

and reticulation to be started. There is an area in North Perth comprising all the properties within the boundaries of Farmer-street and Hunter-street. There is an area in Leederville and another one in West Perth, and also one in East Fremantle containing over 150 houses waiting to be connected with the sewerage system. The Government have the material with which to do the work, valued at over £30,000, a huge stock of stoneware pipes, plumbing material, and a good deal of other stock for the works, but in spite of that no provision has been made by the Minister for Works to go on with these necessary undertakings, which will also create employment, and really be in the direction of a policy of true economy.

The Minister for Works: If you will give me the money I will find plenty of employment.

Mr. JONES: I will assist the Minister to find the money. The only way that this money can be found is by a tax upon the unimproved value of land. This will throw the lands of the State into use. There is a vast quantity of unimproved land lying within a few miles of the metropolitan area. Whilst this land is lying idle, and whilst it continues to be an absolute menace to the future of the State, settlers are being forced farther and farther back into areas which are practically unapproachable, but which are taxable by the railways in respect to the freights and fares which are imposed upon the goods of the farmer. It appears from the Taxation Commissioner's figures that we have in this State unimproved land to the value of only about 19 million pounds. It has, however, been shown by the "West Australian" and by other people that the value of this land is nearer 40 million pounds. I believe that up to now the true value of the lands of the State has never really been arrived at, and until our lands are valued we shall not have taken stock of the taxable property that we have in the State. As things now are, a man possessing a property puts in a return to the Taxation Department year after year, and I for one wish we could see an end to such a practice. I have no doubt that there are business men in the city to whom it costs more to get out their taxation returns every year than it does to keep their ordinary book-keeping account. There is no other State of the Commonwealth in which it is necessary to make this return year after year, and this fact is mainly due to our not having a proper valuation of our lands upon which a tax can be based. The member for York (Mr. Griffiths) said he could not agree to an increase in freights and fares. Surely he cannot be acquainted with the findings of the junta of the Country party, which decided that it could not countenance the determination of the Government, during the final months of last year, to raise freights and fares, and that consequently the Government had to do as they were ordered, and abandon the idea. The producer pays freights on the products that he sends to the city, and on the commodities that he takes

back to his holding. The railway charges are entirely a class tax upon the farmer.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is the consumer who pays the tax.

Mr. Johnston: The farmer pays the lot.

Mr. JONES: I fear that the producer pays more as far as railway charges are concerned than the ordinary consumer. Railway construction has increased the value of the lands affected by it.

Mr. Johnston: As well as the lands in Perth.

Mr. JONES: Our railways have increased the value of land not only in Perth, but in every other town in the State. This is not the only thing, of course, which has increased the value of land. The erection of a house or factory on a block of land enhances the value of a vacant block adjoining, just as the cultivation of land by the farmer will increase the value of the unimproved land lying next to it. It is a just thing that the value of unimproved land, to which the owner has contributed nothing, but which has been created by the community, should belong to the community, and if the Government would take that matter up the Minister for Works would find sufficient funds with which to carry on the great schemes he has for regenerating the State. An unimproved land tax would bring land into cultivation, would encourage industry, and would eventually prove an infallible means for providing employment, and fostering that spirit of true economy which I should like to see the Government taking up on the next Estimates.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

## Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 19th February, 1918.

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

### BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Rabbit Act Amendment.
  2. Vermin Boards Act Amendment.
- Introduced by the Colonial Secretary.

# URGENCY MOTION—COLLIE COAL MINING INDUSTRY.

The PRESIDENT : I have to-day received the following letter from Hon. J. Ewing:—

I propose at the sitting of the House to-day before the business on the Notice Paper is proceeded with, to move that, at its rising, the House shall adjourn till Thursday next. I do so for the purpose of debating a matter of urgency, namely, the unrest existing at the present time in the Collie district, which may possibly lead to a cessation of mining operations in the district, unless immediate steps be taken to prevent the same. I may add that I shall have no difficulty in securing at least four members to approve of this course, as provided by Standing Order No. 58.

Four members having risen in their places,

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [4.35]: I am grateful to you, Mr. President, and to hon. members for giving me the opportunity of placing before the House, and I trust before the people of Western Australia, what appears to me to be a very momentous question which is disturbing the minds of the people at the present time. I say that advisedly, because I am satisfied that not only is the matter disturbing the minds of the miners and those living on the Collie coal mining industry, but it is a question which has been for a long time before the people of Western Australia, and it is desired now to see a settlement of it brought about, and some tranquillity prevailing. You, Mr. President, have outlined in the notice which you have read, the reason I had for submitting this motion. I desire to draw the attention of the Government to the urgent necessity there is for settling this matter. About six weeks ago a conference was called by the Minister for Railways and at that conference there were present the Minister for Mines who was in the chair, the Commissioner of Railways, the Chief Mechanical Engineer the Colliery owners, representatives of the miners, and representatives of the Engine Drivers and Firemen's Union. The position as it appeared then showed that it was necessary that those who represented the Collie miners in Parliament should have an opportunity of attending that conference so that they might thoroughly understand the position and see what was being done. That view was placed before the Minister by Mr. O'Loughlen, who at the present time is watching the interests of Collie in the absence of Mr. Arthur Wilson, the member for Collie, who is at the Front, and I take this opportunity of expressing my regret that that gentleman is not with us to-day, because so satisfactory has been his work in connection with the coal industry during the past few years that if he had been with us the position as we find it to-day would not exist. Mr. O'Loughlen in making his request to the Minister was good enough to include my

name, because Mr. Wilson before leaving this State coupled my name with that of Mr. O'Loughlen and asked me to do what I could to assist Mr. O'Loughlen whenever the interests of coal mining were in question. The Minister for Mines stated that he would not allow either of us to attend the conference. I also approached the Minister to see whether my two colleagues in this House, Messrs. Clarke and Rose, would be allowed to attend the conference with me so that they might have a full knowledge of what was taking place and so that if the opportunity came later on to debate the question in Parliament, we should all know the pros and cons of the position. The Minister replied that a question of policy was not involved in the conference, that the only object of the conference was to obtain information to enable him as Minister to adjudicate. To my utter astonishment, I found out later that nothing but a question of policy was involved, and that the Commissioner for Railways, the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and the representative of the Engine-drivers' Association went to that conference and fully made up their minds that they would force upon the people a certain position. After the matter had been debated and the Minister had endeavoured to come to some conclusion the Commissioner for Railways offered to the Proprietary Company four-sixths of the whole of the Government order, and one-sixth to the Cardiff Company and one-sixth to the Collie Co-operative Company, thereby destroying and disturbing the industrial conditions obtaining at Collie, and thereby wiping out with one blow all the good which had been done in years gone by. The proposal was unpalatable to those who represented the other five collieries and they refused to agree. The Minister then said he would take a trip to Collie and investigate matters on the spot. The Minister took that trip and I am pleased to say that a number of members agreed to accompany him to Collie to see for themselves the conditions prevailing there. The object of those hon. members was to make themselves familiar with the conditions so that when the matter came before Parliament they would be able to adjudicate on it with a practical knowledge of what was taking place. A statement was made in the Press that that trip was something in the nature of a picnic. It was nothing of the kind. It was hard work right through and I am glad the hon. members who went down did not shirk their responsibilities. They obtained the information they required and when the time arrives they will be able to adjudicate fairly. The Government must not be blamed for any extravagance because there was none at all. No special train was engaged, for every train which was used in connection with that trip was an ordinary train which carried goods or merchandise. I maintain that before we can come to a proper conclusion on this matter, it would be better if the Minister placed on the Table of the House the papers relating to the whole of the proceedings of that conference, so that hon. mem-

bers may know what took place there. In that way we will be able to judge as to the merits of the conference. All were prepared to await the decision of the Minister for Railways after his visit to Collie, but, unfortunately, there was a catastrophe at the Collie Co-operative mine, which mine employs 220 men, the largest number engaged on any single mine in Collie. That mine had been supplying to the Government between 1,200 and 1,500 tons of coal per week and also did a prosperous shipping trade. That disastrous creep or fall has been a serious thing for those connected with the company, but I am not going to touch upon that at this moment. I want to impress upon hon. members the necessity for calling attention to the action of the Commissioner for Railways at a time like this. One would have thought, when the Commissioner and the Minister must have known that things were simmering and trouble was brewing, that they would have equally distributed all of the coal to the surviving collieries in Collie until the question was settled. This, however, was not done. The Commissioner practically gave the whole of the shortages to the Proprietary Company. This created a very serious position, and also raised a doubt in the minds of the miners as to what was going to be done to overcome the difficulty; and to impress upon the Minister the necessity for altering the position, the miners' representatives, Mr. O'Loughlin and myself, waited upon him at Collie, and asked him to give an equal distribution of the shortages, at any rate during the time that matter was under discussion, so that there should be no doubt in the minds of the miners at Collie as to what the policy of the Government was. I regret to say that the Minister would not agree to that, and is going on. This precipitate action on the part of the Commissioner is the sole cause of my moving this resolution to-day. The miners and the mine owners of Collie, and the Railway Association and all concerned, were perfectly satisfied to wait until due consideration was given to the matter by the Minister. They did not wish to hurry him in dealing with what is a very important question, but the action of the Minister and the Government in allowing Mr. Short to act as he did conveyed to the minds of the Collie people that this was to be the general policy of the Government, and they resent it very much indeed. They have held certain meetings in Collie, and certain resolutions were carried. It is to urge upon the Government the necessity for overcoming the difficulty, and doing the right thing, that I have taken this opportunity of to-day bringing before the House this resolution, in the hope that hon. members will fearlessly give their opinions upon the question. I do not know, outside my own colleagues, who are with me heart and soul, the feelings of any hon. member in the matter, nor have I asked any hon. member to express an opinion on the subject. The merits of the case constitute the matter upon which members will be asked to decide, and if I am able to place these merits before them in an intelligent manner, and

enable them to arrive at a conclusion in common with my own I shall be satisfied. The policy of every Government since the inception of the coal mining industry in this State has been that which is carried on to-day. Successive Governments, after the initial stages when Lord Forrest started the coal mines at Collie, have encouraged the expenditure of money upon the development of our collieries, as well as upon boring and ascertaining, if possible, what good coal there was in Western Australia. The policy was also to encourage every man, every company, and every body of men who desired to do so to prove the country, in order to get the best article possible for the State. The Commissioner for Railways has at all times opposed this equal distribution of orders. His reason in the early stages was this: when one or two companies started at Collie the Government asked the Commissioner to give certain orders. The Commissioner said "It is far better and easier for me to control only one company, and I desire to do so." From that time up to the present, irrespective of what Government were in power, the Commissioner has at all times fought against this equal distribution, and the various Governments of the day have thought differently and have encouraged each colliery company to develop its mine by giving it a share of the Government orders. I know this does not obtain in other parts of the world, but it is a practice which has tended to build up this industry in Western Australia, and has proved of great advantage to the people of the State. This policy has been carried on by successive Governments up to the present day, and is responsible for the existence of the colliery companies in Collie at the present moment. I will enumerate these various companies presently, and deal with the merits of each. I am not here to compare one company with another, but to tell a plain unvarnished tale in the hope that the object I have in view may be accomplished. This went on until the Labour Government came into power in 1912. Hon. P. Collier was Minister for Railways and Mines at the time, and was approached by the people of Collie on many occasions and asked to give an equal distribution of orders. It will be inferred from this that an equal distribution of orders did not obtain at that time, but as a matter of fact it did. What the companies wanted was confirmation of the then existing conditions. Collieries were coming into existence and getting their equal share of the Government orders, but the Commissioner was all the time opposed to this, and the object of those interested was to have the whole thing placed upon a firm basis. The Minister did not at first accede to the requests that were made to him. I was not present when these deputations waited upon him, but I have read the arguments and reasons placed before the Minister. After several deputations had waited upon him, the Minister granted equal distribution. All the time that Hon. P. Collier was in office as Minister for Railways I do not think he had laid before him a single complaint with regard to the man-

agement of 'Collie coal mines, nor had he a report made to him as to the inferiority of any of the coal. I think the hon. gentleman will state this himself in another place. I know it to be a fact at all events, and that being so I wonder and marvel how it can be said that Collie coal has deteriorated in such a short time. Successive Governments have refused to accede to the requests of the Commissioner to place his orders with one colliery only. This has brought about a peculiar position, because the Government have been approached by the engine-drivers and firemen's association. I notice in this morning's paper a statement by those who speak for this particular association, and have no hesitation in saying that a large portion of the statement is quite contrary to fact. I shall endeavour to prove this in the course of my remarks. I may here express my absolute astonishment that this body of workers is not in union or in sympathy with those working in another industry, and I marvel that it should act in this manner. It is incomprehensible to me. There seems to be some sinister influence at work. I cannot solve this question, but can place no other construction than that upon it. The statement in the "West Australian" is one which can be contraverted very easily, and I shall endeavour to do so. If I were an outsider, a man in the street, with not a full knowledge of this question and I picked up a "West Australian" and read that statement through from end to end, I am certain that I should be influenced very greatly by it. Everyone will say "Who is a better judge of Collie coal than those who have to use it?" They have timed this thing beautifully. They knew that this resolution was coming on here to-day, and that action would be taken simultaneously in another place upon the same question. They timed this so that no reply could be made to them. Unless we have in another place, as well as here, those who know the conditions and those who are able to place them before the people in a proper light, a large amount of damage may be done to those concerned in the Collie industry. Take the position with regard to the coal industry. The Collie coalfields cover a proved coal-bearing area of 27,000 acres, and the Proprietary company leases 5,000 acres of this area. On the same strike and in the same zone are other collieries working there on similar classes of coal. Is it possible that all the good coal in that district is concentrated in this 5,000 acres? I want to make it clear, so far as the engine-drivers and firemen are concerned, that they have my sympathy if they have to work with dirty coal. I am here to-day to ask the Government to use upon the railways nothing that is not in the interests of the people of the State. Engine-drivers contend that dirty coal is supplied to them. It is a fact that in 1910 when there was serious trouble in the Eastern States there was a large demand for Collie coal in Fremantle for bunkering. I do not say that

