

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 22nd August, 1931.

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Supply Bill (No. 1), £2,200,000.

QUESTION—METROPOLITAN WHOLE MILK BOARD.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Does he intend to introduce an amendment of the Metropolitan Whole Milk Act to provide for representation of retail dairymen on the Whole Milk Board? 2, When will the financial returns of the Whole Milk Board for the year ended 30th June, 1934, be presented to Parliament?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied. 1, It is not the practice to disclose Government policy in reply to questions. 2, In the near future.

QUESTION—PERTH TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Education: 1, Do the Government intend to make provision on this year's Estimates for a new site for the Perth Technical School? 2, If not, will the Government make provision for such structural alterations as will render the present building more suitable for the work of the school?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: This matter will receive consideration when the Loan Estimates are being dealt with.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Ninth Day—Conclusion.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [*±35*]: In common with other members who have spoken, I deplore the lack of information which marks the Lieut.-Governor's Speech. The few measures attached to the end of the Speech would be wholly inadequate to keep Parliament occupied during an entire session, whereas the statistics of which the Speech mainly consisted, interesting though they may be, were merely a repetition of matter which had already appeared in the Press. It is therefore impracticable on this occasion to devote much attention to the Speech as one cannot commend the Government for the legislative programme they intend to submit, seeing that one does not know what it is. I shall, therefore, direct my remarks to a few subjects that I consider to be of importance, especially so to that section of the community which has been so hard hit during the last few years of depressed prices—the primary producers. Before doing so, let me express the hope that the business of the present session will not be conducted in the same manner as the business of the two previous sessions. During those sessions the convenience, at all events, of country members was not given much consideration by the Government. With many other members, I am not desirous of having sittings prolonged until midnight; but there is a big difference between such sittings and those which characterised the two previous sessions. Speaking particularly of the session which dealt with the Secession question, we were called together on eight sitting days, and the total number of hours we sat on those eight days was nine and a half, or a little over one hour per sitting day. On many of those days, indeed, we sat for only four or five minutes. I recall that once the House sat on Tuesday, heard one speech, and then adjourned for a week. That does not show much consideration for country members, who have to travel long distances to attend. I trust that during

this session country members will not be treated in the same way.

The Premier: The hon. member could have assisted by speaking then instead of now.

Mr. SEWARD: No. I am dealing with the current Lieut.-Governor's Speech, not with the Speech that was before us last session. By far the most important matter for consideration, a matter which especially concerns country people, is the Premier's recent statement that the Government do not intend to grant any additional sites for the extension of bulk handling. The Leader of the Opposition having dealt fully with bulk handling in the course of his speech on the Address-in-reply, it is my intention to confine my remarks more or less to the Premier's statement which was published a few days ago, giving reasons for the refusal of extensions. The hon. gentleman, in a speech made a year and a half ago, when he was Leader of the Opposition, placed special emphasis on the extremely parlous condition of our wheatgrowers, stating that no sacrifice was too great to enable those men to carry on. In fact, he said that the State and the Commonwealth would be faced with bankruptcy if the wheatgrower was unable to carry on. Bearing in mind those words, and also the Premier's statement that he favoured the taking of strong action in order to assist the wheatgrowers. I consider it of interest to examine the reasons advanced for refusing extension of bulk handling. As is well known, the proposals for establishing bulk handling in Western Australia were such as would not cost the State one penny. The whole enterprise was to be financed by the company behind co-operative bulk handling. There was only one possible exception when the Government might be faced with any expenditure, and that was that when the system became established throughout the State, the Railway Department might be compelled to provide facilities for the proper transport of wheat in bulk. Up to date the department have not had to spend anything on that account because the expenditure on converted trucks and special appliances was borne by the co-operative company which fact has enabled the department to carry bulk wheat without any extra cost. In addition to not having to spend any money in order to transport practically a third of the State's wheat in

bulk, the Railway Department have been enabled to obtain increased revenue in the shape of bigger freights, while some of their costs have been reduced by the smaller amount of shunting that has been necessary. Before examining the reasons given by the Premier, I wish to make it quite plain that I am not here merely to support the granting of further sites to the company which is in existence. I am urging that facilities be granted for the extension of bulk handling, no matter by what company, but subject, of course, to the proviso that reasonable precautions be taken to ensure that any company desirous of establishing a system shall not overlap an existing service, and also to ensure that such company be able to carry out any contracts entered into. Last night, however, the Premier, while the member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) was advancing some objections to bulk handling, interjected that the hon. member was on safe ground because he had the Wheatgrowers' Union behind him. That, however, is not correct. The Wheatgrowers' Union favour bulk handling. Their point of difference with co-operative bulk handling is that they stand for control by the growers. The system of bulk handling, however, is favoured by the Wheatgrowers' Union. But as the statements which have emanated from the Wheatgrowers' Union now form the subject of a libel action. I may leave that aspect alone and let the result of the action speak for itself. Of the reasons given by the Premier for refusing extension, the first was that he considered extension of the present system undesirable. If the Government are of that opinion, they should at all events give some reasons for the conclusion they have arrived at, so that we may examine those reasons. A little while ago it was stated that the question was to be referred to a committee, and it was so referred. The committee consisted of Mr. Berkeley, Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Munt. and Mr. McCarthy. If the committee have examined the question and, after going into all the details, have come to the conclusion that the system should not be extended, then I submit we are entitled to know the reasons which actuated the committee in arriving at such a decision. That we have not the committee's report is not altogether surprising to me. I may be wrong, but I hold the opinion that the committee have never completely investigated the system, or at all

events not since the matter was last referred to them. The proposal to refer the question to a Royal Commission is, I fear, simply a means of delaying the introduction of the system rather than one of obtaining further information upon it. It must be borne in mind that the committee examined the question last year; so that if there is any further information to be got, a committee of that description, having previously gone into all details, should not require more than a couple of weeks to obtain the further details available, and thus complete the examination of the system right up to date. I shall point out later that from the time the question was referred to the committee until the statement I have quoted was made, considerably more than a couple of weeks elapsed. Another reason why it is unfortunate that this matter should be relegated to a Royal Commission is that the Royal Commission would not have the facility of inspecting the wheat that was stacked this year in bags and also the wheat that this year was put into bulk. That wheat is being rapidly moved now, and in many cases the stacks have been moved entirely and wheat bins will be empty. This means that the Royal Commission, if they want to see, for the purposes of comparison, wheat in bags and wheat in bulk, especially in view of the recent unprecedented rains, will not have the opportunity of doing so. Further delay must occur if they are to wait until next year in order to make such an inspection. Therefore, in stating that the present extension of the system is not desirable, the Premier is backing his opinion against that of those who have used the bulk handling system—I am referring to the farmers: and against the opinion of those who, while they have not yet got that system extended to them, have been inspecting it and watching its operation during the last year, and have asked that it should be extended to them; and, lastly, against the opinion of the two Eastern States, Victoria and South Australia, which sent delegations over here to investigate what had been done, those delegations having afterwards recommended that, subject to certain modifications necessary in Victoria and South Australia, the system adopted here be adopted there. Another reason given by the Premier for refusing the extension was that the Government for some time had been giving close consideration to the whole

question of bulk handling. In order to place on record the time the Government have given to that consideration, I should like to point out that at the end of April last the directors of Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited asked for an interview with the Premier in order to go into the question of the sites. They were not successful in getting that interview. But on the 3rd May another Minister was interviewed and a letter was given, to him to place before the Premier. It is extraordinary that a responsible business concern handling one-third of the wheat of this State, when they desire an interview with the head of the Government in order to discuss an extension of the system are not able to have that interview granted. It was an extraordinary way in which to treat that company. Again, after they had passed in that letter, nothing further was heard from the 3rd May to the 2nd June, when it was announced that the matter was to be referred to this committee for investigation. And from the 2nd June to the 10th August the matter was clothed in silence. So there is not the slightest doubt that from the end of April to the 10th August is a considerable time for the Government to give to the consideration of this question, and I venture to say that instead of all that time being necessary for the committee to investigate a matter which they had investigated only 12 months ago, it was by no means necessary, and the delay simply resulted in the postponement of the question for another 12 months. Again the Premier makes the statement—

It has not been satisfactorily determined that bulk handling is responsible for a saving over the method of handling of wheat in bags.

What further proof the Government may want, it is difficult to say. An overwhelming majority of wheatgrowers have asked that this system be introduced. An experimental area established at Wyalcatchem two years ago proved entirely successful, so much so that the growers were carting their wheat long distances in order to reach bulk handling sidings. Surely if practical farmers are prepared to incur long distance carting in order to use the system, that at all events is one proof that the system is satisfactory to them. And it was satisfactory also to the millers; for all the wheat from that experimental area in the Wyalcatchem district was sent to millers, was not exported.

