

1931 the Government would not have been able to find the money with which to pay the Public Service; and if the Public Service had not agreed to the deduction in their salaries, the Government of the day would have had no alternative to dismissing 25 per cent. of the public servants. Yet at this late stage we have the Leader of the Government using this as a political cry because an election is coming on. If the Government wanted the whole credit or blame for the thing, they need not have placed this House in an invidious position.

The Honorary Minister: We would still have been in the same position.

Hon. G. W. MILES: Yes, but the Government would have had all the credit. This country is not in a position to pay all this extra money in salaries. We are not by any means round the corner yet, and I say the Bill represents merely an electioneering stunt. However, we are all in the same position as we were in last year, inasmuch as we have no alternative to voting for the Bill. Nevertheless when in Committee I will support that amendment to Clause 2 of which I have spoken.

On motion by Hon. R. G. Moore, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.11 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 29th October, 1935.

	PAGE
Bills: Financial Emergency Tax, 3a.	1337
Wiluna Water Board Further Loan Guarantee, 2a., Com. report	1337
Pearling Act Amendment, 2a., Com. report	1339
Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Continuance, 1a.	1342
Tenants, Purchasers, and Mortgagees' Relief Act Amendment, returned	1342
Loan Estimates, 1935-36, Committee of Supply	1342

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

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—WILUNA WATER BOARD FURTHER LOAN GUARANTEE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 24th October.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [4.34]: This Bill is on a par with one that was introduced some years ago. It is to make provision for the supply of further water to the town of Wiluna. To that extent it will have the support of members on this side of the House and, I think, of members generally, because the provision of water supplies in country districts is of paramount importance. The only point that causes any concern is whether the provision now to be made will be sufficient to meet the requirements of Wiluna for a considerable period ahead. When the original measure was introduced, we were told that it would suffice for the population of Wiluna. Since then the population has increased, rendering this Bill necessary, and I should like an assurance from the Minister that in making this provision, the normal requirements of the town will be met for a considerable time. We do not want to have a recurrence of Bills to sanction the provision of additional water supplies. I should also like to know from the Minister whether the provision made in the Bill covers the money required for reticulation merely or also for securing water from underground supplies. The scheme seems to have the authority of the engineers as being sound, and the additional rateable value of the properties in the town should be sufficient to meet the charges. I take it that the Commonwealth Bank or the institution that is providing the money insists upon having a Government guarantee. I should prefer to see the scheme financed without a Government guarantee, for the scheme itself should be sufficient guarantee to the bank. So long as we have an assurance that the bank will not make the money available without a Government guarantee, the Bill is necessary.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [4.37]: I do not fear that any serious objection will be levelled against the Bill, but there is one point on which I wish members to be clear. The people of Wiluna are the only community who have attempted to do something for themselves. In all other gold-fields towns the whole responsibility of supplying water has been thrown upon the

Government. We have not another reticulation system on the goldfields that is not Government-owned and departmentally controlled. The Wiluna people thought it desirable to create a water board and take the responsibility of installing their own reticulation system. Probably Reedy's will follow suit, but I do not expect results there similar to those that have been achieved at Wiluna.

Mr. Seward: Even at Wiluna the scheme has to be supported by Government guarantee.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, but in all other instances the Government have had to provide the whole of the capital.

Mr. Patrick: In the early days Cue had its own water supply.

Mr. MARSHALL: Whatever was done in the early days, the Cue reticulation system is now owned by the Government and departmentally-controlled.

Mr. Patrick: I am aware of that, but originally it was not.

Mr. MARSHALL: Until a town becomes established, even the Government cannot do much. Most of the water supplies in the agricultural areas are Government-owned and departmentally-controlled.

Mr. Sampson: And are paid for by the farmers.

Mr. MARSHALL: The people of Wiluna are providing for their own needs. On the rateable value of the properties, there is no doubt of the ability of the people to repay the loan, although it has to be guaranteed by the Government.

Mr. Sampson: You have some faith in Wiluna.

Mr. MARSHALL: When the original scheme was installed at Wiluna, quite a number of married men had their families living in other parts of the State. When the men secured what they considered was permanent employment, their families moved to Wiluna and consequently there has been a fairly heavy drain on the water system owing to the increase of population. The board have found the scheme inadequate and have asked the Government to give a further guarantee. The Minister gave the figures relating to rateable values, which show that there is no doubt as to the soundness of the investment. The great point is that the people of Wiluna are doing something for themselves, something for which other communities have relied entirely upon the Government to finance. I

hope there will be no objection to the Bill. People who take the initiative and seek to help themselves should be encouraged. The scheme is locally controlled, and that relieves the Government of responsibility. The Government have no responsibility as to the payment of rates or the repayment of the loan. Had the people of Wiluna possessed the power, they would have proceeded with the scheme without asking the Government to guarantee it. The bank, however, insisted on a Government guarantee. Banks are banks, and the Commonwealth Bank is no exception to the rule. They all want their pound of flesh. The population of Wiluna is increasing, justifiably on the development of the north end of the belt, and I am confident that in the near future the people will be able to repay the loan and that the Government will have no further responsibility.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [4.42]: I do not think there is much difference between the Government finding the money for such a scheme and the work being undertaken by the local people with a Government guarantee. The charges are made against the local people, irrespective of whether the road board borrow the money and make the capital expenditure or whether the Government undertake the capital expenditure. It makes no difference, except that there exists the probability that the local people might have the work done more to their satisfaction than if it were done by departmental officers. Frequently when local people undertake such work, it is not done half as well as when done departmentally and a good deal of maintenance cost has to be met afterwards.

The Acting Minister for Works: Nearly all of them have been written down afterwards.

HON. C. G. LATHAM: I admit that some of them have been written down. I know that in connection with the head works of many water supplies in agricultural areas, the charge has been made a State charge rather than a charge against the district. I have in mind the Bruce Rock supply where there is a head work. In all the reticulations in the agricultural areas that I know of, there has been no writing down. It is a question only of how long the Government intend to impose the charge in order to recover the cost. In the Kalgoorlie area a charge was set up against Consolidated

Revenue, but I do not believe that immediately the scheme is paid for the Government are going to refrain from making any charge against the people. Of course the cost of water to the people of the gold-fields will not be reduced even then. I know many places where the whole of the costs are a charge against the people. The scheme at Northam is very similar: the people there are finding the money. I presume that the Government guarantee is required in order that the money may be borrowed. That is the usual experience. For the scheme in the metropolitan area we shall shortly be authorising the expenditure of further loan funds, but the people of the metropolitan area will have to pay for the work. It is only a question of who shall do the work—the Government, or the local authorities. The probability is that the people here concerned will do the work much more cheaply than it would be done under departmental control. If the Government did the work, these people would, of course have to pay for it; and the Government would demand every possible penny.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—PEARLING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 24th October.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [4.49]: I do not think the Minister made out a case for our giving him the proposed power. There was a purpose when the Third Schedule of the Pearling Act was adopted, and I see no reason why we should now deviate from the intention expressed in that schedule. To give the Minister the power proposed would mean handing him a blank cheque. I would not have raised objection if he had asked Parliament to reduce the amounts of fees which are hampering the disposal of pearls. The Minister does not tell us what reductions are to be made. He merely asks power to reduce the pearl-buyers' license fee from £50—it may be to nothing, or perhaps to £1; and possibly

there may be preference to certain buyers. The hon. gentleman also asks authority to reduce the license fee for engine-pumped boats. He says the Bill will prevent the sale of pearls overseas.

The Minister for the North-West: No; prevent their being sold to Chinese, mostly on coastal boats.

HON. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know that the Bill will stop that. Even if the Minister charges a license fee of only £1, then, if these people find there is a market for pearls on vessels trading along the coast, they will dispose of their pearls in that way. The trouble is that to-day pearls are a drug on the market. There is no demand for them. I do not think the House desires to make the position more difficult for pearl-fishers. In my opinion the Minister should ask for power to reduce license fees to specified amounts. I know that in 1929 the Minister was given power to fix a lesser amount for a boat license, and the hon. gentleman may also urge that recently a lesser fee was fixed for tenders. This power is becoming extremely general. It means practically scrapping the schedule. Does the Minister propose to reduce the fees by 50 per cent., or 25 per cent., or by what percentage? Will this increase the demand for pearls? If that will be the effect, the House will probably assist the Minister. As regards engine-worked boats, he must remember that the reason for the previous alteration was that these were able to fish much more shell than hand-worked boats. The object of the reduction was to encourage as many boats as possible to share whatever there was in the way of pearl fishing. The great problem at present is to maintain the population we have at Broome. The position there will be interfered with by the Bill. At Shark Bay there is a likelihood of no one making anything out of pearl fishing. For many years the complaint has been the difficulty of finding any market for Shark Bay shell. I hope the Minister will tell us what reductions he has in view. I suggest he might come down with an amending Bill stating what he proposes to do and altering the fees accordingly. It is far better to put the Bill in order here than to have it rejected elsewhere, of which there is great probability in the present state of the measure. The Minister gave no reason in introducing the Bill, merely saying that he wanted this power. He did say that he wanted to stop pearls from being taken

away from the State. I elicited, by interjection, that his object was to stop illicit buying and selling along the coast. If the pearl-buyers' license fee was reduced to £10, the result would hardly be to create a market for pearls. I am just as anxious as any other member is to help the pearl fisher, but I want to know to what extent the Minister proposes to go. The passing of the Bill means scrapping something that has been found necessary for many years. The member for Kimberley (Mr. Coverley) will probably be able to enlighten us as to the requirements of the industry if the Minister cannot. The Minister, I repeat, is asking for tremendous powers.

MR. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [4.56]: I see no objection to the Bill as introduced, but I do see some virtue in it. The measure asks Parliament to empower the Minister to fix the rates and fees to be charged for engine-pumped pearling boats and for pearl dealers' licenses. This will be a virtue at some future time when the industry is flourishing; the Minister will then have power to increase the fees. On the other hand, while the industry is in a bad way, the Minister will have power to reduce fees. Indeed, the Act already empowers the Minister to increase or reduce the license fee for a hand-pumped boat. The Bill merely asks for the extension of that power to the fees for engine-pumped boats and for pearl-buyers' licenses. During the term of office of the Leader of the Opposition a Bill was introduced empowering the Minister to reduce license fees on hand-pumped boats. A reduction was made; and this was at the time necessary, because then more hand-pumped boats were being worked than engine-pumped boats, the latter being laid aside to control output. With the introduction of poaching and other illegal methods of pearl fishing by Japanese boats, our industry must fish as much shell as possible in order to make a living. Therefore it is desired to substitute engine-powered boats for hand-pumped boats. Under the law as it stands, the Minister cannot reduce the fees on the former. The only admissible way is to empower the Minister to reduce license fees. The same remarks apply to licenses for pearl buyers. The matter most closely concerning the industry is the general dealer's license, which at present carries a fee of £50—a great deal of money. There

is no big demand for either shell or pearls, and thus there is not much inducement for pearl buyers to go from Perth to Broome, a considerable distance. The buyer may buy no pearls after going to Broome, but before he has the opportunity of buying he must pay a license fee of £50. We do not know what may happen in the near future; there might be quite a rush of pearl buyers, and pearls might become popular again. We should give every encouragement possible to pearl-buyers. We want to encourage competition by buyers, instead of the trade being left to one buyer. The reduction of the license fee means more pearl-buyers, and thus will assist the industry. At the moment I know of only one pearl-buyer in Western Australia. If a reduced fee brings competition from other buyers, the industry will be assisted. I hope the House will carry the Bill in its present form. I do not know of any amendment that the Leader of the Opposition may have in mind, nor can I think of any that could be moved with advantage to the proposed legislation. If we stipulate a 50 per cent. reduction on the pearl-dealer's license, as suggested, it might be found in 12 months' time that it was not sufficient.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We can always alter the Act.

Mr. Marshall: But if we agree to the Bill, it will not be necessary for such a matter to come before Parliament.

MR. COVERLEY: No, if we agree to the Bill, there will be no need to take up the time of Parliament in passing amending legislation. We are not asked to do anything novel because what is proposed is practically the same as Parliament agreed to when we passed legislation dealing with hand-pumped boats. I know that the Bill embodies what the pearlers have requested, and it is the requirements of the industry that we should consider. This is not advanced on any whim of a politician.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I did not suggest that the Bill was introduced at your request.

MR. COVERLEY: But it might be at the hon. member's request. He did not furnish any reasons.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You have not shown how this will improve the pearling industry.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kimberley will address the Chair.

Mr. COVERLEY: I do not know that any law we could pass would improve trading operations; but I know this will assist the industry, and that is all that is desired.

HON. P. D. FERGUSON (Irwin-Moore) [5.2]: I was one of the Parliamentary party who had the pleasure of visiting Broome recently. When we met some of those engaged in the pearling industry at that centre, we had brought under our notice forcibly the disabilities under which they were labouring. It was suggested that one of the most urgent steps we could take was to impress upon Parliament the heavy burden of the costs they were compelled to shoulder under the provisions of existing legislation. They pointed out that a fee of £50 for a pearl dealer's general license was exorbitant, and was a charge that was not levied on the purchasers of any other commodity produced in the State. Personally I cannot see why the man who buys pearls, which are a product of the State, should be mulet in a heavy fee such as £50, when others can buy wheat, sugar, and other commodities without having to pay a high fee.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What about sandalwood.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I would like to feel that I had done something to assist the pearling industry by helping to secure a reduction in the costs that those associated with that activity are called upon to bear. The industry, since the tremendous blow experienced recently, has been labouring under great disadvantages. So great are those disabilities, due in the first place to the reduced value of pearls and pearl shell in the markets of the world on account of the financial depression, that even the National Commonwealth Government, in their wisdom, came to the assistance of the industry by providing a substantial grant. That action was supported by the State Government, who realised the necessity to do something to prevent the industry reaching the verge of extinction. Whether it is right to reduce the charge respecting a pearl dealer's license by 50 per cent., as suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, or to leave the reduction in the hands of the Minister to levy what he may deem fit, I do not quite know; but I do know that those engaged in

the industry are loud in their demands for a reduction, and for that reason I shall support the second reading of the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne—in reply) [5.5]: The Bill was designed to assist those engaged in the pearling industry, and for no other purpose, at the request of those engaged in the industry. After consideration had been given to their disabilities in every possible way, the principles embodied in the Bill and the alterations that the measure purports to make to the existing law were incorporated on the recommendation of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, who, together with those engaged in the industry at Broome, can, I think, claim to know the requirements of the industry at the moment. In 1920, as the Leader of the Opposition indicated, a Bill to amend the Pearling Act was passed giving the Minister power to reduce the license fee for hand-pumped boats. That was done for a special purpose. At that time every industry throughout the world, figuratively speaking, was returning to hand pumps. In luxury industries particularly, it was necessary that production should be somewhat reduced, and that was done in connection with pearling under what was known as the Gerdau scheme, which limited their output, and was legislated for accordingly. The charge of a license for a hand-pump boat was left to the discretion of the Minister, and that method has worked quite satisfactorily. Surely the Leader of the Opposition would not suggest that any Minister would impose a charge that would be unfair to the industry or, going to the other extreme, levy a charge as a minimum that would also be unfair. As to the charge of £50 for a pearl dealer's general license, I can indicate to the Leader of the Opposition how a reduction in the charge will materially help the people at Broome. As the member for Kimberley (Mr. Coverley) stated, there is one pearl buyer only on the North-West coast at the moment. That gentleman has his headquarters at Shark Bay. If the charge for a pearl dealer's license were reasonable, he would visit Broome. He represents a Parisian firm. If he were to hear that there was a rare gem procurable at Onslow, he could not go there and inspect it with a view to purchasing unless he had a dealer's general license, which costs £50. It is not in the best interests of the industry to force those en-

gaged in it on to the illicit market to dispose of their pearls, in order to secure some money with which to carry on. I have it very definitely direct from the buyer I have referred to that he would take out a general license for pearl buying on the North-West coast if the charge were reasonable, and that is the reason for the proposed reduction from the £50 basis. We should encourage competition among pearl buyers, for there is definitely a market on the Continent today for gems. The fact that there is this dealing in gems is the reason for the imposition of the license fee in the first place. These people are not dealing in a commodity of everyday use, but in a luxury commodity, and it is on the basis of luxury that the charge for such licenses is always imposed. I hope that the Bill will be agreed to in its present form because I can assure members that, after having given a great deal of consideration to the matter, it is in the interests of the industry.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—MORTGAGEES' RIGHTS RESTRICTION ACT CONTINUANCE.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—TENANTS, PURCHASERS AND MORTGAGORS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned without amendment.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1935-36.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 24th October; Mr. Sleeman in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental, £99,777:

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [5.12]: Within the last two or three weeks, members have had opportunities to review the financial position of the State fairly exhaustively. We have had before us the Revenue Estimates, two taxing measures, and now we have the Loan Estimates. I do not propose

to repeat myself during my remarks on the present Estimates.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Evidently they did not satisfy Mr. Seddon in another place.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: This House has nothing to do with another place, but I am glad to know that the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) has time to read what other people have to say.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The pity of it is that they do not do the work.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have not much time to read what other people's views are. The Loan Estimates show that the Government propose to continue the policy they have followed during the last two years or so, so far as I can see. With the exception of a small reduction, due to the fact that the Government's programme for the year is slightly less than it was for the preceding 12 months, the Estimates are practically on all fours with those introduced last year. The Premier's statement the other evening indicated that it may be difficult to float the total loan during the year, and it may mean that the Estimates themselves will have to be modified. We ought to take very great care in the spending of these funds in view of the present position of our State's business. It is very difficult to get hold of money, and difficult to find investments to justify the expenditure of loan funds. The Acting Minister for Employment told us the other evening how difficult it was to provide public works which would mean expenditure on wages rather than on material. But during the current year it is proposed to spend a great deal of money on metropolitan water supply and sewerage. I am sorry the Government have not gone on with the proposal introduced here last year, to set up a metropolitan board of works. Had that been done, the board would have been responsible for the provision of this money, and so it would not have been a charge against the State's debts.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: What about the Commonwealth's contribution?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: There is no contribution to the loans being floated now.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Yes, there is.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, I find that provision is made for the same sum of money year after year.