the Collie coal mine owner did the right thing on this occasion, and I do not wish to mention any particular company, but at that time there is no doubt that coal was supplied which was not satisfactory. This, of course, gave rise to some trouble in regard to the bunkering trade, but that trouble has now been overcome. So far as dirty coal is concerned, I desire to point out that the Commissioner has a contract with the colliery owners at Collie. That contract fully protects the Commissioner, and he has the right to reject dirty coal. If he does not reject it, he is not doing what is right in the interests of the State. That is why I say that this question of dirty coal does not touch the question of the equal distribution of coal. He has the right to send an inspector to each colliery, and if the coal is not satisfactory or is being mined in an unsatisfactory manner, he has the right to direct the mine owner to mine the coal according to his requirements. I ask any hon. member, if any greater powers have ever been given to anyone? Why does he not exercise these powers? If he does exercise them, then the coal that he complains of should not be forthcoming, that is dirty coal. The Commissioner has a perfect right, and no hon. member can say otherwise, to demand that clean coal be supplied for the working of the railways. That being so, he should take the necessary action to secure it. I wish to point out one phase of the question which appeals very much to me, but which is not thought of by the Government now I fear, or by the Commissioner. It is a question which is of great importance to Western Australia. I should like to take hon. members as far back as 1905, when Dr. Jack made a very voluminous and valuable report on the Collie coal industry. He is a man of high scientific attainments, and he said then, in regard to railway supplies coming from one colliery, that if this were done a great injustice would be committed to those who had invested their money in other companies, and that it was not a right thing to do. He told the people who were engaged in that industry at that time that the solution of their difficulties lay in the private trade and in the oversea trade. He said the policy of the Government was to build up and build up further collieries, which as they were developed, got their portion of the Government trade. That being so, he said the time would arrive when there would not be sufficient Government trade to make all these collieries profitable propositions. Therefore, he said, the collieries must go afield and build up private trade. Collie has done that splendidly as regards the private trade in Perth. I do not think there is a manufactory or a brewery around Perth using Newcastle coal to-day. The people of Western Australia are satisfied that they have a coal good enough for them in the State. From time to time it has been said that Collie coal is not a safe export coal. I am prepared to admit that it is not a satisfactory coal to send to other parts of the world for

consumption. But it is a highly satisfactory coal from the bunkering point of view. During the few years intervening between the making of Dr. Jack's report and the present time, from 300,000 to 350,000 tons of coal has been bunkered from the field of Collie. That has a great bearing on the question. The bunkering trade did not start, I should mention, until about six or seven years ago. Which of the companies, however, have taken this matter in hand? At all events, it is not the company now favoured by the Commissioner of Railways. That trade has been successfully worked up by the other collieries of Collie. Now we are told that these other collieries are to be destroyed, and that the company which made no effort—or if they have made an effort, made it unsuccessfully—are to be bolstered up to the detriment of the companies that tried to do something in the interests of the State. The bunkering trade means that Fremantle is a magnificent coaling station. Mr. Allen, who has just returned from the Eastern States, made to-day a remark which produced a great impression in me. It was that the prosperity of Sydney, the most prosperous of our Australian capitals to-day, is due to the coal mining in and around Newcastle. I believe that statement to be true. Let hon. members consider what would be the prosperity of Perth in similar circumstances, if Bunbury, Fremantle, and Albany were first class coaling stations. Due credit should be given to those companies which built up the bunkering trade, even to the present limited extent. No Collie colliery at the present time, or at any time within my experience of the industry, could live without its share of the Government orders. That statement applies with much more force now than ever before, owing to the falling off in the bunkering trade and the war. I have read the last report of the Royal Commission on the coal mining industry from cover to cover, and I am not able to find within its covers anything which justifies the contention of the Commissioner of Railways, that he is asking for the coal which is of the greatest value to the State, the Collie Proprietary. The Westralian and other Collie coals have a higher calorific value than the coal which the Commissioner wishes to use solely. The disabilities of the other collieries should be removed and can be removed. The Commissioner of Railways pays upon a certain standard of heating power. He ascertains that standard and says, "That is the value of the coal to me; if you come up to that standard I pay so much a ton for the coal; if you go below that standard I pay proportionately less." And yet he has picked out a particular coal of less calorific value than two others on the field and proposes to use that coal solely. I am unable to find in the report of the Royal Commission anything which would justify the action contemplated or suggested by the Commissioner of Railways. In speaking here this afternoon I am not in any way speaking against the Government, because I do not at present know what their policy is. It has not been told us.

I am merely endeavouring to draw the attention of the House to the urgent need of action on the part of the Government, hoping that that action will be in the direction which I believe is in the best interests of the State of Western Australia. Another phase of the question, and a very important one from the State's point of view, outside the economic question which I have dealt with, is the question of the war. Not long after the war started—early in 1915—the Government then in power decided to continue all the contracts with the particular collieries during the currency of the war and for three months after the termination of hostilities. The companies approach the Government, and get from them an assurance as disclosed in appendix 31 to the Royal Commission's report, an officer of the Railway Department stating that the Government had decided to continue the contracts during the currency of the war and for three months after the termination of hostilities. I want to know how the Commissioner of Railways proposes to set about breaking those contracts. Of course there is a clause under which he can give three months' notice. Is he going to be permitted to take advantage of that clause in times like these? I do not believe the people of the State would for a moment tolerate such an action. Another most important aspect of the matter is the financial one. The Government say they have no money; and certainly they cannot expect any company to be deprived of their just rights under contract, and under agreement with the Railway Department, unless the Government are prepared to pay the piper. In the event of the breaking of the contract, each of these companies would no doubt take action against the Government for destruction of trade and for loss of capital invested in the collieries. What position will the Government find themselves in? Surely the Government will wait until the war is over, wait faithfully and, like any honourable business man, faithfully observe the contract and not seek to evade it by a mere quibble. I am satisfied the Government will recognise the equity and justice of what I say, and in the interests of the State will stay the Commissioner's hand. I will give a concrete instance, the Scottish Collieries. The capital for the development of this mine was first subscribed in Scotland, and a second time subscribed in Scotland. On both occasions it was squandered, greatly to the regret of the people in Scotland, and much to the regret of myself, as one interested in the field. I do desire above all things that capital invested in Western Australia, and more especially invested here by people living in the Old Country, should return a quid pro quo. However, these Scottish investors lost the capital they had subscribed. After that certain people in Perth took up the mine. They had a disastrous time, though they did splendid work. I have no doubt it will be within the recollection of many hon. members that these were the first people to work up the bunkering trade. In fact, they worked it up to very considerable proportions. Owing to circumstances which I will not dwell upon, this company went into liquidation. Later on other people took over

the colliery on certain conditions, and after working for a time the mine was flooded, exemption was granted, and these new people bored and found a splendid seam of coal. Upon discovering this, they were satisfied they had to obtain more capital in order to work the seam. They hold a letter from the Commissioner of Railways stating that when their colliery is in a producing state he is prepared to continue his contract with them. These people have expended a considerable amount of money, and this has been done in good faith on the assurance of the Commissioner of Railways that when the mine is in a position to produce he will take their coal. Is he now to be permitted to turn round and say that he does not want their coal and that their mine must be closed down? That is a concrete instance which can be proved, and I myself have full knowledge of the truth of what I have stated. Next, with regard to the Westralian mine. This is a mine owned by the workers of Collie. Many a worker in Collie has toiled night and day and given up a large proportion of his wages in order to keep his share in the colliery going. This has been the case for a considerable number of years. This mine has a band of shale in the seam now being worked, but every care is exercised to keep the coal clean, and it is well known to the engine-drivers, to the Commissioner of Railways, and also to the Government, from the Royal Commission's report, that a new seam has been discovered above the seam now being worked, and that portion of this new seam was taken out and submitted to the Royal Commission for trial, when it was proved, in point of calorific value, to be the best coal yet produced in Collie and gave the best results yet obtained from any Collie coal. This body of working miners put the whole of their time and money into this particular colliery in an endeavour to improve their position. Are they to be told by the Commissioner of Railways to-day, "We want no more of you; we confiscate all you have done; your capital and energy and determination count for nothing"? Surely the Government will wait until such time as the men can work the new seam and deliver the coal which is of such high value. Surely the Commissioner of Railways wants the best article he can get, and surely encouragement should be given to these people rather than that their mine should be condemned and placed in a position which is untenable and from which they will be unable to retrieve it. As regards the Premier mine, hon. members who made the visit to Collie know that it produces a coal beautiful in appearance and high in calorific value. In the opening portion of my remarks I showed how valuable the Premier coal is in combination with other Collie coals. The Premier mine is also the product of the work of the miners of Collie—men who have worked night and day and sacrificed everything in order to attain a better position. Are they now to be told by the Commissioner of Railways, "I want no more of you"? Up to date those men have had a great deal of trouble and have made no money. Now, just as they are getting on their feet, is the Commissioner of Railways to tell them that he wants no more coal from

them, and that he is going to give the whole of the railway order to three companies? The Co-operative colliery, which unfortunately has met with disaster, employed 220 men and represent the largest colliery at Collie. They had the biggest bunkering trade, and were doing marvellous work in that direction for the people of Western Australia. They were doing it not alone for the Co-operative company, but for you, Mr. President, and for me, and for every man in the State who desires to see the advancement of Western Australia. I know the grit of the men in this company. They are practically all working miners, and have put in their money for years. Now they are opening out a new seam of coal. They are not daunted, but are facing the position. Yet, notwithstanding the high calorific value of their coal from a railway point of view, and indeed from every point of view, they are told that they will only get a sixth of the railway order, which means that they will be placed at an extreme disadvantage in the markets of the world as against another colliery. With regard to the Cardiff colliery exactly what I have said with regard to the Co-operative applies, except that at the Cardiff mine there has been no disaster; and we all hope there will be no disaster there or in any other mine. The Cardiff people also have worked up a considerable bunkering trade, and they likewise are placed at a disadvantage. I shall not apologise to hon. members for taking up their time because I consider the question to be of such vital importance as to demand the attention of every public man in Western Australia, of every man in the State who is anxious for a fair and just settlement of the question. A very important phase of the matter—and this is not an economic phase, but a phase which will appeal specially to members of this House—is that Collie has done such good work for the Empire. I believe more than a battalion of soldiers was raised at Collie. There is hardly an eligible man left in the town. No town or district has more loyally responded to the Empire's call than has Collie. A large number of those men who went to the Front are shareholders in those collieries which the Commissioner of Railways is prepared to close down. Those men knew the conditions obtaining when they went to the Front; they knew, or thought they knew, they were safe until three months after the war. Yet while they are there fighting for us all and for the honour of the Empire, it is gravely proposed that their money and their livelihood should be taken from them during their absence. If for no other reason, I appeal to hon. members that this injustice must not be done. The very stones in the street would cry shame if it were done. I am looking upon this from the patriotic point of view, the point of view which appeals to all of us. This thing must not be done. If anything is to be done, if any investigation is to be held, let it be done or held when the war is over. Let us keep faith with these men, let us not destroy their property while they fight for us in France. In Collie to-day there are practi-

cally 600 men at work in the mines. Those miners have been loyal and true to the Government. In 1910, while the strike was on in the Eastern States, those men could have stopped the wheels of industry in Western Australia. Did they do so? No, they stood by the Government of the State and supplied from 30,000 to 40,000 tons of extra coal in order to make up the shortage in Newcastle coal, and in order to allow the Railway Department to maintain their reserve in case the trouble should continue for any great length of time. Again, during the last strike in New South Wales which has only recently ended, what did the coal miners do? They stood loyally by the Government and again kept the wheels of industry going. Shall we forget actions of this sort? It has been asked of me, "Why do you worry so much about this? If you are going to turn out a given quantity of coal for the Railway Department it will take only a certain number of workers to do it, and you have more men than you want." I am prepared to state that if the proposal of the Commissioner of Railways is put into effect 200 working men at Collie will lose, first their work and then their homes. Where are we to find work for them now? They are not under 45 years of age, they cannot go to the war. If they were allowed to go, such loyal men would have been there long ago. Instead of that, their sons are at the Front representing them. Are we going to dislocate the whole of the industry? I am not blaming the Government; I cannot blame the Government, because I am ignorant to-day of the attitude of the Government. But is it a desirable state of affairs that we should allow these men to be deprived of their work? Again, what is to happen to the town of Collie with only one or two collieries in operation? The position is untenable. It is to me intolerable to think that such an action could be contemplated by wise and thoughtful men. Let me point out what the miners of Collie are doing. I have been astonished, and no doubt hon. members who represent the goldfields and so come into close touch with working miners, have been equally surprised at learning what those men are doing. The men of Collie are supplying money—in the last report I saw, the fund has reached £800—for the widows and wives of the absentee miners of Collie. Are we to deprive these men of the possibility of doing something for the wives and widows of those of their comrades who have gone to the war? I think I have said sufficient in regard to this phase of the question. I want also to appeal to hon. members on these lines: I want to know whether the Collie coalfield is to be regarded merely as a source from which to supply the railways? That is the position taken up by Mr. Short. Would it not be better to regard this matter from a national standpoint, to think of what is done in other countries in similar circumstances? If they had this coal in America or South America or anywhere else, think what would be done with it. Are we going

to stand by and say, "We only want this coal for railway purposes; we will not bother to apply science to it"? Science is daily being applied with marked success to coals much inferior to those of Collie. What is our idea? Are we to regard it as merely a parochial matter, or are we to regard it as a matter of vast importance to the people of Western Australia? Are we going to apply to it those principles which will give to us the full value of the coal? On scientific research it will be found that the by-products of Collie coal are extremely valuable, and that briquettes are made from similar coals. Are we to cripple the energy and determination of the men of Collie who have endeavoured to build up a great industry, or are we going to give to the industry that encouragement which it deserves? I feel sure that we are not likely to allow anything in the nature of a monopoly in Western Australia. Like other hon. members I abhor the very idea of a monopoly. We have in intention of either building up a monopoly or of allowing one to exist. I am sure the Colonial Secretary will bear with me while I remind him of the policy of his Government. Time after time the Premier has stated that the salvation of Western Australia, and the realisation of all our hopes of recovering from our difficulties and of reimbursing the Treasury lie in the policy of produce, produce, produce, and in the development in every possible direction of our primary industries. I am not blaming the Government, but if they allow the Commissioner of Railways to carry out his proposal they will be acting detrimentally to the development of this great primary industry and discouraging the determination of the people of Collie to produce, produce, produce! Now, having dealt with that portion of the question, is it not fair to ask who is responsible for this position? Have those who have been in power in Western Australia and administering the railways of the State during the last 16 years done all that they could to help along this Collie coal industry? The other night I was told in Collie that apparently I wanted to get some of the railway men dismissed. Nothing is further from my thoughts. I desire only that which is right, and it is my duty and the duty of every public man to criticise those who do wrong. If that criticism is undeserved, the one who criticises will in turn be castigated. Apparently the Government themselves are not satisfied with the position of the railways, for it is only a week since the Treasurer declared that the Government had decided to bring in expert advice from somewhere in order that we might discover what is wrong with the railways. Is that an evidence of confidence in the Commissioner of Railways? The Government propose to see what is wrong with the railways. Surely if we have a competent Commissioner of Railways and a competent staff in the department this is very unnecessary. Of course, as a matter of fact, we know that the railways are going from bad to worse and have been responsible for a large portion of the deficit. The Gov-

