it was the same thing with regard to the purchase of the Perth tramways. The position is absolutely filthy and dirty. Such accusations may be popular, but the making of them reflects on the member for Kalgoorlie. Irrespective of anything that may happen, I will not sit here and allow any man, no matter how I may differ from him on many questions, to say that I do not act fairly and squarely by the community as I judge their interests. I never joined with any mob to get heaps of stones piled up on the road in Hannans-street. How soon the member for Kalgoorlie laughs! How soon he admits his guilt! That is the sort of thing the hon. member does.

Mr. Green: That is right.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member had little heaps of road metal piled up in Hannans-street to pelt me with if I got on the platform. That is the sort of member we have representing the community of Kalgoorlie. I have never yet suggested that each of us has not a right to hold his own opinions and to express them, but I am not going to be accused in the way the hon. member has accused me. In the first place, this matter never came from me; I was not consulted in regard to it until after the arrangement had been made for tenders to be called.

Mr. O'Loughlin: I think you should have been consulted.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Never mind about that. I was absent from the city. So long as I sit on this bench, I will practise what I asked others to practise when I sat opposite. I will be fair to my leader, and the moment I cannot be fair to him I will get out. The public have been led to believe that I was con-

sulted in this matter and was the prime mover in it. They have been led by the statements of the member for Kalgoorlie to believe that I was actually consulted by some members of the firm. I tried to protect the position of the State as well as I could and as long as I could, and when I found the position untenable I came along with another proposal. Would the member for Kalgoorlie do anything else if he were on this side of the House?

Mr. Green: I would do what was right.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: So did I. I ask again, was the hon. member justified, in the circumstances, in making the statement he has made? Not a single penny ever passed or was ever suggested as far as I know. If the member for Kalgoorlie wants the matter thrashed out, let him ask the Premier now to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into it, and then it will be seen how clean my hands are. Because I do not run away when there is an unpopular proposal before the Government, I am supposed to be a guilty person. It is fashionable and popular to say these things about me, just as the "Sunday Mirror" does. If that paper were worth a tuppenny dump I would have had it up long ago, but I am not going to waste my money on wasters. Let the "West Australian" make such an accusation, or let the "Daily News" do it, or the "Sunday Times," and I will spend some of my good brass and get it back again.

Mr. Jones: But you know they would not do it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. They are not such low-down dirty dogs as the editor of the "Sunday Mirror" is.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I do not like to interrupt, but I must do so when a member of the House is referred to as a dirty, low-down dog. No matter what our differences are, I do not think such criticism should apply.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I did not say it of the hon. member.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think I heard the Minister for Mines say that the editor of the paper was a low-down dog.

Mr. Jones: I do not think he is a low-down dog.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am not aware that the editor is here.

Mr. Jones: I can assure the House that if the remark refers to me, I do not mind. Any insult from the Minister for Mines is a compliment to a representative of the working class; and he knows it, too.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Some representatives of the working class loaf on them.

Mr. Underwood: He has loafed on them all his life.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I think I have said pretty well enough for the moment. However, I found this morning some references to my movements during the

period concerning which there has been so much discussion. I find that I returned from the Eastern States on the 24th December, and left for Albany with my family about the 26th or 27th December. I remained at Albany until about the 23rd January, and left for the fields about the 27th, returning to Perth on the 30th. I left Perth for Albany with the Premier on the 5th February, and returned to Perth on the 16th February. I received the deputation on the 17th February. That was when the fuss began. Now hon. members will see how much truth there can possibly be in the statement that I was day by day in consultation with Mr. John. My movements disclose that it was not so. But, even if it were so, Mr. John is a gentleman, and I am entitled to see Mr. John if I want to see him. But I tell the House upon my word of honour that I never saw Mr. John from the time I saw him at Mr. Hudson's house until he came on that deputation.

Mr. Green: And you were never in his company?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Never in his company. One of the detectives in the police force told me that I was supposed to have gone into Mr. John's office. I said, "I must have walked in my sleep then, because I never went there while I was awake." I am still prepared to make the challenge that if the member for Kalgoorlie will go out of politics if he cannot prove his case against me, I will go out of politics if he can prove his case against me.

Mr. O'Loughlen: What had the detective to do with it?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member interjecting was not in the House when I said that I had been told my friends opposite had private detectives watching me.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Was it the private detective who told you that?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No; one of the detectives attached to the police force. He said the private detective had told him that he had been deputed to watch Mr. John's office.

Mr. Hudson: That incident to which you referred was a social function 12 or 18 months ago.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I never saw Mr. John again until he was in my office as a member of the deputation.

Mr. Green: You have said that about seven times.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Mr. John is a gentleman, but I wish to say that I never discussed anything about the sandalwood business with him. If the House, knowing the member for Kalgoorlie and knowing me, believes him, well and good; I cannot help it. But I ask the community to believe what I state to be correct, until the member for Kalgoorlie brings his proofs. When he brings his proofs, as he tells us he can, I will go out of politics; and that ought to be the end of it as far as I am