The millers themselves were satisfied with it, and so satisfied were those controlling the scheme that it was extended last year to include 48 other sidings. And they had the same experience in that larger number of sidings as they had in the smaller original number. In addition, we had those committees come over from South Australia and Victoria to examine the scheme, and after examination they pronounced themselves in favour of it. That fact has a greater significance than might ordinarily be attached to it, because the system investigated here was very different from the orthodox method of handling wheat in bulk. It must have appeared to those visitors more of a temporary scheme, but so effective did they find it that, as I say, they reported favourably upon it. Another question to be considered in coming to a conclusion as to whether this scheme is successful is the question of the disposal of the wheat. As was pointed out by the member for Fremantle last night, some years ago some people in this State intimately connected with the handling of wheat were in favour of handling it in bags. One of the reasons for that was that relatively only a few ports in the world were capable of receiving wheat in bulk. Therefore, for this State to go in for the building of extensive concrete silos was at that time uneconomical and unjustifiable. But since then times have changed, until at present practically only very few ports in the world are not fitted up to take wheat in bulk. That is another proof that the handling of wheat in bulk is a recognised success. Further than that, there is no instance on record that I can find of any farmer who has handled his wheat in bulk and reverted to the use of bags. Another important matter to consider is the facility for the effective handling of that wheat in order to dispose of it at any and every opportunity that may offer. It can be readily realised that in a time of depressed prices such as this, those people handling the sale of that wheat must be able to dispose of the wheat at any favourable opportunity. As an instance, there was only one cargo of wheat sold to China this year, and that was a cargo of bulk wheat. Had the authorities here not been able to supply bulk wheat, Western Australia might have lost that sale. A further reason given by the Premier in refusing extension of this system was that,

The operations of bulk handling last season left much to be desired. The export of wet

and damaged wheat must have great repercussions on the good name of Western Australian products.

The inference to be gained from that is that wet and damaged wheat was the result of bulk handling, and that the work of Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. left much to be desired. If so, if there were any shortcomings in it, they were due to the delay caused by the Government, and particularly by the Railway Department. Greater provision was made last year by this company for completely protecting the wheat received at sidings than had been made in the previous season. Provision was made to store 4,216,000 bushels completely protected from the weather, whereas in the previous season that storage was limited to 1,361,000 bushels. Also, it must be remembered that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., in spite of that, were forced to use bulkheads, a system of storing wheat which is not roofed. The reason for that was on account of the extremely heavy deliveries at these bulk sidings. But in ordinary circumstances those bulkheads would have been cleared out before the end of March, because under the terms of the insurance policy upon wheat held in bulk, it must be protected by covering before the end of March. But on the 8th March we had an exceptional rainfall, the like of which had never previously been seen at that season of the year, and consequently that wheat was damaged to a certain extent. But even that damage would not have occurred had the Railway Department given proper consideration to the request of this company. Instead of giving them the sites they asked for, the company was simply forced to accept sites, whether suited to the storage of wheat or not.

The Minister for Railways: The merchants held the established sites.

Mr. SEWARD: The merchants had sites at those various sidings from year to year. Each year they hired those sites. They were built up at the sidings, and roads run in to facilitate delivery. But although Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited offered to take sites on a ten-yearly basis, the Commissioner of Railways refused that offer and preferred to take a yearly basis from the merchants.

The Minister for Railways: That was all they had in the course of business.

Mr. SEWARD: The Commissioner, instead of taking a ten years' basis of hire from Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited, preferred to take a single year's rent from the merchants.

The Minister for Railways: Would you say that something which somebody had for years should be taken away from them?

Mr. SEWARD: I do not say that. When Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited made application and erected bulk handling facilities for the handling of practically all the wheat received at a siding, I maintain that the merchants might reasonably have expected that they would not receive wheat to be stacked in bags.

The Minister for Railways: But they had the leased sites.

Mr. SEWARD: Yes. It was a restriction adopted to retard the operations of Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited.

The Minister for Railways: Who adopted the policy of restriction?

Mr. SEWARD: The Railway Department first, and the merchants afterwards.

The Minister for Railways: The department will not cancel leases just to oblige someone else.

Mr. SEWARD: The Commissioner of Railways was opposed to bulk handling, and I have to review the actions of the Railway Department in the light of the opinions expressed by the Commissioner. To take an example: On the 29th August, two months after building operations commenced, Bulk Handling Limited had secured sites for the storage of only 2,900,000 bushels of wheat, whereas they had applied for sites to store 6,270,000 bushels. On the 30th October, which was almost on the eve of receiving wheat, the total capacity of the sites secured by them was only 5,880,000 bushels. So Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited cannot fairly be blamed for any delay or any faulty handling of the wheat which was caused through their having to rush up those buildings at the last moment. Bulk Handling Limited had a duty to perform to the farmer, for they had promised to have the system installed at certain sidings. Had they failed the farmer, the farmer would have had to buy bags at a period of the year when the price of such bags was at its highest. So the company had the alternative of standing by the farmer or letting

him down, and I am pleased to say they were able to carry out their contract.

The Minister for Railways: I thought you said they let him down because they could not carry out their contract.

Mr. SEWARD: The Minister questions my statement that Bulk Handling Limited were not able to get suitable sites. That happened at Corrigin. The Minister probably has heard of Corrigin. There the wheat for bulk handling was put off in a low-lying portion of the yard, with the result that when the heavy rains came the lowest part of the stack was damaged because it was standing in water.

The Minister for Railways: That was the site the Westralian Farmers always had.

Mr. SEWARD: Nevertheless it was totally unsuited for a bulk handling site. Now I want to make another point. While we hear a great deal about what occurred at Corrigin, we do not hear much of what occurred at Quairading. At Quairading, the rain was equally heavy, and although the flooring of the site for bulk handling was only of sleepers, and the water outside the building was three feet above the level of the sleepers, not a grain of that wheat was damaged, much to the surprise and pleasure of those controlling it. We hear quite a lot about damage to wheat, but we do not hear quite so much of the other side of the question. Another reason mentioned by the Premier was that the importance of preserving the wheat in good condition was emphasised because upon this depended the commercial value of the storage warrants of the farmers for wheat delivered. That is obvious. No one would deny it. Surely the Premier does not imagine that the gentlemen in control of bulk handling do not also realise the seriousness of the position! It would be a most foolish policy to pursue any other course. While they might sell wheat in one year or two years, if they were not particularly alive to the importance of preserving the quality of the wheat offered to the world, the world would soon refuse to take Western Australian wheat.

Mr. Patrick: To-day it is worth as much as bagged wheat.

Mr. SEWARD: No such thing has occurred. Western Australian wheat ranks very high in the markets of the world. While I commend the solicitude displayed by the Premier in these matters, I cannot help com-

paring it with his recent action in releasing the report of the Royal Commission on the Agricultural Bank before Parliament had seen it. That has had a far more damaging effect on the reputation of the State than the shipping of a little damaged wheat would have had, although, as I have said, that has not occurred. Passing from the reasons given by the Premier, I wish to deal with some matters mentioned last night by the member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman), and also to some extent with some questions he asked the Minister a few days ago. Of course it was quite obvious that those questions were asked with the object of damaging the bulk handling movement. It must be remembered that the wheat is sold in the markets of the world on what is known as the f.a.q. system, and as long as the wheat reaches that standard, all is well. I do not say that that is the best system. In fact, as is well known by the wheat farmers of this State, the Director of Agriculture has been moving for many years to get a more satisfactory method of selling our wheat, namely to get the best price for the best wheat. So far he has not been able to get the other States to agree. If the wheat is to be graded and sold in that way, the introduction of bulk handling is a first necessity. The member for Fremantle, on the 9th August, asked the Minister for Agriculture how many trucks of bulk wheat had been condemned on the North Wharf at Fremantle. I wish to direct particular attention to the word "condemned" because, to the average man, it would convey that the wheat was useless, and was cast aside as useless. No such thing occurs. What occurred was that the wheat was sent forward to ascertain whether it reached the f.a.q. standard. If it did not, it was rejected but not condemned. That sort of thing is quite likely to occur at any time. I suppose it occurs throughout the year. When wheat is rejected, it does not follow that it has to be thrown out and wasted. As I have pointed out, the wheat is sold on an f.a.q. basis. If a man wanted a truck of wheat and was offered one of the rejected trucks, he would naturally refuse to take it. If he wanted 100 or 1,000 trucks, and the bulk of it was above f.a.q. quality, by putting the wheat below that standard with the wheat above it, the standard of the wheat above would be reduced to the f.a.q. standard. That would be quite legitimate.

Mr. Sleeman: And a few trucks would spoil a shipment.