ernment say that the time has come when we must investigate this matter in order to find out what is wrong. Are the Government prepared to accept the recommendations of a Commissioner in whom apparently they have no confidence in respect of the management of the railways? Yet in regard to this question of coal it would seem that the Commissioner is placed there as a dictator, and that the Government have to carry out his orders. His is the law of the Medes and Persians and cannot be altered. It applies, not merely to this industry, but also to railway freights, in respect of which probably members will have something to say a little later on. In as short time as possible I will try to point out the crux of this position as it appears to me. During the last 16 years I have been intimately connected with the coal industry. Throughout that time, as far as I can gather, there has been no desire on the part of those in high places to do a fair thing by the industry. The Commissioner of Railways has always wanted to burn Newcastle coal exclusively, while the engine-drivers and firemen demand 50 per cent. of Newcastle coal. They have learnt that they cannot get so much from the Eastern States these days. On more than one occasion we have found the salvation of Western Australia lie in the development of the Collie coal industry. That being so, I want to know in what position the Commissioner of Railways stands in regard to this industry. It is right that we should analyse his attitude during the past 16 years. Consider the report of the late Royal Commission on Collie coal. No one can take exception to the personnel of that Commission. There was Professor Woolnough, of the University of Western Australia, who filled the position of chairman; there was Mr. Simpson, now Public Service Commissioner, than whom there is no more honourable, steadfast man in the Public Service; then there was Mr. Arthur Wilson, a member of another place, who is also a practical miner, and whose word will not be impugned by any member of the House. He would not insert in the report of the Commission a single word which he was not satisfied was right. This report is bristling with condemnation from end to end; in almost every paragraph one finds condemnation of the Railway Department. It is not a nice thing, nor was it the desire of those conducting the inquiry, to condemn the Railway Department. Rather would their sympathies be in the other direction. In 1902 the late Mr. Rotherham was Chief Mechanical Engineer of the Railways. He was a man of high attainments. Unfortunately for Western Australia he did not long survive his appointment. In those days I was a member of the Lower House and I succeeded in securing the appointment of an inquiry to go into the question of stimulating the coal mining industry. Mr. Rotherham came along as a witness. I asked him how many engines he had, and he replied, "300." I then asked how many of them could burn Collie coal, and he replied, "None." The next question was, "How many of them could

partially burn Collie coal with success," and he replied, "About 100." Mr. Kingsmill and Mr. Holmes were each in turn Minister for Railways. In passing, I would pay a tribute to those gentlemen, for on many occasions they materially assisted the Collie coal industry. Mr. Kingsmill established, and subsequently Mr. Holmes confirmed, the 80 per cent. basis. I asked Mr. Rotherham whether he could alter those engines, and he said the only way in which he could alter them was by replacing them. I want to point out to the country and to hon. members that this is 16 years ago, and we have been expecting something to be done ever since. What has been done? The Railway Department have got 124 more engines at, I suppose a cost of three quarters of a million pounds and not one of these engines, I say it advisedly, have been constructed with a desire to help the industry—to burn Collie coal successfully. What greater condemnation can we have than that. We have the report of the Railway Commissioner animadverting on this question and telling the department that they have not done their duty. We find in other parts of the world, in New Zealand, where they have lignite to burn, in South America and in other places where they have absolutely inferior coals to Collie, that engines have been constructed with wide fire boxes and grate areas to enable the coal of their country to be consumed. These things have not been done in Western Australia. They have not been attempted and the Commissioner, through his engineer, says it is not the right thing to do. We have to take his dictum against the experience of other parts of the world. We have Mr. Bagshaw telling us that these things might apply in other parts of the world but they will not apply in Western Australia, because of the water difficulty. I tell members that these difficulties do not obtain. I am not the only one in Western Australia by a long way who is condemning the management of the railways and the treatment that this industry is receiving at the hands of the railways. Some time ago the Perth Chamber of Commerce decided to go into the question of the Collie coal industry and I will give members the names of the gentlemen who went to Collie. They were Mr. Leslie, Mr. Garner, and Mr. Nathan, men of great repute in Western Australia in commercial circles. They are not interested in the Collie coal industry, but they are interested in the development of the industries of the State and when these gentlemen came back they joined in a deputation to the Premier asking that he should instruct the Commissioner to again go into the coal question. In his annual statement, Mr. Leslie, who is an engineer and a man of high standing, made these few remarks which will show members that I am not the only man in Western Australia who is condemning the Railway Department. Talking of the coal industry, he said—

It is undoubtedly true that no industry should be bolstered up at the expense of the Railway Department of the State, but it is equally incontrovertible on the an-



thority of the Royal Commission that through all the years the Collie coal industry has been in existence the Railway Department has never attempted to make use of the fuel under conditions calculated to lead to such success as has been met with in other countries having similar fuel. Were that done, I am sanguine it would be found that within a very few years the department would find that the industry would become an important factor in the economy of operating the system.

That is condemnation outside of my own. That is the position taken up by the Chamber of Commerce through their President. It is condemnation is it not? These gentlemen see that this industry should not be in the state it is in to-day. Perhaps the most important question which I have to touch on is that of covering the coal in transit. Is it known to me—I have known it for years and I speak from experience. It is known by the railway department that Collie coal deteriorates in transit. That difficulty can be overcome. The Collie coal during the sittings of the Royal Commission was put under the most severe test conditions. It was taken to Fremantle, and to Bunbury and left under cover for from three to four months. It was not disturbed, but was simply covered with an ordinary tarpaulin and at the end of the period I have mentioned, a certain number of persons, I was one of them, went down and investigated this experiment. The coal had been covered for three months and when uncovered it was in a splendid condition. There was no friability about it and when that coal was used it was found to be highly satisfactory for steaming purposes—more satisfactory from a steaming point of view than before it was put under cover. With the full knowledge that he has been wasting thousands of pounds of the people's money, the Commissioner will not adopt this system of carrying the coal. The Royal Commission have pointed out in two or three places in their report that if the covering of coal had been taken in hand thousands of pounds would have been saved annually to the people of Western Australia through the Railway Department. No wonder the department has a deficit when they are carrying on such antics. One great solution of the difficulty in the industry is the construction of suitable wagons and the covering of those wagons. Is that to be done? I saw the reply to a question asked in another place that this has been done. I have not yet seen a truck of coal for locomotive purposes which was covered. Collie coal is taken to such places as Meekatharra, to Menzies, to Kalgoorlie, but it is not covered. Years ago the department could have overcome this difficulty, yet they have turned a deaf ear to all entreaties. During the last 17 years the Government have lost hundreds of thousands of pounds of the money of the people of the State through the bad management of the railways in this connection. When Collie coal arrives at Menzies or Kalgoorlie or anywhere else, it

is thrown into the open bins exposed to the sun and, as a consequence, it quickly deteriorates. The engine-drivers are suffering to-day from the neglect of the railway department. It is a fact that if that negligence had not been there, if there had been a desire on the part of the Railway department, the difficulties and troubles of the engine-drivers would have been overcome. Collie coal is stored at the places I have mentioned in the open. The coal should not see the light of day from the moment it is taken out of the mine until it is used, and if proper precautions are taken this can be done. I hope these proper precautions will be taken. I come now to what appears to be the final and the most solid argument in favour of equal distribution. It is said by the Railway Department that the admixture of the hard and soft coals is not satisfactory, yet the Royal Commission carried out trials and found the admixture admirable. I refer members to the Royal Commission's report, page 25, paragraph 196, and in the schedule to the report it will be found that the admixture of Proprietary and Premier coal, 50 per cent. of each, means an improvement of 10 per cent. If 50 per cent. of soft coal and 50 per cent. of hard coal is mixed a better coal cannot be found in Collie to-day. Fifty per cent. of the Proprietary coal and 50 per cent. of Premier coal was taken for the trials and the advantage was equal to 10 per cent. The paragraph to which I have alluded says—

The admixture of these two coals gave excellent results in the fire-box, the faults of both coals being minimised, and the steaming improved. Although the Proprietary and Premier coals were selected for these tests, as typical of the hard and soft coals, it is anticipated that a mixture of any of the hard and soft coals would show similar results.

If the Commission arrive at that conclusion after due consideration—and remember this Commission consisted of practical men—how can it be said that the Commissioner for Railways has done his best for the industry when he has not so used these coals. The admixture of hard coal and soft coal is the crux of the position. We should believe the statement of the Royal Commission rather than that of those who have not shown consideration for the industry.

Hon. H. Stewart: Has there been a mixture of Proprietary coal and one of the soft coals tried?

Hon. J. EWING: That is the mixture that I am referring to. If the hon. member will turn up page 25 of the report and read paragraph 196, he will see the result of the trial and the result of the trial showed an advantage of 10 per cent. The Commission go on further to say that the admixture of these coals is better than any of the hard coals being mined at Collie to-day. It is absolutely satisfactory. It is needless for me to further labour this question. Notwithstanding the many points which I have made in my remarks, the whole matter from a practical and economic point of view is

summed up in this one statement by the Commission, that this admixture gives a better coal than the best fuel to be found at Collie. I want to know why this admixture is not used. It is only a question of proper management and if there is any desire to help the industry it would have been carried out. No public servant of the State and no Commissioner or anyone else has a right to do anything which will not assist the industries of the State, and I say with all responsibility that proper assistance has not been forthcoming from the railway department. Members reading the report can come to no other conclusion.

Hon. E. M. (LARKE (South-West) [5.45]: I have listened attentively to the remarks of Mr. Ewing and have much pleasure in supporting the motion he has submitted. I have been acquainted with the Collie coalfield ever since it was first discovered, and I regard it as one of the best assets of the State. It is there for all time, and it is possible that before long we will find there coal of a quality to suit all purposes. Of course there are bound to be some grumblers, but we as common sense business people have to ask ourselves what we would be doing under the existing conditions were it not for Collie coal. I endorse every word that Mr. Ewing has said. We have been asked to re-enact the Industries Assistance Act, a measure which is mainly for the benefit of the wheat belt. I am not going to say that I am going to oppose the re-enacting legislation, but I am going to say that coal is one industry and that wheat is another, and that if coal had had only a portion of the money spent on it which has been devoted to wheat growing, the industry would be in a far better position to-day. We are bound to agree to the Government's proposal to re-enact the Industries Assistance legislation but we must claim some assistance at the same time for the Collie coal industry. Up to the time the war began, we were using Newcastle coal in preference to our own. That was a wrong policy. I am not going to criticise the Commissioner of Railways except to say that it is his duty to run the railways as economically as possible, but I do repeat that we are inconsistent in helping the wheat-growing industry to the extent we are doing and not giving the Collie coal industry that help which it needs and deserves. If an injustice is done to the coal industry, a great number of men will be thrown out of work and the field itself will receive a set-back from which it may take a considerable time to recover. I claim that there should be an equal distribution of the orders and that we should put up with the paltry loss which may ensue. If we are going to foster one industry and neglect another we shall be acting inconsistently. We cannot afford to do that in connection with our coal-mining industry because Collie coal is going to be with us for all time. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West) [5.50]: The company I have the privilege to be associated with in Collie is very much in the same position as the Government of the day, so that there is a bond of sympathy between us, and there exists the same community of interests, inasmuch as

we are both in very low water. Mr. Ewing in moving the adjournment of the House on this question, did what I consider to be quite the correct thing. The industrial unrest at Collie to-day has been brought about not by any action of the Government, because unfortunately we have had no member of the Government sufficiently strong enough to dictate a policy relating to the industry, but it has been brought about by Mr. Backshall, the secretary of the Engine-drivers and Firemen's Association, who is attempting to bring about a position at Collie similar to that which he was responsible for at Fremantle during the recent strike. On the occasion of that recent strike, Mr. Backshall and the Premier, without any reference to the Fremantle Harbour Trust, a body created by Statute, arrived at certain decisions with the Secretary of the Trust, Mr. Stevens, as to how they would handle goods at the wharves. The Harbour Trust were then advised of what had been decided. Mr. Backshall is doing the same thing now. In the Minister's office the other day, he told the mine owners and the men's representatives what he would do, and in to-day's paper he inform us that he is willing to allow the use of certain coals on the railways. If it is Mr. Backshall who is going to allow these things to be done, the sooner we know it the better. He may be acting under instructions from his union, but neither he nor his union, nor the Commissioner for Railways should tell the Government what should be allowed in a matter of this kind. It is due to the Government to say what they propose to do, and it is for Mr. Backshall to accept or reject what may be decided upon. After the conference had taken place, Mr. Backshall communciated what his union would permit. I do not wish to be misunderstood. I do not hold any brief for the workers at Collie and I hope that every action of mine will be considered in a just manner. I would not do a worker, whether in Collie or elsewhere, any injury or injustice, but I would point out that the workers at Collie have established their homes in various centres around Collie, and they have a just right to draw attention to the fact that they have put their money into some of the mines in the district, and in property there, and that all they possess is at Collie, and if it is to be wiped out they will be deprived of their all. I know the temper of these men and the attitude they will adopt unless they are treated fairly. If the Government are going to allow Mr. Backshall to dictate to them as to which coal, and the quantity they are to take, they in their turn will endeavour to dictate to the Government which coal they are prepared to supply. That will be quite a reasonable stand for them to take up. If the Proprietary coal was superior in calorific value or in steaming quality, or possessed anything at all of a higher value than other Collie coals, I would find myself in a very awkward position because I realise that economy is the watchword of the Government, and it would be inconsistent on my part if I stood up here to-day to advocate the use of any article if it interfered with the proposals of economy of the Government. Let any hon. member take Dr. Jack's report and also the

report of the Royal Commission which sat only recently, and it will be found from beginning to end of both of those reports that though there have been dozens of tests on all sorts of grades and under every possible condition, the Proprietary coal which the Government intend shall have four-sixths of the trade is only third on the list from an economic standpoint. In some instances it is fourth on the list. The Royal Commission's report shows that 70 per cent. of Proprietary coal and 30 per cent. of New South Wales coal will not give the same results from the train mileage standpoint as the mine I am interested in, the Co-Operative. Thirty per cent. of the imported, in order to stiffen up 70 per cent. of Proprietary, is not equal to some other coals at Collie from an economic standpoint. The Proprietary is not within 15 to 20 per cent. in value of some other coals of the district. Two Royal Commissions have proved that beyond the shadow of doubt. Therefore why do the Government propose to give the Proprietary mine four-sixths of the trade? I would like to quote from page 19 of the Royal Commission's report. The Commission says—

We have found on closer investigations that some of the drivers are unable to distinguish the coal from the different seams. In many cases they can distinguish whether the coal belongs to a certain group or not, and very often it is found that the coal mine is incorrectly guessed. Here we have men who say that these particular coals are of no value, and the Commission say that many men are unable to distinguish the coal. In another paragraph the Commission say—

We would point out that in other countries coals vastly inferior to Collie coal in calorific value are used extensively, and surely any patriotic man would wish to encourage the use of the native Western Australian coal rather than to limit it in the way proposed.