concerned, anyhow. Now may I return to the main point and say that the regulation does not affect the Government very much. Personally, I do not care if the regulation is disallowed. But we have to devise means by which we can get an adequate return from the trade, and here I wish to say what the member for Kalgoorlie has never said, that the Government made it one of the conditions of contract that the minimum return to the sandalwood getter should be £9 per ton. He is not receiving anything like that now. In the circumstances, although it may appear that we acted wrongly, we did at least take some action; and, having taken some action, we naturally must expect criticism. But it should be fair and honourable and honest criticism although we and hon. members opposite may differ from time to time.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [9.14]: I do not know whether I am elevated or not by the charges which the member for Kalgoorlie has made against the reputation of the Minister for Mines, but I can say that it has been my knowledge through life that those who are prone to charge others with taking bribes are always apt themselves to take bribes. That has been my experience. Coming now to what we want to get at, the question before the House is the size of sandalwood that should be taken. Not that I complain in the slightest degree regarding the scope that has been given to the debate. But on the question of the size of sandalwood which is to be taken, I want to say quite clearly that in my opinion Lane-Poole is not the right man to decide what size should be taken, because he has not sufficient knowledge. The Minister has told us that Lane-Poole is a trained forester. I am prepared to admit that. He has put in all his life studying forests, but he has never known the forest in the back portions of Western Australia. I am prepared to take Lane-Poole's word in regard to our commercial timbers, our karri, our jarrah; but Lane-Poole made an awful bungle when he started to lease our foreshores of mangroves. When I asked him whether he knew anything about it he admitted that he had never seen a mangrove. Until he came to this country he never saw sandalwood. Therefore, what opportunity has he had of judging of the sizes to which sandalwood will grow? He has not had an opportunity of learning that.

The Premier: He has in India.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: There is no sandalwood in India. Western Australia produces all the sandalwood of the world.

Mr. Hudson: With the exception of a few islands.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes, and Lane-Poole has never seen them. In the country where there is a good rainfall a certain size may be provided for, and we may go further inland where the rainfall is less and we will get a wood equally valuable in oil but not of the same size as the wood in the wetter districts. That applies not only to sandalwood but to all our timbers and to wheat as well. Why Western Australian wheat is the

best in the world is because it is grown in a dry climate. I can tell Lane-Poole that if he goes to the Upper Gascoyne, he will find the best sandalwood ever produced in Western Australia. I can assure the Minister for Mines that I will show Lane-Poole, if he has the time to come with me, where there is any amount of sandalwood that does not grow bigger than mere scrub, where it cannot be got any bigger than the two fingers of one hand, and never grows larger. When Lane-Poole comes along in his ignorance—and notwithstanding that he is a trained forester, he is absolutely ignorant of many things in Western Australia—and says that we will get nothing less than 14 inches, he is doing an injury to an industry, even though he is doing it in ignorance. I might put it this way, that he is doing injury because he lacks the knowledge that we possess. Along the Gascoyne River sandalwood can be got so small that it is a mere scrub. There are members in this House—the member for Gascoyne and the Minister for Mines—who are aware of that fact. Notwithstanding the charges made against the Minister for Mines and the counter charges made against the member for Kalgoorlie in dealing with this question—and I am speaking with the knowledge of a bushman, the knowledge of a man who has been all over Western Australia—I say it is not advisable to restrict the size, or even declare the absolute size, at which sandalwood shall be pulled.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [9.20]: I think I have as much right to say something on this question as other hon. members, seeing that I was associated with the sandalwood business for 3½ years. There has been a lot said about the reforestation of sandalwood. The first attempt in this direction in Western Australia was made in 1899 and at that time Mr. Ednie Brown, the then Conservator of Forests, reported as follows:—

The plantation of sandalwood at Meckering, which has been enclosed and thoroughly treated for the purpose of experimenting in the conservation of this tree, is making satisfactory progress. There is a considerable number of self-sown sandalwood trees in this area, and these have all been properly attended to by pruning, and all the blank spots in the enclosure have been sown or planted with sandalwood nuts. I watch this enclosure with much interest, and by the result of its treatment we shall gain experience in regard to the best method of dealing with our outside sandalwood areas.

The report goes on to say that, in order to put a stop to the indiscriminate cutting of immature trees, the Government had prohibited the cutting of sandalwood trees of any sort whatever for a period of two years. In the following year the Conservator of Forests wrote about the sandalwood plantations as follows:—

The reserve at Meckering, which was set apart for the purpose of experimenting from the artificial conservation and

propagation of sandalwood, is, I am glad to say, making satisfactory progress. The situation has an easterly aspect and the soil is composed principally of granite formation, which is conducive to the successful growth of sandalwood. There is a considerable amount of young, self-sown sandalwood trees on this block, which are progressing favourably, the sandalwood having regenerated itself by natural means. The artificially sown nuts are also springing up in all stages of growth and present a remarkably strong and healthy appearance. This experiment is one that the public should regard with especial interest, as by the result of its treatment experience will be gained as to the best system of dealing with the large areas of sandalwood throughout the colony.

In view of the statements made in this House as to the possibility of the reforestation of sandalwood, the quotations I have made will prove of value to hon. members. If possible, it will be wise for the present Conservator to take reasonable means to safeguard the sandalwood industry in this State. I would like further to say that in the "Year Book of Western Australia" issued in 1902, the subject of the size of sandalwood is referred to. This is what appears in that publication—

Sandalwood, although only a tree or shrub, is an important factor in the timber industry of Western Australia, and therefore has a place in the description of those forest products which have assisted to build up the export trade of the State. This species is somewhat peculiar in its appearance, and certainly has more of the character of a large bush than of a tree proper. It has a low depressed habit and is consequently decidedly branchy and heavily topped. It is seldom found more than 8ins. in diameter and from 12ft. to 18ft. in height, with stems from about 8 to 10ft. in length. In a good many cases, however, stems have been found measuring over a foot in diameter and 12 ft. in length, these weighing from 3cwt. to 6 cwt. Trees have been cut which produced timber weighing more than half a ton.