Mr. SEWARD: I will give the hon. member full particulars before I have finished. There is one question the hon. member asked to which I take strong exception. He asked how many trucks of bulk wheat had been put into ships by night after having been previously condemned. I do not like an aspersion of that kind cast upon gentlemen whom I know to be honourable men, and above all on men who have for some years been concerned in the marketing of our wheat. Had they been guilty of anything of that sort, it would have been reflected in the price received for wheat. It has not been so reflected. Consequently, the hon. member cast an unworthy aspersion on those gentlemen.

Mr. Latham: As a matter of fact, they have been able to sell their wheat when other people could not do so.

The Minister for Lands interjected.

Mr. SEWARD: Every conceivable point is bound to be advanced except any in favour of the capable handling of wheat by the company. I propose to read an extract from a letter received from the Overseas Farmers' Co-operative Federation, dated 17th May, 1934, as follows:—

In discussing the various qualities with the directors of Messrs. Joseph Rank Ltd., they inform us that from a milling point of view they consider Western Australian wheat 6d. per quarter superior to South Australian, and comparing Western Australian wheat with New South Wales wheat, they consider the difference is barely 1s. per quarter. On the other hand, they consider the difference between Western Australian wheat and Victorian wheat slightly exceeds 1s. per quarter.

According to those expert authorities—

The Minister for Lands: Did they write that letter to you?

Mr. SEWARD: No, they would not take quite so much notice of me; naturally they wrote it to the agents for the wheat, the bulk handling authorities. I hope the Minister is not seeking to cast a doubt on the genuineness of the letter. If he does so, I will obtain the original letter. I am not making any statements that I cannot substantiate. Let me quote a few more figures comparing the price of Western Australian wheat with that of the other States to show that the quality of our wheat overseas has not been reduced in any way as the result of its having been mixed

with inferior wheat. Sales made in London—that is, after all the expenses of freight, etc., have been met—on the 28th July included a cargo of bagged wheat from Western Australia at 27s. 6d., and another cargo at 27s. 9d. On the same date a cargo of bagged wheat from New South Wales brought 26s. 6d., and a South Australian cargo of bagged wheat 25s. 6d., while 5,000 tons of Victorian bulk wheat brought 26s. Consequently, Western Australian was 1s. 6d. per quarter above that of all the other States. I shall not read all the figures, but will take a few instances. On the 13th January, 1933, a parcel of Western Australian wheat brought 28s. On the same day a New South Wales cargo and a South Australian cargo brought a similar price, and a Victorian cargo brought 27s. 9d. On the 15th April, 1931, a cargo of Western Australian wheat was sold for 22s. 6d. to 23s. On the same day a New South Wales cargo brought 21s. 9d., a cargo from South Australia 22s. 1½d., and a cargo from Victoria 21s. 6d. On the 15th September, 1930, Western Australia wheat brought 33s. and 33s. 6d.; South Australian wheat 33s. 4d., and New South Wales wheat 33s. 3d. If the mixing of wheat had had any effect on the quality of Western Australian shipments, obviously it would have been revealed in the figures I have quoted extending over a period of four years. Any inferiority would have been apparent to the people on the other side of the world. In his remarks last night, the member for Fremantle laid particular emphasis on the question of the certificates and also on the small percentage granted. I have referred to the fact that Australian wheat is not sold on certificates; it is sold on what is known as the f.a.q. system. When we sell wheat to any country represented on the Baltic exchange, no certificate is required; it is sold on the f.a.q. standard.

Mr. Sleeman: There are countries that demand a certificate.

Mr. SEWARD: I will deal with that point presently. When the wheat arrives at the port of destination, the agents of the local shippers, known as out-turn agents, take samples, and if the wheat is not up to f.a.q. standard, which is known there, it has to be docked. If it reaches f.a.q. standard, the wheat is passed. If wheat is sold to a country not represented on the Baltic exchange, it has to be accompanied

by a certificate declaring that it was of f.a.q. standard when put into the ship.

Mr. Latham: Not in all instances. Japan wanted a shipment released, and the Department of Agriculture refused.

Mr. SEWARD: When the countries not represented on the Baltic exchange buy wheat, they require to have the certificate, and I have the assurance of the manager of the Wheat Pool that they will not send wheat to those countries unless they get the certificate. That, I think, effectively disposes of any question of sending out of the country wheat below standard and unaccompanied by certificates. In speaking last night, the member of Fremantle said that in January, 170 trucks were condemned.

Mr. Sleeman: I said 74 trucks were condemned in July.

Mr. SEWARD: I am pleased to have that correction. I asked, by way of interjection, what percentage of the trucks coming forward that number represented, but the hon. member could not say. That is the important point. If 200 trucks arrived in July and 170 were condemned, it might be a serious matter. It would be necessary to ascertain where the wheat was coming from. But if 170 trucks out of 1,000 were condemned, it would not be such a serious matter. When it was condemned or rejected, to use the correct word, we would naturally ascertain where it was coming from. The bulk handling authorities endeavour to assist the railways in every way. Consequently, they clear up bins or silos from sidings adjacent to one another. It is possible that when they come to clear up the silos at three adjacent sidings, the wheat at the bottom may be found to be damaged. That would account for the fact of a lot of trucks coming in at one particular time with some damaged wheat in them.

Mr. Sleeman interjected.

Mr. SEWARD: I thought the hon. member referred to the months before the rains in March. After those rains some of the wheat may have been damaged. It is fully admitted by the authorities handling wheat that, whether handled in bulk or in bags, a certain portion must be damaged, but it is contended that the portion damaged is a negligible quantity. The trucks that were rejected at Fremantle were rejected by the merchants, and not by the certifying authority. The merchants cannot be said to view

with favour the co-operative bulk handling system in existence. The trucks were all examined by the people who handled the wheat, and they were quite certain that the wheat was up to the f.a.q. standard. I have no doubt it was all disposed of. Of the wheat which was rejected by the merchants there was only one consignment of bulk wheat this year for which a certificate was asked and given. That disposes of the question of rejections. The hon. member also said that, as yet, the experts had been unable satisfactorily to explain where the loss of wheat came in. He said the weights were checked at the weigh-bridges at Fremantle, and in Japan the weights were taken again, but that the Japanese, who were shrewd businessmen, wanted to know what had become of the loss of 80 tons out of a particular shipment of 8,000 tons. The hon. member was probably referring to bagged wheat and not bulk.

Mr. Sleeman: Bagged wheat gains; it does not lose weight.

Mr. SEWARD: I, too, am of opinion that bagged wheat gains in weight. I thought the hon. member was referring to bulk wheat. Although I have made exhaustive inquiries, I find that no bulk wheat has been sent to Japan. I therefore thought the hon. member had made a mistake.

Mr. Sleeman: Who told you that?

Mr. SEWARD: The hon. member said that the wheat sent to Japan was in bags.

Mr. Sleeman: No.

Mr. SEWARD: It appears on the Notice Paper in that way. I maintain that no bulk wheat has been sent to Japan.

Mr. Sleeman: It has gone from here to Japan in bulk, and there was a big row about it.

Mr. SEWARD: When I first joined the A.I.F. the policy of the army was not to give a private any information telling him the reason for doing a certain thing. Very often he was called upon to do something, and wanted to know the reason for it, as he could not see that it related to anything else he was doing. As the war progressed, the authorities found that, if they wanted to get good work done, they had to give the privates the reason for the command issued to them. I commend that policy to the hon. member. If he wants to know anything about bulk handling let him get the information from the heads. He should not go to a man who is doing

the lumping at Fremantle. The heads are more reliable, and they will prevent him from making mistakes in the future.

Mr. Sleeman: I say wheat did go to Japan in bulk, and there was a lot of trouble over it.

Mr. SEWARD: He said the same thing had occurred with wheat in bulk as with wheat in bags. He said that trucks had been condemned, and that the condemned wheat had been put into the holds of the ships at night time. That statement is untrue, though I do not say the hon. member knew it to be untrue. I challenge him to produce evidence substantiating his statement.

Mr. Sleeman: You can get plenty of it down there.

Mr. SEWARD: There may have been some parcels that were rejected by the merchants. The people handling the wheat declare whether it is fit to be shipped or not. If the ships are being worked at night, damaged wheat may go in with other wheat, but I have the authority of those who handle the wheat for saying that none of that wheat was sent out at night time. If there was any question about it, the wheat was put into the ship with other wheat during daylight.

Mr. Sleeman: It is done with bagged wheat as well as bulk wheat.

Mr. SEWARD: The hon. member said he would support bulk handling if he were convinced that it would be for the benefit of the State. We are all with him in that. We are supporting it because we are convinced it will be of benefit to the State as a whole.

Mr. Moloney: Would not a Royal Commission clear up that point?