The Minister for Justice: The Commonwealth have taken over the finding of a proportion of the interest payments.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, they make an allowance of, I think, £243,000 every year.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: What are you trying to prove?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That we still have to find the money. The amount provided by the Commonwealth is, I see, £473,432. They have found that ever since the Financial Agreement came into operation. That is a portion of the interest contributions.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I was speaking of the sinking fund contributions. We include that in the rate charged.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not think so.

The Premier: The contribution is based on the per capita payment which we used to have from the Commonwealth; the 25s. per capita payment. So that statement could be very misleading.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have tried to find out where they make contributions to the loans floated year by year.

The Premier: The payments by the Commonwealth are based on what they used to pay to the State up to 25s. per head of the population. The only extra contribution from the Commonwealth is that paid by the Commonwealth towards the sinking fund.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I believe they pay 5s. per cent. sinking fund. In any case it would have been a good idea to follow up the suggestion made for the creation of a metropolitan board of works. That is what the Eastern States have done. Had that been done, we would not have been building up such a big national debt.

Hon. W. D. Johnson interjected.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I wish the hon. gentleman would make his own speech.

Mr. Marshall: That is more than you can do.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I ask you, Mr. Chairman, to give me opportunity to say what I have to say; other members can speak at a later stage. Then there is the money to be found for the new power house at East Perth. That ought to have been the responsibility of a metropolitan board of works. When I was in the Old Country, the Imperial Government were anxious to assist in the increasing of railway facilities for the City of London, and proposed to borrow £35,000,000 for the purpose. But instead of the Government doing the work, as is done in this State, they hand it over to a board which will be responsible for the interest and the repayment of the loan.

That is similar to what I suggested just now—a board of works. It means that the Government have nothing to do with the running of the concern, for the board is there to see that the money is expended, and so the only relationship the board has with the Government is eventually to look to the repayment of the loan. Evidently they find that system more satisfactory than the system we follow here. To provide requirements for the city, we are now going on the loan market to raise money for those works, whereas if that were not necessary we should be able to go on the loan market to raise funds for our industries. I notice in the Loan Estimates there is very little money for the agricultural industry; as a matter of fact, there is a considerable reduction. Last year the amount was £414,649, but this year it has been reduced to £340,500. This may be all right while the Federal Government still agree that we shall go cap-in-hand and ask them for assistance whenever we are suffering seasonal disabilities, but that is only forcing us into unification.

The Premier: If the hon. member will look at Item No. 42 on the Estimates, he will find the explanation of the reduction. A large amount of money was expended last year on works that are now finished, and so a similar amount is not required this year.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is referring to irrigation and drainage in the South-West.

The Premier: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Well, I cannot follow the Premier at all. This money includes the £100,000 for reforestation, and other money used for clearing up Agricultural Bank properties in the South-West and such-like. What I am concerned about is that we should have some money available to help our agricultural industry, which to-day demands assistance.

The Premier: It is available.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Well, I cannot find it in the Estimates. We ought to make provision in these Estimates for at least a quarter of a million pounds for that purpose. I agree that during the last week or so the timely rains have reduced the necessity in certain parts of the State, but undoubtedly financial assistance is urgently needed in some other parts of the State. The Minister for Agriculture, when in

Merredin the other day, had brought home to him the necessity for immediate assistance to the agricultural industry.

The Premier: There will not be any lack of funds for those who need assistance.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am pleased to have that assurance. But the idea to-day is that we should go to the Federal Government. Presently the Federal Government will tell this State Parliament that there is no necessity for such a Parliament, and that the State can be managed entirely from Canberra. I am not a unificationist, nor, I hope, is any other member of this House, for we know how difficult it would be to have our affairs managed by an authority at such a long distance. Just the same, whenever we need assistance, we have to go to Canberra. Out of this £2,600,000 we are raising, we ought to set aside a quarter of a million for the agricultural industry. Here is the position: five years ago we produced 53,000,000 bushels of wheat, whereas this year our wheat production is not likely to exceed 20,000,000 bushels. It must be remembered that the agricultural industry provides a great deal of employment for those engaged on farms, together with revenue for the railways and work for Fremantle and other ports. It is very serious when we see the falling-off of our wheat production in this State, and when we have farmers gathered together, as they have been recently, asking for a million pounds' worth of assistance—some actually asked that it be £2,000,000. I do not know whether they had any idea as to what extent the dry period has affected the industry, but certainly we should show some interest in the industry by providing a bigger sum on the Estimates with which to relieve that industry.

The Minister for Agriculture: We have never shown any lack of interest.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then why are so many farmers leaving the industry?

The Minister for Agriculture: Certainly it is not due to any neglect on the part of the Government.

The Premier: It is not a question of a bigger sum, for the sum provided here will meet the circumstances.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not think it is nearly sufficient. It is of no use the Minister for Agriculture saying there is no lack of interest in the industry; the

very fact of our having all these idle lands on our hands shows that there is a great lack of interest somewhere.

The Premier: You are telling the same old story.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, it is not the same old story. It is a very serious story, for it is not only how the position affects the Government of the State, but also how it affects every man seeking to retain his interest in the industry.

The Premier: Would the conditions be altered in that respect if we were to double this amount?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, I believe they would be altered. I want the Treasurer to fix in his mind the plight of the farmer who has put in 12 months' work, only to find his crop a failure. There is not much inducement for him to remain on his farm after four or five years of that sort of experience. Consequently, he picks up his gear, such as it is, and goes off to the goldfields in the hope of finding there something better worth while.

The Minister for Lands: It would be better if a lot of them were to do that, rather than continue trying to farm when they cannot.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is a pretty poor outlook if we are to follow the advice of the Minister for Lands. For many years past it has been the policy of successive Governments to encourage the agricultural industry. In 1914 the Government of the day put on their Loan Estimates three-quarters of a million for the assistance of the drought-affected farmers.

The Premier: I am afraid that part of this failure we have had has been brought about by the fact that we have done too much for the industry.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know what the Premier means by that. The policy of forcing agricultural development may not have been a very sound one, but at the same time the Premier must not forget that for a number of years this industry has returned annually a tremendous lot of money to the State. In the long run the policy has probably been quite a sound one.

The Premier: So long as the State will find the money to keep men in a job, for which they are not suited, so long will they stay there, and the greater will be the loss to the nation.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Premier is referring to misfits on farms. They went long ago. The men on the land to-day ought to have assistance because of the season, and the shortage of rain.

The Premier: What Government assistance did the early settlers receive?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: What kind of progress did we make in those days?

The Premier: Solid progress.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We have spent a large amount of loan funds in developing agriculture. Out of that expenditure we have returned to the people and the State from the industry at least £70,000,000.

The Premier: It has cost that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It has not cost nearly that amount.

Mr. Cross: How much has been written off?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: These men cannot help themselves. If they could, I would not be putting up a plea for them. For five years they have been battling against low prices and have been struggling on. Even now those who are best off have great difficulty in making ends meet, while in other cases they have not been able to make ends meet, except possibly in the case of those who have had above the State average yield.

The Premier: Is not the State as a whole doing its best for these people?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Still more requires to be done. I have not said anything about what the Government have done.

The Premier: I am not talking politics, but asking what this State as a whole has done.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We ought to have at least a quarter of a million this year for assistance to these people, instead of the paltry sum we find on the Estimates.

The Minister for Lands: What did you do with all the money you had?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We did not have nearly as much money as the present Government have had. I remember the Minister for Lands sitting on this side of the House when the Premier said he would provide £100,000 and sign a cheque for it and chance whether it was met or not, and I remember how the Minister for Lands supported that statement. I think there is roughly about £40,000 on the Estimates to assist the agricultural industry at a time when it cannot help itself, and has suffered so extensively through adverse seasons and circumstances.

The Minister for Lands: Has not the Agricultural Bank been of assistance?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: How much money has the bank had in the last two years?

The Minister for Lands: All the money it wanted.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then it is not doing its job. Another serious factor is the depopulation of the agricultural areas. We are spending at least a million and a quarter in the city, and depopulating the very districts which support the city. People are being encouraged to come to the metropolitan area, because better conditions are provided for them there.

The Premier: Will you indicate what item, making up the million and a quarter, you would cut out?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The sewerage system in the southern portion of the city could have been held over for the time being.

The Premier: Especially in Nedlands.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Even there. Most of these places have already provided themselves with septic tank systems. Let us maintain our industries. When they are in a flourishing condition we can then find money for these extra services for the city.

The Premier: Our industries are being maintained.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I disagree with the Premier. It is no use arguing across the floor of the Chamber. Numbers of people have already left the agricultural areas, and without assistance more will leave.

The Premier: Would it suit you to cut out the water supply for Perth?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not suggest that. We could have taken a quarter of a million from the works in the city for the maintenance of our industries. Unless we do maintain our industries, the city will be of very little use to us. The city developed more when agriculture was flourishing than it did at any other time. I am stressing the importance of the industry, not finding fault with the Premier. We should have provided more on the Estimates this year.

The Premier: We are not neglecting the industry.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know where the Premier will find the money.

The Premier: We will get it. It is there.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I strongly object to going cap in hand to the Federal Government asking for assistance for everything we want. It is right they should assist this State, if we cannot find the finances with

which to carry on our industries. They have as great a responsibility as we have. If we cannot manage our own affairs, they will say it is about time they took them over. That would be a retrograde step. Five years ago this State produced 53,000,000 bushels of wheat. Even allowing for the season this year we ought to be producing at least 40,000,000 bushels. The yield this year may be 20,000,000 bushels. I think the Great Southern and other parts of the south will make up for the shortages elsewhere. I am not going to tell a doleful tale. Generally speaking, I do not think the season is so very bad, but parts of the State are suffering severely. It is in those parts I desire that the people should be assisted so that they may remain on the land. Farmers are leaving their holdings, and in so doing are depreciating the value of securities generally. One man may be working his farm, and around him may be ten holdings belonging to the Government, without a soul upon them.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: And only breeding rabbits.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That must be a serious matter to the farmer who is left; his values are absolutely gone.

The Premier: Do you suggest the Government are not doing their best to counteract that position?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I should like to hear what they are doing.

The Premier: But you know.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have given the new commissioners of the Agricultural Bank a fair chance to show what they are prepared to do and are able to do. I admit they have been in office only a few months, and I have not said a word against them. At the same time, I have seen but very little progress since they took office.

The Premier: What progress could they make in the time?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then why the necessity for the change? They were appointed because this House was dissatisfied with the previous administration. I have not criticised them, and am prepared to give them a reasonable chance.

The Premier: They are re-organising the whole thing.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am waiting for the report of the commissioners, which has not yet been tabled. I want to see what their proposals are. No one will peruse the report more keenly than I. They must

justify their appointment. So far I see nothing they have done that does justify the alteration. The question is a very serious one. Members on this side who go out into the country and hear the stories that are told them, and see things as they are, know what the actual position is. I appeal to the Government to give more serious consideration to the setting aside of a sum of money to keep these people on the land. Long ago the misfits have left and have sought other avocations.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why are men leaving their farms?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Because they do not see any prospects ahead.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: How could the Government create a prospect?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No one knows better than the hon. member, who is associated with the largest co-operative concern in the State, that these people have struggled for five years against low prices, and this year have struck a bad season.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: They have not reached the stage when they are suffering from that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am surprised at the hon. member, who knows as well as I do what the farmers have been through in the last five years.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is so, but what could the Government do?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is of course impossible for the Government to improve prices.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Then what are you moaning about?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I want to see these people provided for.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is a matter for the future.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Who is talking about the past? I thought the hon. member would assist me in seeing that an adequate sum was placed on the Estimates. All he is doing is to enunciate a break-down policy. There is nothing constructive about that.

The Premier: A breaking-down of your ridiculous argument.

Mr. Raphael: Why do you not put into the agricultural industry the money that is being spent on the roads in York?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is another wise interjection. The hon. member should know that the £384,000 which comes from

the Commonwealth Government for roads is drawn from the petrol tax, which is imposed for road construction. He should not mislead the public by that kind of interjection. We can hope for no constructive policy from that quarter. What we need is a constructive policy for the maintenance of men on the land. We are spending money on the city whilst our industries are starving.

The Premier: On what works are we spending this money? Tell us.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have told the Premier.

The Premier: It would be very interesting if you would tell us.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I know what the Premier is getting at.

The Premier: Tell us where we are spending it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The people of the city have enough commonsense to know that the first call is to maintain the industries of the State. They will back any Government that will put the industries of the State on a sound basis.

The Premier: You say we are spending money in the city.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Premier wants to make political capital out of what I am saying. He is doing so for political purposes, but he will not trap me.

The Premier: You said we were spending money in the city.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Government are installing a sewerage system that could wait for another year.

The Premier: That is good; now what about the water supply?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That must be maintained.

The Premier: Thanks for the answers.

The Minister for Lands: And what of the power station?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The money was provided for that last year, and has not yet been expended.

Mr. Cross: Is the sewerage system not necessary?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am only asking for a small sum, not for the whole of the money to be spent on the agricultural industry. We are not making adequate provision for an industry which is of such importance to the State. Will the Premier in his reply say where he is providing adequately for the industry? I can see nothing

on the Estimates but a meagre sum set down for assistance to farmers. There is a small sum under the Industries Assistance Act, but it is very small. I read to-day of a request for a million. Such request may seem unreasonable. But we should make arrangements for at least a quarter of a million for our farmers from State funds. Many of them will have to be provided with seed, while some will require feed for their stock and fertiliser for next year, in addition to sustenance to maintain themselves and their families.

The Premier: We have done for the farmers more than any other Government have done.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We have only to look at the Agriculture Vote for a number of years past to find that it is becoming gradually less each year.

The Premier: Its becoming less means that there are not so many requirements.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Of course the Treasurer wants to get into an argument. At the present time we have public works being carried out that are not very attractive; they certainly are not attractive to those who are working on the land for nothing. While such works are providing a few shillings for those engaged on them, the farmers see nothing but blank failure ahead. It is the latter for whom I am putting up a plea this afternoon. I want the Premier to do what he did two years ago when he was on this side of the House.

The Premier: What was that?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: He put up a good plea for the farmers and his speech on that occasion was printed in pamphlet form and distributed throughout the State.

The Premier: And I made good after that speech. I did what I promised then and more than that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Unfortunately facts and figures do not prove what the Premier says. There are fewer men on the land now, and the wheat yield has dwindled away. Facts and figures decide whether or not the Government have done all that they set out to do.

Hon. W. D. Johnson interjected.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I cannot expect any progressive policy from the hon. member who just interjected. I have listened attentively for something of a constructive nature from him, but in vain. He knows what the position of the farmers is just now.

The Premier: May I suggest that you advance something in the nature of what ought to be done that is not being done?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We should provide a quarter of a million on the Estimates with which to purchase sufficient chaff at a reasonable price while there is the opportunity of buying it, and so that we may not have to import it from the Eastern States. We should also provide sufficient seed wheat that is procurable or will be procurable very shortly, instead of having mixed seed gathered up at the sidings. We should make sure of providing sustenance for the maintenance of farmers and their families in the dry areas, and also sufficient money with which to purchase duplicate parts for machinery, and also fertiliser for the next crop. I do not want this done in a general way from one end of the State to another, because many farmers to-day will be far better off than they were last year, and they will not require any assistance. I see nothing in the Loan Estimates to justify any comments beyond that inadequate provision has been made for men on the land. I know that the Government are committed to certain expenditure and they are making provision for the Canning Dam and other works which will have to be continued. About £27,000 is to be spent on river reclamation. This could be held over for another year. It provides employment for half a dozen men, that is all. Most of the money spent on that work is going up in smoke, otherwise in fuel.

The Premier: Of course there is no improvement as a result of this work!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have no objection to the city being provided for, but let the people in the city make the necessary provision. The most important thing is to maintain our industries at as high a standard as possible.

The Premier: Who has paid all the losses the State has incurred in connection with agriculture?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The farmers have paid half a dozen times over.

The Premier: Oh!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Premier has only to get hold of the returns which will show him how the State has benefited by the export of wheat and wool. Only a few years ago all our wool was produced in the pastoral areas; to-day 50 per cent. of it comes from the agricultural areas.

The Premier: Who has found all the money that has been expended in the agricultural areas?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Anyway, most of it has been repaid. I do not propose to act the role of schoolmaster and tell members what has been done. They can check everything for themselves. I tell the Premier, however, that most of the money has been repaid.

The Premier: Of course, indirectly. Everybody pays everything indirectly.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I admit that in the last few years it has been difficult to obtain any repayments. But we must remember what has been the result of all this expenditure. Even in the group settlement areas we are now producing practically all the butter required by the State. It is not so very long since we were sending between £400,000 and £500,000 a year to the other States for our butter supplies. Now we have overcome that.