There is one point I would like to emphasise in connection with Proprietary coal. Mr. Strelitz was a director of the Collie Proprietary coal mine, and if hon. members turn to page 123 of the report they will find there that in giving evidence Mr. Strelitz said that Proprietary coal was not fit to bunker, and that he used some other coal on the Hansa line of steamers, and with good results. Whose coal was it he used? It was the Co-Operative coal. As a director of his own company he tells the Royal Commission that his coal is of no value for bunkering purposes, and we who are connected with the trade know that this is so. The Government—and I say the Government because the Commissioner is an official of the Government—propose to give to the Proprietary Company four-sixths of the trade, approximately 3,000 tons per week. This is a mine which produces only for the benefit of the State, and for the express benefit of the railways of the State. It will take that mine all its time to produce that quantity of coal, but in producing it the company will make a magnificent profit. It places them in this position, that they can work full time exclusively on Government

business and Government business alone. The industry must fade away because no mine can exist without this Government assistance. It is an established fact, and well known, that no other mine can possibly exist without some assistance from the Government, but here the Government propose to wipe out the industry in Collie through the establishment on a sound footing of one mine and one mine only. If a steamer called in to bunker to-morrow and the Proprietary Mine was fully engaged in supplying Government orders, she would be unable to get any coal because no other mine would be in existence. It means absolutely closing down the industry. Take this, or last week. Not one ton of bunkering trade has been done in Fremantle or Bunbury with Collie coal. If the mines at Collie were dependent on this bunkering trade and had no help from the Government in connection with their orders then undoubtedly they must go to the wall, and it would be impossible for them to continue any longer. Let us assume that this Proprietary Company possesses that value in coal which some of its supporters would have us believe. We will admit that, and also admit that it is the best coal for the railways, will give the men less work to do, and best from the agricultural point of view. We will admit all that, but are we going to close down the industry in Collie when by farming out these Government orders in an equal distribution we would be showing fairness all round? Take the case of a company like my own, which spends over £1,000 per week in wages. Are the Government not going to take into consideration what it means to have hundreds of men in the district circulating large sums of money, to have money brought into the State in connection with the bunkering trade, and to have coming to our ports ships from overseas which, in turn, mean the circulation of more money? The coal industry is one of the biggest and best assets that any country can have. Where it is known that coal exists and bunkering ports are available, valuable traffic is created which would not otherwise come to the country concerned. I do not desire to exaggerate the question, but to my mind Collie cannot exist without the companies receiving an equal share of the Government orders. I have been in the business at Collie for many years. The Collie Proprietary Company has never done anything to advance the interests of this industry, but has only endeavoured to derive the benefit of all that the Government could shower upon it. My company has done more in one day for the bunkering trade and for the industry generally than the Collie Proprietary has done in one year.

Hon. J. Duffell: Has it not spent a lot of money in developmental work?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Certainly the company has spent money in developmental work in order to work the mine.

Hon. J. Duffell: Beyond their present requirements?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: The Collie Proprietary has done nothing to assist the industry, but has lived and existed solely upon the

Government trade. Disasters have overtaken all the Collie mines at different times. The geology of the country and its general formation, are such that it is only a question of time when each company in turn will meet with certain difficulties. Take the case of the old Wall-send Company. This was flooded first, and then had fire damp through it, and the result was that the company had to close down. The Scottish Collieries have spent £30,000 or £40,000 in the district. They also had to close up. The Cardiff mine also spent money and very nearly closed up. The Premier mine is still in difficulties, and the Westralian has its difficulties in connection with water. My own unfortunate company fell in, as the Government will do in connection with the industry unless they are very careful, and unless they give more consideration to the companies than they have done in the past. The Collie Proprietary is to get this large order, four-sixths of the Government work, and the other companies will be unable to exist, but disaster will, in time, overtake that company also. At the recent conference with the Minister for Railways and the Commissioner, I pointed out to the former that he did not know whose turn it was going to be next, little thinking that my own company would be the first company affected. History will repeat itself, and it has repeated itself during the past week. This policy of the Government cannot be considered at all from the economical standpoint. It might certainly be the means of giving to the engine-drivers' and firemen a little less work, because the Collie Proprietary coal is softer with the two other harder coals. It is bracketed with two other hard coals, and included as one of the three coals. It is not altogether one of the three hard coals. It is not as hard as the two coals on the west end of Collie. Let us assume that this Proprietary coal does give the men less work. If however, the Government in their actions are to be guided by this circumstance, why should they not arrange for some automatic system by which the fuel is blown or sprayed into the furnaces with kerosene, and in this way obviate the necessity for the men doing any work at all? That appears to be the only thing that is guiding Mr. Short to-day. He says that the railway men are desirous that they should use only this coal because it gives them very little work to do. He should get some automatic system and blow the fuel in, and give them no work at all. One of the witnesses before the Royal Commission told me that, as far as firing was concerned, he was in a position to fire only once in 20 or 30 minutes, and that for the rest of the time he could sit down. If that is so, I fail to see that the men should have such objection to using this particular Collie coal. It has been used for the past 18 years. In 1909 when a little impetus was about to be given to the industry owing to the strike in New South Wales, and when the coal owner's entertained hopes of getting a few extra shillings per ton for their coal because of the strike, the Government said "We will com-

mandeer your coal." This coal was good enough for them to use because they could not get coal elsewhere, but they would not give us an opportunity of establishing it. I am told that during that year 1909-10, there were less fires in the agricultural areas than in previous years and less than there were in succeeding years, although Collie coal was exclusively used. Mr. Ewing mentioned the point about covering up Collie coal. If this report is gone through it will be found that one coal, the Collie Co-operative coal, when covered, only exceeded by 17 per cent. the best Newcastle coal. That is to say Newcastle coal was 100 per cent. and the Co-operative coal 117 per cent, whereas the Proprietary coal went considerably higher. This clearly indicates that if the Railway Commissioner and some of his hide-bound staff had only taken the industry and the interests of the State into consideration, as well as their own interests, covers would have been provided long before. Recently I was in Coolgardie and in looking round there I saw approximately, 1½ miles of beautiful galvanised iron fencing, which seemed to be placed around a magazine. I said to a stranger near by, "Why is this place fenced in?" and he replied that it was to keep the rabbits from eating away the magazine. There is sufficient galvanised iron around that magazine to cover all the coal that is required for consumption by the railways. If the railway people would do that and stop this disintegration of coal, it would, to a great extent, I am sure, meet with the objections that some people have to the use of Collie coal. Another grave aspect is the question of which the leader of the House has often spoken—stimulating production and increasing our population.

Hon. J. Duffell: Two good points.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Undoubtedly. Will the leader of the House continue to be a member of a Government which is going to stultify production and annihilate population? What primary industry is there in Australia to-day, or in Africa, in many parts of America, India, or Japan, which plays a greater part than the coal industry does here? I do not know of one.

Hon. J. Cunningham: You put rocks into the coal down at Collie.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: The arbitration award states that where there is a seam of coal the miner engaged—and my hon. friend was a miner once—must be paid so much per ton to take the dirt out of it, and he is paid that court award. Our company, and other companies, not feeling satisfied that the miners were taking this dirt out, not because the miners were not anxious to do it, but because it is an extremely difficult matter down in a coal mine to extract all that material from the coal, and in order to safeguard our interests, offered to put up a conveyor and a picking belt upon which all the coal that came from the mine would be carried, and to place men on either side of the conveyor to pull out all the dirt. My own company is not concerned in this matter because it is not proposed to cut it out. Mr.

Backshall was willing to allow our company to remain in. It is not our company, therefore, whose claims I am advocating to-day but the other companies. We said to the Commissioner of Railways and the Minister, "If you are not satisfied with the way in which the dirt is picked out as the coal goes over the conveyor belt and think you are not getting a fair deal, my company and other companies are willing to pay an inspector, appointed by the Engine Drivers and Locomotive and Firemen's Association, to go to Collie. We will pay his salary and he can check any coal that goes into the truck." Surely nothing fairer could have been offered. In addition to that we have said that the Commissioner of Railways has power to go down and sample any section of our collieries that he likes.

Sitting suspended from 6.18 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Before tea I was referring to the question of clean coal and to the efforts being made by the coal owners to produce that class of coal which will give every satisfaction to all concerned. I desire to emphasise the point that every effort is to-day being made to produce coal which will be free from dirt and give little or no trouble to the firemen as regards the matter on which they have enlarged to such an extent. All the mines referred to as producing coal of a dirty nature are, I am sure, doing all they can to improve the quality of that coal, and to raise it to such a standard as will obviate all the objections raised by the firemen's union. In a statement published in this morning's newspaper I observed the remark that the engine drivers are prepared to endeavour to use all Collie coal, so that not one ton of imported coal shall be used by the railways if the engine drivers can possibly help it. That of course is very patriotic on the part of the engine-drivers. Nevertheless, it is a remarkable thing that although to-day they say they can use all Proprietary coal, yet when giving evidence before the Royal Commission they were emphatic on the point that they could not use more than 50 per cent. of Collie coal. Thus within a very short space of time they have seen fit to change their views regarding the proportion of Collie coal they are prepared to use. The statement referred to would also give many people the impression that the supply of one-sixth of coal by the various mines is something which has been in existence for some years. But that is not so. During the last two or three years the Co-operative mine has supplied two-sixths of the total coal used by the Government, and the Proprietary mine has supplied the same quantity. Only when disaster overtakes the Co-operative mine is a stand made by the Commissioner of Railways for the full quantity of two-sixths to be given to the Proprietary mine to fulfil. The reason two-sixths was being supplied by the Co-operative mine was that an accident had occurred at the Scottish mine. Then, in pursuance of an undertaking

entered into with the Commissioner of Railways, who approved of the transfer of the Scottish contract of one-sixth to the Co-operative, the latter supplied that order on behalf of the Scottish. In connection with the filling of that order a certain rebate was allowed to the Scottish mine for the purpose of carrying on and developing. From that date until to-day the Scottish company have been developing their mine, and within the next month or two they will be in a position to put out coal. They hold a letter from the Minister for Railways stating that immediately they are in a position to put out coal the Railway Department will accept delivery of the one-sixth. After receiving the benefits which the company I am interested in were prepared to allow them, and after having expended that money in the development of a new seam, they are now told that they are to have no further orders from the Government. To say the least, that is not altogether what one would expect from a Government. I would go so far as to say that it is an attitude which should not be adopted by any Government of repute. That the Scottish company should now be told that they are not to have any portion of the Government order—which practically means wiping them out—is something I cannot understand. Mr. Ewing made a certain reference of which I think I saw the Colonial Secretary take a note; and that is, perhaps, one reason why I refer to the matter. Mr. Ewing said it might be possible to have the same output of coal from Collie with fewer men employed in the district. That statement, however, is not quite correct. The coal mining industry of Western Australia, similarly to the industry in every other part of the world, is situated very much as is the waterside workers industry. The coal owners must of necessity have a number of spare men in order to fill rush business. The bunkering trade of the State is not such as to warrant continuous supply from day to day with the average output being maintained. The result is that when rush orders come along, a certain number of men employed in the industry assist to give the additional quantity of coal required. Because of this feature of the industry many of them do not work full time. The time is spread, and the men do not work the full number of days that they would ordinarily. That is the reason why more men are engaged in the industry than the actual output requires. In other words, more coal could be put out in the district if the trade warranted it. Next, I wish to refer to the benefits to be derived from an industry of this kind. Within the last two or three months I visited Melbourne and there I met one or two men connected with the Eastern States coal industry. An officer of the Victorian Government invited me to inspect the tests then being made of the Victorian brown coal. I found that the Victorian Government had installed an excellent experimental plant in order to treat brown coal, which is a coal of not half the calorific value of the Western Australian commodity. Its value is some 6,000 B.T.U. However, the Victorian Government were

spending a considerable amount of money on the experiments, and were producing from the brown coal by-products of considerable value, including petrol, many classes of oil, and wax. In addition, the brown coal was converted into briquettes at a small cost. Although the coal was valued at only 6,000 B.T.U. originally, it had, in the form of briquettes, a calorific value of 12,000 to 13,000 B.T.U., after the by-products had been extracted. In Victoria the Government are not talking about wiping out the coal industry. They are talking about spending no less a sum than two million pounds in pushing forward the brown coal. I was so taken with the experiments being made with the Government plant that I arranged to send, and did send, samples of our Collie coal to Victoria to be experimented upon; and I now await the results of the experiments, which I hope will prove of benefit to myself and of interest and advantage to the State. The benefits derived by Western Australia from the Collie coal industry are numerous. That industry brings to the State a certain amount of foreign capital, a commodity for which we are to-day most anxious. In addition, the industry supplies the Railway Department with considerable revenue. Again, there is in Collie a population of 4,000 to 5,000 people dependent upon the industry. In respect of these people the State receives so much per capita from the Federal Government. The industry not only brings into this State a certain amount of capital, but circulates a considerable amount of money paid as wages. Further, it must be borne in mind that the payment of £1 in wages at Collie means a circulation of, perhaps, £10 or £15 or £20 in various directions throughout the State. It is a very difficult thing to realise what £1 of money paid in wages represents in circulation. I do not know that we have in this House a mathematician able to calculate the exact spending value of 20s. in a community. Therefore, having regard to the town of Collie alone—which town is to-day, though I speak subject to correction, circulating more money in wages than any other town outside the metropolitan area and the gold-mining centres—the coal mining industry must be of great benefit and advantage to the State. And is it the wiping out of this industry that the Government propose? If they do that, what do they propose to put in its place? Before the Government allow this thing to drift too far, before they allow Mr. Commissioner Short to have his own way from a railway standpoint, I hope the Government will view it from the policy point of view respecting the value of this industry to the State. In addition to all this, the industry has been a big insurance to the State against imported coals. People engaged in the industry have laboured for years and have not obtained very great results from it. Many of the companies have never paid a dividend, but have struggled on with their development in the hope that the additional trade which they have been catering for will come along and add to the trade they receive from the Government, and thus enable them in the near future to pay a divi-