Mr. SEWARD: I welcome the appointment of a Royal Commission, and only deplore the delay on behalf of the farmers in the appointment of that Commission. An inquiry will clear up a lot of public misconception with regard to the system. Bulk handling saves the farmer a great deal in bags. The member for Guildford-Midland said he was quite satisfied with it, and a number of other farmers have certified to the advantage they have gained. Bulk handling also gives further facilities for the disposal of our wheat in all those markets that are at present handling wheat in bulk. It also greatly reduces the cost of handling and the freight charges.

Ships are able to load more quickly when handling wheat in bulk, and because they can get out of port sooner they save hundreds of pounds. The hon. member said the scheme would throw hundreds of thousands of men out of work.

Mr. Sleeman: Thousands!

Mr. SEWARD: We deplore the fact that it may temporarily displace some people and put them out of work. If the hon. member follows the progress which has been made down the ages, he will find that this sort of thing has been going on continuously. When the harvester was invented it threw the stripper and winnower out of action, and one man was able to do the work of three. Inventions are continually doing that, and men have to seek other forms of employment.

Mr. Ferguson: Is not petrol handled in bulk at Fremantle?

Mr. SEWARD: I am coming to that. Those who are put out of work by new machinery will find avocations in other walks of life. I know of no law that says a man must be a wheat lumper and nothing else. We would be very sorry to see men put out of employment, but they would soon get work elsewhere. The other night the Leader of the Opposition pointed out that whilst we had received a lot of estimates and heard a lot of guesses on the subject of the scheme, this year we had been afforded an opportunity to compare bulk handling with bagged wheat. Something like 223,720 tons of wheat were handled this year, and it took 54,005 man hours to do it. This compares with 143,244 man hours in the case of a similar quantity of bagged wheat. The saving through handling the wheat in bulk represents 89,239 man hours, or a total saving of 39 men in full employment. That gives an indication of the exact number of men who will temporarily be displaced by bulk handling. Poor prices and the inability of the wheatgrowers to make machinery replacements have considerably curtailed their activities. If a scheme could be introduced that would turn an unprofitable industry into a profitable one, the farmers would be able to extend their operations as they desire, and thus afford work for a great many more men than would be displaced by the system. I deplore the delay that has been caused by reference of the matter to a Royal Commission, but I would welcome the inquiry and confidently antici-

pate that a favourable report will be made. I hope, if the member for Fremantle does not become discouraged, he will continue to ask questions, for the more he asks the more certificates will be afforded to him of the efficiency of the system.

Mr. Sleeman: You have a very good opinion of it.

Mr. SEWARD: The Leader of the Opposition, as well as the Minister for Lands last night, referred to the administration of the Wheatgrowers' Relief Act by the local authorities, particularly in regard to giving further assistance to a farmer who owns a motor car. The Minister said that if a man owned a motor car and could afford to buy petrol so that he might run about in the vehicle, his was not a necessitous case. I agree with that. No one would imagine that a man who could buy petrol and run his car could be described as a necessitous case. Cars are owned by many other men who cannot afford to buy petrol in order that they may run about in the vehicles. They own cars, but only use them as runabouts, and as a means of transporting themselves to the siding, or taking stores back to the farm. I saw a delegate at the P.P.A. conference arrive at Pingelly in his car, in the back seat of which were six fat lambs. Another man drove into a town with a corrugated iron tank in the back seat. These cars are not articles for admiration, and are only cars in name. To deprive the owners of such vehicles of assistance, and to class them as non-necessitous cases, is unfair. There are some cases of the kind in my electorate, and I should be quite willing to pass the names on to the Minister if he would be good enough to have an inquiry made. These people have accumulated large debts which they cannot meet, and for the most part are carrying on their farms by the grace of their creditors. The Minister said if a man owned a car he was not entitled to be regarded as a necessitous case. What would he expect the farmer to do? In three cases that I have in mind the owners could only dispose of their cars to a car wrecker or to some garage, and the most they would get would be about £5, which would be insufficient to enable them to buy a horse and sulky. What is the sense of a policy which forces a man to dispose of a motor car and incur a greater expense for a horse and cart to take him to a siding

and bring back his stores? I know of one man who bought a car eight years ago at the instance of his doctor. His wife could not travel in a sulky, and if she was to get out at all it was necessary for her husband to provide a car. This is a car in name only. The man cannot pay his debts, and yet because he owns a car he is said to be not in necessitous circumstances, and not to be entitled to any relief. I appeal to the Minister to give further consideration to this question. I do not say he should pay out money regardless of any investigation, but I do ask that every case should be treated on its merits. If one of these people is deserving of the subsidy it should be given to him. The Minister said the authorities could not discriminate, that if the money was paid to one it would have to be paid to all. That is rather childish reasoning. If the Minister would, in the case of clients of the Agricultural Bank, refer to the branch managers of that institution he would very soon learn whether a farmer was necessitous or not. I appeal to him to go further into the matter with a view to making some of the money available to these men. A few days ago I asked the Premier if it was the intention of the Government to pay a wheat carting bonus this year, and the reply I received was that the matter was receiving consideration. I hope he will look into it at an early date. The bonus has been given to growers who have to cart their wheat from 30 to 60 miles to a siding. The allowance is regarded as compensation for the lack of railway communication, and is payable when carting is over a distance of more than 15 miles. Last year when I asked the Government for an early determination on the question, the reply I received was that as the crop was in at the time, it did not matter and was not urgent until the harvest was garnered. That is not the position at all. At present the farmers are engaged in fallowing operations for next year's crop. If the farmer does not know that the cartage subsidy will be available next year, he cannot know what he may expect from his crop. That position, together with that relating to prices, cannot encourage farmers to take full interest in preparing their land for next year's crop. Consequently, I appeal to the Premier to arrive at an early decision on the question and to make his decision known so as to

give the farmers some encouragement to go on with their fallowing operations. It is already late for the determination. The Government know what they had to pay last year and during the previous 12 months. It is not as though the amount to which they will be committed is not ascertainable. Another matter I will refer to relates to a subject in respect of which I also asked a question. I refer to Western Australia's representation on what is known as the Federal Meat Advisory Committee. A year and a half ago the Federal Government convened a conference of the meat interests of the various States. Western Australia was represented at the conference, and the upshot of the deliberations was the formation of the Federal Meat Advisory Committee, whose duty is to advise the Federal Government in connection with meat problems. Two main interests are represented on the committee—the exporters and the growers—and their interests are not identical. The committee consists of a representative of the growers from each of the different States, and six members representative of the exporters. The exporters' delegates comprise four representing mutton and lamb interests, and two representing beef interests. Members will have noticed from the Press that a few weeks ago the question was raised regarding the meat quota system with regard to exports from Australia. The Federal Government convened a meeting of the Advisory Committee, but as with so many such gatherings, the Federal Government did not afford Western Australia sufficient time to enable our representative to attend the conference. I am sorry that a telegram was not sent to the Federal Government pointing out that no time had been given our representative to attend the conference and therefore we would not consider ourselves bound by any decision arrived at by the conference. If we adopted that attitude more often, we would probably receive more consideration from the Commonwealth Government when fixing dates for conferences. The Western Australian delegate on the Meat Advisory Committee is Mr. Farrell, the manager of the Wyndham Meatworks. Although he left the North by plane, he was unable to get over in time to attend the conference, and it became necessary to appoint a proxy delegate. Mr. Angliss, one of the largest butchers in Melbourne and a repre-

sentative exporter, was the delegate chosen to represent Western Australia. That was not a choice favourable to the growers of Western Australia. The effect of that appointment was to give the exporters of the Eastern States an additional vote. Unfortunately this matter comes under the jurisdiction of the Chief Secretary. I do not know why that should be, but probably it is because the delegate appointed happened to be Mr. Farrell who, as manager of the Wyndham Meatworks, is an official of the Chief Secretary's Department. I think the control of this matter should be transferred to the Minister for Agriculture.

The Minister for Agriculture: The Prime Minister has stated that no vote is taken at conferences of the committee, whose functions are purely advisory.

Mr. SEWARD: But if the advice tendered is inimical to the interests of the growers of Western Australia, the question of the vote is of no importance. The Minister for Agriculture attended the Hobart Conference of Ministers for Agriculture, and is an fait with the subject. It certainly would seem more natural to refer to the Minister for Agriculture when discussing such matters, than to deal with the Chief Secretary. Another matter of importance that was referred to by a previous speaker relates to the attitude of the School Teachers' Union and the direction of that body that teachers are to do nothing outside the duties specified in the departmental regulations. The union adopted that attitude arising out of their discontent because of salary reductions. The decision of the teachers not to do anything apart from their specified duties is astonishing. It means that they will not do what their duty as citizens should demand. Recently a circular was sent to country agricultural societies and also to the Royal Agricultural Society intimating that teachers would not undertake any work in connection with the preparation of school displays to be submitted in future at agricultural shows. Not only will the teachers not help the scholars to prepare displays, but they will not assist in arranging or judging the work so displayed. The attitude of the union is extraordinary. It means that the teachers are required to do only the work for which they are paid, and refuse to undertake any honorary work that may devolve upon them because of their citizenship.