The Premier: Of course, indirectly everything comes back; there would be scarcely a farmer in this country if the money had not been found by the taxpayers outside the farming areas.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Leader of the Opposition should address the Chair and not take notice of the interjections.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: May I suggest to the Premier that he should have a return prepared showing the amount of money advanced by the Agricultural Bank to the people in the agricultural areas, and the amount repaid. Taking the Bank advances and the advances under the Industries Assistance Act, the Premier would find that with the exception of repurchased properties, a considerable proportion had been repaid.

The Premier: The figures are given in Public Accounts.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I admit there are a few properties respecting which there has been a big accumulation of outstanding debts, but generally speaking the money has been repaid, except in the South-West. In that part of the State there has been a big return in the shape of the production of butter for which previously we were sending money to the Eastern States.

The Premier: But surely the hon. member is familiar with the figures. How can he say that the money has been repaid? It has not been repaid; it is still owing—millions of pounds.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Of course we can go on indefinitely in this way. I can show what has been advanced and the repayments that have been made. I will guarantee that well over 70 per cent. of the capital advanced by the Bank has been repaid.

The Minister for Justice: How much has been repaid over the last five years?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Very little, I admit. But the industry during the last five years has not been in a position to repay anything. Why ask that question? My reference was to the period prior to the last five years.

The Premier: We are dealing with facts now.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: And I am stating facts. The people in the city are being misled by such statements as that which we have heard that the farming community have been kept by the people in the city.

The Premier: Who said that?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We know very well it has been said. The taxpayer, as the Premier so often says, has provided the capital. Of course, he sets himself on a very fine pedestal, and it is about time the people were told that they owe money to the industry, if there is any money owing, and not that the industry is indebted to the people. I have voiced my opinions, and I hope the Premier will do his best to obtain sufficient money to ensure that those who are in the dry areas that are worthy of assistance through adversity will receive the assistance to which they are entitled. But immediately we on this side of the House ask for anything, we appear to get into trouble. As a matter of fact, our requests are very moderate indeed, and after all we represent a very important section of the community.

The Premier: You do not represent them at all.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No?

The Premier: There are better farmers on this side of the House than there are on your side.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I hope the Premier will not proceed any further on those lines.

The Premier: I am willing to back the Minister for Lands as a farmer against you any day.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I wonder how many acres of land the Minister for Lands has cleared and fallowed.

The CHAIRMAN: All this has nothing to do with the Loan Estimates.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have listened to this kind of thing here for the last ten or twelve years, but it does not go down with me. I have no intention of placing myself on a pedestal as far as farming is concerned, but I consider I have done a darn sight more than any member on the other side of the House. Probably I am one of those who have benefited, but every penny piece I have borrowed has been repaid.

The Premier: You have no right to speak for all the farmers.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have never pretended to represent all the farmers. At the same time every member on this side of the House represents an agricultural area, and therefore we are entitled to speak for the agriculturists. In any case I intend to do so so long as I represent a farming community. All I am asking for is that the sum of money to be devoted to agriculture shall be adequate.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [6.0]: I do not think I have ever listened in this Chamber to anything so discreditable or so unfair as the speech delivered by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Hawke: He is getting desperate.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: His remarks were simply a speech to the gallery. The elections occur next year and the hon. member made that speech in order to get an advertisement. Last year he made a similar speech. On that occasion also he complained of the inadequacy of this vote.

Mr. Thorn: Was he speaking then with elections in mind?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In reply to his complaint on that occasion, it was shown that some of the money was in repayment of advances made in the previous year, and that the vote compared more than favourably with that of the previous year. The hon. member accepted that explanation without question: he was satisfied. But three or four months later a by-election occurred in the district of Avon, and the statement he had made here he repeated in Avon, notwithstanding that in the meantime he had accepted the explanation given in this Chamber. What can we say of a man of that kind? What importance can we attach to the word of a man of that kind? He had charged the Gov-

ernment with not granting help to agriculturists and then he accepted the explanation only to repeat the charges in the country a few months later.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Where did I make that statement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In Avon.

Hon. C. G. Latham: In what part of Avon?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At Merredin.

Mr. Thorn: Read the statement to us.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: During the Avon election campaign he repeated the charges.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: The electors of Avon believed him, not you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A member who would do that sort of thing is a very poor character indeed. In the House he said in effect, "Thank you, I am satisfied," and six months later he repeated the accusation, knowing that there was nothing in it. His speech to-day has been one of the very same kind. Of course it has come from the same man. He wants to be able to quote during the forthcoming election campaign what he and his colleagues did and not what they did not do. The hon. member is not nearly the man that superficially he pretends to be.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You are a good judge.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am.

Hon. C. G. Latham: A beautiful judge.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am. Another member went to Ballidu and condemned the Government. He said that we were the only Government who had ever refused a sum of money to provide bulk handling facilities for the farmers. He must have known that the Government that refused the money was the Government of which he was a member. If he did not know, he is an ignoramus. However, he had no hesitation in making that statement at Ballidu, although he must have known that the Government that refused the money was the Government he supported. The hon. member has offered no apology for his statement.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: No, but I made an explanation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: To whom?

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: To you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Never.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Yes, when you brought it up previously.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: "Hansard" does not record a word about it. The methods of members opposite are very discreditable. This vote is not one to assist the industry in the manner indicated by the Leader of the Opposition. The vote has never been used for help to farmers.

Hon. C. G. Latham: To which vote are you referring? I was speaking on the Estimates generally. You do not know what you are talking about.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is all a subterfuge. The Government of which the hon. member was a member never utilised this vote to assist farmers.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I suppose they took the money out of revenue.

The Premier: Oh, revenue!

Hon. C. G. Latham: Then, where did they get it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: During the hon. member's term of office farmers were leaving the land in thousands, and during the whole of that time the money provided by this vote was being expended on work in other parts of the country, Take the Frankland River settlement: Out of this vote the previous Government spent £53,000 and cleared 600 acres of land.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And what did you do at Forrestania, where the land is still uncleared?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. C. G. Latham: You cannot put up that bluff.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I had no hand in the expenditure at Forrestania. During the term of the previous Government, as I have pointed out, £53,000 was spent on clearing 600 acres of land, and only last year the Leader of the Opposition said that that land was good dairying land. He said that in justification of the expenditure. The people in the neighbourhood are not of that opinion. I think an advisory board were appointed, of which Mr. Law was a member, and that they recommended the expenditure. Mr. Law suggested that I obtain a report from Mr. Hadley, who is farming at Frankland River. That report is on the file. Mr. Hadley said that the land was no good for dairying. Since then the Lands Department have made the land available for selection and we have not received a solitary application for it. Thus, £53,000 has gone west.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Have you received any applications for your blocks?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I also lay at the hon. member's door the expenditure of £14,000 at Margaret River. That money was spent on clearing poor country. We stopped the expenditure. The hon. member calls that agricultural development.

The Premier: And do not mention the millions spent on group settlement.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Including what you spent in your six years of office, from 1924 to 1930.

The Premier: Cleaning up your job.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The previous Government wasted thousands of pounds on works of that kind. I propose to give still further examples of their expenditure. At Herdsman's Lake a sum of no less than £200,000 has gone west, and the previous Government alone were responsible for that expenditure. For all that outlay, it does not bring in a shilling. The Peel Estate is another instance. The hon. member quarrelled with his own party over group settlement, left the party, but crawled back later on.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I ask for a withdrawal of that statement, which is absolutely untrue.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: First of all, let the hon. member withdraw the word "untrue."

The CHAIRMAN: To what statement does the Leader of the Opposition object?

Hon. C. G. Latham: That I left my party because of the group settlement policy and then crawled back.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member asks that the statement be withdrawn.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot be asked to withdraw as offensive something that is quite true. The hon. member did leave his party.

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member regards it as offensive, it is up to the Minister to withdraw it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It cannot be offensive; it is true.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I say it is offensive.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Did not the hon. member leave his party? Did not Mr. Monger chase him around the country addressing meetings?

Hon. C. G. Latham: Mr. Chairman, am I to be protected by you or am I not?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has asked for a withdrawal of the statement and I ask the Minister to withdraw it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I mentioned something that was true. It is a positive fact that the hon. member left his party.

The Premier: That is true.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister must accept the hon. member's assurance that he did no such thing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot do that; what I have said is true.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I have no objection to the Minister's saying that I left the party, but I object to his connecting it with group settlement. Group settlement had nothing to do with it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Chairman, are you asking me to withdraw something that the hon. member admits?

The Premier: You have been asked to withdraw something that he now admits.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member asks for a withdrawal.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We have been very fair to you. Be fair to us!

The Premier interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the Premier to keep order.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member, in supporting the previous Government, was responsible for the expenditure on the Peel Estate and on group settlement. A sum of £2,600,000 has been spent on the Peel Estate without having obtained a return of a shilling. Huge sums of money have been spent on group settlement, and we know that the State Grants Commission appointed by the Federal Government condemned this State because of the expenditure on group settlement. We would have received more money in the shape of Federal grants had it not been for what the Commission termed our excessive generosity in the matter of expenditure on agricultural development.

Hon. C. G. Latham: During the years 1924 to 1930.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What did the hon. member do during his three years of office?

Hon. C. G. Latham: That was quite a different period.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What would he do again if he had the opportunity?

Mr. Seward: He would tell the truth, at any rate.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member utilised this vote for some special settlements in the South-West. He had his own special settlement at Nornalup. He utilised some good land there and I regret that a great many settlers he placed there are not there to-day. Why did they leave? Will the hon. member tell us?

Hon. C. G. Latham: Yes, because they got something more attractive than we paid them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Farmers have left the wheat areas and gone to the goldfields because they could get something more attractive there. Other settlers have left their holdings because they could get something more attractive.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They went to work on the roads in the South-West.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Farmers have gone to the goldfields because temporarily they have something more attractive. Who would blame anybody for leaving his occupation for something more attractive? Is it not a fact that people often leave something that does not pay in favour of something that does pay? No more settlers have left the land during the present administration than left during the hon. member's term of office. When the hon. member was Minister for Lands, the then member for Avon directed his attention to the thousands of farmers who were leaving the land. Is that not a fact? Did he do anything to retain them on the land? No. This year assistance has been granted to the farmers in the north-eastern parts of the wheat belt, not from this vote—

Hon. C. G. Latham: No, but from the grant given you by the Commonwealth Government.

The Premier: No, not a shilling of it.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Yes.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Now that the Leader of the Opposition has spoken of the attitude of the Government towards the farmer, it is fair that I should make some comparison between our administrative methods and the methods employed by the Government of which he was a member. I also wish to deal with the expenditure of money under this Vote compared with the manner in which the money,

also under this Vote, was spent by the previous Government. When the hon. member was in office, his Government did not spend one penny out of this Vote in helping any resident farmer, not one shilling, but money was spent in providing work for the unemployed on the Frankland River area.

Hon. C. G. Latham: When the farmers were supplied with superphosphate, where did the money come from?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Out of funds provided by the Finance and Development Board.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Out of loan funds.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will come to that. It did not come from loan funds. Not one shilling was spent by the previous Government from this Vote in assisting any farmer. The hon. member has accused the Government of not providing enough money from this fund to help the man on the land. From the same Vote during his term of office the Government spent nothing.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We raised a special fund for that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will deal with that later. The previous Government employed large numbers of men, who were out of work, on the Frankland River settlement, and expended £53,000. The result was nil. The country is now growing up again.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Tell us about Forrestania.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Forrestania is entirely irrelevant. People would not take up the Frankland River blocks. The work at Forrestania was not done from this Vote. The hon. member accuses the present Government of not providing sufficient help to farmers. It is on that he desires to convict the Government. Not one application has been made for a farm at Frankland River.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There is plenty of land available, represented by the farms whose owners have been driven off the land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There was plenty of land available when the money was spent at the Frankland River.

Hon. C. G. Latham: No.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The organisation for which the member for Avon stands and the hon. member himself publicly declared that thousands

of farmers had left their holdings while the hon. member was Minister for Lands. Whilst this was going on, the previous Government were spending money on an area 40 miles from a railway. Would any right-thinking person commend such administration? The present Government are not following that policy. We stopped all expenditure at Frankland River and Margaret River, and have utilised unemployed in assisting existing farmers. In the group areas we have provided larger holdings of cleared land so that the settlers may be able to earn sufficient for their own support.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There are fewer men than ever on the land to-day.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There are fewer people on the land the world over than ever before. Thousands of people have left the land in America. I am told by the Premier that in South Australia the Government are going to abandon an area on which millions have been spent. In Victoria an area on which £16,000,000 has been spent is also being abandoned. In both cases that is the policy of Country Party Governments. In my opinion the acreage cleared in the group settlements did not give the settlers scope to carry enough stock to meet their liabilities. We have something to show for our policy, but members opposite have nothing to show. The Leader of the Opposition has been electioneering in this Chamber.

Hon. C. G. Latham: If there is a past-master at electioneering, it is yourself.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member's remarks were absolutely discreditable.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You are discredited by your own party as well as by everyone else. You never get results.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: His remarks were most impudent. Members know that in my attitude towards land settlement I have ever been consistent. I have been consistent ever since I took office. I have never tried to throw dust in the eyes of settlers, but have told them the facts as I saw them. No farmers' organisation can ever say I misrepresented the position, or deceived the farmers. That is the difference between the Government of which the hon. member was a member and the present Government. If it came to a question of a fair test, and the appeal was to reason and intelligence, and not prejudice, we would

win all the time. If ever a case was put up to the farmers as to the relative merits of the two Governments on the question of land development, we would win hands down.

Mr. Thorn interjected.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Imagine the electors of Toodyay returning as their member a man who could tell them something that is not true!

Mr. Thorn: They believed me and not you. That was the trouble.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Is that the ethics of it? They believed the hon. member when his statements were not true, but they did not believe me when I spoke the truth! If he can get away with it, that is all right.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: We have only your word for the truth of it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What about the Country Party man who charged a farmer 12½ per cent. compound interest? All the hon. member said was, "They believed him, but not you." Apparently he got away with it and that to them was satisfactory. This Government could put up a case for their attitude towards the farmers that is unanswerable.

Mr. Hawke: All the documents in Parliament House will be required to answer this.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The sophistry of these people!

Hon. C. G. Latham: Did you believe the statement that thousands of men had left the land when I was Minister for Lands?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The organisation of the member for Avon said so.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You would say anything that suited you.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Members must keep order.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I said the member for Avon and his organisation had made the statement that thousands of men left the land when the hon. member was in office.

Mr. Thorn: Is that statement authentic?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: All I said was that many men had left the land when the hon. member was in office.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Only 274.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I also said that he did not spend one shilling on resident farmers out of this Vote. The organisation to which the member for

Avon belongs said that thousands of men had left the land while the Leader of the Opposition was Minister in charge.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Go for your life!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Do members suggest that we on this side of the House are not concerned about settlers in this country? I have no worry apart from the farmers' worries. The only worries that oppress me are the farmers' worries. I get them every day. Am I to be told that the things I worry about and concern me I pay no attention to? That is not correct. We are very concerned about the position in the farming areas. I took advantage of my recent trip to the Eastern States—

Hon. C. G. Latham: To come back on the boat.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Did not the hon. member come back on the boat?

Hon. C. G. Latham: You were not in a hurry to get back.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Every Federal Country Party member travelled on the boat.

Mr. Thorn: Why Country Party members?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Why that slur? The hon. member cannot accuse me of wasting time out of the State. I was attending to the business of the State.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I suppose we shall shortly hear about your trip to New Zealand. What did that cost?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I paid all the expenses of that trip out of my own pocket. It did not cost the country a shilling.

Mr. Cross: Can you not find anything else to say?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the condition arose through drought in the northern areas, the Government went to work at once and quietly. We did not wait for any agitation. We knew what was going on. We were able, as a result of that policy, to purchase a large quantity of chaff to meet the situation there. We rendered assistance to the farmers.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What sort of deal did you make over the chaff?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the hon. member will ask for particulars about that. I will then tell him how the deal was effected, a deal they could not

make. They had not the capacity to make a deal of such advantage.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Thank the Lord we can do better than you did over the chaff.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Let the hon. member ask for the facts and we will tell him all about it.