dend to those who have invested their money in the industry. I hope the Government will view this, not altogether from the standpoint of the value of coal to the railways, although I contend that this coal favoured by the Government, the Proprietary coal, is not from an economic point of view the best coal, or even the second best, but is merely the third best. I hope the Government will take into consideration the serious effects their proposal will have on the establishment of every other industry in the State.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [7.47]: While I disapprove of the action of the miners in practically threatening the Government with a strike unless they can have equal distribution of orders, I think the Government should give every consideration to this important industry, one of the most important we have in the State. I recently had an opportunity of visiting the Collie district, and I was very much impressed with what I saw and heard. Of course there are two sides to the question. The firemen and engine-drivers have placed their side of the case before us, but I think it has been fairly met by the facts quoted by the representatives of the industry in this House, Messrs. Ewing and Lynn. Some of the statements placed before us in this circular, more particularly those in regard to the use of hard and soft coals, are of considerable interest. The Royal Commission in its report declares that the soft coal can be used with the Proprietary coal. If this is so, the Government are making a fatal mistake in deciding to give the bulk of the orders to one mine. I think the industry should be fostered, and if there is to be any loss to the railways in consequence of the use of the Collie coal, it should be made good out of Consolidated Revenue, and not made a charge against the working of the railways. From what I can gather we are too apt to talk down our own commodities. If we would, rather, talk our products up instead of down, we should be doing far more good to the State as a whole. I remember that on the goldfields a few years ago we would not look at Australian tinned fruit. We would not even look at Tasmanian fruit, but demanded the imported article. To-day we are producing Westralian jam and will not look at it, but must have Tasmanian jam. If all our primary producers were to pull together and work for the benefit of themselves and of the different local industries, it would be of considerable advantage to the State. In reference to the bunkering trade, a friend of mine on the North-West coast, the engineer on the "Minderoo," has used this coal to a considerable extent and he assures me that, taking the difference in prices into consideration, he gets better value from Collie coal than from Newcastle. When, on a recent occasion, the "Minderoo" was steaming out of a willy-willy, the engineer was candid enough to say that he wished to goodness he had Collie coal instead of the Japanese coal he was using. We are too apt to talk our commodities down. All sections of the community should agree to foster this Collie coal industry, for the coal mining industry will be there when our gold mining industry will have been forgotten. With, perhaps, the exceptions of wool and

wheat, the coal mining industry is the most important we have to-day. I would urge the Government to give consideration to those mines which it is proposed to cut out from the railway order. The Commissioner of Railways, some time ago, assured the people of Collie that the existing conditions would prevail until after the close of the war. In these circumstances I think the Government would be well advised to maintain the equal distribution of the orders. If they cannot do that, they should endeavour to give to the mines proposed to be cut out a bigger share than it is intended to allot to them. If I am permitted to refer to the criticism of the "West Australian" in reference to that visit to Collie the other day, I will take the strongest exception to the statements made in the Press, and more particularly to the comments of the editor after the Minister had replied. In those comments the editor asked, "Was not more than the Minister's car in requisition?" The inference was that the Government hired cars to take members home from the railway station. Personally I think it is the duty of every member to see all that he can of the possibilities of the State. The editor, in his comments, asked, "Was not another car obtained from the rank?" Let me explain that there was another car obtained from the rank. It was telephoned for by the station-master on behalf of Mr. Boan, who motored the State Mining Engineer and myself home, paying for the car out of his own pocket. I take strong exception to such comments appearing in the leading paper, if indeed it is the leading paper. As I said last year, it is getting down to the level of the gutter Press instead of being the leading paper of the State. I hope, as I said before, that the Government will see to it that the Collie coal mining industry is fostered in every possible way.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH (North-East) [7.53]: The position is a somewhat serious one, but I fail to see why the counsels that prevail should not be able to overcome the difficulty. I know that vast sums of money have been spent in the development of the industry at Collie, and we all know that the coal miners have come from almost all parts of the British-speaking world, and have brought their families and made their homes at Collie. That appears to me to be one of the most serious aspects of the situation. I think Mr. Ewing touched an important point when he referred to the statements made by the late Mr. Rotherham some years ago in connection with the locomotives. It is strange that so important a report as that should not have received serious consideration, if not by the Government of the day, at least by one or another of the Governments we have had since then. Yet no attempt has been made to model an engine that would successfully burn Collie coal and so be of improved benefit to the State. This is one of the greatest difficulties the engine-drivers have to contend with, and if an engine had been modelled on the lines suggested by the late Mr. Rotherham it might have been of vast advantage to the Collie coal industry. Even now, perhaps, it is not too late for the Government to take up the question and see what can be done. The Collie coal industry will grow, and it is of no use delaying

the time when steps shall be taken in the direction of remodelling our engines to fit them for the successful and exclusive use of Collie coal. I hope the Government will give the question every consideration.

Hon. H. BOAN (Metropolitan) [7.55]: I should like to briefly express my opinion in connection with this industry. From the commercial point of view, none can deny that the industry is of vast importance. I certainly am not in a position to express an opinion on the relative qualities of the coal, but little as we know, it is quite plain that we should endeavour to go further in the development of the industry. Recently I was fortunate enough to be invited to acquire a little more knowledge of the industry, and in consequence I accompanied an enthusiastic party to Collie. It was my first visit to that very important centre. I derived considerable enlightenment the whole journey through, and particularly in viewing the natural resources in the vicinity of Collie, where we found timber growing in great profusion, representing a very great asset to the country, and large areas awaiting cultivation. Then on my arrival at Collie I was agreeably surprised to find that not only were the coal miners working in their mines to the great advantage of the State, but that they have a very delightful way of spending their leisure hours, which appealed strongly to me. I had the good fortune to meet some very genial miners who were anxious to point out that life in a coal mine was not so dark and gloomy as one would imagine. At all events there was a little conversation when they came to the surface, and I found that their homes were fit models in the appreciation of many of us from the City. Round their homesteads flourish pleasant gardens of flowers, fruit and vegetables, requisites in a healthy life. I was amazed to find so happy a community. Another thing that appealed to me was that while those conscientious men worked with a will, it did not take the whole of their energies to accomplish good results. I am told that they make handsome wages down there. They have no occasion to play bowls, football, and other exercises to keep their physical frames in order, and so they devote their attention to their homes and gardens. It impressed me tremendously. I have attended many meetings and heard most interesting accounts of the great wealth lying at Collie awaiting exploitation. I cannot for a moment believe that there was any member of our party who did not think the industry, as we saw it, worthy of all the enthusiasm and support that could be given to it. From the commercial point of view I consider the Government have from time to time occasion to pause. It is a very serious thing to condemn any of our private industries, potential avenues of wealth. It is an admitted fact that we in Western Australia have not much confidence, or the confidence that we should have, in our possible wealth, and in our vast resources. It is no incentive to capitalists when we go abroad and ask them to invest their money in our country to tell them that our own people are ner-

vous of investing capital in our own resources. When we ask them to assist in developing propositions like Collie coal, they will tell us "No." That is a very serious point for the State. We cannot expect to accomplish too much. We know there are many things in the State to develop, and we must be prepared for reverses. We cannot produce all that we may perhaps require. Talking about the nervousness of capital, we are offering no incentive to capitalists unless we do something ourselves. We cannot expect to get capital abroad if we do nothing. We also know that labour has a certain amount of nervousness. I am told, and I think there is some truth in it, that prospects are very encouraging in the Eastern States. I should say that secretly, because we do not want too many to know it. But in Victoria and New South Wales things are very flourishing, and if we disturb the industry, men may be packing up their traps and leaving us. We cannot allow such conscientious developments as we have at Collie to leave our State, and if they go away, they may never return. This is a disaster, which the people may have to face. I hope the Government will see the possibility even should some loss occur, of endeavouring to tide over the trouble until after the war. I am told with some confidence that at Collie many of the mines are producing good bunkering coal, and that some of the mines can be quite independent of the Government. Why should we disorganise such an industry as we have? From what I saw—the contentment of the people—I should feel that I was committing a crime if I did not support this request, and I hope to see the little trouble tided over until after the war, because there is an understanding which is more than a partial one. I hope that any little suggestion which I have made may impress members sufficiently with the seriousness of the position, and that we should do something which will benefit this portion of the State.

Hon. E. ROSE (South-West) [8.5]: Few words will suffice to support the remarks of the speakers who have preceded me on this subject. The Collie coal field is one of the greatest assets we have in Western Australia. This is a railway matter that should be outside of political influence. I regret that this subject had to be brought forward because I think the Commissioner of Railways should be removed from any kind of political influence. We have had a discussion from both sides, the railway organisations and the miners, and I think sufficient has been said to convince the Government that they should not allow the whole of the contract for coal to go to one mine. Collie coal has had very little assistance from the Government in comparison with what other industries have received, such as our timber and our agriculture. Look at what the Government have done for the karri timber industry? They have gone to the expense of erecting works to powellise that timber. Why should not the Government, on the other hand, experiment and do

something for our coal industry, so as to make the coal of greater use to the railways. Two years ago there was a cry that Collie coal could not be used because of the sparks firing the country. That argument seems to have fallen through, and there is another fault found now, that the coal supplied is of an inferior quality. I think the Commissioner has the matter under his own control, for he has the coal inspected and if it is not up to the calorific value or is not clean it can be condemned, I believe, at the expense of the mine owners. Not only can the Commissioner do that, but I believe he can stop coal being hewn from the place where the bad coal was taken. I think the Government should take into consideration all the facts which have been placed before them, and not take any rash step. I do not think the whole of the orders should be given to one mine.

Hon. H. STEWART (South-East) [8.9]: The aspect that Mr. Boan placed before us, that it was not only the asset of the coal, but the asset of a very valuable type of individual that we had to consider is important. It certainly strikes me that these people are too good to risk losing at a time when practically it is impossible to add to our population by immigration. Not only have the men shown excellent qualities as miners spending their time below, but on the surface they have shown themselves to be good citizens, cultivating fruit and vegetables to despatch to market, even to the metropolis. They have also put their savings into the mines, working on the co-operative principle. If they have shown such an interest in the State and demonstrated that they have a live interest in the wealth of the country, the Government cannot fail to take cognisance of that aspect of the question. The Government have stated that their policy is to support the co-operative principle. This is one point that tends to strengthen the argument that the people in that district should have full consideration. All the people who are interested in production in this country should be country party people. One aspect that I as a representative of an agricultural constituency take into consideration is the danger from bush fires from Collie coal. We have not heard much of that lately, but the danger has been present during the past 16 years. What have the Railway Department done to cope with it? Practically nothing. We have heard that experiments have been made all of which have been condemnatory to Collie coal. As time has gone on, we find that the railways can work with a higher percentage of Collie coal than they formerly said could be done. We have had two Royal Commissions on this subject, and their recommendations are before us. What is the use of the country being put to the expense of Royal Commissions, consisting of people whose status is unquestioned, and whose ability has been proved before they were appointed to the positions, of their recommendations are not adopted? Have the Railway Department made any real earnest



effort to cope with the difficulties? In Collie coal we should not discriminate between one company and another. We have good fuel at Collie which is not in any way inferior to New Zealand. It is of better quality than the New Zealand coal and coals of the United States, both in calorific value and physical properties, yet these coals in New Zealand and the United States, and I am told in India and in Eastern Asia, are used for railway purposes, because a proper type of locomotive has been adopted. It is up to the Railway Department of the State to import a suitable class of locomotive engine from those countries. Mr. Ewing has pointed out that a former engineer said rather than alter the existing type of locomotive we should import other types. It is a disgrace to the Railway Department if they cannot introduce some system of dealing with a fuel which is superior to the fuel in New Zealand and the United States. From the point of view of the sparks, the agriculturist must insist that it is a danger which shall be eliminated if possible, and I believe it can be. I believe Mr. Hedges on his wood lines after having had losses through the burning of trucks and firewood by sparks from locomotives, has introduced a spark arrester or extinguisher that has proved effective. If he can do that with wood fuel it shows what can be done in the field of private enterprise. If Mr. Hedges can do that, the Railway Department with Collie coal should be able, without appreciable expense, to introduce a system of dealing with this coal. It has been said that in the letter sent out from the Engine Drivers and Firemen's Union that if the fireboxes were increased it would involve an additional cost to the State. It was also stated that the water was bad and that corrosion would follow. Marine engineers know that corrosion can always be dealt with satisfactorily. All these objections which are raised are, to a trained mind, objections which can be overcome. With the aid of science they can be effectively and completely dealt with, but if we run departments and eliminate from those departments men of scientific training, we cannot expect to progress and overcome difficulties. Mr. Ewing also brought forward the point that there was an honourable understanding between the Commissioner and the companies, and that practically the whole of the companies would be given railway orders until some time after peace had been declared. It seems now that to bring about an alteration is highly injudicious. Every effort on the part of all of us is required to keep the wheels of industry going, to keep our population here, and keep them employed, and I trust that something in this direction will be done.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [8.18]: The debate which has taken place on the motion moved by Mr. Ewing has quite justified that hon. member in his action. We have heard quite a lot about the Collie coal industry this evening and its relation to the State, how it affects the mines and mine owners, and also how it affects those who are