The Minister for Justice: And then the teachers will proceed to give lessons about citizenship!

Mr. SEWARD: I intended to refer to that phase. Very often the displays tabled by the Education Department and the school children have been features of country shows. On one occasion at Narrogin I saw a wonderful exhibit furnished by a school at which 14 pupils attended. It is easy to imagine the interest and enthusiasm of the children who provided the exhibits. That sort of thing is to be done away with, not because the teachers have a grievance against agricultural societies, but because of a gronch they have against the Government. It is a shocking example to place before the rising generation. It is a glorification of mob rule, and an intimation that if what one requires cannot be obtained, one must strike and revolt against the laws of the country. That is a harmful attitude to take up, when it may so influence the rising generation. The teachers have also refused to have anything to do with the work of parents and citizens' associations, some of which have had to disband because formerly the teacher was the secretary or organiser, convening meetings and so forth. Those associations are composed principally of the parents of school children, who have given their time and work quite voluntarily. As a result of their efforts many improvements and conveniences have been provided for the benefit of both teachers and children that could not have been made available by the department because of lack of funds. Now the edict has been issued, and teachers are not to participate in the work of such organisations. That is a deplorable state of affairs, and I hope something will be done promptly to make the teachers realise their position. From what I know of the attitude of teachers in the country districts, I cannot imagine that this move came from them. It probably emanated from city folk who have had no experience of country conditions at all, and who do not realise the duty imposed upon them by their citizenship. There is one other matter only to which I desire to refer, and that concerns some remarks made by the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Tonkin) the other night. During the course of his remarks he said—

The Commonwealth Bank is a fair indication of the profits that are to be made out of the banking business, despite the losses in other businesses. In 1928 the accumulated

profits of the Commonwealth Bank amounted to £6,766,415.

In the course of his speech the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) replied to some of the contentions of the member for North-East Fremantle, and I will deal only with the reference I have quoted. If the member for North-East Fremantle had any knowledge at all of the history of the Commonwealth Bank, he could not possibly have made such a statement. I suppose no other bank was ever established on such favourable terms as the Commonwealth Bank, from a profit-making point of view. The bank did not have any capital to provide; the money was made available by the Commonwealth.

Mr. Moloney: The bank never had to avail itself of that capital.

Mr. SEWARD: On the day the bank opened, deposits were received totalling £2,368,126, which was very handy and obviated the necessity for providing any actual capital. The bank did not have to pay interest on that money as would have been necessary had the raising of capital been required. The bank was started in 1913, which was before the outbreak of the Great War, and the institution had the advantage of the huge amounts received in connection with the various war loans. According to the Commonwealth Year Book, there was, in 1924, something like £40,000,000 in the Commonwealth Bank. The member for Subiaco (Mr. Moloney) said there was no necessity for the bank to raise capital, but the Commonwealth Government provided the bank with authority to raise £20,000,000. It has not been necessary for the bank to raise one penny by way of capital; the necessary capital has always been provided for the Government. The bank has not had to pay a dividend on capital subscribed in that way.

Mr. Moloney: That is the pivot of the whole matter.

Mr. SEWARD: In addition, no taxation has had to be paid by the bank. In the circumstances, the comparison with the private trading banks is not fair. I have a copy of a balance sheet of one of the Associated Banks. This shows that the net profit of the bank in 1930 was £542,000, while income tax and other taxes necessitated an expenditure of £227,000 that year. In 1931 the taxation payments amounted to £227,000, and the net profit had decreased to £266,000.

In the succeeding year, taxation represented £201,000 and the net profit £147,000, and in 1933 taxation amounted to £106,000 and the net profits to £219,000. During the course of his speech, the member for North-East Fremantle quoted the dividends paid as indicating what one might expect if one had shares in that institution. He quoted the payment of 12½ per cent. on paid-up capital, but, as the member for West Perth pointed out, the dividends should have been given on the amount of the shareholders' money in the bank, and on that basis the payment would have represented something more like 5.82 per cent. And so on to the year 1931 the dividend on the paid-up capital was eight per cent., and the actual return of dividends to total funds was 3.7 per cent., while for the last two years the dividend was at the rate of 2.31 per cent. They were able to carry on because of the provision they had made for possible troublous years. Their reserves in some years exceeded their paid-up capital and I say that the reason why we have to be specially thankful for the position of our banks and the position of Australia to-day is because of the policy pursued in the past that has enabled the institutions to carry on. We have only to remember what happened in America where something like 17,000 banks out of a total of 30,000 closed their doors during the last crisis. Nobody wants anything of that description to occur here. I have quoted these figures just to show the fallacy of the hon. member's statement the other night that the Commonwealth Bank could be taken as a fair indication of the profits that are to be made out of the banking business.

MR. FERGUSON (Irwin-Moore) [5.47]: The Speech of the Lieutenant-Governor was a little less interesting than the usual run of Governor's Speeches. They are not particularly interesting documents at any time, but the latest I think, was less interesting than usual. One could not help but notice, nevertheless, that running through the Speech there was a tone of optimism which was made for those in the metropolitan area, though it was hard to find amongst those people in the back country who are producing the wealth to create the spirit of optimism in the city. How can there be any spirit of optimism in the country when we find men all over the State either

leaving their farms through stress of financial circumstances or being forced off their farms through no fault of their own? Naturally amongst those people there would be a feeling of pessimism rather than optimism. The Speech states that the financial position is still extremely grave and requires constant attention, that rigid economy is necessary and that no funds are available for other than absolutely essential services. I want to know, if funds are not available for other than essential services, how is it that the Government can find thousands of pounds for expenditure on works such as the Perth-Fremantle Road, and the foreshore reclamation in the vicinity of the Causeway, as well as other works in and around the metropolitan area. Can those works by any stretch of the imagination be classed as absolutely essential services? Would it not be a sign of greater statesmanship on the part of members of the Government if they were to regard expenditure in country districts as being more essential than anything spent on the hopelessly non-productive works to which I have referred? It seems to me that someone is dictating the wrong policy in the expenditure of this money in the metropolitan area. In the long run greater benefit would accrue to Western Australia were the position reversed, and the expenditure carried out in those areas where it would have a better chance of proving reproductive. On the question of unemployment the Speech proceeds—

The problem of unemployment has received the serious consideration of Ministers at all times. Their efforts have been devoted to providing employment for a greater number of workers and thereby reducing sustenance payments. As a result, the number of persons receiving sustenance which stood at 6,265 on the 1st July, 1923, has been reduced to 3,196.

In effect that is a reduction in the number of men receiving sustenance of 5,069. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Wise) moved the adoption of the Address-in-Reply in a very neat speech, for which I should like to congratulate him. He lauded the Government generally and the Minister in Employment in particular for what he considered a wonderful achievement in regard to employment. I am prepared to admit that on a superficial examination of the figures it would appear that the Government and the Minister had achieved something, but a

closer investigation reveals the fact that the greater amount of work provided was the natural corollary of the Government having more money to spend. The figures quoted by the Leader of the Opposition would indicate that the Government had nearly a million pounds more to spend during the year ended 30th June, 1933 than was available in the year ended 30th June, 1932. In 1932-33 loan funds amounted to £1,955,000 and in 1933-34 the total was £2,750,000, or an increase of £795,000. On the revenue side we find that for 1932-33 the receipts were £8,332,153 and for 1933-34 the total was £8,481,697, or an increase of £149,554. On the two accounts, loan and revenue, the increase was no less than £944,554. Where is this great achievement of the Minister for Employment of finding work for an additional 5,069 men with the increased funds that were available? This money would really have been sufficient to employ for the whole of the 52 weeks of the year at the State basic wage no less than 2,544 extra men. In addition, we have private enterprise being responsible for the employment of a large number of additional men. The fact that the Government had nearly a million pounds of additional money to spend during the 12 months in itself means that the expenditure of that sum would naturally create employment in industry. That is the position as we find it to-day. So that after all the achievement of the Government is not one for which they need take any more than an ordinary share of credit.

Mr. Wise: You give them no credit for what they have done.

Mr. FERGUSON: I am giving the Minister all the credit that is due to him. The achievement that the Minister has put up has been brought about by considerable expenditure on the part of the Government, by the provision of a full-time Minister for Employment, the opening of an office in the centre of the city and the provision of a staff. Altogether it is costing the State a considerable sum in administrative expenses. Naturally, therefore, the State has the right to expect something in the way of an achievement on the part of the Minister.