It will be seen from this statement that it is seldom found more than 8ins. in diameter. There is, therefore, a good deal in the contention of the hon. member who moved the motion. During the course of the debate some remarks have been made about the association of some West Australian firms with Chinese. I have here a statement in which it is said—

Mr. Fong Lang was in business in this State as a wholesale merchant for over 20 years in Geraldton. He was for many years a shareholder in Paterson & Co., Ltd., but about two years ago sold out his interests. With the exception of Mr. Paterson, and his brothers and sisters, all the shareholders of Paterson & Co., Ltd., are resident in Western Australia and are employed by that firm. It was with capi-

tal subscribed by Mr. Paterson's relatives and himself that the business commenced, hence the reason for these people still being interested. Of course some years ago capital from other parts of the world, from friends of Mr. Paterson, was brought into the business, but those people have all been bought out by the present employees of Paterson & Co., Ltd.

It is true that Mr. Fong Lang was at one time in partnership with this firm, but for the past few years he has ceased to be a member of it. Before Paterson & Co. began operations, Guthrie & Co. were associated with the business, which was then of considerable volume. The insurance alone on sandalwood stacks amounted to £20,000. The sandalwood business in those days did not afford the big margin of profit that has been alleged by the member for Kalgoorlie, and I am assured that the profits Paterson & Co. are said to have made have no foundation in fact. So far as the business of that firm with China is concerned, it is now worked from their office in Perth and it is controlled entirely by Australian money. The firm is now really an Australian firm except that the head of the firm has an office in London. Therefore it is unfair that the statement should be made in this Chamber to lead hon. members to believe that Chinese are associated with Paterson & Co. at the present time. The explanation given by the Minister for Forests was a satisfactory one and I feel sure he convinced members that there was nothing in the accusation made by the member for Kalgoorlie. I shall have much pleasure in supporting the motion for the disallowance of the regulation.

Mr. CHESSON (Cue) [9.28]: It is my intention to support the motion. Although there has been no public outcry in my district and no deputations have waited on the Minister from that part of the State, deputations from sandalwood cutters have interviewed the local road board and asked the board to make a protest on their behalf against the gazettement of the regulation. We know from experience that the sandalwood on the Murchison grows in mulga belts and ironstone ridges and, as has been pointed out, the timber matures when it has attained a diameter of three inches. After that the wood begins to die on one side and in a lot of the ridges there may be seen a good deal of dead wood. The people engaged on the Murchison in pulling sandalwood are mostly prospectors, and if we are going to allow the regulation to remain, we shall cut out the industry in that part of the State, and by cutting out the industry we shall penalise a number of our citizens who are doing pioneering work in developing auriferous belts. Those men are able to keep the tucker bag going through the sandalwood they get while out prospecting. I hope the House will disallow the regulation, which is certainly having a bad effect on the men engaged in the industry. Such a regulation might be all right in the South-West,

but when applied in the mulga country it can have only one effect, namely, to prohibit any cutting at all.

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies—in reply) [9.31]: I very much regret the tone of the debate, and I want to dissociate myself from the charges made by the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green). During the past few months I have taken a prominent part in discussing the sandalwood question, notwithstanding which nothing that would make me for a moment suspicious of any malpractice has come under my notice. I think it deplorable that a member of this Assembly should make half-charges of the character we have heard. I should be just as anxious to expose anything of the nature hinted at by the member for Kalgoorlie as is that hon. member himself, but I think that public men should adopt the attitude that when they are not in a position to bring forward and prove definite charges, they ought not to make half-charges such as the member for Kalgoorlie has indulged in. It is no wonder that Parliament is coming to be thought very little of by the general public when hon. members adopt the line of discussion taken up by the member for Kalgoorlie. I regret that there are so few members at present in the House. Since the Minister has had an opportunity of stating his side of the case and refuting charges, I think hon. members should give the mover of the motion a few minutes of attention while he makes his reply.

Mr. Troy drew attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung; a quorum formed.

Mr. MULLANY: I am quite prepared to accept the assurance given by the Minister to-night that he was not responsible for the publishing in February last of the terms of the proposed contract. He showed clearly that it emanated from the Premier, and that it was proposed to be carried out by the Conservator of Forests. But I think the House is entitled to ask, who is administering the Forestry Department? The Minister cannot blame members if they attach to him the responsibility for actions taken by the department while he is controlling that department.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Conservator controls the department.

Mr. MULLANY: I propose to deal shortly with the Conservator. When moving the motion, the one statement I made in the nature of a grievance was that the Conservator had deliberately misled me in giving me an assurance that this regulation would not be enforced. The Minister has explained that in a very ingenious manner. He has practically said that the Conservator admitted having given this assurance, but that he thought different conditions were to be applied to the industry, that the contract was to be let. Evidently, the position the Conservator takes up is that if the contract had been let there would have been no

necessity for enforcing the regulation, the successful tenderer would have been under no restriction. Apparently it is not really in the interests of the industry that the regulation is to be enforced, but because of a little official pique on the part of the Conservator, in consequence of his not having been allowed to have his own way.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you not think it was a deception practised on the tenderer?

Mr. MULLANY: It was a definite statement by the Minister. Seeing that they intended not to enforce the regulation against the firm or individual who was to have the control of the whole of the trade, how can the Minister or the Conservator say that it is now advisable to enforce it, since only individual sandalwood pullers are operating? I think this most effectually disposes of the argument that in the interests of the trade the regulation should be enforced.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Apparently the tenderer who secured the contract would have been able to get sandalwood anywhere.