engaged in using it, the railway men. I visited Collie recently, and whilst there I heard much vigorous language used in connection with this question, and I came to the conclusion that the present Commissioner of Railways is not a popular man in Collie. As a matter of fact, if he had to stand for election for his present position, he would not get a single vote in Collie. Personally, I must admit, in listening to those who have discussed the question both privately and in public, I have had the misfortune to strike violent partisans on both sides. Even in the discussion this evening an element of partisanship has entered. In any question such as this there are the interests to be considered, first of all, of the mine owner and then the miner, and in Collie at times the mine owner and the miner happen to be one and the same person. The interests of these people have been well put before us. Again, we have the railway men who are taking up quite a large proportion of the spare columns of the daily Press in which to set out their side of the case. It appears to me that, although these two parties are in violent disagreement on this question, it is due to us to give it consideration from the point of view of the whole State. I hope we shall shortly hear the policy of the Government in this respect. It is rather remarkable to me to find that the Railway Commissioner is dictating the policy of the Government on such a question as this. If he is allowed to do so on this occasion, we will be justified in inquiring a little into the question of who fixed the railway policy in connection with other industries in the State. For instance, if the Government are inclined to stand off and say that this is a matter purely for the Railway Commissioner, and that he is taking this attitude purely from a business standpoint, I shall be reminded of previous occasions when questions such as this arose, and when the Railway Commissioner took up a rather remarkable position from the business standpoint. Take, for instance, the case where the freight on super was reduced until that commodity was carried over the railway for about a quarter its cost. I do not think it requires much argument to demonstrate that this was not the policy of the Railway Commissioner and that he would not adopt such a policy from a commercial standpoint. Therefore, despite what we are told that the Commissioner has a free hand, the fact remains that previously the Government saw fit to interfere. They had a very definite policy and the Railway Commissioner fell into line with that policy. When the Government thought it necessary to use the railways to assist the industries, or to win an election, the Railway Commissioner appeared to have been very blind. The policy of the Government and of the Commissioner on such occasions appeared to coincide. Now, of course, when the present difficulty is facing us, the whole of the onus is to be placed on the shoulders of the Commissioner. This is too big a question for the Commissioner, and he should not be permitted to decide what policy should be adopted in connection with the coal mining

industry of the State. So far as our experience is concerned, I remember when Collie coal was considered quite a joke. Even with public men it was not considered out of place for them to publicly belittle and defame Collie coal. That feeling has died down and especially since our experience of the last few months when we found that Collie coal, instead of being a joke, was of vital importance to the State and saved the State during a critical period of its history.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: It has saved us right from the beginning.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: Exactly. We do not realise these things until they are brought home to us, as they were brought home recently. I refer to the industrial dispute which caused a shortage of coal here, and also the abnormal conditions which rendered it almost impossible to get coal from the Eastern States. The Commissioner probably would not take all these things into consideration. In running the State railways purely as a business concern, perhaps he does not want to take all these things into consideration, but with the Government controlling the industry it is quite an entirely different proposition. We hear a good deal about business lines, but I think we have also got used to considering these matters in a different light from that which was intended. When people tell us we have to run the concerns of the State on business lines, we can generally bet that that is not meant so far as any particular business is concerned. A farmer does not suggest running the railways on business lines when he wants cheap super, and so it is right through the piece. Therefore, the question of business lines need not enter into this discussion. It is really a question of what is best in the interests of the State, and as the Government have done so much to assist the various industries, I think they can well look at this a little bit from the Collie people's point of view. I am interested also in the manner in which this will affect our railway system and the manner in which it will affect the drivers and firemen who have to use this coal. I think we have to consider not only the mine owners and miners, but also the users of the coal, and I say unreservedly, after asking a good many questions while I was at Collie, and after hearing both sides, that undoubtedly the position in which we find the coal industry to-day is due, to a certain extent, to the carelessness of those who have been supplying the commodity. I think it is just as well, on an occasion like this, to tell those who supply the coal that whatever happened in the past, if they hope to get what they want on this occasion, that is the equal distribution of orders, they must give the railway system at least clean coal. I mentioned this in Collie and they said, "We admit that we could have been a little more careful in this respect." If we are to support their claims, the Railway Department are perfectly justified in demanding that they shall have a good article and if the Collie people expect us to back their claims they must give us a fair deal. We cannot impose too stringent restrictions in this respect. It must be understood that if the mines are to get an equal distribution, they must give a guarantee that they will not give

a third or fourth class article, where it is possible to supply the first rate article. That is a question for the Railway Commissioner and the Government to determine, and I see no reason why all the mines should not be given a fair show. On the other hand, they must be given to understand that if they offend in this respect, drastic measures will have to be taken and the particular mine offending will have to go clean out. I believe that the mine owners are prepared to give a fair deal in this respect and the Government are justly entitled to demand it. I say this because it appears to me that the firemen and drivers of the railways have had their just grievances in the past. They say that matters have gone along to such an extent that they have no confidence in any further promises that are made. Be that as it may, there must be some method which could be adopted so as to provide that only good coal should be consumed on the railways. At a time like this, when we have on the one hand one party making a very violent and what appears to be a definite demand, and on the other hand the Collie firemen and drivers appearing also to have a pretty definite policy, is it not well for the Government to take this matter into consideration, and endeavour to find some way out of the present difficulty instead of allowing, as it appears, both parties to act in a manner which, if both statements are correct, is going to result in a deadlock? I believe that the Government intend to take this matter into consideration. If the Government are stirred up I think they will take charge of the matter, and show that, in a question like this affecting as it does the interests of the State as a whole, they realise that it is they who should be running the State. I ask the Government to take the matter in hand not merely in the light of a business undertaking, but because of the other factors which have been referred to by the various speakers, who have stated the case so eloquently and well.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [8.32]: I quite realise the importance of the question before us, and that it is of such a nature as to justify the action taken to-day. It appears to me that we are faced with a very serious situation inasmuch as one section of the community, the Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association, is clashing with another section of the community, the coal mine owners, and unless something is done to bring about a settlement there is no doubt that serious trouble will occur. That is why I say that the situation is a most serious one. I did hope that we might have had the advantage of hearing something from one of the members of the Government in the Chamber, and that they might have said earlier in the debate something which perhaps would have saved the House much time and enabled us to proceed with the other business. I suppose, however, we will have to be patient and that some information will be forthcoming later on. There is one question which has not yet been very greatly touched upon. I am not inclined to believe that it is owing to any indiscretion on the part of the present Minister for Railways that this present trouble has been brought about, or owing to any per-

suasion on the part of any of his officers. But there is something else underlying the whole thing which has not yet been touched upon, to my satisfaction at any rate. Very little has been said upon the question of costs. In the circular letter issued by the Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association, this body has gone to the trouble of pointing out the difference in the costs of the various types of coal. That is set forth on page 2 of the letter and is as follows:—

The quality of this coal, which is consumed per train mile, renders it a most expensive article compared with the Proprietary coal, and the consumption of two of them cost the State 2s. 10d. per ton more than the Proprietary, and the other 1s. 2½d. per ton. Thus the railways are paying 2s. 10½d. per ton more for an article of an inferior nature, which exposes the country to more risks and which is in every way inferior to other coal produced on the same field. These prices are only computed where the coal is used near the mines under the best conditions. We repeat that the consumption of 50 per cent. of this stuff on our railway system is wrong and should not be allowed to continue.

I have only this to support me in the remarks which I am now making, and it is with a statement like this before me that I wish to place my remarks on record. I hope that when Mr. Ewing is replying he will make some reference to this letter. I am almost inclined to think that the whole question is something like that of a storm in a tea cup, but still it is a question which we, as representatives of the people, should be in a position to settle before it assumes any more serious aspect than it has assumed at the present time, or gives any more tangible results. When we come to hear the reply of the Government, as represented in this House, we shall probably find that the Commissioner is not so much to blame as he appears to be from the remarks which have been made. I realise the seriousness of the position and the importance of the coal industry. It is no doubt one of the most important of our primary industries, and anything that would have a tendency to retard or injure it in its progress I should certainly raise my voice in protest against. I was very pleased to hear from Mr. Ewing that the actions of the miners at Collie were laudable in the extreme, taking into consideration the great percentage of men who have responded to their country's call and are fighting for our freedom on the battlefields of Europe. That must weigh very considerably with hon. members in dealing with that question. It does weigh with me very considerably, and I say it is my duty to protect the interests of these men, even though this may be responsible for a slight increase in the cost which the Government will be called upon to pay for their coal for the running of the railways. This is not a time when strife of this nature should crop up at all. With a little discretion I firmly believe that the whole trouble could have been obviated. I hope that in the course of his reply Mr. Ewing will be able to state

that although the Government are paying more per ton, as stated in the circular issued by the locomotive engine drivers' association, there will be solid reasons for that being paid, and that the benefits to be derived by the State will compensate for the extra outlay. I hope that before danger comes any nearer than it is now, the whole question will be amicably settled.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [8.41]: Mr. Duffell has expressed regret that I did not enter into this debate earlier. I would remind him that it has been the practice of this House for the Minister, who proposes to deal with the subject under discussion, to wait until all the members have had an opportunity of speaking, in order that he may be in a position to reply to any point raised by any hon. member. Had it been intimated to me, no matter how indirectly, that it was the desire on the part of hon. members that this practice should be departed from on this occasion, I would have been only too pleased to have spoken after Mr. Ewing had resumed his seat. I wish to assure hon. members that the Government have had the matter under very serious consideration for a long time past. As several hon. members have intimated, the position is a difficult one. The miners at Collie say to the Government, "Unless you will immediately agree to the principle of equal distribution, we will not mine any more coal." The railway engine-drivers and firemen say to the Government, "Unless you depart from this system of equal distribution and use local coal best suited to railway purposes, we will not continue to run the railways." The Government do not propose to be influenced in the decision they arrive at by threats either from one side or the other, but at the same time realise that it is their duty not to take up any high-handed attitude, and to endeavour to get both parties, in a spirit of sweet reasonableness, to arrive at a compromise which will be suitable to all. In the hope of doing that, a conference was held some few weeks ago and this conference continued for some days, but, unfortunately, a decision was not arrived at. Since the parties interested, the proprietors of the coal mines, the workmen, the Railway Commissioner, and the engine-drivers were unable to come to a decision, it has now become the duty of the Government to review the matter and reach a decision themselves. In making that statement I do not hesitate to say that the object of the Government will be, not, as some hon. members have suggested, to strangle the Collie coal fields, but to make such an arrangement by which it will be possible for the State to use more Collie coal than it has ever used before. To put the matter slightly differently, I will say that because we have not been able to get Newcastle coal in the past or cannot get it now, we have been forced to use more Collie coal than we ever did in the past. The desire of the Government now is that what we have to do by compulsion at the present time shall be done by choice and as a matter of advantage to the State in time to come. We wish to put

the larger consumption of Collie coal upon a permanent basis, and I do not think that it is unreasonable for the Government in taking up that attitude to say "We must be permitted some voice, if there is a difference in the value of these coals for railway purposes, as to the quantity of coal of each kind that we shall use for railway purposes." The Government have no sympathy whatever with any suggestion that the whole of the coal should be used from one mine, and no idea of that kind will be put into force. But, at the same time, the information now available to the Government does not justify us in saying that we are prepared to agree to an equal distribution in all circumstances. I hope to be able to satisfy hon. members that, if we did make such a declaration at the present time, we should be flying directly in the face of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, whose report has been so frequently referred to during this debate. I should like, if possible, to remove the impression that past Governments have been unmindful of the desirableness, in the interests of the State, of developing the Collie coal industry. I do not think any good purpose is served, when matters of this kind are under debate, by saying, "You have done such a lot for this industry and such a lot for that industry, and nothing for Collie coal." There are just one or two points of which I would like to remind hon. members. Some years ago the price of Collie coal was fixed at 8s. 9d. per ton; and, at the time that price was fixed, one of the Collie mines offered to supply the Railway Department with the whole of the coal they required at 7s. per ton. The Government of the day—I think, rightly—rejected that offer because they considered, in the terms of Dr. Jack's report, that it would be unjust to the Collie coalfields to accept the offer. Consequently, at that time a price of 8s. 9d. per ton was paid for Collie coal in order to encourage the industry generally, whilst the whole of the Railway Department's requirements could have been obtained from one of the collieries at 7s. per ton. Dr. Jack's recommendation, I think I am correct in saying, was that 66 per cent. of Collie coal should be used and 33 per cent. of imported coal. Now, gradually, before present conditions made it impossible to obtain Newcastle coal, the proportion of Collie coal has been steadily increased; and personally I am quite convinced that if this State had not had Collie coal we should have had to pay a great deal more for Newcastle coal than we have paid in the past. It may be possible for the Commissioner of Railways to demonstrate, as he has said in his report, that the use of Collie coal in certain circumstances has added to the cost of running the railways. But I have always held the opinion, and I hold it to-day, that but for Collie coal we should have had to pay a great deal more for Newcastle coal than we have paid in the past. Therefore, in any remarks I make showing that Collie coal has not been neglected, I do not wish it for a moment to be supposed that the industry has not been worthy of all the encouragement it

has received, and possibly of more. Before we were compelled to use a largely increased percentage of Collie coal owing to the impossibility of getting Newcastle coal, 80 per cent. of Collie coal was used in the winter months of the year, and a reduced quantity from the 15th November to the 15th March. During that brief period of the summer, about 70 per cent. of Collie coal was used. Thus it will be seen that even before this compulsion came along, through the shortage of Newcastle coal, the quantity of Collie coal used on the railways was steadily increasing. For the current year it is estimated that out of a total consumption of 220,000 tons of coal, 200,000 will be from Collie. That is to say, only one-tenth will be Newcastle coal. We propose this year to use 90 per cent. of Collie coal.

Hon. J. Ewing: The Government should be using 100 per cent. of Collie coal.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Royal Commission do not favour the using of 100 per cent. of Collie coal, because it is laid down clearly in the Commission's report that to use Collie coal on the northern railways would mean a heavy increase in cost to our Railway Department. However, I shall be very glad if the time arrives when we can use nothing but Collie coal. There is another aspect from which the State has not been ungenerous to the Collie coal industry. Collie coal was supposed to pay a royalty of 3d. per ton for the first 10 years, and of 6d. per ton thereafter; and that provision is still on the Statute-book. It is law at the present time. Up to 1905 Collie coal had, as a matter of fact, paid in royalties £14,462. That was paid in the early days of the industry, when it was struggling, and when, as I have already said, the price paid by the Railway Department for Collie coal was 8s. 9d. per ton. Since then, not by the action of Parliament in repealing that law, but as the result of an act of grace on the part of the various Governments in power from time to time, the royalty due by the Collie companies has been remitted from year to year, the amount of such remission up to the present time being the substantial one of £60,000. That has been remitted, not by Act of Parliament, but as an act of grace. I am not boggling at this. I say that the Collie coal industry is worth developing, and that everything necessary should be done to encourage its development. But I do not think it fair to say that different Governments have not done their best to assist this great industry. We have heard some references to an agreement made, an agreement that the existing condition of affairs should continue until a certain period after the termination of the war. This agreement, like other agreements, was mutual. There were mutual obligations and mutual undertakings under this agreement. We have been reminded that one feature of the agreement was an obligation on the part of the Railway Department to take a certain proportion of their coal requirements from each mine. Now, what was the obligation on the part of the Collie coal pro-

prietors? That they should supply to the Railway Department coal until three months after the war at the price then obtaining, which was 11s. a ton.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: But the Government altered that.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am not suggesting that the 11s. per ton was sufficient, although I shall have a word or two to say on that point a little later. In May, 1915, a letter on this point was written by the Acting Secretary for Railways. That letter has been made the subject of reference during the debate. It reads as follows:—

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 1st instant, and in reply am directed to inform you that the Commissioner concurs in the extension of the conditions and existing arrangements in connection with the old contract for the supply of Collie coal until three months after the cessation of hostilities, and the necessary directions are being given accordingly. It will, however, be necessary for the bond to be renewed.