The Minister for Employment: The hon. member knows that what he is saying is not correct. The staff were there already, but were not co-ordinated. As a matter of fact

what was done meant a reduction in the staff.

Mr. FERGUSON: I am surprised to hear that there has been a reduction in the Minister's staff. I cannot say how many were there before and how many are engaged on the work now, but it is the usual thing in connection with governmental activities when a new office is opened for additions to be made to the staff employed. Anyhow, I am glad to know that the Minister has achieved some result. The Speech goes on to say—

The Government believe that one of the most promising avenues for the provision of employment is the extension and development of the State secondary industries.

In my opinion the Minister for Employment and Industries is deserving of every credit for the way he has carried out the work initiated by his predecessor, Mr. Scaddan. Whilst we cannot expect the secondary industries in this State to develop to any great extent, because we are situated too far from the big centres of consumption, I believe they should be encouraged in every shape and form, and I commend the Minister for what he has done in this respect. In season and out of season the Minister has advocated the use of Western Australian products. That is just exactly what his predecessor did and both the Minister and the ex-Minister carried out their job very well. Our ultimate salvation and solvency must be by means of primary production. There are quite a number of avenues for primary production which are awaiting the sympathetic consideration of the Government. When we remember that no less than 73 per cent. of the world's population is dependent upon agriculture in its various phases, it will be seen that we in Western Australia who are so extensively dependent on agriculture for our future existence, cannot go far wrong in encouraging the industry in every possible way. Certainly money spent in that direction is more likely to be profitable than anything spent on works such as the construction of the Perth-Fremantle road and the foreshore reclamation, and also the provision of a swimming pool in Perth as advocated by the member for Forrest (Miss Holman). I am pleased at the action of the Government in putting into effect the resolution carried by this House favouring the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the position of the aborigines. That movement, initiated by the

member for Kimberley and agreed to by the House, was in my opinion long overdue, and I am hopeful that the findings of the Commission will be placed before the Government at an early date and that some benefit will result for the unfortunate race whose lot it is our duty to ameliorate if we can. There is also an illuminating paragraph in the Speech which reads—

During the financial year 1933-34 the railway returns were £103,597 worse than for the previous year, both increased expenditure and decreased revenue being responsible. The smaller tonnage of wheat railed to the seaboard was the principal cause of the falling revenue, but as a considerable movement of wheat is now apparent, better results should be reflected in the figures for the current year.

I want to know what becomes of the much-vaunted and oft-repeated statements of railwaymen and Ministers of the Crown to the effect that wheat haulage is unprofitable to the Railway Department. It seems to me that the statement which has been placed by the Government in the mouth of His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor gives the lie direct to that assertion. It appears that the Railway Department are absolutely dependent upon wheat haulage for a great proportion of their returns. In fact, the department go out of their way to haul superphosphate at an extremely low rate in order that they may have the opportunity of hauling more wheat, which of course is profitable. That exceedingly low rate is a sprat to catch the mackerel. The Minister for Railways is one of those who have always insisted upon the haulage of superphosphate at such a rate during certain periods of the year, with the object of inducing wheatgrowers, among other producers, to supply tonnage for the Railway Department to haul. In addition, there is the haulage of the other requirements of wheatgrowers and farmers generally at still higher rates into the country districts. Those requirements would not be available for haulage if superphosphate were not carried at such a low rate. The legislation which the Government propose to introduce does not inspire much interest in the rural resident. In fact, there is not much in it to appeal to him, or even to interest him to any great extent. For instance, no mention is made of any legislation to provide for more effective control and organisation of the marketing of primary products. That is one of the proposals which the man in the country had hoped to find mentioned in the

Lieut.-Governor's Speech. Returns from all classes of primary production to-day are low, and it is the duty of this country to endeavour in every possible way to increase them.

Mr. Moloney: That is what the Government have been doing.

Mr. FERGUSON: There can be no shadow of doubt that one way in which the returns to the producer can be increased, even though but slightly, is an intelligent system of organised marketing. If proof were wanted of that, we have it in the only two instances of organised marketing that obtain in Western Australia. The marketing of dried vine fruits, which has been in operation since about 1926, has absolutely saved Western Australia's dried vine fruits industry from extinction. When that legislation was introduced, those engaged in the production of dried vine fruits were indeed at a low ebb; numerous growers in the Swan district were absolutely leaving their vineyards, being unable to finance the operations necessary for carrying on. They were neglecting their cultural operations, and it was apparent at that time to anyone who took an interest in the matter that shortly the products of those vineyards would deteriorate materially because of lack of cultivation and lack of manure. By a system of organised marketing, that industry has been pulled round, and saved to Western Australia.

Mr. Lambert: That is organisation more for marketing oversea.

Mr. FERGUSON: It is organisation for marketing in Australia as well.

Mr. Lambert: You know very well that one-tenth of the products could not be absorbed in Western Australia.

Mr. FERGUSON: One-twentieth is absorbed in Western Australia, but the hon. member's figure is near enough for him. Another instance of organised marketing is to be found in the recently passed Metropolitan Whole Milk Act, which has proved of inestimable benefit to milk producers. To-day every producer is satisfied with the operation of that measure. This State has only two examples of organised marketing, and both of them are outstanding successes. Surely that fact is sufficient inducement to the Government to interest themselves in a question which is absolutely vital to our primary producers, and to let us have a general marketing measure.

Mr. Lambert: You know very well that there can be no organised marketing except to the extent of local absorption of products.

Mr. FERGUSON: Two minutes ago the hon. member said that the organising of the dried fruits industry applied only to export.

Mr. Lambert: No.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. FERGUSON: Other Australian States and oversea countries are giving serious consideration to the same problem. Western Australia must not be behindhand in that regard.

Mr. Lambert: You are getting too socialistic altogether! That is what is wrong with you.

Mr. FERGUSON: I hope that before the session closes the Government will see the wisdom of introducing a Bill for general marketing. I know it is useless inquiring of the Government whether that is their intention, because the reply would be that Government policy is never divulged in answer to questions. Bulk handling of grain has largely occupied the attention of wheat-growers, and that of the people of Western Australia in general, during recent years. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward) have dealt with the question exhaustively, and I do not propose to go into all its details. However, there are one or two points to which I may draw attention. The member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman), in referring to the subject last night, made some wild and woolly statements—statements which even the hon. member would have difficulty in proving outside Parliament. I desire to refer especially to one of those statements. He said—and I think I have his words correctly—that the late Government had ordered the Commissioner of Railways to allocate bulk handling sites at railway sidings. No one except a rabid political opponent could make such a statement.

Mr. Sleeman: The Minister for Works substantiated it.

Mr. FERGUSON: I regret that the Minister for Works is not here. I denied the statement last night, and I deny it now. Let me state the exact position. The question of bulk handling being prominently before Parliament, the Government of which I had the honour to be a member instructed the Commissioner of Railways to place an embargo on railway sites pending the consideration of bulk handling by the Legislature.

That was a perfectly legitimate instruction to give to the Commissioner, because while the matter was under consideration by Parliament it would have been undesirable to grant additional sites. After the matter had been finalised by Parliament, the Government of the day informed the Commissioner of Railways that he was at liberty to lift the embargo. That is an entirely different thing from saying that the previous Government instructed the Commissioner of Railways to allocate bulk handling sites at railway sidings: they did nothing of the sort.

Mr. Sleeman: This is pretty near to splitting straws.

Mr. FERGUSON: They simply informed the Commissioner of Railways that he could lift the embargo. They never gave the Commissioner any instructions as to whom he was to give sites. That has always been the prerogative of the Commissioner of Railways; and, so far as I know, it still is.

Mr. Lambert: You know very well you were only flirting with bulk handling.

Mr. FERGUSON: Because the hon. member does nothing but flirt, he thinks that Governments have nothing else to do. The member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) also made some extravagant statements as to damaged wheat. He told the House about the number of trucks that have been rejected: "condemned" is the word he used.

Mr. Latham: He meant "rejected."

Mr. FERGUSON: Yes, I think so. There has been some damage to our wheat owing to the phenomenal rains experienced in February, March and April—during a period when it is not usual for those engaged in the wheat trade to cover their stacks. But there has been no greater damage to the wheat which was handled in bulk than to the wheat which was handled in bags. The hon. member should have been fair enough to mention that fact. Indeed, the damage has been less, as I have figures to prove. The dockage to approximately 11,000,000 bushels of wheat handled in bulk has been £405, not a large amount on 11,000,000 bushels; and 9,000,000 bushels of bagged wheat, handled by the same firm, suffered dockage to the extent of £428. Thus there was £23 more dockage on the 9,000,000 bushels of bagged wheat than there was on the 11,000,000 bushels of bulk wheat. I think that disposes of the question of damage, of which the member for Fremantle made so much.