Mr. MULLANY: Yes, and of any size. I do not propose to again go into the details of the trade, the actual buying and selling of sandalwood. The Minister has dealt exhaustively with that phase of the question to-night, and, after all, my motion has no reference to the trade in sandalwood between Western Australia and China. However, I again say that the enforcing of the regulation on the goldfields will prohibit the pulling of sandalwood on those areas. The Minister has brought here two samples of sandalwood. This one, on the word of the Minister, is barely of the size that would be permitted under the regulation, that is to say, a circumference of 14 inches at 16 inches from the ground. If I were looking for evidence to bear out my statements, I could not hope to get better than this which the Minister has furnished. This sample supports my contention that the sandalwood on the goldfields is not a tree but a bush. This sample is dead in the centre. Sandalwood, when it attains this size in the goldfields areas, ceases to grow and produce wood. This sample is conclusive evidence to anyone who will examine it. There is only a very small margin of sap wood, and inside that ring there is wood which is practically dead. The sap wood is sufficient to keep the tree alive, but the tree would not make more wood if it stood for the next 200 years. I do not know the district whence the sample came, but I venture to say that in that district will be found hundreds of thousands of sticks, not quite up to this size, but which are just as dead as this and will grow no more wood. The Minister says the object of the regulation is to control the supply, that the department does not want any over-supply of sandalwood pulled or produced in Western Australia. We shall be prepared at any time to assist the Minister or the department in the endeavour they are making to see that the sandalwood pullers get a better price in the future than they have had in the past; but

I claim that the enforcing of the regulation would inflict a hardship on the pullers of the northern and eastern goldfields areas. Another point I wish to emphasise will appeal to the Minister for Forests. I have heard him say that he wishes to preserve the industry, in part at least, to the men who combine sandalwood-getting with prospecting for gold. The Minister may know, certainly I do, that where this small sandalwood grows is in the auriferous areas of the goldfields, where the country is of a hard, rocky nature, and where the mulga does not attain any great size. But that is the very locality where there is most inducement for the prospector. And I wish to point out to the Minister that if he enforces the regulation he will prevent the prospector from obtaining any assistance by the getting of sandalwood. I want hon. members to view this motion strictly on its merits, without any party feeling, and above all, to dissociate their minds from the passage which took place between the Minister for Forests and the member for Kalgoorlie. That passage has no bearing whatever on the merits or demerits of the motion. I trust that hon. members will give the motion just consideration. I am not prone to the making of extravagant statements; I am prepared to substantiate any statement I have made as to the growth of the trees in the goldfields areas, and therefore I trust that hon. members will support the motion, and so prevent an injustice being done to sandalwood pullers on the goldfields.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, CUSTOMS DUTIES.

Order of the day read for the resumption from the 8th September of the debate on the motion by Mr. Pickering:—"That in the opinion of this House the duty on all commodities essential to the development of the primary industries of this State should be removed."

Question put and negatived.

MOTION—RAILWAY PROJECT, CARNARVON-KILLILIL.

Debate resumed from the 8th September on the following motion by Mr. Angelo:—

That in the opinion of this House the time has arrived for the construction of a railway from the port of Carnarvon to the junction of the Gascoyne and Lyons Rivers, approximately 105 miles.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott—Nelson) [9.46]: When the member for Gascoyne addressed the House on this important question he put up a very good case. He had an excellent subject to speak on, because anyone who has travelled through that magnificent belt of pastoral

country as I have or has lived in it for the number of years that I did, can arrive at only one conclusion that there is a very great future before that particular country. For very many years now it has been noted as one of the best fattening pastoral areas in Western Australia. The hon. member pointed out that the proposed railway would assist the squatters during times of drought. I can fully bear out all his remarks as I know that, in the past, pastoralists have had and that at the present time they still have great difficulty in taking their stock from that particular area to Meekatharra for entrainment. The Gascoyne has been spoken of by people who do not know it as a dry river. The Gascoyne is never dry. It might not run on the surface all the year round but, beneath the river sands, there are millions of gallons of beautifully fresh water flowing every day and, as one who has had to dig wells and water stock there in years gone by, I can say that I know of no part of that river right down to the mouth where fresh water cannot be obtained by sinking. The Gascoyne country differs from the Murchison in this respect: the Murchison country is excellent feeding country, but the quality of the soil cannot be compared with that of the Gascoyne.

Mr. Troy: Some of it can.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

The HONORARY MINISTER: On the Murchison River are excellent patches of heavy soil, but on the Gascoyne there are hundreds of miles of it. That is the difference. After rain, the Gascoyne district recuperates quicker than any other country I know.

Mr. Underwood: You do not know all of it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I know a great deal of the country, and I am satisfied that my statement is correct. I have seen the Gascoyne country as bare as a board for 18 months, and I have seen it again one month after a downpour of rain and it is absolutely amazing how rapidly the grass grows. The soil contains potash and all the ingredients that make for quick growth, and I fully endorse the statements of the member for Gascoyne as to the excellence of the district from a pastoral point of view. The question of putting a tramway through that country was considered as far back as 30 years ago. There was a discussion as to whether it would be possible to run a line to the junction, 105 miles from Carnarvon, through the Kennedy Ranges, and work that tram line with horses or donkeys. Had the squatters at that time invested sufficient money to lay a two-foot gauge light line, it would have paid them handsomely. There is no doubt that the further back we push our railways from the coast, the better are the conditions

for the people further inland, because the railway enables them to run sheep where otherwise they can run only cattle. Take the railways of Queensland and see how they have been pushed inland. They have railways from Brisbane to Charleville and Cunnamulla, 450 miles; Rockhampton to Longreach, 450 miles; Townsville to Dajarra, 500 miles; Cairns to Charlestown, 200 miles; Cooktown to Laura, 100 miles; and from Normantown on the Gulf of Carpentaria to Croydon, 100 miles. Those who know Queensland are aware of the way in which these railways have been pushed in and in, with the result that in that State sheep can now be run at a profit where previously it was utterly impossible to run sheep.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is the most decentralised State in Australia.