The date of that letter is the 7th May, 1915; and I understand the agreement in all particulars was observed until the middle of December, 1916, when, on application made by the member for the district, Mr. A. A. Wilson, an increase of 6d. per ton was granted, bringing the price up to 11s. 6d. per ton. Some time afterwards, the Newcastle strike, to which reference has been made this afternoon, occurred; and I heartily endorse the statements made by hon. members that had it not been for Collie coal we should have found ourselves in a deplorable position when that strike happened. The strike was settled by Mr. Justice Edmunds, of New South Wales. He settled it by giving the miners an increased wage and by arranging that the price of coal should be raised. After that decision had been arrived at in New South Wales, a further increase of no less than 1s. 11d. per ton was made in the price paid by this Government for Collie coal.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: As against a rise of 3s. per ton in the Eastern States.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: But I do want that point to be understood. I observe in a letter of which a copy has been sent me, and which I understand is to be published to-morrow as a reply to the comments of the Engine Drivers' Association, the suggestion is made that the Government intend to treat their agreement to maintain the old conditions until three months after the war, merely as a scrap of paper. I think it is a fair proposition that if the Government make an agreement to continue certain conditions or a certain contract until three months after the war, the obligation to observe the terms of the agreement are on both sides. As a fact, the price provided for in that contract was 11s. per ton, and the price at present paid by the Government, and insisted upon by the coal companies, as a result of the award given in the Eastern States, is 13s. 5d. per ton. So that during

the progress of the agreement the price has been increased by 2s. 5d. per ton. If I can show, as I think I can, that other circumstances have arisen which have altered the position very considerably, I maintain that there is equal justification for the Government's seeking some modification of the agreement in regard to the distribution of orders as there is in the Government's paying 2s. 5d. per ton more than the price stated in the contract.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: A matter of pique, because the award was given in the Eastern States.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know that there is any pique about it. The award was given in the Eastern States, and the Collie coal owners claimed that they were entitled to the increased price fixed by the Price Fixing Commission.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Why did not the Western Australian Government appoint someone to protest against it in the East?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think the Western Australian Government had much chance of making an appearance before Eastern States tribunals in this connection. I do not wish to say anything at all about the arbitration proceedings by which the Newcastle strike was settled. The question now arises whether the demand for the increased price was altogether justified. Mr. Lynn speaking this afternoon said that if the Collie Proprietary Company got the large proportion of orders suggested by the Commissioner, they would be making a very handsome profit indeed. I can quite understand that if a company are working full time they can produce coal a great deal more cheaply than if only working part time. But we have here a statement in paragraph 294 of the Royal Commission's report dealing with the question of price. The Commission says—

Inasmuch, however, as our investigations show that Collie coal can be mined and sold at a good profit at its present price of 11s. per ton on trucks at pit's mouth, we recommend that the present maximum and minimum prices, viz. 12s. and 8s. 9d. per ton respectively, be retained.

We have the statement of Mr. Lynn that the Proprietary company would make a handsome profit out of this contract. We have the statement of the Royal Commission that coal can be mined and sold at the present price of 11s. per ton.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: How is it that one of the chief mines has never paid a dividend?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not know. We have also this fact, a fact worth the while of hon. members to ponder over: we were told that the Scottish Colliery had been unable for some time to supply its quota of Government orders. During the time the Scottish Colliery was unable to supply its quota, it farmed out the right to supply those orders, and received from the companies supplying them 2s. per ton for the privilege, which rather tends to bear out the statement of the Royal Commission that the coal can be mined and sold profitably at 11s., and also the statement of Mr. Lynn that if the Proprietary company got this contract they would be mak-

ing a handsome profit indeed. I also understand that another mine not able to supply its quota has received so much from another company that supplies the deficiency. The Railways are using an increasing quantity of Collie coal, because they cannot get Newcastle coal, and I hope that they will be able to so arrange their affairs that even when they can again get Newcastle coal they will continue to consume Collie coal in the larger quantity. For the year 1915-16 we find that 63,000 tons of Newcastle coal was used, as against 164,000 tons of Collie coal. Last year 37,000 tons of Newcastle was used as against 178,000 tons of Collie coal, and for the current year it is expected that the proportions will be in the ratio of 20,000 tons of Newcastle coal and 200,000 tons of Collie coal. This brings me to the opinions of the Royal Commission on this question of equal distribution. Judging by the remarks of some of the speakers I think anyone who is not familiar with this report would be very likely to run away with the idea that the Royal Commission recommended the equal distribution of coal orders.

Hon. J. Ewing: For six years.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We will go more fully into that directly. The present claim of the companies and miners of Collie is not only that the Railway Department shall equally distribute the whole of its orders between the six companies at present operating on the field or likely to be operating in the near future, when they overcome the temporary difficulties they are under at the present time, but also that any orders which any one of those companies is unable to fill shall be equally distributed between the others. That is the claim made. I want to point out that that claim is directly contrary to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The Royal Commission in its reports says—

Under present conditions there is equal distribution of orders amongst the various mines working at Collie, although the coals are of very different values from a railway standpoint.

I am not going to say a word in favour of any coal as against any other; I do not profess to know anything about it. But I say that the Royal Commission distinctly laid it down that there was a great difference in the values of these coals from a railway standpoint. The report continues—

Presumably, if more mines opened, the new mines would claim to share in this equal distribution. It is conceivable that so many mines may open that the quota of the railway order received by each will be quite inadequate to enable the mine to work at a reasonable stage of efficiency. We are convinced that such a condition of affairs would be disastrous to the State assets.

We have had the suggestion made this afternoon that if any other mines should open they should be included in the distribution.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Who said that?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It was suggested by Mr. Ewing.

Hon. J. Ewing: Certainly not, although I do not see any objection to it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Royal Commission says it would be disastrous to the

State assets. At the time the Commission said this there were five collieries operating, and not six; it was only five that the Royal Commission took into account when it advocated equal distribution.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: There always have been six.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The paragraph continues—

Unless a fair margin of profit can be secured, economical methods of working cannot be employed; cheapness in working costs has to be attained even by serious sacrifice of efficiency. Five collieries are at present in operation, and the bulk of trade, even under the best conditions, is not sufficient to keep these mines working at anything like full pressure. We appreciate the value of healthy competition as a means of keeping the producers alive to the necessity of maintaining a high-grade supply of material, but we believe that the competition, so far as it can be produced by numbers, is already quite sufficient. We are of opinion that extremely good cause should be shown before the number of collieries to share in the railway orders is further increased.

And since this report has been issued this number has been increased. There are six sharing, and there were only five at the time the report was written.

Hon. J. Ewing: There always have been six.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Here we have five distinctly mentioned in the Commission's report.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: The sixth had water trouble, and has since got over it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The report continues—

We believe that the principle of equal distribution of orders militates against the principle of competition very much more effectively than smallness in number of competitors. Under present conditions, no matter what the suitability of the coal is, so long as it comes up to the standard thermal requirements the producer is assured of an equal share in railway orders. We recognise that several mines at Collie would not have come into existence had it not been for this principle of equal distribution, and it would be manifestly unfair to cancel the arrangements which have been entered into, without due notice.

From that paragraph it is surely obvious that the Commissioner did not favour the principle of equal distribution. On the contrary, it says that the principle is destructive to the spirit of competition which alone can ensure the production of the best article; but that some of these companies having been encouraged to come into existence because of this principle of equal distribution, it would be manifestly unfair to close them down without due notice. The report of the Commissioners continues—

Provided that the use of Collie coal on the railways be regarded as a principle of national importance, and that Collie coal be used wherever and in whatever proportions it is possible to do so, we recommend that six years' notice, equal to the dura-

tion of two contract periods of three years each, should be given that the existing policy of the equality of railway orders will cease, and that after the expiration of that period the Railway Commissioner be allowed to select the coals which he regards as most suitable for railway purposes.

I am merely quoting this so that hon. members will not run away with the idea that the Royal Commission recommend equal distribution of orders. Emphatically, they denounce the principle as being a vicious principle, eliminating the competition so desirable in such an industry. But they say, and very rightly, that these companies that have come into operation because of the existence of that principle should be given considerable notice, and they go on to say that at the expiry of that period the Commissioner should be allowed to select the coals which he regards as most suitable for railway purposes.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What was the date of that report?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is four years since the Commission commenced their investigations. How long it is since they completed I do not know, but I believe the Commission were as leisurely in their habits as are most Commissions.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Be fair. The work of the Commission was deferred owing to the war for some considerable time.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I daresay they were as quick as they could be in the circumstances, but I think it is the habit of Royal Commissions to take a long time over their work. This report was printed some time in 1916. The Commission go on to say—

As a result of our investigations we find that when a mine is unable to supply its quota of the Government order it has been customary for the company, with the consent of the Railway Department, to arrange with one or more of the other mines to take over the supplying of its orders, usually at a satisfactory premium.

As I have said, in one case the Scottish Colliery farmed out their right to supply the railway order at 2s. per ton, and the fact that they were able to get another company to pay that premium is highly suggestive of generous treatment on the part of the Government in the matter of prices. The report continues—

In our opinion this procedure is quite incorrect, and should not be permitted.

The demand of the miners at Collie is, not only that there should be equal distribution of the Government orders, but equal distribution of any order that a company fails to supply; and from the speeches made this afternoon one might easily run away with the impression that it was the opinion of the Royal Commission that that practice should be in force. What is actually the recommendation of the Commission is contained in paragraph 233, of the report, which reads as follows:—

We recommend therefore that when a company is exempted from its liability to

supply from its own mine, the Commissioner of Railways should have the right of allocating the amount of the order among the other mines.

Hon. J. Ewing: Equally.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No.

Hon. J. Ewing: That was the intention.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: How can the hon. member say that? "The Commissioner should have the right of allocating the amount of the order amongst the other mines." It can have no other meaning than that the distribution of that order should be at the discretion of the Commissioner; because the whole tenor of this report is contrary to the system of equal distribution. It denounces equal distribution, and only suggests it continuance for a certain period because a number of mines have been brought into existence under that system. Therefore the last paragraph is consistent with the remainder of the report. When a mine fails to supply its quota the Commissioner shall have the right to allocate the order as he thinks fit. I want to point out that when the Commission made this report the railways were using approximately 70 per cent. of Collie coal and 30 per cent. of Newcastle coal. It was that 70 per cent. which the Commission recommended should still be divided in accordance with this agreement. The Commission say distinctly that there is a marked difference between the values of the coals produced in the different Collie mines. I am not going to argue the point. I am standing merely on the report of the Commission. The point I wish to make is this: now that we are excluded from using Newcastle coal, does it not follow as an ordinary business proposition that in making up the extra quantity to replace that Newcastle coal, the Commissioner should use the coal best suited to his purpose? Only by doing that can we keep the spirit of the report of the Royal Commission. If it is argued that all these coals are of equal value for railway purposes—if anyone wishes to argue that point—then I say, do not argue it with me because I know nothing about it. It must be argued with the Royal Commission and the Royal Commission says the value of these coals is not equal. If that is correct the Government are bound to follow the spirit of the report of the Royal Commission and the most that would be said, if we stick strictly to the report, is that so far as the quantity of Collie coal which we were in the habit of using before the Newcastle supplies were cut off is concerned, it must be equally distributed because some of these mines were brought into existence under the policy of equal distribution. We must give them the same quantity as they had before, but so far as the extra coal is concerned, because of the inability to obtain Newcastle coal, we must obtain the very best coal possible, and let me remind hon. members that it is anticipated that the railways will close the year with a deficit of £400,000.

Hon. J. Ewing: You have an expert coming, have you not?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is the intention of the Government, in view of the

fact that the Commissioners' term of office is expiring shortly, to take advantage of the presence in one of the other States of an expert in railway matters and to take advice from him.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: An expert under very different circumstances.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: This report, paragraph for paragraph, deals with the question of the difference in the relative values of Collie coal. Paragraphs 79 to 86—I do not propose to read them now—are devoted almost exclusively to dealing with the question of the difference in the values for railway purposes of these Collie coals. I repeat, if the Government decide to carry out in detail the recommendations of the Royal Commission, the most they could do would be to say that, insofar as the proportion of Collie coals that we take when Newcastle is available, we shall continue the principle of equal distribution.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Will you admit that?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I say that is the most we could do. I am not in a position to say what the Government will do. The negotiations have not come to a conclusion yet. But, so far as any extra quantity is concerned, the Commissioner will take the very best coal obtainable for his purposes. That is a definite recommendation of the Royal Commission. It is wrong, it is misinterpreting the report, to say that the Royal Commission recommended equal distribution. They opposed it from every point of view, merely advocating that, because some of the mines came into existence on the principle of equal distribution, that a six years' notice should be given and at the termination of the six years the Commissioner should select the coal which he thought best for his purpose. In making that recommendation, and giving that reason, that because these mines came into existence under that principle, it would be unfair to close them down, the Commission could not have in mind that Newcastle coal would be excluded and the Commission could not have in mind that the extra quantity of coal required would be equally distributed also. So far as the statement by the Engine-drivers' and Firemen's Association, appearing in this morning's newspaper is concerned, Mr. Ewing said in his speech that he was prepared to deal with the different points raised by the association, and show that their contention had no existence in fact. I listened very carefully to the hon. member and he did not deal with any of the points.