Mr. Thorn: Still putting himself on a pedestal.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We did not tell the world what we were doing, but we got in and purchased the chaff reasonably and rightly. If the hon. member wants any further explanation, he can have it if he asks for the information. He may have a full-dress debate upon the subject if he likes. In another place the Hon. H. J. Yelland is asking questions about this. How can any member who is supposed to be a friend of the farmers ask such questions when it is not in the interests of the farmers to disclose the information? A disclosure of the information could not be in the interests of drought-stricken settlers, who must buy their requirements in the cheapest market. I do not think the hon. member will be satisfied when he receives the information. We certainly rendered assistance to those people. When they were in trouble while the previous Government were in office they were given a maximum of £1 a week. Members now complain that the 30s. they are getting is not sufficient, whereas in their day £1 was the maximum. They now complain because we are not giving more, although we are giving 50 per cent. more than they gave. Those who formed the previous Government should be judged by what they did themselves.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You fixed the price, did you? The Bank fixed it, and you know it. All you did was to hand over the money you received from the Commonwealth Government; your Government did not provide a penny.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Commonwealth Government did not provide a shilling. That shows how badly informed the hon. member is.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What did you do with the £130,000?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member is talking about a fund that was provided for necessitous cases which is another matter entirely. £50,000 from the Industries Assistance Board was provided for

farmers in the Eastern wheat-belt by the State Government.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Pity you cannot stick to the truth.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the hon. member will look up Item 47 he will find a sum of £50,000 which the Premier provided to meet the drought position. He readily agreed to give that sum as it was a position which had to be faced. Replying to the Leader of the Opposition I can say I fixed the sustenance rate, not the Agricultural Bank. Before doing that I inquired what other Governments had done in like circumstances, when they assisted farmers from the finance and development Vote. Furthermore, the money did not come from Commonwealth sources. I would not have refused it had it been offered, and I hope some will yet come from that quarter. When I was in the Eastern States I saw Mr. Casey, the Federal Treasurer, and also Dr. Earle Page. A deputation which waited on the Federal Government also comprised Mr. Teasdale, the President of the Primary Producers' Association, the President of the Wheatgrowers' Union, and also some South Australian delegates and members. I am accused, and the Government are accused, of taking no interest in the wheatbelt, of having no concern about it. We went along and told Dr. Page and Mr. Casey that the request was a just one. Although I was not present when a reply was made to our request, having been called back to the conference room, the gentlemen who were present said that Mr. Casey gave some assurance of help. In fairness to Mr. Casey I ought to say that I saw him next day, and that he then stated he had made no promise but had said he would bring the matter before the Commonwealth Government. The Leader of the Opposition said that he resented our going to the Commonwealth Government for help. While he wants us to find money—apparently out of the air—he does not want the Commonwealth Government to give assistance. The Commonwealth Government have the money, but he suggests that we must not go to them. Why not? Why should we not go to them? Is not the welfare of any part of Australia their concern? Why should not we ask the Commonwealth Government for assistance? Since the Commonwealth Government have the means to help us, why should we not ask them to do so? I believe they will help us.

The Leader of the Opposition was not so particular when he was in office. In fact, he was hardly in office before he went to the Commonwealth Government for help.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Talk sense! You know very well I did nothing of the sort.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know the hon. member went to the Commonwealth Government to try to get money. The Leader of the Opposition was refused the money.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Was he?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He could not get the money.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I got £500,000, and that was to help the farmers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As a matter of fact, the hon. member did not get it. Sir James Mitchell, who was Premier, then, got that amount as a loan from the Commonwealth Bank.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What was I sent to Sydney for?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member was not the Minister concerned at all; he did not control the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I was sent to Sydney, and the matter was arranged in Sydney while I was there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Sir James Mitchell did not have sufficient confidence in the hon. member to undertake the task, and he did it himself. So the Leader of the Opposition did not deal with the matter at all. He did not control the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You will not accept a statement when it is true.

Mr. Marshall: It is so seldom true.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The fact remains that the hon. member did not get the money at all. The Agricultural Bank had the use of the money on loan from the Commonwealth Bank. As to the drought in the north-eastern areas, we deplore the position extremely. So far as their resources will permit, the Government will help the settlers in that part of the State, or anywhere else, as we have in the past. We shall also continue to ask the Commonwealth Government to assist us in such instances, because it is as much their responsibility as it is ours. When did it happen that the Commonwealth Government had no interest in an industry of Australia when it was in trouble? Of course, the Commonwealth Government have a responsibility in

the matter, and we asked them to assist us, and shall do so again should the necessity arise. Yet the Leader of the Opposition said that we had not got a penny for them.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I did not say anything of the sort. Why the devil don't you state the truth.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. C. G. Latham: Well, why does not the Minister tell the truth?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Probably I am interpreting the hon. member—

The Minister for Justice: Literally.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, literally.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The Minister for Justice ought to assist his colleague!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We intend to approach the Commonwealth Government in such circumstances, and, as far as we possibly can, we will help the settlers. We cannot do impossibilities, and the settlers should not expect impossibilities of us. What we have been able to do in the past, we shall do again. We also provided reservations for the settlers' stock. We topdressed the great majority of the vacant blocks in the group settlement areas. I refer to blocks that were vacant. We topdressed those holdings and made them available for settlers in the drought areas to depasture their stock. They were invited to apply for the blocks with that object. Then, again, we arranged with the Forests Department to hold areas suitable for grazing in order further to provide for the stock from the drought areas. It will be seen, therefore, that the situation was well met by a Government who, we have been told, will do nothing in the interests of the farmers. I suspect members who raise this cry of the city against the country. The Leader of the Opposition represents a farming electorate, and when he speaks about the expenditure in the city as against the country, he knows he had only one purpose, and that is political. During the Avon by-election, the same statement was made. The Government were condemned because they had utilised money in order to dredge the Swan River and reclaim the foreshore in the metropolitan area. I have pointed out that the reclamation in years to come will be worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. For every £1,000 spent now thousands will be returned because of the new land that is provided. Hon. members opposite will not

condemn it in the future when people talk about the great value of the improved foreshore. On the contrary, they will say, "We did that." Now they say, "Look at the money you are spending in the city and not spending in the country." The Leader of the Opposition said that I, as Minister for Lands, helped the city as against the country. There is no truth in that allegation whatever. I have never held the city up against the country. Why should I? I have not one shilling invested in the city but all my interests are in the country. So I am stupid enough, am I—

Hon. C. G. Latham: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: —to help the city at the expense of the country?

Mr. Thorn: At any rate, you have had a good job in the city for many years past.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the hon. member has, he does not look like it.

Mr. Thorn: You certainly do not look like it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Premier: You seem to be enjoying your job.

Mr. Thorn: I am.

The Premier: Well, why that?

Mr. Thorn: The Minister for Lands does not look like it. He looks as if a good feed would do him good.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Toodyay must keep order. If he does not, I shall take action.

The Premier interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the Premier to keep order, too.

Mr. Thorn: I work a jolly side harder than the Minister does.

The Premier: Why talk like that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Toodyay says that he works harder than I do. Again I say he does not look like it.

The Premier: No one would believe it of him.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the Minister for Lands to address the Chair.

Mr. Thorn: Well, I will obey the Chair, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am sure that from now until election time we shall have a barrage of such statements as were made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Thorn: We are getting it now.

Mr. Coverley: Not after to-night. The Opposition will give up guessing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Although the Government have done all these things for the country areas. I believe that from now until election time the Country Party members will be the worst enemies of the farmers in this Parliament. If they can harass the Government and wear Ministers down—

Hon. C. G. Latham: You should talk about wearing Ministers down! We have been the best Opposition from that standpoint in the history of Parliament.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If they can embarrass Ministers, they will be happy, for that is their game.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We have not embarrassed you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: From now onwards, Parliament may expect any accusation from them. In my opinion, they will be the worst enemies that the farmer has.

Mr. Seward: You judge us by yourself.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Farmers themselves say to us, "We know you have done a great deal, and we hope you will stick to us." They come to us and state their case fairly and decently. They adopt an entirely different policy from that followed by the Leader of the Opposition in this House. Again I say we are going to ask the Federal Government to help the farmers during this bad period in Western Australia. We have the good precedent set by the South Australian Government, which went to the Federal Government in the interests of South Australian settlers. The South Australian Government never hesitated, and the Federal Government met them and gave them large sums of money with which to help the settlers in South Australia. I assure the Committee that the present position of the farmers in Western Australia is causing the Government some concern and, as far as we can, we shall try to remedy the position. But Opposition members will not help the farmer by attempting to harass the Government and wear down the efficiency of Ministers. If those members represented their constituents correctly—

Hon. C. G. Latham: You will not help the farmers by calling them mendicants, as you did the other night.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I did not call them mendicants, but I reprov'd the Leader of the Opposition, who never comes to the House without crying "the farmer,

the farmer, the farmer" I said that in that attitude he was not representing the farmer properly. Members of the Opposition do not represent the farmer properly, for he is not the mendicant they make him out to be. To say that the farmer will not pay, and that someone else must pay for him, is not doing the farmer justice. I reprov'd the Leader of the Opposition for representing the farmer here as a mendicant. It was not I who said he was a mendicant, but I certainly can prove that the Leader of the Opposition makes out the farmers to be mendicants. I would not have spoken at all if the hon. member had not put his foot in it so badly. I assure members on the Opposition side that the farmers have the sympathy of the Government, to whom the present situation seems deplorable. We realise that the farmers have had a very bad time. On the Address-in-reply I pointed out that, quite apart from what had been done in the past we have asked the rest of the community to again come to their assistance. I then pointed out that the arrears of interest due to the Agricultural Bank by farmers are over £2,000,000, and that the Government have to make up that leeway, to which end they have called upon the community to pay the interest. To finance that leeway at 4½ per cent., the Government have to find an additional £138,000 per annum. So not only have the taxpayers to find the £2,000,000, but there is also the additional £138,000 as interest. That burden is being borne by the taxpayers in the interests of the farmers and in the hope that the farmers will yet see better days. The arrears of land rents amount to another £1,000,000, much of which money is in regard to repurchased estates. I pointed out also that the water rates are in arrears to the tune of £150,000, and that this year we shall have paid the Commonwealth Government £80,000 more than we have received from the farmers. Then are not the Government helping the farmers? We are doing that for nobody else in the community. We are doing it for one section only, and no other section of the community is having this done for them. It is all being done in the hope that the farmers in the end shall pay their way and have homes, which many taxpayers in their old age will not have. There are hundreds of thousands of people in the State carrying this load to-day who

will not have properties in their old age. Yet in the meantime they are paying out to help the farmer remain on the land. And then we are told the Government and the people are doing nothing for the farmers. Is that correct? Of course not. This country requires to be told the position, which is that the farmer is being treated generously by the Government and, as far as the resources of the State permit, that treatment will be continued in the time of his difficulties. As for the hon. member who said the farmers in this State do not get as much assistance as the farmers in the Eastern States, let him compare the treatment of our farmers with that meted out in the Eastern States. The Federal Grants Commission definitely said that this State would have had a larger grant but for our over-generosity in land settlement. Our annual grant would have been better by £400,000, but for our over-generosity in land settlement. And then members opposite tell us we are doing nothing for the farmers. That of course, is not correct, and I hope that for the remainder of the time during which this Parliament sits members opposite will be fairer in their attitude towards the Government.

Hon. C. G. Latham: If your present attitude is any indication there will not be any fairness towards you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, if the Leader of the Opposition says he will not accept peace, he can have war.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We are the peaceful side.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We can take care of ourselves.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There is no doubt about that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: During the past three years this Government have done more for the farmer than did the last Government during their three years. The Labour Government have always done more for the farmer than have any other Government.

Mr. Thorn: What nonsense!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If we want a witness to that, there is always the member for Avon. As for the member for Toodyay, the very industry he is concerned in, the dried-fruits industry, owes its success to legislation passed by a Labour Government. But what can we expect from the hon. member?

The Premier: He would be on the road, on the dole but for us.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: These are the facts: Before the Labour Government introduced the Dried Fruits Act only 2 per cent. of the settlers in the Swan Valley were regarded as good bank securities.

Mr. Thorn: I deny that. It is not correct.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not care what the hon. member denies. I know it.

The Premier: And the member for Toodyay was not one of the 2 per cent.

Mr. Thorn: Don't you worry.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And now I am assured that 98 per cent. of the settlers in the Swan Valley are regarded as good bank securities.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: But 20 per cent. of them are not on the bank at all, so how can the Minister's statement be correct?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If what I say is not correct, how is it that a deputation which came to me, a deputation including the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson), told me the growers were down and out until they got that legislation. They agreed with the facts. Deputation after deputation came to me asking that a dried fruits measure be placed on the statute-book.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You saved the industry.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And now the member for Toodyay wishes to tell me that the statements made by his own constituents were untrue. Well, I prefer to believe them. I think they stated facts, and, as a consequence, we introduced the Dried Fruits Bill. I hope members will realise that the objections taken to this Vote are not reasonable. This Vote has never been expended in the interests of any settler already on the land. No settler already on the land has ever had a shilling from this Vote. It has all been expended on schemes such as that to which I have referred. Consequently, when the hon. member tries to represent this as an index to the Government's attitude to the farmers, he is all at sea. Either he does not know or he has adopted an attitude which cannot be described as responsible.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [8.11]: I should not have taken any part in the

debate this evening but for the very ungenerous and very provocative speech to which we have just listened—ungenerous because it is absolutely false to the true picture to say that the Opposition have in any way harassed the Government on any occasion. On the contrary, I venture to say that no Parliament has had an Opposition more tolerant than has the present one. Nevertheless, the Minister says that the Opposition are attempting to harass him and other Ministers, and so possibly drive them to the extremities in which their small gifts of reason will be lost.

The Minister for Water Supplies: That is a very generous statement, is it not?

Hon. N. KEENAN: The speech of the Minister for Lands was very provocative. The only complaint made by the Leader of the Opposition was that no adequate provision had been made.

The Minister for Lands interjected.

The Minister for Water Supplies interjected.

Hon. N. KEENAN: When two Ministers interject at once, I cannot be expected to hear them. Of course both of them, by interjecting, are disorderly. I was pointing out that a provocative speech had been made by the Minister merely because the Leader of the Opposition claimed that no adequate provision had been made for a very grave emergency that has arisen in the agricultural industry. It is obvious that provision must be made to meet the emergency, either from revenue or from loan. There is no other source. Neither on Revenue nor Loan Estimates is any adequate provision made, so the Leader of the Opposition submitted, to meet the very grave and exceptional crisis that has arisen in the agricultural industry for reasons entirely beyond the control of those engaged in the industry. We have this year experienced climatic conditions of a very exceptional character. In fact, I was told by an old settler that nothing like it had happened in his experience either on the Upper or Lower Murchison, and that experience has been repeated to a large extent, unfortunately, in very many parts of the agricultural areas. All that the Leader of the Opposition complained of was that the exceptional condition of affairs had not been adequately provided for in any Estimates of expenditure, whether from the revenue side or the loan side. To examine all the records

of the past, to rehash every blunder that has been made, not by one Government or another Government but by every Government, is a very stupid and inadequate answer to a complaint of that kind. No great study will be required to discover numerous blunders on the part of Ministers for Lands in the past; and naturally so, because Ministers, after all, are only human beings, and it is the essence of humanity to err. Among the many colossal blunders that have cost this country millions of pounds was the group settlement blunder; but it is never properly recognised that that very policy, had it been carried out on different lines, might have been a great success. Its conception was very fine, but unfortunately the manner in which it was carried out led to a terrible collapse.

The Minister for Lands: Do you say that the Peel Estate settlement was a wonderful conception?

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the Minister for Lands would speak up, I might be able to hear him. From what study I have made of group settlement, in its essence it was a very great conception, but unfortunately the wrong way was adopted for bringing it into effect, and, equally unfortunately, the wrong people were brought out to carry it into effect. It was a fine conception to bring out groups of people from the Old Country who would naturally form communities here, and, when they had gained experience on the land, would be able to assist one another. Such a scheme would have commanded a considerable amount of support in the right direction had it been properly guided. But to inquire into the blunders of administration, well, I would ask, is the present Minister for Lands free from blame? Did not he also squander huge sums on group settlement?

The Minister for Lands: No.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The records show that while he was in office colossal sums were spent on group settlement.

The Minister for Lands: No, I reduced expenditure considerably.

Hon. N. KEENAN: But the Minister did not eliminate a great deal of waste.

The Minister for Lands: The waste was there.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am not going to attack the Minister for that. He merely perpetuated an already existing blunder, and if he is to blame, it is only because he did not have the foresight, or perhaps the

courage, to cut down expenditure immediately on such a scheme. So, if we discuss the past, we can always find many transactions in respect of which it is easy to frame a charge, and easy to make a very provocative speech. For that reason I do not consider the Minister for Lands had any justification for making the attack he has made on the Leader of the Opposition because of what he alleges to be blunders committed in the past by the Leader of the Opposition. If he would search his own history, he would find that he could correspond every blunder of which he accused the Leader of the Opposition with a very much larger and graver blunder on his own part.

The Minister for Lands: Quote my blunders; what are they?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Does the Minister want me to go into his history? I do not propose to deliver a provocative speech such as we have had from him. We have not attended, as has the Minister, armed with numerous notes, and then pretended that he was not prepared to speak. He had matter ready with which to attack the Leader of the Opposition, and yet he alleged he was not ready to speak. If that is so, where did all those notes used by the Minister come from?

The Minister for Justice: He made them during the speech of the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Where did the extracts come from?

The Premier: Every note was written by the Minister while the Leader of the Opposition was speaking.

Mr. Seward: Even the 2 per cent.?

Hon. N. KEENAN: If I intended to attack the Minister, I should have prepared the matter. I am not here for that purpose; nor would I have spoken at all, possibly, except for the provocative manner in which the Minister addressed the Chair.

The Minister for Justice: Tell us one of his big blunders.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Does the Minister desire me to search the whole history of the Minister for Lands?

The Premier: Surely there must be in your mind just one big blunder of his. Give us one big blunder.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Could you restrain the Ministry, Mr. Chairman? They have no regard for the Standing Orders. Tonight the Minister for Lands invented a

new one. He said, "You can say anything you like so long as you believe it is true."

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member should take no notice of the interjections.

Hon. N. KEENAN: There is no regard for any of the rules of order or debate on the part of the occupants of the Ministerial Bench.

The CHAIRMAN: That is a matter for the Chairman to decide. Will the hon. member address the Chair and take no notice of interjections?