Mr. Lambert: You want to use bulk handling so that—

Mr. FERGUSON: I want the hon. member interjecting to let me alone for a few minutes. The Co-operative Bulk Handling Company having applied for sites at railway sidings in May last, the Government decided to refer the matter to a committee, notwithstanding that the subject had been investigated by various committees previously. I believe I am safe in saying that there is more information on the subject of bulk handling available to the Government of Western Australia than is available to the Government of any other country in the world. Nowhere else, I feel sure, have such exhaustive inquiries been made. Consequently Western Australia has a complete knowledge of the problem. The only additional information available to any investigating committee would be information from the sidings operated here last year. Ample evidence is available from all existing sites that the operation was a complete success. In fact, 10,000 wheatgrowers were grievously disappointed at the Premier's announcement—after the matter had been considered for so long—that the Government had decided to refer the subject to a Royal Commission.

Mr. Lambert: That is because your party wanted to politically capitalise it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) will keep order.

Mr. Lambert: Yes; I will keep order.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Lambert: I shall keep order. Hon. members opposite wanted to politically capitalise bulk handling.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie will please keep order.

Mr. Lambert: I will not allow the party opposite—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not want to take action in the case of the hon. member, but I may have to do it.

Mr. FERGUSON: The Government fail to realise that the reference of the question to a Royal Commission must mean a delay of at least another year. That delay would mean additional loss to the wheatgrowers.

Mr. Lambert: What did you do in the matter during the three years you were over here?

Mr. FERGUSON: Such a delay would mean that the farmers would have to continue operating under the expensive bag-system for another harvest.

Mr. Lambert: What did you do during the three years you were in power?

Mr. Thorn: What did you do during the three years you were out?

Mr. Lambert: I could do more in three years than you would do in a lifetime.

Mr. FERGUSON: There are unequipped sidings in the Fremantle zone, and the farmers in the Bunbury and Geraldton zones, which are not equipped with bulk handling facilities, are grievously disappointed at the Government's decision to refer the matter to a Royal Commission.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. FERGUSON: Reference has been made, particularly by the member for Fremantle, to the fact that the installation of bulk handling facilities will throw out of employment quite a number of men—thousands, the hon. member says. Whilst I admit that a few men at the various ports will of necessity be thrown out of employment, the provision of employment for those men is not the responsibility of the wheatgrowers. I have never heard the member for Fremantle suggest that when new facilities were installed for handling foreign petrol at Fremantle, the oil companies should have been responsible for those men who were thrown out of employment. It is to be admitted that, when any new scheme for handling any commodity is initiated, it is naturally expected to cheapen or economise the handling of that commodity in some way. Recently, when the Minister for Works was opening the road board conference in Perth, he made this statement—

In all innovations some individual difficulties are sure to arise, but the public interest is the paramount consideration.

That is just the paramount consideration in the bulk handling of wheat; the public interest is wrapped up in the interests of the wheat growers, and it is of paramount interest to-day. When two years ago Western Australian Farmers installed bulk handling facilities at five sidings in the Wyalecatchem district, the instalment was largely in the nature of an experiment. That experiment was watched closely by the wheat-

growers and by the community generally, and so successful was that experiment that for the 1933-34 season an additional 48 sidings were equipped, making a total of 53 sidings in all. The member for Pingelly has pointed out that there were very many obstacles placed in the way of the company who were anxious to instal those facilities in the interests of the wheatgrowers generally. Those obstacles were placed there by various interests that considered they would not profit by the installation. It is regrettable that our Railway Department should have seen fit to place any obstacles in the way. In striking contrast to the attitude of our Railway Department is the attitude of the Railway Departments of New South Wales and South Africa to bulk handling facilities. But, notwithstanding the obstacles which were placed in the way of the installation of those facilities, 53 sidings were equipped, and there can be no doubt the handling of wheat at those 53 sidings has been most economical. There has been handled over 11,000,000 bushels of wheat in bulk. The number of men thrown out of employment in the handling of 233,710 tons of bulk wheat, which has been handled at the port to date, would represent 39 men for one year. If we export next year or the year after, say 30,000,000 bushels of wheat in bulk—and in view of the many difficulties in the way of the wheat-growers to-day, I should imagine that would be a fair figure to put it at—and working on the same basis as to the number of men, it would mean that 156 men would be displaced. There are many farmers in this country who have assured me that their saving in connection with the bulk handling of their grain, as compared with handling in bags, has amounted to 3d. per bushel. That saving alone would be sufficient to pay 200 men the basic wage for 52 weeks in the year. So, if the farmers alone are going to save enough to more than pay for the men who would be displaced, surely the installation of bulk handling is worth while. There have been many critics of the scheme that has been installed, and prophecies were made that the cost of handling would be very high on account of the type of storage bins that were erected, and on account of their cheap construction. Those prophecies have proved unfounded, because the cost of handling at those 53 equipped

sidings has been far more economical than it has been under the bulk handling scheme operating in New South Wales. If we take the charges under the heading of handling, interest and depreciation, in New South Wales, and compare them with the charges in Western Australia, it will be seen that in New South Wales the charges under those headings are 2.0169d. per bushel, whereas in Western Australia it is less than 1d. per bushel. And it should be borne in mind that in New South Wales they charge only 6 per cent. for depreciation, whereas in Western Australia it is 11 per cent. In addition it is quite natural that the cost of handling in the first season might be expected to be somewhat high, but experience gained in the process of time should lead to a reduction of those charges. There can be no doubt the system has proved most economical and of great benefit to our producers. If any proof of that were required, we have it supplied in the various large wheat-producing countries of the world. Bulk handling facilities have been installed in the Argentine, Canada, the United States, South Africa and New South Wales, and, in addition, Victoria and South Australia are now considering proposals in that connection. Moreover, all our wheat customers, all the buyers of our wheat, namely, England, Japan, China, Italy, Germany and Belgium, have bulk handling facilities at their main ports. Many farmers in my electorate, in those districts where they are fortunate enough to be able to handle their wheat in bulk, have assured me that their savings have amounted to from 2d. to 3½d. per bushel, and every one of them intimates that it is impossible to put a value on the time saved by horses and teams in the quick despatch they now get at the siding as compared with the interminable delays that occurred when farmers had to handle their wheat in bags. A cause of complaint throughout the length and breadth of the farming areas in Western Australia, and in connection with which there is a good deal of indignation expressed, is the attitude of the Government in imposing an extra freight of 9d. per ton on bulk wheat. The Premier told us the other evening that 11,000,000 bushels handled in bulk would mean additional revenue of £13,000 to the railways. The reasons he gave for the im-

position of that charge were, to say the least, unconvincing. He said that a certain amount of additional tare on the trucks had to be carried, and that there was an additional amount of shunting necessitated. Surely the additional tare is part and parcel of the equipment of the truck, and ought not to be charged for. If the department had done the work according to its own ideas, instead of having some 5 cwt. of canvas and light timber to carry the additional wheat, it would have been done with ordinary 2in. jarrah and so there would have been at least 15 cwt. of additional tare, but there would not have been any suggestion by the department that the users should pay for that additional tare. In New South Wales no difference is made in the charge for handling bulk and bagged wheat, and in South Africa the charge on the bulk wheat is actually the cheaper. There the railways, to encourage the farmers to use bulk handling facilities, actually return the bags free of charge to those sidings where bulk handling facilities are not provided. So the farmers who have to use bags get their bags returned gratis, whereas in Western Australia the railways charge for them. The opposition to bulk handling is not very pronounced in Western Australia. There has been slight objection raised in some quarters, but generally speaking the wheatgrowers are anxious that we should get on with this bulk handling scheme as quickly as possible, and they are bitterly disappointed that another year's delay is going to occur. This idea of the farmers to help themselves, to find their own money without asking for Government assistance, and without asking for any guarantee, really by taking up the challenge of the Government that they would not be game to go on with the scheme unless they had a monopoly, is a scheme which should have all the encouragement the Government could give it, instead of having obstacles placed in its way. The Speech contains mention that we have promise of a wonderful season in Western Australia. That is so. From Wyndham in the North to Esperance in the South I do not think I have ever known a season so universally good. That is the luck of the Labour Government. Nearly every time a Labour Government have been in office, Western Australia has experienced good seasons. I am

not going to allow my friend, the Minister for Employment, to take any credit for that.

The Minister for Employment: And every time the Labour Government have to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds in belated repairs left by the previous Government.

Mr. FERGUSON: I do not know which belated repairs the Minister refers to, but if he means the splashing of a bit of paint on public buildings in Perth, I am not with him, for that is one of those belated repairs which could easily be allowed to stand over. In his blind efforts to find employment for the trade unionist supporters of his party, the Minister is buying all the paint he can get and splashing it on public buildings. That is altogether unjustified, but I am not going to allow him to take credit for the bountiful season we are enjoying. It is gratifying that the price of wheat has increased a little, and I hope it will move up still further. The price of wool, on the other hand, is very disappointing. The wool sales in Brisbane the other day could not have brought much satisfaction to the wool producers of Australia. Those prices, in my opinion, are largely accounted for by the unfortunate fiscal policy adopted by the Commonwealth.