Hon. J. Ewing: You are quite wrong. In the latter part of my speech I dealt with every one of them.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I listened very attentively and I remember the points which appeared in the newspaper. I do not say that the case put up by the engine-drivers is right or wrong, but I say that in the report of the Royal Commission there is a tremendous difference in the values of Collie coal, and now that the Government have to use Collie coal almost exclusively, and does, as a matter of fact, desire to use it exclusively, it should be permitted to use the greater proportion of coal

which is best suited for the railways, rather than that which is less suited. If members admit that proposition, there is not much to dispute between the Government and themselves. While they insist that there must be equal distribution of the whole quantity required, that policy cannot be carried out without great loss to the railways of the State. One colliery that is not working is receiving 2s. per ton from another colliery for the right of supplying their orders. The Royal Commission stated that coal could be profitably mined at Collie at 11s. per ton while the price paid to-day is 13s. 7d. I say that 2s. per ton on 200,000 tons of coal, which the Government propose to use, represents the tidy sum of £20,000. Mr. Lynn asked just now why the Co-operative Company had not been able to pay a dividend. That put a suggestion into my mind. I believe the public of Western Australia would approve of the action of the Government in treating the Collie coal industry on a generous basis, so that the industry should have a chance of developing. Are the mines operating at Collie prepared to lay their cards on the table, when entering into these negotiations with the Government, to see what arrangements can be arrived at? Are the companies prepared to produce their balance sheets so that the Government may be satisfied that the price they are paying is fair and reasonable, at an increase of 2s. 5d.?

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Sixpence royalty.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That has been suspended year after year, so that we can leave that out of the question. The increase is 2s. 5d. since the agreement of 1915. The companies should satisfy the public that the increase of 2s. 5d. is justified.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Do you know that you are entitled to demand anything relating to the increase if you are not satisfied about it?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think some of the remarks made as to the Commissioner of Railways have been rather unfair. If the Commissioner is to be required, as the Government no doubt require him as a matter of public policy, to do something which he may say is not strictly business as far as the railways are concerned, I think there should be a vote of Parliament to recompense him for it. It is no good blaming the Commissioner of Railways. As a matter of policy he is compelled to do this and to do that, and I think the Commissioner is quite right in regard to Collie coal in contending, from a purely railway point of view, that he should be allowed to use that coal which gives him the best results. I can see no justification for the insinuation made by Mr. Ewing that there is some sinister motive behind the statement of the Engine-drivers' and Firemen's Union.

Hon. J. Ewing: I think so.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We cannot see what motive the Engine-drivers' and Firemen's Union can have in stating but what is true. We cannot see what they have got to gain. It will be readily recognised that the using of Collie coal necessitates additional handling, consequently we can readily understand that the men prefer to use only Newcastle coal, but I cannot understand what motive they can have in urging the use of one kind of Collie coal as distinct from others. I



do not think it is suggested that these men have any interest in the Proprietary mine. It seems to me their attitude must be entirely disinterested. I ask Mr. Ewing that if he sees any sinister motive, let us know what it is, because the attitude of the Government towards the stand the Engiuc-drivers' and Firemen's Union have taken is that whilst we are not prepared to allow them to dictate what they should do or what they should not do, we accept the statement made as being a bona fide and disinterested statement.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: It was published on a very convenient day.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I knew nothing about it until I saw it in the newspaper this morning. I do not know when it was written, or anything about it. I received a copy this morning but I had previously read it in the newspaper. If members have any reasons for imputing motives to that organisation, I shall be glad to know what those reasons are. It is the intention and the policy of the Government to encourage to the utmost the development of the Collie coal industry. Having been forced by the strike and the war to use larger quantities of Collie coal than we have used before, we shall continue to use those by choice and in the interests of the country, when other coals are available. But if that is to be done we insist that we shall not be bound to take equal quantities of all the coals if we can get better results by obtaining larger quantities of some and smaller quantities of others. We do not propose to take all the requirements from one mine but we propose to carry out absolutely, and in the spirit, I maintain, the recommendations of the Commission.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [9.28]: It was not my intention to debate the motion but I wish to refer to some of the remarks of the Minister. An objection was raised by Mr. Lynn to the bulk of the orders going to one colliery instead of being divided amongst other collieries that had superior coal, according to the report of the Royal Commission. I am not in a position to say whether the coal from one mine is better than that from another. I have some interest in Collie coal, and have taken an interest in it for 20 years, ever since the coal industry was opened up, but the statement that the orders have not been given to those whose coal gives the best results should be replied to. That, to my mind, leaves the unpleasant flavour in the mouth of members which has been referred to. If the Commissioner was requested by the Government to carry out as far as possible the recommendations of the Royal Commission, then I take it that the orders which could not be executed by the mines which had the contract would be placed with the mines which had the best coal. If the Government were desirous that the Commissioner should place the orders to the best advantage in the interests of the mines and the development of the industry, they should have been placed with the mines supplying the best article as suggested by the Royal Commission, instead of which we find that these orders were placed with the colliery which stands

third in the Royal Commission's list. That is the important question to which I thought the Minister would have replied. The report of the Commission states that the calorific value of the Proprietary coal is lower than that of some of the others, and the coal from that mine appears third on the list.

The Colonial Secretary: On a point of order, I think I am entitled to inform the House that the hon. member is not putting the position fairly. The Commission in its report referred not only to the question of value, but the question of cleanliness, and on that point refers to the Collie Proprietary coal as the best of the lot.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: I am not speaking of the cleanliness of the coal. That question was disposed of by Mr. Ewing. It has been shown that the Commissioner has power to reject coal which is not clean and he has the power to send an inspector to the mine and say what particular seam shall be worked. If the Commissioner does not get what he should receive, the fault is his own. For years I have been watching the growing interests of Collie and I can only say that it has had most unsympathetic treatment from the Railway Department. It has been pointed out that a recommendation was made by the Chief Mechanical Engineer some years ago that the engines should be altered to better use the coal. I knew the engineer who made that recommendation, and I know that the officials who have occupied that position since have no sympathy with the industry at Collie, have done nothing in this direction, and one sometimes wonders why men rise to high positions in the public life. One comes to the conclusion that it is the bubbles that rise to the top, and I am afraid that we in this State suffer largely from the fact that we have bubbles at the head of affairs. The coal industry is of vast importance to Western Australia. Throughout the world we find that wherever they can produce coal from their own soil they spend as much as they can to develop it. Coal is always the backbone of a State. Every other industry depends upon the cheap fuel it can produce. This war has shown us also that the country which can produce all those things it requires within its own borders is the best off. It should be the policy of the Government, and they should insist on their officers respecting that policy, that the natural resources which we have, and which are of vital importance to the community, such as this fuel, should be fostered to the best of their ability. The opinions of officers may be received and considered, but it is not for them to say which coal they like or dislike. It should be for the Government to say that they must use this fuel, and if the results are not satisfactory, then the Government should take the blame. No Government should submit to employees attempting to dictate as to what should be done in this respect. I am sorry the Minister did not explain that point; why the orders for this coal were placed with the colliery which

appears third in the report of the Commission.

The Colonial Secretary: It is the best coal according to the report of the Commission.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: If that is so, then the Government printer who printed this report is at fault. Further in regard to Collie coal, extensive tests have been made of it in Fremantle. Five years ago I happened to be a member of the Tramway Board at Fremantle, a body that consumed between 1,200 and 1,400 tons of coal per month. We investigated the various coals from Collie and carried out tests on lines similar to those of the Royal Commission. The results of our tests were also very similar to those obtained by the Commission, and the coal from the Proprietary mine, instead of being first on the list, came third or fourth, so that the Minister's statement that the Proprietary mine is the best, does not agree with the experience of the Fremantle Tramways Board or the Royal Commission.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [9.38]: I have only a few words to offer and they will be in the nature of a suggestion to the Government. But before I make that suggestion I would like to place on record my opinion of the immense amount this State owes to the Collie coal field. Mr. Ewing was kind enough to refer to my having made the first definite proposition for the use of Collie coal by the Railway Department when I fixed the percentage that should be used by the Railways at 80 per cent. of Collie and 20 per cent. of Newcastle coal. In those days I was not Minister for Railways, I was Commissioner of Railways, and I was the last political Commissioner exercising all the powers of the present Commissioner and perhaps more. When I was fixing the proportion, I realised that if we were not to become victims of the New South Wales collieries, it was essential that our own industry should be encouraged, and I firmly believe that if this industry had not been encouraged this State would have been paying for its coal for some years before the war, no less than £2 a ton, and very probably to-day £4 a ton. I think that the action which was then taken has been absolutely justified by the subsequent state of affairs, and this country has been saved some hundreds of thousands of pounds, while we owe a debt of gratitude to the industry. Now, if any action on the part of the Government in allocating the bulk of the orders to one mine will have the effect of hampering that field, or possibly crushing it out of existence, I for one will never support such an action. This is the suggestion I have to make: The term of office of the present Commissioner of Railways will expire in the course of a few months. I have not seen advertisements calling for applications for the position, and indications point to the fact that the present Commissioner will be re-appointed. I do not know whether this is so or not. If the period when his term will expire is only a few months off, in justice to the present occupant of the office he should be given notice, or he should be asked to submit an application for re-engagement with others which might be invited from persons willing and capable of filling the position, and

advertisements should be published throughout the length and breadth of the world. We must then in the course of a few months have a new Commissioner of Railways and in justice to that new Commissioner he should not be hampered in his choice of the coal with which to work the railways; he should have the opportunity of choosing the coal with which he will work the railways. Therefore I earnestly ask the Government not to take precipitate action at present, but to allow the Commissioner to make his own choice.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Without any pressure.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: Yes, without any pressure.

Hon. H. Boan: Regardless of the effect it will have on the industry.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: I presume the Commissioner will be a reasonable man, and I presume also that any new Commissioner who may be appointed will be a reasonable man.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: If he is appointed to make the railways pay.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL: If the present Commissioner was appointed for that reason he does not seem to have had any luck. The interjection with regard to pressure brings me to another point which I did not intend to mention. The leader of the House said that a gentleman had been engaged to report on the railways of Western Australia. I have the pleasure of knowing this gentleman who is to be consulted, and let me say that one of the most illuminating incidents in that gentleman's career will be this very question we have been discussing, that is as to whether the drivers and firemen shall attempt, and to some extent succeed, in dictating the policy of the Government in regard to the fuels which shall be used on the railways. I can imagine the hopeless expression which will come over that gentleman's face when he finds that he will have to advise on a problem such as that. His advice to the Government will be contained in a very few words indeed, but those words will not be capable of being repeated by the Government to Parliament, and it would not be profitable to them if they did repeat them. While I admire the gentleman who has been selected for this task, I think the experience he has gained in other countries is such as to render his advice—I will not say of any use—of no practical value, to put into effect in regard to Australian railways. Under those circumstances I am afraid that after his South Australian experience he will very likely not care to give very much advice about our railways. If the Government give the bulk or the whole of the orders for their fuel to one mine it will result in the eventual extinction of the field. We will then have a monopoly to face which we all, or some of us, feared some 16 years ago. I earnestly counsel the Government to defer the granting of those orders, or the settlement of this question, until the Commissioner, whoever he is, has received his reappointment or new appointment, as the case may be. In these circumstances I support the motion.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West—in reply) [9.45]: I only desire to express, with as much feeling as I can, the sense of my obligation to hon. members

who have been good enough to address themselves to the debate this evening. If anything could be more satisfying to me than another it is the unanimity which exists in this chamber in regard to the action I have taken. I am sure that you, Sir, will appreciate the position, and will agree that seldom has a debate of such unanimous character as this been conducted. Mr. Duffell requires information, and wants to know why it is that certain coals from Collie cost more than other coals. So far as the particular coal that is favoured on this occasion is concerned, I would point out that it costs more than the other coals from the fields do. I again lay stress upon what I said this afternoon, and upon paragraph 196, page 25, of the Royal Commission's report where members will find the crux of the whole question. The crux of the question is the admixture of the coals. I defy the leader of the House or any other member of the Government, or any person in the State, to contradict that and prove that it is incorrect. The report states that the admixture of hard and soft coals produces a better quality of coal than any other existing in Collie to-day. If that is so, and 50 per cent. of each coal is required, I maintain that there is nothing more to be said. The leader of the House has replied in a most unsympathetic manner. He has also stated that I have taken practically no notice of statements made by the Engine-drivers' Association, or the figures contained therein. I am satisfied that hon. members will agree with me that I have criticised these figures considerably, and have pointed out the many occasions in which they are wrong in their statements, particularly in regard to engine design and other matters which have been spoken of by hon. members. The leader of the House does not tell us the policy of the Government in regard to the matter except in one important and vital particular, namely, that the Government are not in favour of the equal distribution of orders. He argues that the cost of Collie coal is very much higher than it was when the agreement was made by the Commissioner for Railways between himself and the companies for the continuation of the contract during the currency of the war and for three months afterwards. I would like to point to page 29, paragraph 223, of the commission's report. Hon. members will there find that Newcastle coal is valued at 23s. 9d. per ton and other Collie coal is worth 16s. 1d. per ton. They must also know that to-day Newcastle coal is worth anything between 27s. 6d. and 30s. per ton, and, if so, what is the value of Collie coal to the State to-day? The sum of 13s. 5d. per ton is being paid for Collie coal of a certain calorific value. As a matter of fact the position is this: The Government are being subsidised by the Collie coal industry instead of the industry being subsidised by the Government. The leader of the House has left many things unsaid, and has made no reply to my appeal on behalf of the miners who have gone to the war. He has not allowed his patriotism to find voice in the matter at all. He has taken the

whole question as a keen business proposition. I should say he had taken his cue from the Commissioner for Railways and that his reply was probably that of the Commissioner for Railways in opposition to the debate to-day. I have already occupied the time of the House at great length, but must say in conclusion that I have been constrained to force this motion to a division. I am reminded, however, by hon. members who are much older in experience in this House at all events than I am that to do so would be injudicious. I do not desire to place any hon. member in any position that is not just and fair. My desire was to obtain an expression of opinion from members, and that expression of opinion has been practically unanimous in supporting me in the action I have taken. The only thing I have to regret in the debate is the scant courtesy of the leader of the House and the unsympathetic manner in which he replied to the various speeches that have been made. I do hope most sincerely that his utterances do not represent the opinion of the Government, and that at no distant date we shall find a different proposition coming forward and a different aspect of the affair placed before the country. If the Government have decided that they are not in favour of the equal distribution of orders, then they must come to that conclusion with a full sense of their responsibilities. Whatever result may be achieved the Government will have to take the full responsibility upon their shoulders. With the permission of the House I desire to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

#### BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1. Sewerage Works Validation.
  2. Curator of Intestate Estates.
  3. Electoral Act Amendment.
- Received from the Assembly.

#### BILL—BROOME LOCAL COURT ADMIRALTY JURISDICTION.

Read a third time and passed.

House adjourned at 9.55 p.m.