Hon. N. KEENAN: I know you could not possibly keep the Premier in order, Mr. Chairman.

The Premier: You are running away.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I did not come prepared with facts to throw at the heads of Ministers, or to talk about past history.

The Premier: You are running away.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Running away, because I did not come prepared to give details of what is public knowledge, and because I did not come prepared to launch an attack upon the Ministry?

The Premier: What is it that is well known to everyone?

The CHAIRMAN: I must ask the Premier to keep order.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not think you will succeed, Mr. Chairman, but you can ask him. I will now turn to a short consideration of these Loan Estimates. The proposed expenditure is a sum approximating £3,000,000. The actual expenditure is £2,677,000, and there is £270,000 contributed by the Commonwealth Government on a pound for pound basis. We are spending considerable sums of loan money. I strongly deprecate any comparison between expenditure that is alleged to be for the benefit of the city, and expenditure which may allegedly be for the benefit of the country. I represent a city electorate. From my point of view there is no hope of success for the city unless the country also is successful. During the last ten years my electorate has developed considerably. That has been due to moneys that came into the possession of people in Perth as a result of their labours, but those labours would not have been possible but that the industries of the country were carried on. Imagine what the position of the city would be if the pastoral or agricultural industries ceased operation, or if they suffered a severe though not a total

collapse! The two interests are indivisible. Our good fortune is the good fortune of our primary industries. No one imagines that the city can progress by itself. It is recognised that it can only progress as the industries of the State enable it to progress.

Mr. Hegney: You must have consumers to consume stock and butter.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The consumption is not so important. Only a half of one per cent. of our wool is used within the State, so that the local consumption is infinitesimal. Only about 10 per cent. of our wheat is used within the State.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Not to mention stock and butter.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Stock is important, but not to be compared with wheat or wool. Nor is the stock market dependent entirely on local consumption. I know the Minister is seriously engaged in promoting the lamb export trade. Or is it the Minister for Agriculture who is responsible?

The Premier: He was.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Whichever Minister is concerned in the matter, he is greatly concerned in developing that side of our industry. And it is absolutely necessary, because if we had not got an export trade in lambs the metropolitan market would be so glutted that prices would be absolutely useless.

The Minister for Water Supplies: No; prices were not useless.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I fear I am merely encouraging disorder. I seem to have an extraordinary capacity, not for being disorderly myself—

Members: Oh!

Hon. N. KEENAN: —but for making other members disorderly. The State must find pound for pound to correspond to £270,000 given us by the Commonwealth out of loan moneys, and necessarily so because we have not the revenue. This means that the expenditure which we are incurring on loan account is of a colossal character, having regard to our population, having regard to our resources, which unfortunately are dwindling, and having regard to the prospects of the immediate future. I shall not criticise the items in respect of which this loan money is proposed to be expended. There is no doubt that the search for works which will return anything in the nature of interest on the expenditure involved in them

is a most difficult one. I admit that it would be perhaps somewhat ungenerous to criticise, under those conditions, some works which are not on the face of them, at any rate, likely to reproduce any money that is spent on them. However, there is one highly peculiar item of expenditure on these Loan Estimates which I do think warrants comment; and that is the expenditure on the Fremantle harbour. The reason for my commenting on it is not that the money is to be spent on the Fremantle harbour, but that £90,000, or something like that sum, is set down for expenditure on the harbour and at the very same time roughly £80,000 is taken from the Fremantle Harbour Trust accounts and transferred to revenue. Undoubtedly many Governments in the past have carried on the practice of imposing surtax on all that comes into the harbour, which enormously increases the revenue, and using that increased revenue to buttress up the general revenue of the State. But the extraordinary feature of first of all taking into Consolidated Revenue £80,000, and then turning round and getting out of the State Treasury from loan funds, for the work for which that money is collected, a sum of £90,000—

The Premier: You admit, of course, that that is nothing new, that that has been the practice for many years?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Not to that extent. Not to any extent like that at all.

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Nothing like this has happened in the past. What has happened in the past—I say it is a wrong practice, and say it always will be a wrong practice—is that the surplus revenue from the Fremantle harbour, after payment of the cost of maintenance of the harbour, such as it was, and current expenditure, was taken into Consolidated Revenue. It was, in fact, collected specially, and should have been put away in a reserve fund, to meet the requirements of repairing the harbour and putting it in order. That practice, I repeat, has been going on for years; but nothing like to the same extent as by the present Administration. In no previous year has £90,000 been taken out of loan moneys for repairing the harbour and £80,000 taken from the Fremantle Harbour Trust funds into revenue.

Mr. Lambert: Do you know that a million—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: I was remarking that nothing like this is to be found in our past

history. It is a most extraordinary example. There is £80,000 taken away from the harbour, and then £90,000 is handed back from loan. Of course it presents an utterly false picture, because the £80,000 makes our revenue look that much better, and thereby presents a Budget deficit of a greatly reduced character, whereas in truth, if the £80,000 had been applied by the Harbour Trust officials for the purposes of the harbour, the State Budget would have been £80,000 worse on the revenue side.

The Premier: May I interrupt the hon. member?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes.

The Premier: Nothing like this ever occurred in the past?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Nothing of this magnitude.

The Premier: Oh! Will the hon. member show that there has been any change at all in the policy this year as compared with years and years past? The amount does not matter.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The amount?

The Premier: The hon. member says nothing like this has happened in the past.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Premier: The practice has been carried on for years and years, and the hon. member knows it.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am very much afraid that the Premier is making his reply prematurely. Perhaps I should sit down.

The Premier: I shall be glad to answer.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Apparently the Premier thinks he has possession of the floor. I happen to be in possession of the floor. I may be wrong. What I did say—and it is necessary to repeat it—was that in the past the practice, which I will admit and have always admitted to be wrong, was to take moneys received by the Harbour Trust Commissioners for services rendered by the harbour into Consolidated Revenue, after the mere annual charges were paid.

The Premier: In all the years past.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is so.

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: But nothing like this has ever happened before.

The Premier: Why?

Hon. N. KEENAN: One moment.

The Premier: Will you show me—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Nothing like taking £80,000 into Consolidated Revenue and then

turning round and lading £90,000 out of Loan Funds—

The Premier: That is a ridiculous statement.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It has happened, and it is ridiculous. I venture to say that anyone who heard of it would characterise it as nothing but ridiculous—taking the money into Consolidated Revenue and then turning round and handing it all back again and calling it loan.

The Premier: Has the principle been altered this year?

Hon. N. KEENAN: I dealt again and again with that. The Premier has not followed me. I have told him that for years past the Fremantle harbour surplus has gone into Consolidated Revenue. Unless he calls that a principle, that is what has happened for years.

The Premier: You say nothing like this has ever happened before?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Nothing such as the illustration to which I have drawn attention.

The Premier: Ridiculous!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Let the Premier call it ridiculous.

Mr. Cross: Will you alter it?

Hon. N. KEENAN: It is hard to alter what has never happened before, though the hon. member may do so. Of course, in order to carry out an exhibition of this character one must have command of a large amount of loan money. So here we are once more in the position of imposing on this State a further burden of approximately £3,000,000. I would like to know from the Treasurer, when he replies to the debate, does he look forward to borrowing sums of this character in the future, for unnumbered years? How many years does he think we can go on borrowing? How many years?

The Premier: Oh, about—let me see—

Hon. N. KEENAN: I think that what the Premier means is that what he is quite content with is that the borrowing can go on for at least as long as he and his party occupy those benches. The borrowing can keep him in funds, and then, as I said before, God or the devil look after the rest; and it is likely to be the devil.

Mr. Raphael: What are you worrying about?

Hon. N. KEENAN: It is said that a comparison between our loan indebtedness per capita and that of the Eastern States is not fair, but is misleading. However, I have

taken the trouble to get a comparison which allows in the case of the Eastern States all the expenditure which we in this State incur by way of loan but which is at present incurred in the Eastern States by certain semi-Government bodies which are empowered to borrow money. These allowances being made, the figures are as follows:—In New South Wales £121.7 per head of population, in Victoria £134.9, in Queensland £109.1, in South Australia £169.1, in Western Australia £188.4.

Mr. Lambert: Those figures do not represent the position correctly.

Hon. N. KEENAN: They represent the exact position.

Mr. Lambert: Not at all, because—

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Lambert: They do not represent the true position, and it is wrong to give them out to the public.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie will keep order.

Mr. Lambert: What about the metropolitan water supply? The comparison does not represent the position truly, and it is not fair.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: We have had a long interjection, I would not like to say, interruption, by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie. Let me now ask him to permit me to tell him that those figures are the corrected figures; that is to say, every single item of expenditure which we in this State meet out of loan moneys borrowed by the State and which are met in the Eastern States by various public bodies which borrow on their own account, has been allowed for, and that the figures I have taken are taken from the report of the claim of Western Australia under Section 96 of the Commonwealth Constitution Act, paragraph 81, presented by Mr. Curtin, the present Leader of the Federal Labour Party, as an accurate statement to the Federal Grants Royal Commission. I assume that they are correct, therefore, notwithstanding the contradiction of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie. This shows that we are a long way in the lead. And we are going still further in the lead every day. I admit, of course, that in the world as it is to-day, it is impossible to avoid borrowing.

The Minister for Justice: That is generous!

Hon. N. KEENAN: What I do say is that there should be some attempt at laying down a policy which we hope to carry out with the borrowed money, instead of a let-live policy, a sort of keep-alive, keep-the-wheels-turning-over policy, as a Minister once remarked, a policy of "It does not matter; we may reach somewhere, or we may reach nowhere." Most probably we shall reach nowhere. It is disastrous. It really means despair. It means that the day must come when we shall go bankrupt, and we shall have to go and ask the Commonwealth to take us over and administer this State as Commonwealth territory. That is all that lies before us in the future. I wonder do hon. members realise what our position will be when that day does come? The Commonwealth is not in the least likely to find money for our needs and our wants. We shall have no credit left, we shall have nothing on which to borrow and the Commonwealth, as the supreme power, will take care that we are taxed to the last limit to pay our debts.

The Minister for Justice: Now you are very encouraging!

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not attempt to be unduly encouraging. What I want is that we should spend the money, which I admit we must borrow, to serve some definite purpose.

The Premier: Just a moment! Would you help us just with an idea?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Does that mean that the Government of the day are so bankrupt of any idea of what to do, that they invite Opposition members to tell them what should be done? Is that the meaning of the Premier's interjection? We, who are sitting in Opposition, are asked to form a policy for the country, and that is not to be the duty of the Government, who have no policy! Is not that most extraordinary?

The Premier: For the time being, I admit that is the position. Now, just come along with one idea.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The Premier: Just one small idea.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Mr. Chairman, can you possibly induce order from members of the Ministry?

The Premier: For the sake of argument. I will admit what you suggest to be the position.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the Premier to keep order.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Is it not a most extraordinary proposition, perhaps the most extraordinary ever put forward in any House of Parliament? Is it not most extraordinary that the Government should say, "We are bankrupt of ideas and, for God's sake, put one in our heads"?

The Premier: Ridiculous!

Hon. N. KEENAN: They say, "We are bankrupt of ideas. We do not know what to do, we beg you as an Opposition, although you are not in power and cannot carry out the policy you advocate, to give us some ideas. Tell us something to do."

The Premier: Talk that rubbish to a jury; don't talk it here.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If that is the position confronting Western Australia, then, indeed, God help us!

The Premier: Put that rubbish over a jury. Don't put it over here.

MR. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [8.42]: The member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) concluded his speech by drawing attention to the state in which the country finds itself with a Government bankrupt of ideas and asking the Opposition to supply some. That may be true, but how much worse must be the state of the country when a Government, bankrupt of ideas and requesting the Opposition for some, find the Opposition bankrupt of ideas as well. Of course, we do not admit that the Government are bankrupt of ideas. From the time the Government assumed office, the drift was arrested and progress commenced. I have heard Opposition members, perhaps in unguarded moments, compliment the Government on improvements made in various directions. I was amused to-night to hear the Leader of the Opposition make his declaration regarding the meagre sum the Government had set aside for agriculture. I think that stamps the Leader of the Opposition as the very last word in inconsistency. Early in this session, he took the Government to task for borrowing too much money. He said that our borrowing programme should be considerably curtailed, and while I was speaking I twitted him regarding that assertion and said we would have little chance of a new bridge being built at Fremantle if he were Treasurer. He replied by interjection that that would not follow as the bridge could be built from revenue.

Mr. Thorn: You have little chance of getting the bridge now.

Mr. TONKIN: Here we have the gentleman who desires to curtail borrowing! He would take money from the metropolitan area and spend it in the country districts. That money would have to come from revenue. He also proposes to build a bridge for Fremantle out of revenue. There is not much consistency in that suggestion. The Leader of the Opposition cannot have it both ways. Either he must borrow additional money and increase the amount available for the farmers, or he must take what revenue he can raise and borrow less. In that event, the farmers would have to take less. I notice that the Leader of the National Party (Hon. N. Keenan) did not seem too comfortable when the Leader of the Opposition said we were spending too much money in the metropolitan area. Such an assertion was not palatable to him because he knew that later on he would be called upon to defend that attitude and would find it difficult.

The Premier: He endeavoured to come to the rescue.

Mr. TONKIN: Yes. It was difficult, but to-night he endeavoured to smooth the position over without much success. I notice, too, that the Leader of the Opposition states yearly that we should not use loan funds for repairs and maintenance to the railways. He has repeated that so often that I take it he believes it. He said this year that such a practice would not be adopted by private enterprise. I am not so sure about that. If the choice were between borrowing money to repair and maintain assets and not repairing and maintaining them at all, then it might be sounder policy to borrow for that purpose. I believe—I think I interpret the views of the Government correctly in this regard—that the sounder policy in this instance is to borrow, because the railways have lapsed into such a condition that it would be disastrous to defer any longer a vigorous policy of repairing and maintaining rolling stock.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But their policy is one of construction.

Mr. TONKIN: I applaud the Government for adopting such a policy regarding the State's assets, even if it means using loan funds. This year provision is made, I take it, for the purchase of additional rolling stock as well. If it were not so, we would hear Opposition members say that

the State could not shift the harvest as the rolling stock could not cope with the demand. They have sometimes criticised us.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Who said that?

Mr. TONKIN: You did.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. TONKIN: I did not say that the Leader of the Opposition had said that the railways could not shift the harvest.

Mr. Raphael: Leave him alone. He is only dreaming.

Mr. TONKIN: The Leader of the Opposition criticised the Government for having used loan funds for railway repairs and maintenance. It could not be done out of revenue because there have been deficits. In those circumstances, if the work were to be done at all, loan funds had to be used. I disagree with the hon. member when he says that that policy would not be adopted by private firms. It might be absolutely necessary to do so, particularly if, as I have already indicated, the choice were between adopting that course or not carrying out necessary repairs and maintenance.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But the Government are not doing that, you know.

Mr. TONKIN: If they are not, they should be.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: They are effecting repairs out of revenue.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They are rebating every year portion of the Loan funds that they take.

Mr. TONKIN: I have received information from railway men that for years past the rolling stock has been deteriorating to such an extent that repairs cost far too much and engines were being overworked. It is possible for metal to be overworked, just as it is for human beings. Engine trips were far too long with the result that insufficient time was left for the engines to be overhauled and repaired. As a result, the repairs that had to be undertaken were much more extensive than they should have been. In consequence, costs mounted up. It is wise to use loan funds for repairs where necessary.

The Minister for Railways: Of course, we are not using loan funds for ordinary maintenance and repairs.

Mr. TONKIN: The Leader of the Opposition went on to say—I should have said that the Leader of the National Party went on to say—

Hon. C. G. Latham: You should stick to the truth sometimes.

Mr. TONKIN: I endeavour to do so at all times and should I be wrong in any statement I make and the Leader of the Opposition can correct me, I shall be pleased to accept the correction. The Leader of the National Party deplored the fact that £90,000 odd had been set aside for reconstruction work on the Fremantle wharf. My only regret is that the amount is not double that figure. There are down there men who for years have been engaged in maintenance work on a full-time basis and who, for the years of the depression, have been on part-time employment only. I should like to see the amount increased, if for no other reason than to give those men full-time employment. And another little matter which could be attended to at the same time is to see that those workers receive holiday time. But that is an additional matter for regret that the amount is not larger than it is.

The Premier: Has there been any alteration in the policy there?