The HONORARY MINISTER: In the old days when there were very few squatters on the Gascoyne and Lyons Rivers, I was stationed at Mount Augustus and we could run 25,000 sheep down the Thomas, down the Lyons and down the Gascoyne to within 100 miles of the port, because the firm for whom I worked owned practically the bulk of the river for hundreds of miles. That would be impossible to-day because the country has been taken up and is owned by various squatters. Consequently, at a distance inland, it is possible to run cattle only, and this State is losing considerably through the lack of railway communication there. This country certainly justifies inquiry and report by engineers as to the possibility of laying a line, the engineering difficulties likely to be encountered, the probable cost of the undertaking, and the area it will serve. I commend the hon. member on the excellent address he delivered in moving the motion.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.54]: I listened very attentively to the speech of the Honorary Minister. He complimented the member for Gascoyne on the excellence of his speech in moving the motion, but he did not tell us what the Government intend to do and he was very careful to avoid making any promise.

Mr. Underwood: You do not want to be too hard on the Government.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is the first speech the Honorary Minister has made for a couple of years.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN. When the Minister rose to address the House, I did expect that he would announce the policy of the Government with regard to this proposed railway. If a railway Bill were introduced and supported in such glowing terms as this proposition has been, the measure should be passed right away.

Mr. Angelo: Let us do it right away.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is proposed that this line shall pay £22,000 into consolidated revenue after meeting all working expenses, interest and sinking fund, and we certainly

cannot afford to refuse such an offer of revenue.

Mr. Angelo: This line would produce revenue.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: So I understand. The people in the district are willing to pay a shilling a mile which will enable a sum of £22,000 to be paid into consolidated revenue.

The Honorary Minister: Are you objecting to that?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, but if the railway were constructed, it is probable that there would soon be many deputations requesting that the rate be reduced considerably. They would want to know why the Government were charging only 6d. a mile on the Port Hedland-Marble Bar line, while they were paying 1s. a mile. No information of a reliable character, such as would warrant any member giving a vote for or against this motion, has been placed before the House. I move an amendment—

That after "for" the words "an inquiry be made whether" be inserted, and after "miles" the words "is warranted" be added.

After the glowing statements of the member for Gascoyne and the figures he has quoted as to the amount of traffic available for such a railway, which statements were supported by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood), it is due to the district that inquiry should be made. We have been sending railway advisory boards all over the country to districts which appeared far less favourable than does this one. I am one of those who will always be found to support the construction of a railway if it can be shown that there is a possibility of it paying within a short space of time. That is my reason for moving the amendment which I think will meet the wishes of the mover of the motion.

Mr. CHESSON (Cue) [10.0]: I second the amendment. A report should be obtained before the House commits itself to the construction of any railway. It is all very well for an hon. member to put in a report, as the member for Gascoyne has done. No doubt the Gascoyne district is capable of carrying a large amount of stock. If the report that I think should be made is satisfactory no one will be more willing than I to support the construction of the line. The only chance of opening up the north is by extending railways from the ports. I have had a good deal of experience in the north of Queensland and in the back parts of that State. I have been over the railways running from Brisbane to Charleville, and over the railway extending 500 miles from Rockhampton and also over that from Townsville. These are all flourishing ports carrying a large population, and this has been brought about by the extension of railways into the hinterland and opening up the country. They are talking of establishing meat works at Carnarvon.

Mr. Underwood: They are established.

Mr. CHESSON: They want a railway run out from the port to open up the country, but before committing ourselves we should have an inquiry regarding the construction of the line. If this report is satisfactory I am prepared to support the construction of this line.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [10.4]: The member for Cue (Mr. Chesson) and I hold much the same views on this subject. We are men of a like temperament and we know this country well. I think, however, that I know more about what a report means than does the hon. member. What it means is the shelving of the whole thing. This is not my electorate. I know the Gascoyne river, just as the hon. member knows it, from its source to its mouth. The people of Carnarvon and in the vicinity of that port have put in their money, and have built meat works there. I have a thorough knowledge of this country, and from this point of view know as much as any engineer, and I say that in a drought it is impossible to bring sheep down to the freezing works. All the reports in the world will not make that position any different. The only way these meat works can be run successfully is by the construction of a railway to the junction of the Lyons River, thus getting over the bad country over which it is impossible to travel stock in a dry season. An expert cannot do more than state that. During a drought the pastoralists will use this railway to reach the freezing works with their stock, when they want to effect a decrease in the numbers. In a good season they can travel their sheep to Carnarvon and ship them to Fremantle. In a drought, however, it is impossible to drive stock from the Junction to Carnarvon.

Mr. Smith: Will not an inquiry show whether there are enough sheep in the district to warrant the construction of a railway?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: An inquiry cannot disclose more than I am disclosing. Once an inquiry starts it is the end of the dream.

Mr. Smith: We want to know if there is sufficient stock in the district to carry a railway.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) has shown by his figures—which are correct—that there is sufficient stock in the district. If facilities can be provided for carrying the necessary stores over the first hundred miles, the settlers in the district will be greatly benefited. That stretch of country contains sand hills, which make the work of carting very heavy for horses. It is necessary to carry horse feed over that area, and camels and donkeys are the only beasts that can go through it. When I was there this year even the camel feed had given out. It is over this country that it is proposed to construct this railway. Beyond that the country, for a radius of 150 miles, is such that the stock can travel right through to Meekatharra. The proposal put forward by the hon. Mr. Miles for a railway

from Meekatharra to Marble Bar is not warranted, and the line will never be built. If those who do not know the country will look at the map they will see that my statement is correct. What is wanted is a series of short lines in from the coast, and not a big hinterland railway. We want lines in from Carnarvon, from Exmouth Gulf, and from Onslow. In my opinion this is the most important railway before us to-day. It will not only pay from a traffic point of view, but it will mean that the land valuers will take it into account in valuing the land, and the pastoralists will have to pay more for it in the vicinity of the railway.

Mr. Smith: Will they?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That is why I should like to know to-night whether the railway is going to be built or not. If it is not to be built the land valuers will not take that into account in appraising the value of the land. If it is going to be built the land in its vicinity, about six million acres, will be classified accordingly.

Mr. Smith: When the railway is built.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: If the railway is going to be built the classifiers may value the land at, say, 30s. per thousand acres instead of 10s. It is, therefore, a good thing to know now how this land will be valued, for it will be valued on the question of whether the railway is to be built or not. The member for Gascoyne said that I could tell the House about the mineral prospects. I can only say that I worked myself almost to a standstill and did not do any good. I may add that if one goes just about 100 miles further east of where the proposed line is, that is the dead end; and so far as I know it is practically the only unprospected portion of Western Australia. I have had specimens handed to me which went 8 per cent. lead and 12 ozs. of silver to the ton. I know there is copper there, and I know there is mica there, and I know there is gold there. But, further, I know from a long experience of 20 odd years, an experience of failure, that that is the hardest part of Western Australia to get to. If we had a railway to the junction, we could prospect that country; and that country is, barring some parts of Kimberley, the only unprospected part of Western Australia. I oppose the amendment moved by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), and he will excuse me for saying that he knows absolutely nothing about the subject.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I want to know.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I am telling the hon. member. The amendment has been seconded by the member for Cue (Mr. Chesson), who does know about the subject. He knows also that when I speak about prospecting country I am not putting people astray. I say that of all the railways which Western Australia desires to build, the first one should be a railway from Carnarvon.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [10.17]: I desire to support the amendment in a few

words. The last speaker has brought to my mind the case of a very genial old gentleman in another place. After speaking for some time, that old gentleman went into the corridor, where he met three or four other members, and inquired whether they were going to speak. They said, yes. He said, "Is it necessary?" I believe that the amendment moved by the member for North-East Fremantle is necessary; but, after all, I think the member for Gascoyne must rest content for some considerable time before he can get his railway. He has done good work by moving the motion, because it gives publicity to the subject and also because it has had the effect of bringing the Honorary Minister to his feet, where we have not seen him for about 18 months.

The Honorary Minister: You would not get on your feet either if you had the gout.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am sorry the Honorary Minister has the gout. The member for Gascoyne put up a very good case for the construction of this railway, but we must bear in mind the announcement of the Premier, made in the course of his Budget speech yesterday evening, that for the next few years our limit of railway construction will be 100 miles per annum. That was his definite statement, and I think the statement must be taken as correct. I support the amendment asking for inquiry, because inquiry can do no harm. Furthermore, inquiry will supplement that big volume of information, which the member for Pilbara has given us. After all, the taxpayers of Western Australia would not be prepared to build a railway on the unsupported statements of the hon. member.

Mr. Underwood: Yes, they would.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The hon. member wields an enormous power in this country, but not sufficient to warrant the expenditure of £120,000 without our first obtaining the reports of engineers and others competent to inquire. The inquiry can go on, and it will take some considerable time. The railway could not be built this year or next year, even if it was the best possible financial proposition. I think the public are entitled to more information than has been vouchsafed to-night by the mover and seconder of the motion. Like the member for North-East Fremantle, I shall be told by the member for Pilbara that I know nothing about the subject. I venture to say, however, that when the member for North-East Fremantle does give expression to an opinion, that opinion commands respect throughout the country. I have been in Carnarvon, and a few miles outside of it. I motored out to Brick House, and I was absolutely charmed by the surroundings of the port of Carnarvon. I was pleased to hear the member for Pilbara express his opinions regarding the rival propositions, the sending out of feeders from the ports along the north-west coast, and the laying of a line from Meekatharra to Nullagine or Marble Bar. After all, if we

are to be guided by the experience of the Australian State which has benefited most from decentralisation, namely, Queensland, we must bear in mind that the reason why Queensland has such a big element of population in her inland districts is that she has developed her ports right along the coast and has sent out many railway lines to tap the country behind the ports. That is the idea. This proposition does not matter much to either side of the House. I believe every member of this Chamber is desirous that our North should be developed on the most scientific and most economical lines; and when rival propositions are put forward we have to be guided largely by the men in the locality, by the men who know the country. One proposition is going to cost a mint of money, and the other will cost much less, though perhaps it will prove just as serviceable.

Mr. Johnston: The other is a defence railway more than anything else.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I do not attach much importance to that argument. If one wants to buttress a pretty shady project, one can drag in half-a-dozen propositions to aid the argument. But it is poverty of argument. In my opinion, many fallacious reasons are frequently put forward to warrant the construction of a railway line. We have been told by various speakers that the country behind the line proposed by the motion will warrant its construction. We know that the products of that country must be brought within reach of the ports, and that we must have a greater element of civilisation there. If we can develop the country not only around Carnarvon but around other ports, by the means proposed, the Government should seriously consider the matter. But we have to consider the price of money to-day; and, after all, money is too dear to-day to build many railways. The Premier has raised the cry of caution, and I admire him for doing so. At one time the slogan in the daily Press here was, "A thousand miles of railway a year at £1,000 a mile." We have to-day an interest Bill of crushing severity, and we have extended our railway construction too far in various directions.