Mr. TONKIN: No, the policy is the same as has been followed in the past. Excellent work has been done for the money spent. The job on the North Wharf is a credit to those responsible, and similar work has been done on the south side of the harbour. It is necessary work, and good work, and no fault can be found with it. That brings me to a subject which is dear to the heart of the Chairman, and to my heart as well, namely the question of the Fremantle bridges. To explain this subject it is necessary to go back a fair distance, because the House appears to have forgotten quite a lot about it. In 1923 the file reveals that heavy maintenance costs were being incurred yearly. We find that three years later the Commissioner of Railways put in a minute stating that the question of the new bridge was one that would have to be seriously considered in the near future. In the same year the file shows that the railway bridge was fast approaching the limit of usefulness, and that it was necessary to take steps for a new bridge. That was in 1926. In the same year Mr. Willcock replied to a deputation, using these words, "A new bridge should be built as soon as possible." That is on the file. In 1927 there were urgent communications between

the Secretary for Railways and the Chief Engineer, and also urgent letters from the Deputy Secretary for Railways to the Deputy Chief Engineer, to the effect that it was proposed to introduce legislation for the construction of a new rail and traffic bridge. That indicates that in 1927 a decision must have been made for the building of a bridge, because the Chief Engineer and the Secretary for Railways were exchanging urgent communications, and mentioning that legislation was to be introduced for the construction of a new rail and traffic bridge. That was in 1927. Then later in the year, in November, it is noticed that the Deputy Secretary for Railways found it necessary first to telephone and then to send a telegram—so urgent was the matter—to the Deputy Commissioner for Railways mentioning the proposal for the new bridge and asking the Deputy Commissioner for the railway viewpoint. The Minister, too, was anxious, for he sent an urgent letter to the Commissioner for Railways asking the Commissioner to supply him with the railway viewpoint on the proposed new bridge. In the same month there appeared in the "Kalgoorlie Miner" under the heading "New Bridge over the Swan" an article which dealt with a statement made by Mr. McCallum on the introduction of the Leighton-Robb's Jetty railway. It was mentioned that it was proposed to construct a new bridge over the Swan River at Fremantle. In 1928 the file shows that borings were completed and that work was proceeding apace. I do not know to what work that refers. In the same year we actually got so far as to have a plasticine model of the bridge prepared. I hope that is not all we shall see of it. In 1928 the department constructed a plasticine model of the bridge. It would be interesting to see that model now. In 1929 the Premier, in reply to Mr. Sleeman, mentioned that plans and specifications and other necessary preliminaries could not be completed in time to permit of the work on the bridge being started that financial year. In July, 1930, Mr. McCallum, in an article to the newspaper, had this to say in connection with the construction of the bridge—

The two existing bridges are in such a bad state of repair as to be a heavy financial burden on the State. The engineers have for a long time been warning the Government that they are anxious for their safety. So the advisability of carrying out the proposed bridge is obvious.

Mr. McCallum was satisfied that the fears of the engineers were warranted, and that there were grave doubts as to the safety of the bridges then. That was in 1930. Mr. McCallum went on to say:—

A bald statement that the work is not going to be proceeded with should not satisfy the public.

It did not satisfy Mr. McCallum then, did not satisfy the public then, and no more does it satisfy the public now. And if we are not to have a bridge, we want to know the real reason why, so that we can face up to the position and endeavour to remove the difficulties.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: What did Mr. McCallum say in 1934?

Mr. TONKIN: I was interested to read in an issue of the "West Australian" in 1931 an article contributed by "Vigilance," who advocated the construction of a timber bridge. He set out his arguments that it would be possible to construct a timber bridge carrying road, rail and pedestrian traffic; that the cost would be only a small fraction of what was necessary for a bridge of concrete and steel, and that practically the whole of the work of constructing a timber bridge could be performed in Western Australia, that the only outside work necessary would be that of the making of the mild steel that would be required for pile-shoes and other small equipment. With that exception, the whole of the work would be performed in the State. That of course would give a great deal of employment to our timber-hewers, our carpenters, and a host of other artisans and labourers. We could use the Rocky Bay quarries for spoil for the embankment, and we could set to work a large number of partially employed people. I really think that in time to come it would be proved that the building of such a bridge would be a much more valuable work than some of the constructions that have been undertaken from time to time. I should like also to have a word on the item dealing with workers' homes. I notice in the annual report which the Premier tabled, that no money had been received this year under the Commonwealth Housing Act. That made me curious. I called for a copy of the Act, read it up, and was satisfied that it was an admirable Act. So I wondered why we had not received any assistance under it. I then wired to Mr. Curtin, M.H.R., at Canberra, and endeavoured to find out whether this State had suf-

ferred in comparison with other States. Mr. Curtin replied that for the last five years no State had received any advance from the Commonwealth Bank under the Commonwealth Housing Act. I am ignorant of the method to be adopted to obtain that money, but the Act provides that money is available for the erection of dwelling houses and the discharge of mortgages on dwelling houses. I wish to ask the Premier, is the Act a dead letter? If not, why has it fallen into disuse and is it possible to revive it so that this State may obtain some of the money? If we had the money, we could undoubtedly spend it. There are people in my electorate anxious to get homes. They are paying 12s. 6d., 15s. and 17s. 6d. a week for ramshackles. Any builder could build a far better home than the places for which those rents are being paid at a price, I should say, of less than £200. I spent my childhood in a house on the goldfields that cost my father less than £100, and there was certainly nothing wrong with it. I am satisfied that a similar house could be built here for £200. I saw some of the houses built on group settlements. If they had not been built under a system of mass production and more care had been exercised, they could have been supplied more cheaply and in better condition, but even so they were not bad houses. They are far better than some of the houses in which people of North Fremantle are living and for which they are paying high rents. I would like to see those people have an opportunity to get cheaper homes which they could purchase for about 10s. or 12s. 6d. a week, which amount would cover interest and capital re-payments. That would be possible only if we could build homes at a price round about £200. It seems to me that an advance under the Commonwealth Housing Act would help us, and that we could build some of those homes. I hope the Premier will inform me why we have not received any money under that Act and whether it is possible to shake up the Commonwealth authorities so that in future we can take advantage of the Act. I should like a definite reply from the Premier as to the reason why it is not thought advisable to commence the construction of a new bridge at Fremantle, and also a definite answer to the questions regarding advances to States under the Commonwealth Housing Act.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [9.3]: My contribution to the discussion will be very brief. I feel reluctant to speak at all, because the Minister for Mines, who would be most concerned with my utterances, is absent. I understand that his absence will be prolonged beyond the passing of these Estimates, and I cannot expect the Premier to hold up the Estimates pending his return. I desire to draw the Government's attention to the fact that the State Battery system, as we know it to-day, is anything but satisfactory. For many years our State Batteries have been gradually falling into a bad state of disrepair, and because of that have become inefficient. Years ago a policy, bad in itself and worse from an economic point of view, was adopted. One of my first remarks to the Minister for Mines when I entered the House in 1921 was that his policy of shifting a State battery, because the production of ore had declined in the district, was bad. I argued then, as I argue to-day, that if caretakers had been employed—many old-age pensioners were available who would have guarded the property of the State—such batteries would have again been of great usefulness to their respective districts. I had in mind that there was always a chance of a revival in the gold mining industry. My utterances, however, were unheeded, and that policy was continued. When one battery in an active district needed repairs, it gradually swallowed its neighbour in a less active district. From my electorate no fewer than four batteries have vanished. Whether we derived any economic benefit from such a policy, I cannot say. But this I can affirm, that the policy was due to two considerations, firstly, the decline in the production of ore by prospectors, and secondly, the desire on the part of the superintendent of State Batteries to keep costs down. Apart from the State Batteries that have vanished from my electorate, it is well known that Governments have dealt liberally in the way of advancing loans to certain syndicates and companys and have taken a mortgage or lien over the assets of the syndicates or companies. Amongst the assets was machinery suitable for adding to the State Battery system. Over a period of years it was not difficult for the Superintendent of State Batteries to keep costs down by dismantling inactive batteries and utilising parts for batteries that re-

quired repairs. The result of that policy is that none of the State batteries, in my electorate at any rate, can be said to be in anything like a decent state of repair, or up to a good standard of efficiency. Had those batteries been retained in their original positions, instead of being dismantled and used to supplement other batteries, there would have been hundreds of men more engaged in prospecting in those districts to-day. Prospecting becomes unattractive unless a man is on particularly high grade ore or unless crushing facilities are near at hand. Consequently we have places like Mt. Keith, Mt. Egerton, Nannine and Quinns suffering sadly from the lack of crushing facilities. The Government have not profited from this very uneconomic policy because they, in turn, have subsidised the carting of ore over great distances, which could have been obviated had the batteries been maintained on their original sites. It seems to me that the present superintendent of State batteries has a keen desire, notwithstanding the great demand for the services of State batteries at the moment, to keep his administrative charges and expenses down to a level comparable with that of his predecessor. In his effort to relieve this, the State Batteries have fallen into a very bad condition. Another bad policy adopted in the past—I hope it will not be reverted to or continued—is the leasing of State batteries to private individuals. At Tuckernarra there is a State mill which has been leased for many years. All that is left of the State battery now is, I believe, a sufficient asset to draw from one individual an offer of £250. That shows the condition of disrepair into which our State batteries have fallen. The other night the Minister for Mines said that the charges for treatment were reasonable, bearing in mind the actual cost of running State batteries plus the carting subsidy. A sum represented by 2 dwts. 8 grains of gold is charged for the treatment of ore. In itself that would seem to be a reasonable charge, but we must remember that in addition there is a deduction of 10 per cent. on the tonnage crushed as against the tonnage treated by cyanidisation, and then the Government only pay on a 75 per cent. extraction. On the last London quotation for gold of £7 1s. 7d. per fine ounce, the charge works out at 16s. 6d., or with exchange added £1 1s. If we add to this the 10s. per ton for crushing, we have a sum of 31s. that is charged for ore treated at a State battery. There are mining com-

panies in this State which not only break the ore and haul it thousands of feet, as well as treat it, but can afford to pay for the development work, at a total cost of less than 31s. per ton. There is something radically wrong with the administration of the State battery system. I have approached the superintendent concerning the condition of some of the mills in my electorate. He does not exhibit a very keen desire to bring the batteries up to a decent state of repair. He argues that this will cost money. That is not his business. His job is to put in a requisition in cases where he knows expenditure is necessary to make the battery efficient and keep it in a good state of repair. In one instance I told the superintendent about the deplorable condition of the Cue battery. I had no sympathy for him. He told me with a cynical smile that it was quite a new mill. Within four months of my speaking to him the battery practically collapsed, and two months passed before it could be put into working order again. There is not that activity, sincerity and desire about the Superintendent of State Batteries that one would like to see. Every State battery in my electorate is several months behind on the prospectors' orders. It is all very well for the Minister and the superintendent to say that to be a few months in arrears is neither here nor there. Their only obligation is to do the best they can, whilst the business people and the prospectors are having a struggle for existence. It does not encourage the prospectors that this sort of thing should continue. A man may find he has a reasonable opportunity of making a certain show pay, and is prepared to work it, but when he finds he has to wait five or six months before he can get his ore treated there is no encouragement for him to make a success of the venture. If there is one industry we can afford to nurse and cherish, it is the gold mining industry, the brightest spot in the State. I do not claim it is the backbone of the country, as the Leader of the Opposition says when he is speaking of the farming industry, but I do say it is carrying practically the whole burden of the State. If we are not going to provide adequate crushing facilities within a reasonable time, and see that the batteries are brought up to a proper state of repair so that they can perform sufficient and satisfactory services, clients of the batter-

ies will become disheartened, and the position generally will be detrimental to the progress and development of the industry. I intend to watch closely for the next 12 months to see whether my utterances have been heeded. If they have not received attention I hope to speak with a greater degree of heat 12 months later than I am doing to-night. In my electorate the State batteries are a disgrace to the department. No Minister or superintendent could justify the exorbitant charges the prospector has to pay for the treatment of his ore. It is not sufficient for the Minister to say that a privately-owned battery charges more. I was always taught when I was in charge of a privately-owned battery, that my battery, although it was doing as well as any other, could do much better, and I was asked to see that it did better. That should be the instruction to the Superintendent of State Batteries. For a few pounds all our State batteries could be put into a state of repair. The money would be well spent and it would encourage those who are sacrificing their comforts, living a hard life, and working under great disadvantages, to hope that they would gain some result from their labours. As things are at present, prospectors may have to wait six months before they get any return. The whole system should be reviewed by the Minister, with the object of seeing what improvements can be effected. Knowing what I do about batteries and the treatment of ore, I say there is much to be done. If I were Minister for Mines I would see that it was done. Before a prospector can be expected to be attracted to any particular district, some provision should be made in advance. I suggest that the State Geologist should indicate where State batteries could be established with a reasonable hope of attracting prospectors to develop auriferous ores there. We have always pursued a wrong policy and waited for prospectors to go ahead. That was all right in the early days, when alluvial gold deposits were found in many places. To-day we have nothing but low-grade deposits so far as I know. There is nothing to attract the prospector unless he has a State battery available within a reasonable distance of his work. In the north-western portion of my electorate there is room for two or three State batteries. The capital involved would be a good invest-

ment, and I am confident that these additional units would attract hundreds of men into the district, and we cannot say how important the results may be. The money would be more wisely spent than money is being spent under some of the headings associated with the Revenue Estimates. I should like to draw the attention of the Minister in charge of goldfields water supplies to the condition of the stock wells along the routes in my electorate. It is not much that the growers of the North-West ask of the Government. One of their main needs is a good watering system along each stock route, and not only for the transport of stock to market, but also for its transport from one district to another and from one station to another. I agree that the department have done much to bring the wells in my electorate into a decent state of repair. However, so far as I can ascertain, the department propose to attend only to the central stock route, the main artery of the North-West. I sincerely hope they will not stop there. They have a team of men operating, and have been most fortunate in securing the services of two or three of the best miners in Western Australia. The reason for that is that those miners cannot get back into the mining industry. They stayed out of it too long, and now, owing to their afflictions, they cannot return to the industry. Let me urge the Minister to utilise that labour while it is available. There are the western and the eastern stock routes. All the wells on those routes deserve immediate attention. I urge the Minister to take advantage of the wonderful services of those men, while they are in his employ, to see that all the wells are put in a proper state of repair. Surely the Minister can do that much for the growers of the North-West. They must have good stock routes in order to check up on shipping and other means of transport by which they would be exploited if they could not overland their stock. I repeat, it is not much they ask for. Were I the Minister, I would do my utmost to retain the services of those miners permanently. When they have got all the wells that are now out of repair brought to a condition of efficiency, let them start off again and go over the stock routes afresh. I desire to draw the Government's attention to the fact that there are wells needed in the more northern portions of the central stock route, or from the central stock route across to the west, prac-

tically desert country. Hon. members can appreciate the wastage in beasts travelling long distances through sandy country with very little feed, in the heat of the day, without water.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Is that stock route used now?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. Many stores come down that route for fattening purposes, and many beasts are transferred from one district to another by means of that route. Others are brought down in easy stages. Numbers came down recently owing to the bad season. I do not know how the North would have got on if that team of men had not been put to work at the time it was. There would have been a crisis among the growers. I fail to understand the Government not spending the few pounds necessary for putting down wells. In the early days, when these wells were first gazetted, cattle were the beasts principally catered for in that area. One can take big stock over a fair distance without water, but much of that area has now been subdivided and sheep are grown on it. The little animal cannot travel too far or too fast. On a hot day, with his coat of wool, he is not able to go far, especially without water. Some squatters are trying to find water on their runs; but according to the information that has reached me, negotiations have been entered into with the Government for the use of one of the Southern Cross boring plants now in the North. I sincerely hope the Government will meet the wishes of the men in the North in that respect. Let them ascertain whether water can be obtained at reasonable distances. I know that the Government are sympathetic towards the North-West. The men there have a great struggle all the year round, what with one pest and another; and when they find it necessary to transport their stock, they are handicapped by want of water. That stage has been reached in the history of the North-West when the defect should be remedied. If we could get for the North-West a fraction of what is made available to the wheatgrowers, we would be quite satisfied. A few pounds would overcome the difficulties of the North-West, and I urge the Minister concerned to give earnest consideration to the request for further wells along the northern portion of the northern stock route. I urge, further, that all wells on the three stock routes be put in a state of repair before they lose the value they now possess.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [9.28]: It seems to me that from all quarters, whether one takes the position in Great Britain or the situation in other parts of the world, there is being forced upon us in this State the necessity, above everything else, for a more balanced economy. The remarks of the Leader of the Opposition in regard to the need for more money for agriculture, and the remarks of the member for Nedlands reminding us that of our wool production we use only a half per cent. and of our wheat production only ten per cent., in themselves point out the reason why we in this State have been so hard hit by the depression as compared with other countries. The reason is to be found in our unbalanced economy. In past years we were misled into exporting to an Old World which was working on international lines of trade. We were also urged to spend millions of pounds upon several export industries. I am pleased to notice that in the East manufacturers now are discussing the question of spreading Australian secondary industries from two Eastern States to all the States. That I regard as an important and striking advance recorded in the news during the last few days. If we can persuade the Federal Government and the Commonwealth generally to achieve in Australia a more balanced community, we shall overcome our troubles. Because of these evils, we have heard to-night all the complaints about wheatgrowers unable to balance their books and about the closing-up of farms all over Australia. These features are due to the fact that we have depended upon exports to the ruthless Old World, which does not now require our products as it used to do. We must remember that Great Britain has shown us a good example, and that during the years since the war she has deliberately endeavoured to make herself a self-contained country. Her exports may continue, but nevertheless she will soon be in a position of being absolutely self-contained, even in regard to growing her own food products. She has experts who maintain that that can be done. An example has been set recently whereby she is putting thousands of Britishers from the idle, depressed areas on the land, thus starting the very group settlements which apparently we are finding trouble in carrying on here.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Do you say they can grow their foodstuffs as well?