Mr. Johnston: The war is the only thing to blame.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am not going to blame the war for it, because I know we all went mad—Parliament and Press and the public. We are all to blame for the excessive railway construction, far in advance of the population that we had at the time. The fact remains that to-day we are limited in our scope. We have not the money to spend, and therefore we have to go very carefully. The Premier is limited to 100 miles a year, and consequently the member for Gascoyne cannot hope to get his railway built for a couple of years at least. I dare say that 200 miles will pretty well absorb the railways now authorised; and if the present proposition is warranted as a good one, I do not see why it should not come on pretty soon after existing railway commitments. By carrying the amendment we shall not be

discouraging the mover of the motion. His railway, if it is warranted, will have to come in its turn. If it is not warranted, the reports will show that. In the meantime I consider the hon. member is to be commended for bringing the matter forward, and I believe that the further information which is sought should be obtained. The people of the district will understand that the railway construction policy of the Government is limited by financial exigencies for the present. If money becomes cheaper, it will be a different proposition. I remember reading in the bush the discussion about the proposed construction of the Port Hedland-Marble Bar Railway. That was described by several members of that day as a gamble and a leap in the dark. All these railway propositions have the element of a gamble about them; they all depend on Providence. It may be that the railway proposed in this motion is not the rosy proposition it appears on paper. However, I sincerely trust that inquiry will justify the confidence of the two hon. members who are at this moment conferring together regarding this proposed railway, and that as a result the North-West, which has too long been retarded by want of development, will be given an opportunity to come into its own.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [10.28]: I have no desire to discourage the hon. member who has moved the motion, but I propose to vote for the amendment because it represents the sanest attitude for this House to take up. The mover of the motion must know that there is no possibility of this railway being constructed for some years, owing to the reasons pointed out by the last speaker. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) has urged that the motion ought to be carried, because the passing of the amendment will mean delay. But the hon. member knows very well in his own mind that even if the motion were passed, it would bind the House to nothing. That would not bring the construction of the railway in any way nearer.

We all know, we do not need to be informed, that if cattle or sheep have to be travelled a hundred miles during a drought the position is disastrous for those who want to shift them. That is so in the Gascoyne, or in the Upper Murchison, or in the Lower Murchison, or in any pastoral district. In my opinion, no railway has ever yet paid as a pastoral proposition. The Murchison railway traverses the biggest, if not the best, belt of pastoral country in Western Australia. That line is 400 miles in length, and it drains a pastoral area of about 200 miles in breadth. But that railway did not pay as a pastoral railway; I doubt if it pays even as a pastoral and mining railway. No pastoral railway ever pays.

Mr. Pickering: But the member for Gascoyne is prepared to pay double rates.

Mr. TROY: Comparing the prospects of a railway from Wilgarup, or from Bridgetown, to Albany with those of a railway

from Gascoyne to the junction, I should say, if it were a question of immediate possibilities, that it was preferable for us to build the railway from Carnarvon to the junction, which would bring in a bigger revenue for at least 10 years than the railway from Albany to Bridgetown.

The Honorary Minister: You are wrong.

Mr. TROY: I am sure I am right.

The Honorary Minister: The timber traffic will make the other line pay.

Mr. TROY: The proposition of the member for Gascoyne is in my opinion a far better proposition than a railway in the South-West to serve agricultural interests. The serious objection to railway building is, of course, the fact that in this country we have already too many miles of railway for our population. We have a huge deficit on existing railways, and we have burdensome railway rates already in force with a possibility of still higher rates. The want of the country is not for more railways, but more people alongside existing railways. The hon. member should assist in the direction of bringing about settlement on the land adjacent to existing railways, and after that has been done we can extend the system. That is why I am not interested in the North-West proposition which is being boomed by Mr. Miles and Mr. Shallcross. In my opinion it is ridiculous to ask this country to embark upon the expenditure of 11 millions on such a project.

Mr. Johnston: We are asking the Commonwealth.

Mr. TROY: The Commonwealth will not do it.

Mr. Johnston: They should do it.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Why should they?

Mr. Munsie: They would have to tax Western Australia to do it, and it would be an absurdity to ask them.

Mr. TROY: At any rate, there is no possibility of the project being endorsed. Of course it would be of great benefit to Western Australia, but it would not pay for many years; Western Australia with its present population could not carry it. I have expressed my views to Mr. Miles, and I have said to him, "If you will endorse the policy which will cut up the areas along existing railways and settle people as closely as they can be settled on those areas, then we can extend our railways further on." I have no doubt that the country around Carnarvon will carry a far bigger population than is there to-day, but the plan I have suggested is the safest one to embark upon first. I agree with the proposal to connect a port with the railway; that is far sounder than the proposal to build a line from Meekatharra to Kimberley. Of course that will come some day.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Do you think the Minister for Works will introduce it?

Mr. TROY: He will not be here. I am in sympathy with the hon. member's proposal, but it is not practicable at the present time. I want more information

obtained with regard to it, and I want to know whether, by building a railway there some day, we can make better use of the land and make it support a bigger population. An inquiry will bring that about.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [10.35]: The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) will be satisfied that the House should not do more than inquire into the proposal at this stage. While we have heard interesting speeches from the hon. member and the member for Pilbara, we have not had a scrap of information regarding the proposal itself. What will happen if the House agrees to an inquiry being made? The inquiry will be on the classification of that country and then it will be a simple matter to have the report laid on the Table of the House.

Mr. O'Loghlen. We have not the money now.

The PREMIER: We have a few hundred miles of railways in the agricultural areas to complete, and when they are completed we may then be able to turn to railway projects in the North. I venture to say that when the loss on the Marble Bar railway is taken into consideration by this House, members will want to be certain that a good deal of development will follow the construction of 100 miles of line from any other North-West port inland before they will agree to the proposal.

Mr. Munsie: Unfortunately the other one was built from the wrong port. It should have been built from Roebourne.