Mr. NORTH: Experts say it can be done. The effect upon us is shown in the fact that the Eastern States manufacturers are not only demanding a greater increase in our secondary industries but are advocating that they shall be spread through all the States and not merely concentrated in Victoria and New South Wales. If that should become the policy of Australia, there should be not merely an attempt to support farming for its own sake, but urgent steps should be taken to develop Australia's secondary industries and thus utilise more of the trade internally, which absorbs three-quarters of the total. We should then be better placed to deal with our troubles. Not only that, but by extending our exports from that point, having largely increased our secondary industries, we shall be in a position to commence paying off our national debt abroad. At present we are merely carrying on with our exports to meet interest charges. We should be fully equipped, physically and from an engineering standpoint, to produce 90 per cent. of our requirements within the Commonwealth, and surely the time has come when that should be our policy. The reason that it has been so difficult in Western Australia is that we have a mere handful of people with a huge surplus to get rid of. From the standpoint of wheat production alone we could feed 3,000,000 people. This State could easily carry that number whereas in the Eastern States there are already 6,000,000 to-day. It is not for the Opposition to say how that policy should be inaugurated, but it is pleasant to know that leading economists in Australia are turning their attention in that direction. I do not know why Country Party members should not be glad that some method should be suggested to increase the population of Western Australia largely in order that we shall more nearly absorb the produce we can grow but cannot sell.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [9.32]: I was rather amused to hear the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) refer to the Fremantle Harbour Trust, and his suggestion that the revenue from the Trust's trading should not be taken into Consolidated Revenue. As a matter of fact, in 1931 I asked a number of questions that the hon. member replied to in his then Ministerial capacity. His views in those days do not coincide with those he expresses to-day. I have always advocated that the revenue from

the Fremantle Harbour Trust should not be paid into Consolidated Revenue, and the Trust forced to go, cap-in-hand, to the Government if they desired to spend money on the wharves. On the 23rd June, 1931, I asked a question in this House, and sought information from the member for Nedlands, as Chief Secretary, regarding the amount that had been paid into Consolidated Revenue each year from 1918, inclusive, by the Fremantle Harbour Trust. His answer gave the following details:—

	£
1917-18	Nil
1918-19	Nil
1919-20	49,705
1920-21	71,409
1921-22	56,491
1922-23	47,272
1923-24	96,611
1924-25	142,963
1925-26	112,026
1926-27	142,245
1927-28	162,521
1928-29	190,715
1929-30	193,568

So those figures show that the £80,000, of which he complained, represents a mere bagatelle compared with what has been paid into Consolidated Revenue by the Trust in the past, including the time when the hon. member himself was a Minister.

Hon. N. Keenan: I was not Minister from 1924 to 1930.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The hon. member was a Minister in June, 1931.

Hon. N. Keenan: Yes, and I gave you the history of what had happened, under other Governments.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The hon. member went on to say, in answer to a further question I put to him—

It is correct to say that I view the high cost of harbour services as detrimental to the welfare of the State, and representation has been made accordingly, with a view to revision of the charges on export of primary products. Without the concurrence, however, of the Treasury, the surtax cannot be abolished, and in view of the necessity for the expenditure at an early date of a large sum in reconstruction of wharves, such concurrence is not obtainable.

At that stage the hon. member claimed that concurrence in what was suggested could not be obtained because money was required for the reconstruction of wharves. On the 7th July, 1931, I asked the hon. member, in his capacity as Chief Secretary, the following question—

In view of the amount, £193,000, paid into Consolidated Revenue last year from the

operations of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, does he intend to continue using this utility as a taxing machine?

To that question the hon. member replied—

The operations of the Fremantle Harbour Trust are not, and have never been, used as a taxing machine.

I also asked him—

Has he made representations to the Treasury to remove the present surcharge, which has helped considerably to raise the cost of living to the "dizzy heights of 1929"?

To that he replied—

The Treasury, with the knowledge of the Minister, is not in a position to remove the surcharge. The Minister, therefore, refrains from making useless suggestions.

I asked him—

Is he prepared to subordinate his fiscal reform ideas to the dictation of the State Treasury?

To that he replied—

If any conflict arises, no.

Then again I asked him—

Will he refrain from criticising the incidence of the tariff till he is prepared to remove the war-time measure known as the "surcharge," which can continue only with his sanction?

The reply I received from the hon. member was—

No. The Federal tariff and charges made for harbour services are not comparable.

I have always claimed that the profits from the operations of the Fremantle Harbour Trust should not be taken into Consolidated Revenue but should be retained by the Trust in order that they could carry out necessary work on the wharves. I hope it will be possible in the near future for that practice to be adopted. At present hundreds of thousands of pounds are paid into Consolidated Revenue by the Harbour Trust, and if £1,000 or £2,000 is required for construction work or repair work on the Fremantle wharves, the Harbour Trust commissioners have to approach the Government for permission to spend the money. I hope that will be altered very soon and that the commissioners will be able to retain at least some of the money they make in order to effect necessary work. Another matter, which was referred to by the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Tonkin), that I wish to deal with relates to workers' homes. The Loan Estimates for 1934-35 contained provision for £35,000 as capital for the Workers' Homes Board, but this year

the amount has been reduced to £15,000. Even last year the workers were not provided with the homes they should have obtained. The man in a reasonable position with a substantial salary is a good mark and he can secure a home from the board at an expenditure of upwards of £900. I claim the people for whom the Workers' Homes Board was created are not those in such a position, but rather the poorer man who is on the basic wage and on part-time work. Such a man has no more chance of securing a home from the Workers' Homes Board than he has of flying. I know that for a fact, because I have frequently approached the board on such matters. It is not necessary for the man who has a good job to secure a home from the Workers' Homes Board because he can go to outside institutions and obtain the assistance he may require. The man who should receive assistance through the Workers' Homes Board is he who is on the bottom rung. When I visited the Royal Show recently I was interested in the display of the State Sawmills. I noticed a plan of a house on the wall of the department's exhibit. It was the type of house that hundreds of people would jump at a chance of securing. I asked what such a house would cost and was told that it would run into just under £200, including material and labour. The men who should get assistance from the Workers' Homes Board are those who are down and out. They should be able to secure homes at from 7s. to 7s. 6d. per week. Such homes would be welcomed by hundreds of people in the metropolitan area, and in the country districts where homes are still more scarce. During the life of the previous Government the late Mr. Seaddan, who was then a Minister, made available on my representations timber for the building of small homes for the unemployed working for the local authority. The labour was done by other unemployed men working for the local authority. All told, about 20 of those houses were erected at a cost of £70. They were counted very good at the time, and I appreciated the action of Mr. Seaddan. But we should go a little better now and erect homes costing up to £170 or £180. Unless the Workers' Homes Board can do this sort of thing, they ought to close up. I did not stop at the Workers' Homes Board, but went on to the Industrial Development Committee, and put the proposition to them. They had money

available for the adding to existing homes of one, two or three rooms, as the case might be. So there we had the spectacle of people who had already good homes but who, wanting some extra rooms, could go to the Industrial Development Committee. That committee also, in reply to my representations, said they were not prepared to do anything in the way of small homes, although those homes were for the very people who should be catered for.

Mr. Sampson: And who need the assistance most of all.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Certainly. I hope something will be done about this matter. If the policy of the Workers' Homes Board cannot be varied, and if the policy of the Industrial Development Committee cannot be altered, I hope there will be brought into being some other body which will cater for those who most require small homes. The conditions under which a lot of those people are living in Fremantle are absolutely rotten—three or four families in one home, because none of them can afford to pay the full rent. I hope something will be done for those poorer people so that they may get homes for themselves.

Mr. North: Are there many empty houses down there?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Yes, quite a lot, while three or four families are to be found living in the one house because not any one of them can pay the full rent. Then the Workers' Homes Board have numbers of homes to dispose of, but the prices are far beyond the basic wage worker. For a long time we have seen recurring every year an item on the Loan Estimates, "Leighton-Robb's Jetty Railway and Fremantle Bridge, unexpended balance loan authorisation, 30th June, 1935, £65,141"; and in the other column, "Estimated unexpended balance, 30th June, 1936, £65,141." That has been recurring for a number of years, and I am tired of seeing it in these columns. I only wish something would be inserted showing what is likely to be done during the coming year. However, in that I have been disappointed. Now it will be necessary for me to prove that there are engineers, really competent men, who are entirely opposed to the dictum of other engineers who have said that a new Fremantle bridge is not necessary. I shall show that highly competent engineers have said that a new bridge is absolutely necessary. So I wish to present to the Committee the names

of men who have recommended that a new bridge is urgently needed. Then I will endeavour to maintain that other people, Ministers and members, have declared in favour of the bridge. As far back as 1897 the bridge was declared unsafe, and another bridge was built alongside it. I have here an illustration showing the old bridge, which was built in 1864 by convict labour. In 1897 the authorities of the day decided it was unsafe, and so they built this new bridge to take its place. It was for vehicular traffic, while the bridge of to-day was reserved for pedestrian traffic. In 1907-08 the old discarded bridge was brought to life again, because it was decided that the new bridge that had been built was worn out. So new piles were put into the old bridge, and it was brought back into use again for the general public. It reminds me of a spectacle I saw last year when a man found his fowlhouse had nearly fallen down. He put a few props under it and said, "It will now do for quite a long time." This bridge is in much the same position. It was built at a little distance up the river, and when it was moved down into position a few piles were put under it, the top was cut off, and we have been using that bridge ever since.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Is it safe now?

Mr. SLEEMAN: One man thinks so, but if he knew as much about it as I do he would change his view. He has declared that it is safe, but I make this public announcement that the bridge is not safe, and for a considerable time past has not been safe. I hope to show before I sit down that engineers entirely superior to those who say it is safe have said that it should be removed and a new bridge constructed. It will be necessary for me to show who recommended that a new bridge should be built. Mr. Stileman, then Engineer-in-Chief, said a new bridge was necessary. Mr. Blake, who at considerable expense was brought out to this country to check Mr. Stileman's recommendation, also said the bridge was unsafe and should be rebuilt. So there we have Mr. Stileman and Mr. Blake on the one side. It will not be difficult to show that the ex-Minister for Works, Mr. McCallum, thought the bridge was unsafe. Also I will show before I conclude that Mr. Collier, the present Premier, evidently thought the bridge was unsafe. Speaking in this Chamber on the 25th November, 1930, Mr. Collier said,

when referring to the proposed retirement of Mr. Stileman—

It is false economy to cut off the brains of the department, especially with the experience we have had in the Works Department of Western Australia during the last 20 years. I doubt whether there is any other State in Australia, or in fact any other country in the world, where there are so many monuments—and expensive monuments, too—to the incompetence of professional officers and engineers as exists in Western Australia. Go where we will, we can see where money running into hundreds of thousands of pounds, in fact, I might say, close on a million pounds, has been absolutely squandered because we have had to accept the advice of incompetent men.

Mr. Collier on the same occasion said—

But Governments in the past have been induced to undertake schemes of this kind because they have accepted the estimates of engineers, estimates which ultimately proved to be astray to the extent of as much as 500 or 600 per cent.

Again on the same occasion Mr. Collier said—

The State is covered with monuments to engineering stupidity and folly, and when we are able to secure the services of a highly qualified man, we retire him for the sake of saving a few hundreds or a thousand pounds!

Later in the same speech Mr. Collier said—

I have no hesitation in saying that, except the Engineer-in-Chief, there is not in the State an engineer qualified to undertake the works this State will have to construct in the years ahead.

According to "Hansard," pages 1961-2, the ex-Minister for Works stated—

Take the Wagin water supply: There £15,000 was spent, and on completion of the work very little water could get into the reservoir, and what little did get in was not held. When I first went there with Mr. Stileman and the rock catchment was pointed out to him he was amazed that any engineer could have recommended the plan to the Government . . .

Conceive the result if that wall at Churchman's Brook had been allowed to rest on the kaolin foundation 4ft. 6in. below the surface! The whole of the cost of the construction would have been gone and the lives of the people in the valley below jeopardised. Fortunately the work was saved through the fault being discovered before it was too late . . .

My experience of Mr. Stileman shows me that he embraces a unique combination. He combines a highly skilled professional brain with the acumen of a highly qualified business man. When we take the report he submitted to Parliament on the Fremantle harbour works, if we are not convinced of his capacity, ability and wide vision, I do not know what we require with which to be convinced. The report has no equal amongst all the reports that have ever been submitted to Parliament.

Thus both the Premier and the ex-Minister for Works paid a glowing tribute to Mr. Stileman. The Premier said he was the one and only man able to undertake the works that would be required in the State in years to come.

Mr. Patrick: Other engineers have carried out large works, including the Canning water scheme.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I have quoted the opinion of the Premier. Mr. Stileman said—

The heavy floods of July, 1926, which caused the collapse of the north abutment of the railway bridge, emphasised the need for early consideration of this whole question, while it was clear that both the existing bridges were approaching, if they had not already reached, the limit of their economical life, and that heavy annual expenditure must be incurred in their maintenance.

A Bill was introduced by Mr. McCallum for the erection of a new bridge and Parliament passed it.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: That does not say that the present bridge is unsafe.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why should he recommend a new one if the present one were safe?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Let me repeat Mr. Stileman's words for the benefit of the hon. member—

It was clear that both the existing bridges were approaching, if they had not already reached, the limit of their economical life and that heavy annual expenditure must be incurred in their maintenance.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: It might be approaching that condition for the next ten years.

Mr. SLEEMAN: And it might not. If the hon. member wishes to judge for himself whether it is likely to last for the next ten years, let him inspect the bridge from a boat in the river.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: And pit my judgment against that of the engineers?

Mr. SLEEMAN: That is where a lot of people are making a mistake. There are some people who know more about the condition of the Fremantle bridge than do the engineers. I refer to the divers. An engineer will not inspect the bridge under water, but the diver does so. Before I finish I will read a report by the diver. He is prepared to say that in his opinion the bridge is not safe and has not been safe for a considerable time.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: The engineer would have the diver's report.

Mr. SLEEMAN: When the diver was inspecting the bridge, the engineer immediately above him expressed the desire to go down in the diving suit. A calm day arrived and the diver said, "It is a nice day to-day, what we term dead water. You had better go down and have a look round." They put the engineer into the diving suit and lowered him. The diver told him that when he got down he ought to walk along the piles and have a good look at them for himself. When the engineer reached the bottom he refused to move one yard from the spot where he was lowered and almost immediately gave the signal to be pulled up. Then he remarked, "If that is diving, you can have it on your own." He did not inspect one pile.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: That is my view too.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The Government or anyone else can get the opinion of the diver. Would the hon. member say that Mr. Stileman or any other engineer knew more of the condition of the bridge below water than did the diver?

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: He would have the diver's report.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I maintain that on the diver's report any third-class engineer would have recommended the building of a new bridge without delay. Mr. Blake was brought to Western Australia at great expense to the State to say whether Mr. Stileman's report was correct or otherwise.

Mr. Moloney: Did not he report on the harbour?

Mr. SLEEMAN: He was brought out to report on the harbour, the bridge and the railway. Mr. Blake said—

The harbour is served by a system of railway sidings (about 11 miles in all) with connections to the existing main line from Perth to Fremantle; this latter crosses the Swan River on a bridge composed of timber piles at the northern or upper end of the harbour. The quays are also served by about two miles of roadway, and cross-river road communication is provided by a bridge about 1,400 feet above the railway bridge. This bridge is of similar type of construction to the railway bridge, and both are in an unsatisfactory condition.

That was the condition at the time of his visit. Later on in his report Mr. Blake made recommendations as follows—

As the existing road and railway bridges should, in any event, owing to their condition be renewed at the earliest possible date, it is

opportune that a re-location of these bridges should be effected so as to facilitate the extension of the harbour. We suggest the removal of both bridges to a point in the vicinity of Bruce-street, but a little higher up the river, as shown on Drawing No. 3, and recommend that they be independent structures.

The ex-Minister for Works, on the strength of the reports by Mr. Stileman and Mr. Blake, introduced the Bill in 1927. According to "Hansard" of that year, pages 1954-6, he said—

In it we provide for the deviation of the railway that now serves Fremantle to the site of the suggested bridge over the Swan River, as recommended by the Engineer-in-Chief in his report on the bridge and the suggested improvements to the Fremantle harbour. So the Bill carries with it the acceptance by the Government of the Engineer-in-Chief's report. He says the bridge itself will take at least two years to construct from the time the work starts . . .

It is most necessary to be very cautious in making public statements dealing with bridges, particularly a bridge carrying so much traffic as does the Fremantle bridge, for we do not want to create an impression in the public mind that the bridge is unsafe.

Realising that it was necessary to be cautious, the ex-Minister for Works continued—

Just after the washaway that occurred in 1926, the Railway Department, who are in charge of the railway bridge, examined the whole position, and the Engineer for Ways and Works, who is the responsible officer, put up to the Commissioner of Railways a long report on the bridge. After he had dealt with the repairs, he concluded his minute by stating—

I cannot undertake to maintain the present bridge in safe working order for more than about three years longer, and it will probably take all that time before a new bridge will be ready, even if a start is made at once.

That was the opinion of another engineer and his report is dated the 14th October, 1926. The ex-Minister for Works continued—

Over a year has gone by since then. There is the declaration by a responsible engineer that he cannot guarantee the safety of the bridge for more than another two years from to-day. And it will take at least two years—provided the money is found to the extent the Engineer-in-Chief has asked for—to build the bridge as suggested.

The traffic bridge is an historic structure. . . It has undergone many alterations since it was first constructed, and has been patched and added to from year to year in the endeavour to make it carry the traffic. It has given good service and, of course, is now decrepit with age . . .

In 1920 the effect of the teredo became evident and tarred piles were driven alongside the existing piles where the effect of the marine borer was most marked We are dealing with the traffic bridge which was actually closed in 1897. Another bridge was built alongside it. At that time it was considered unsafe. The average cost of maintaining the two bridges over the last five years has been £41,003.