The PREMIER: I hope that some day we shall put the northern part of the State to proper use, and that in addition to the pastoral industry we shall have others there which will necessitate the provision of transport facilities. The member for Gascoyne ought to be satisfied with the motion if it is carried as it is proposed to amend it. There will certainly not be any delay in the construction of the line.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [10.38]: I am pleased that the Premier has made a few remarks on this subject. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) rose for the purpose of opposing the amendment and supporting the motion, but he certainly made a good speech in support of the amendment. I have yet to learn that the adoption of motions of this description means the construction of railways. If they had that meaning we would have had the Esperance railway built years ago. The only reason given in support of the construction of the line is that in drought times it would be possible to convey stock by rail, and that the people who had invested their money in the freezing works at Carnarvon would benefit by the construction of the line. Would the House be justified in sanctioning the building of the railway merely to provide for the conveyance of stock to the freezing works in drought sea-

sons? If the country is as good as the hon. member would have us believe, he has nothing to fear from an inquiry. I hope he will agree to the amendment, because in any case an inquiry will have to be held on some future occasion before the railway is built. The inquiry will not delay the construction of the line, for, at the earliest, that construction will not be started this year. If the hon. member has that confidence in the country which he displayed in his speech, I am sure he has nothing to fear from the proposed inquiry.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne—in reply) [10.41]: The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) appears to belittle the assurance of the Gascoyne pastoralists that they will be willing to pay 1s. per ton per mile. Even on those terms they would save nearly 50 per cent. of what they are paying to-day. Whenever the people of the North have had their freights and other charges increased, they have always taken it in a good spirit, saying that it was necessary for the Government to raise money. I have already made it clear that those pastoralists would look for a reduction in charges when the railway was paying sufficiently well to cover interest, sinking fund and working expenses; at the same time, of course, they would never expect so great a reduction as to render the railway unprofitable. It has been suggested that the meat works would be working only during drought times. That, of course, is wrong. It is during good seasons that the works will be doing their best trade. But it is during times of drought that through this railway the districts north of the Gascoyne such as the Ashburton, the Pilbara and the Roebourne districts will have an assurance against heavy losses. Because, as I explained previously, after the sheep travelling overland reach the Junction, they have 300 miles of dry country to traverse before reaching Mullewa, whereas if the railway were built those sheep from the northern districts would be railed from the Junction to Carnarvon, where they could be absorbed by the meat works, or alternatively shipped to Perth. So it will be seen that in an adverse year that railway would probably pay for itself indirectly in one season. It has been said for the present the Premier intends that not more than 100 miles of railway shall be built per annum. But the Premier has created a North-West department under a Minister. Why? Is it not because the Government realise that the development of the North is absolutely essential? And is the development of the North to be hindered because of the policy of restricting railway construction to 100 or 200 miles down here? The development of the North must be taken in hand immediately regardless of what the policy may be for the South—and this proposed line is going to be one of the most important features in the development of

the North. The Premier has promised to go up to Carnarvon to open the meat works. I hope he will be able to arrange to be accompanied by the leader of the Opposition; indeed we may induce two or three other hon. members to join the party.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member will have to discuss that under another motion.

Mr. ANGELO: It has to do with this motion, Sir, because such a party would go overland and traverse the route of the proposed railway.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not replying to any of the arguments used in the debate.

Mr. ANGELO: One member of the Ministry has been kind enough to tell us that the railway was warranted 30 years ago. At that time Carnarvon was a village of about 100 people, with 12 or 14 stations in the district. To-day Carnarvon has over 1,000 inhabitants, and it is expected that the population will be doubled as soon as the meat works are established. There are to-day over 80 stations in the district. If in the opinion of a Minister of the Crown the railway was warranted 30 years ago, what is to be said of the position to-day? However, I am prepared to accept the amendment. When moving the motion I explained that I did not expect the Premier to call up Major Brearley and start for Carnarvon to-morrow for the purpose of turning the first sod. I said that what the motion meant was that a report should be obtained and a flying survey made as soon as possible. There is no difference in intent between the motion and the amendment. However, I hope that if we accept the amendment the Government will not go to sleep over it, but will have the report prepared as soon as possible.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We promise you that if we get in next year there shall be no delay.

Mr. ANGELO: I think the Premier will be prepared to give a similar assurance conditionally on your being kept out. However, I leave the matter in the hands of the House.

Amendment put and passed.

Question as amended agreed to.

House adjourned at 10.49 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 16th September, 1920.

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

QUESTION—RAILWAY, ESPERANCE NORTHWARDS.

Mr. SMITH asked the Minister for Works: When does he intend to redeem his promise to the Esperance deputation to expedite the delivery of material for the construction of the Esperance-Northwards railway?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Works) replied: Material is being forwarded to Esperance as quickly as shipping facilities will permit.

QUESTION—STATE STEAMSHIP SERVICE.

Mr. SMITH asked the Minister for Mines: Would it not be possible to run the s.s. "Eucla" weekly instead of laying her up at Albany for nine or 10 days in every fortnight?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: For the last six months the s.s. Eucla has been laid up at Albany for ten days on five occasions and eight days on one occasion. One of these was due to the public service strike, and one to allow the half-yearly engine and boiler examination to be made. The total cargo and passenger traffic on the South Coast does not warrant any more frequent running, and recommendations have been made to utilise the steamer in other directions, which would curtail the number of voyages on the south coast and keep the vessel more fully employed.

QUESTION—WORKERS' HOMES ACT.

Mr. VERYARD asked the Premier: As a large number of occupiers of workers' homes on the leasehold principle have long been urging their request that they should have the option of purchasing the fee simple of the land occupied by them, will he state whether it is his intention to introduce an amendment to the Workers' Homes Act in order to give effect to the desire of these people?

The PREMIER replied: The matter will receive consideration.