He went on further to say—

In order to give some semblance of safety to the bridge we have had to provide under the Traffic Act that no person shall drive any vehicle across it of a weight exceeding 35 cwt. at more than eight miles an hour. The Fremantle trams do not travel at more than six miles an hour, while the maximum rate of other vehicles is eight miles an hour. The big trams are not allowed to cross the bridge at all.

These are statements made by a responsible Minister, who said he had to be cautious. The engineers declared that the bridge was unsafe. We are also told that the railway bridge was unsafe. In 1925 I told members of this Chamber that the railway bridge was unsafe, and that something should be done to make it safe. When the bridge went they declared it was only the abutment that gave way. After all, the weakest link in a chain is the first to go. There was so much timber in the fairway that the fairway was blocked. Something had to go, and if the abutment had not gone, the bridge itself would have gone. So much timber had been driven into the fairway that there was no room for the water to get away. In the opinion of the ex-Minister for Works as well as that of the Premier, the engineers in question were competent to speak on this question. People holding responsible positions do not say these things offhand without first considering what they are going to say. The ex-Minister for Works said he had to be cautious in his remarks. I should like to show how visitors to our shores view these bridges. In August, 1927, a visitor made the following remarks—

The top of the harbour where the blue Swan River narrows suddenly to a pretty country stream is still spanned by a bridge of poles and planks.

This is how visitors view the harbour. I will now turn to the files. There are one or two matters I would like to have got hold of, and Mr. Tindale said he would endeavour to trace them for me, but up to the present I have not been able to find them. On the 27th August, 1926, I introduced a depu-

tation to the Premier and he made the following very definite statement—

The question of a new bridge was an old, old story, but he was going to vary it and tell them something new. The Government believed that a new bridge ought to be built, and that it ought to be commenced as soon as possible, and the Government were going to do it. I will make provision on the Estimates which will be under revision in a few weeks' time for the money to be available, and the bridge will be started as soon as the responsible officers make their recommendation to the Government as to the most suitable site. Beyond that there will be no delay.

On the 13th June of this year, however, the Premier, according to the "West Australian," said—

Questioned about the suggestion that a new bridge be built over the Swan River at Fremantle as an unemployment relief measure, possibly with Federal aid, the Premier (Mr. P. Collier) made it clear yesterday that this was a project which would have to wait. Money spent on a bridge, Mr. Collier said, is not reproductive at all. So far as the Fremantle bridge is concerned, my attitude is that as long as the responsible engineers in the Government service certify that the present structure is safe and reliable and that no risk or danger is incurred in using it, I will not attempt to find any money for a new bridge. I will agree to find the money only when the engineers advise that a new bridge has to be built because the old one is not safe. The engineers, of course, take into consideration the time necessary for the provision of a new bridge.

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

Bells rung, and a quorum formed.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I will again refer to the files, in view of the promise made by the Premier. Mr. Creswell, Engineer for Ways and Works, a competent officer, made the following report on the railway bridge—

It is desirable that there should be as little delay as possible in deciding upon the scheme for a new bridge, as we are repairing the old bridge for one set of rails only, and apart from the considerable inconvenience that will be incurred in single line working from North Fremantle to the south side of the river, I cannot undertake to maintain the present bridge in safe working order for more than about three years longer, and it will probably take all that time before the new bridge would be ready, even if a start is made at once.

Further on in the file I find diver Luxton's report, which is as follows—

This is to certify that I have made a very careful examination of all piles under North Fremantle traffic bridge, and have noted and marked the condition of each separate pile

corresponding with the numbers on the original plan. All the piles with the black heads (good). They are the tarred twin piles. Others I have marked bad. They are old piles. Some are eaten right through, some are partly eaten through, and others I have marked (gone) are eaten off at the water's edge and are lying on the bottom of the river. Others I have marked (fair) are tender piles in the traffic arches, with two or three exceptions. All struts are gone below water.

I started at pier 34 south-east abutment, and have continued through deep water to pier 20, to where it rises to a bank north-west, and I think by comparing my sketch with the original plan you will be able to follow it. I have also made an inspection of all piles and struts from pier 20 to pier No. 1, of which you will find list attached. Yours faithfully, (signed) E. Luxton, Fremantle Harbour Works.

P.S.—You will notice that I have marked a lot of the shallow-water piles "fair." They are very old piles, and I have tried them with auger and with wood chisel, and they show solid timber. For that reason I have marked them "fair."

It will be seen that numerous piles are gone altogether. Some have been eaten off at the water's edge and are lying at the bottom of the river. The fender piles, with two or three exceptions, were rotted; others were eaten right through. That was the position in 1927. Now to show how the lives of our people are protected by some of our officials, let me mention a most seathing report submitted by a diver, which caused someone to wake up on the 29th July, 1930. Nothing had been done meantime. Mr. Munt wrote—

I find on investigation that a diver examined the substructure of this bridge in 1927. His report is at folios 47-49. Although the report indicated that a number of the piles were in unsound condition, no action seems to have been taken. I consider it is necessary that the substructure receive attention. To ensure that all weak points will receive attention, I would recommend that we have the piles again inspected by a diver, as, if teredo are present, considerable damage could be done in three years.

After the diver had sent in such a report, nothing was done. I wish to warn the authorities that if this is the way they care for the lives of our people, it is time someone else took the matter over. Here is a comment sent back to the Under Secretary for Works—

I made a personal inspection of this bridge recently, and consider that a diver's inspection of the piles should be made. The inspection by me was made on the 18th ultimo, but it is only now that we have been able to locate the report of the diver who was previously engaged to inspect the bridge.

It takes three years to locate the report. Mr. Munt wakes up and wants to know what has happened. Thereupon there is a reply that the report cannot be located. Now I pass on to the 25th November, 1930, when Mr. Glendinning is found writing as follows:—

Serious faults have been discovered, and although the structure has stood apparently for some time with these faults, it cannot be expected to do so very much longer. As it now stands, the bridge is unsafe. I mean by this the bridge is not capable of sustaining a load above the ordinary, a severe strain, or shock. I refer mainly to both navigation spans where a heavy load overhead, or the bumping of a passing vessel, barge or tug, might easily bring on a serious collapse. Until the plans are completed and my computations worked out, I cannot indicate the full amount of work necessary. Many timber beams will require strengthening or renewal, and new work is required in piles and timber work; this will take some little time to complete. I submit my reasons for the urgency of making both navigation spans safe.

Right through the piece we find engineer after engineer reporting in the same terms. Because one engineer said the bridge was likely to be safe for a while, the lives of the people of Western Australia are likely to be gambled with. I accept no responsibility. If my representations prove futile, I cannot help it. Now I come to Mr. Tindale's last report—the only report, so far as I see, with a good word for the bridge. Perhaps Mr. Tindale is right and all the others are wrong. Engineer or no engineer, any member of this Chamber who saw the piles would unhesitatingly say the bridge was unsafe, no matter what any engineer might say. Mr. Tindale writes, under date of the 4th July last—

I have been interested in running out an estimate of the cost of constructing, in timber, a bridge to give service equal to the suggested concrete bridge; such a bridge, I estimate, would cost in the region of £75,000.

Further back Mr. Tindale's estimate for a concrete bridge was £650,000. Now he talks of a timber bridge to cost £75,000.

At 5 per cent., the annual interest charges on the concrete bridge would be £32,500, and on the timber structure £3,750, or a difference of some £29,000. In other words, a timber structure, as compared with one of concrete, would pay for itself in something over two years. We could safely assume its life at 30 years. I do not wish it to be thought that I am advocating a timber structure; there is no necessity for such advocacy at the present time, in view of the stated condition of the present bridge.

Mr. Tindale says that a timber structure could be put up for £75,000, representing an annual interest charge of £3,750. Whilst I am loth to agree to a timber structure, yet if such a structure is likely to last 30 years, and at that cost, it would be cheaper to adopt timber. This country is paying more for interest and maintenance on the two existing bridges than would construct a timber bridge. I have been against a timber bridge for many years, but if its construction would mean the distribution of the money within the State, with the results already stated, I would agree to a timber structure. I trust something will be done shortly to improve the present position. Here is a photograph showing "Further Repairs to Bridge." That is quite a common sight. In fact, it is the commonest of sights to see the old red flag waving there. I do not know what Billy Hughes would have done if in war-time the red flag had waved there as much as it does in these times of peace. Members of this Chamber who drive motor cars know the condition of the bridge. My smaller children are never happier than when going over it, because, while they do not know the danger, they say they get such a good switchback movement on the old rattletrap. And here is a photograph, taken 34 years ago, of a bridge built by convicts. Now I show a photograph of another bridge which lasted until a few years ago, when it was pulled down and the community reverted to the old bridge. The photograph shows the amount of timber in the structure. It also shows the place where the women and children of North Fremantle had their clothes torn to pieces for many years. Another photograph shows a huge lump of timber that has been placed on the bridge so that no tram will fall through. If it had not been placed there, perhaps a tram would have been deposited into the river below. This photograph shows a few rails that are missing. It does not matter if someone falls over the edge. Photographs cannot lie; there they are! Another photograph shows the nice approach that we have to the bridge. Members can see the tumble-down nature of the approach; rails down here and there do not seem to matter at all. Now I will direct the attention of members to the most serious of the photographs I have. This morning I was in a rowing boat taking photographs from below. I want to warn the Government that if they do not do some-

thing about the bridge very soon, something serious will happen. If they do not take action, they will not have the bridge much longer. Should people meet their deaths there, the Government will not be able to say they were not told about the position. They will not be able to claim the displacement of the abutments as an excuse next time. This photograph of some of the piles was taken this morning and the negative developed during the day. It shows the piles eaten right through.

Mr. Moloney: Was that between wind and water?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Yes. The photograph was taken at low tide, and the part between wind and water is the worst of all. That is where the piles go. I might explain that many of the piles have been eaten through for some time and the Government have placed fender piles or spring piles alongside the original piles, to which they have been bolted. This photograph shows that spring piles have been eaten through as well. As some of the main piles and spring piles have both been eaten through, God knows what is keeping the bridge up. I urge the Government to do something to rectify the position. It cannot remain unattended much longer. I know that some members regard any mention of the Fremantle bridge as a joke; but I can assure them it is no laughing matter. It is a serious thing to gamble with the lives of the people. I hope this will be the last time I shall have to direct the attention of the Government to this particular matter. If it is absolutely necessary that we must put up with a wooden bridge, we shall have to agree to that course being pursued. For my part, I do not like the idea. Some people say that posterity can look after itself, and if a wooden bridge will last for another 30 years, I suppose we shall have to be content with that. I would prefer a more substantial bridge of concrete and steel to be constructed rather than one of the inferior article, if I may refer to our hardwoods as such. I do not desire to disparage our local timbers, but used in water, it has to be admitted that wood is inferior to concrete.

MR. WARNER (Mt. Marshall) [10.23]: I do not desire to delay the Committee, but I regard it as necessary to inform members of the conditions that obtain in the North-Eastern portion of the wheatbelt. It is proper that the Government shall be informed of the greatly-reduced quantity of hay that

will be cut and wheat harvested in that part of the State this year. I refer more particularly to that part of the district that extends along the railway from Koorda to Campion, and from Kulja to Bonnie Rock. In that area little hay will be cut this year and very small quantities of wheat will be harvested, possibly not more than will be sufficient to feed the stock and people, respectively, in that affected area. It will be necessary for much additional assistance to be rendered to settlers if we are to prevent further abandonment of farms. It is essential, from a national standpoint, to stem the rush of farmers from their holdings. Quite recently we had an indication of what results from the abandonment of properties in the consequent cost to the Government on account of the grasshopper plague. The pests bred on abandoned farms became such a menace that they not only involved the Government in considerable cost in the supply of poison and so forth, but ate out even what small crops were on farms in the vicinity. For those farms some little profit would have been made but for the plague. I desire to give the Government credit for the manner in which, immediately they were informed by me of the situation, they took action to cope with the difficulty. They sent the Government Entomologist to examine the position on the spot and to act in conjunction with the road board and the farmers in coping with the plague. Had it not been for the abandoned farms in that area, I do not think there would have been any grasshopper plague. Farmers who were working their holdings cannot be blamed for that occurrence. To permit a further abandonment of farms will merely mean depleting our exports, the proceeds from which enable the Government to function. If further assistance is not available to the farmers in that part of the State this year, abandonments may be so heavy that the effect will be felt by future Governments charged with the administration of the affairs of State. Owing to the low prices obtainable for wheat, a farm to-day is more a liability than an asset. This year when it looked as though good prices might be obtained, it was disheartening to know that drought conditions prevailed over such a large area of the State, from which no returns, practically speaking, will be received. The trustees of the Agricultural Bank are really getting all they can

from the farmers, but, under existing conditions, the man on the land is largely in the position of a manager of his property. Many of them are beginning to think they would be better off on sustenance than continuing on their farms, with the possibility of having insufficient with which to carry on and to provide clothing for their families. The farmer is hard working and spends long hours at his toil. The present Government desire that every worker shall be reasonably compensated, and, in those circumstances, due consideration should be given to the position of the farmer, who should also be entitled to a reasonable living. Most of them have sunk their life's savings in their properties. If we accept the figures quoted by the member for Subiaco (Mr. Moloney) with reference to loan funds made available by the Government in aid of the farmers, we need not dispute them. On the other hand, if farmers had been engaged on the basic wage and had received payment for the time they were employed, which would be the equivalent of the result of the sale of their products, their employers would be owing them more in wages than would be represented by the amount of the farmers' indebtedness borrowed from the State to enable them to carry on, and in that way helping to keep the State solvent. That is the position of the farmer, and as I know the member for Subiaco (Mr. Moloney) is a fighter for every class of working man, I trust that if he speaks later, as no doubt he will, he will agree that the position of the farmer must be maintained at a reasonable standard and not be any worse than that of other workers. At the present time it must be agreed that the position of the farmer is an unenviable one. I am pointing this out so that the Government may see that more money must be forthcoming than is provided in the Estimates to enable the farmer to carry on. I am pleading chiefly for those in infected areas who, through no fault of their own, will be forced off their holdings. A large amount of money will be required, but I hope and believe the Government will give reasonably sympathetic treatment to those farmers who are honestly endeavouring to carry on. It has been mentioned here, and I endorse the remark, that numbers of farmers have gone off their holdings but that those who are left are all good solid fight-

ers, and it would be very hard to see them abandon the land. From a national point of view it would spell ruination. The lack of rain in that part of the district is not alone responsible for there being no crops up there this year, for equally heavily felt is the lack of water conservation. This is another reason why it is essential to have water supplies in further numbers installed in that area, for pretty soon now the Government will have to convey water along that railway line. Had an amount of money been spent in small tanks up there it would have averted this crisis and given the farmers the opportunity to retain some of their stock. As it is, unless we have thunderstorms, it really appears that the farmers will have to remove their stock to other districts for agistment, or alternatively dispose of them. I am not unmindful of the fact that this Government have given me quite a lot of assistance in point of water supplies in my district. Five or six country conservations have been laid down in that area, but at the same time I feel that the Government should give more. It is clear that the farmers will have to go in for mixed farming, and to do that they must have water supplies. So, too, water is required by all those farmers who believe it is better to have horses than to have tractors, which means using imported fuel as against our own local product. I believe that much hay will have to be sent into these districts this year, and I trust the Minister for Lands took notice of my remark some time ago, when I asked that the Agricultural Bank should be requested to see whether it was possible to assist those with hay in the infected area so as to save the importing of chaff carrying various weeds, and of the scandalous quality which was sent up there recently. Some of the chaff sold to the farmers up there was a positive disgrace and quite unfitted to be fed to their stock. I do not know whether it was the fault of the Government, but I do know that fodder had to be supplied while the drought conditions prevailed, and the Government had to supply it in order to keep the farmers going. I hope the Minister for Water Supplies will endeavour to give some added water catchments in that area. In the building of the class of tank for which I have made application, local products can be used and, of course, local labour. We have a sufficiently

large number of men still only partially employed and who could be put on full time on those jobs up there. The dams in that area have only a few feet of water in them, whereas in a normal season they would now be full. That water shortage, I am sorry to say, extends down to Kodj-Kodjin, and I trust that one of the supplies applied for will be given to them so as to save an exodus of stock from that district this year. I believe the Minister for Agriculture is fully acquainted with the conditions prevailing up there, for I know he made a personal inspection of the district, and I believe the Minister for Lands also has a knowledge of the conditions. I trust their attitude towards the farmers will be of a sympathetic nature, and that they will use every endeavour to obtain money in order to keep the settlers on their holdings and not have them suffer as they will have to suffer if no Government assistance be given them.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.37 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 30th October, 1935.

	PAGE
Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, Amendment Bill Select Committee, Report presented ...	1380
Ministerial Statement, Supply Bill (No. 2) ...	1381
Bills: Wiluna Water Board Further Loan Guarantee, 1r. ...	1384
Pearling Act Amendment, 1r. ...	1384
Health Act Amendment, 3r., passed ...	1384
Rural Relief Fund, Assembly's message ...	1384
Traffic Act Amendment, Assembly's message ...	1381
Electoral, 2r. ...	1383
Finance & Emergency Act Amendment, 2r. ...	1400

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

CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT ACT, 1899, AMENDMENT BILL (No. 1) SELECT COMMITTEE.

Report Presented.

Hon. J. Nicholson brought up the report of the select committee.

Report received and read and ordered to be printed.