The Minister for Railways: The wool prices were not so bad as some people feared they would be.

Mr. Mann: It will mean a loss of £20,000,000 to Australia.

Mr. Hawke: When wool prices were high last year, was that due to the tariff?

Mr. Mann: To economic conditions, possibly.

Mr. FERGUSON: Some little time ago the Commonwealth Government appointed a committee to investigate the wool position in Australia. The committee presented a report, which has been favourably commented on by wool growers throughout the length and breadth of Australia. Portions of that report can be put into operation by the Commonwealth Government and portions by the State Government, and I am in hopes that the Governments of all the States, as well as the Government of the Commonwealth, will do their best to implement the committee's report. The bountiful season in the North-West will create another problem, namely, what is to be done with the surplus sheep in those areas? They will not prove to be of

much value if they are allowed to remain in the North. If we get an indifferent or a bad season next year, there will be huge loss, as many of the stations will be over-stocked under those conditions. As quite a number of farms in the agricultural areas have been definitely proved to be not entirely suitable for cereal production, but suitable for carrying sheep and growing fodder crops such as oats, some effort should be made to provide a market in the agricultural areas for the surplus North-West sheep. The best thing would be to hasten on the provision of wire netting to those settlers anxious to change over from wheat to sheep. The Speech mentions that the provision of wire netting to settlers has been extended. I think it should be extended still further. In view of the fact that wire netting is essential for keeping out vermin, another attempt should be made by the Government to induce the Commonwealth to provide money for the purchase of wire netting on easier terms than those that now exist. The terms provide for an interest payment of five per cent., and a sinking fund payment of two per cent. for the redemption of the loan. I urge on the Premier to take up with the Commonwealth Government once more the suggestion that the money should be provided free of interest. If that were done and the farmer paid a sinking fund to repay the loan in 25 years, it would be all that the Commonwealth had a right to expect. It would pay Australia handsomely if consolidated revenue bore the interest payments on the money and if the farmer were allowed to have it on condition that he paid a sinking fund of a little over three per cent., which, I believe, would repay the loan in 25 years. That is all the farmer can pay under existing conditions. As I indicated, there are many farms not entirely suitable for the production of cereals—light lands and lands of medium quality—but they are suitable for sheep raising and for the growing of fodder crops. I understand the Minister has stated that he will not allow any farmer to have wire netting whose land rents are in arrears. I hope the Minister will not stick hard and fast to that decision. Surely a man in arrears for one year should not be penalised to that extent! Moreover, if his farm were suitable for the production of sheep and fodder crops, it would be perfectly futile for him to continue on the block unless he were to carry sheep, and he could not carry sheep unless he could effectively fence against vermin such as rabbits.

Will the Premier also take up with the general manager of the Midland Railway Company the question of allowing the Government to take a first mortgage over the company's lands in order that Midland settlers might be eligible to participate in the money for the provision of wire netting? The Agricultural Bank, the Associated Banks, all the insurance companies and every private mortgagee that I know of have been willing to allow the Government to take a first mortgage over the land for the provision of wire netting. Netting a property increases the value of the mortgagees' security, and it is in his interests to allow a first mortgage to be taken for netting. For some reason the general manager of the Midland Railway Company has not fallen into line with other mortgagees, and I think the only way to get the company to agree would be for the head of the Government to bring some moral suasion to bear. There appeared in the "West Australian" quite recently a notification of a virulent disease that had broken out amongst certain rabbits kept for scientific purposes in the Old Country. If we could get a disease like that introduced amongst the rabbits in Australia, we should go far towards exterminating the pest. I hope that the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research will follow this matter up, because it would be the most economical way of coping with this, the greatest pest we have in Australia. Other pests that are worrying the pastoralists and farmers greatly are the dingo and the fox. I have protested on more than one occasion against the reduction of bonuses paid for the destruction of those pests. I realise that the bonuses are governed by the finance that the Central Vermin Board have available. I should like to ask the Government, in view of the difficulty that the Central Vermin Board experience in collecting their rates, to go to their assistance financially and supplement the bonuses the board are able to pay during the present difficult times. I am of opinion that it would be in the interests of the State if the source from which the Central Vermin Board derive their funds were extended. As the Minister for Lands knows, the present taxable basis is on those areas of 160 acres and over. If the basis were extended to include all lands in the State, the amount collected would be increased by about 100 per cent., and the com-

munity generally would reap the benefit. Certain it is that the higher the bonuses paid for the destruction of dingoes, the quicker will they be exterminated, whereas if, through lack of funds, the Central Vermin Board are compelled to reduce their bonuses still further, the vermin will go on increasing. We shall be paying a smaller bonus over a longer period and, in the end, it will cost more completely to exterminate the pest.

The Minister for Lands interjected.

Mr. FERGUSON: One year's funds were built up before any disbursements were made.

The Minister for Lands: The rate was reduced.

Mr. FERGUSON: Because it was impossible for contributors to meet the rate.

The Minister for Lands: No, the board had money to burn.

Mr. FERGUSON: Another problem worrying the farming community is that of sheep-stealing, which is becoming very prevalent in many of the sheep districts. I regret to say it, but I think most of the sheep stealing is being done by men possessed of motor trucks. Once a sheep stealer with a motor truck gets away from a farm or a district it is not easy to have him traced. It has been known that a motor truck with bags tied round the tyres has been backed up to a fence, the truck filled with sheep, and driven off. I urge the Minister for Police, who fortunately is also the Minister for Agriculture, and is interested in the problem, to get the Commissioner of Police to make available two or three plain clothes men to devote the whole of their time to this problem. Sheep stealing is costing the farmers of this State thousands of pounds per annum. The sheep stealers do not mind taking studs or anything else. Generally they want sheep fat enough to be marketed, and they get them on the market quick and lively. Local police constables experience difficulty in tracing the thieves. In some instances the local constable has only a horse, and it is difficult for a man on a horse to compete with a man in a motor truck. The thief, of course, does not steal under the eye of the policeman, and he succeeds in getting away to the back country. If the Government empowered the country police to hire a car when they had word that a sheep stealer was in the district, it would facilitate their efforts at

detection. At present the police are handicapped, and not many offenders have been brought to book. If the Minister made available a couple of officers to devote the whole of their time to the work and allowed them to go into the country districts and study the problem where it is at its worst, some good would result. The penalties for the offence should be increased considerably on account of the difficulty of obtaining proof. Once an offender was caught and proved guilty, we should make an example of him.

Mr. Latham: The penalty provided is satisfactory, but the judges impose far less than the maximum.

Mr. FERGUSON: A question of importance to part of my electorate is the proposed Kalannie-northwards railway. While the line would not be in my electorate, farmers in the north-east portion would use it. Last year a deputation waited on the Premier and urged the construction of the line. The Premier gave a sympathetic reply, telling us it would have to stand over for a year, but that the matter would not be lost sight of. I again urge on the Government the necessity for giving the matter serious consideration with a view to introducing this session a Bill authorising the construction of the line. During last year, Western Australia has been deprived, through death, of one of its most useful citizens, Mr. H. W. A. Tanner. Mr. Tanner had done excellent work on behalf of rural co-operation in the State, and was the producers' representative on the Fremantle Harbour Trust. On Mr. Tanner's death, the organisation that had recommended his appointment naturally thought that the Government would ask them to nominate a successor, but judge of their dismay when they found that Mr. W. C. Angwin, ex-Agent General for the State, had been appointed producers' representative on the Trust. I have nothing to say against Mr. Angwin; I think he is one of our most estimable citizens. He has done good work for Western Australia in many spheres, but as a producers' representative on the Trust, I am afraid we cannot expect from him the service we would get from a man who had been nominated by a producers' organisation. Mr. Angwin has been associated all his life with trade unionism. He can therefore be looked upon as a representative of trade unionism on the Trust, and not as

the representative of the producers. There are times when it is conceivable that the interests of the two bodies would not be identical. Mr. Angwin's life-long association with trade unions would lead him to lean towards the interests of the waterside workers at Fremantle rather than towards those of the men who are producing the goods which enable those workers to get their employment.

Mr. Sleeman: What a shame!

Mr. FERGUSON: I am not disparaging Mr. Angwin, but I wish to enter my emphatic protest on behalf of the primary producers over the attitude of the Government in refusing to appoint a direct representative.

The Minister for Lands: He is a man who would more than most people see all sides of the question.

Mr. FERGUSON: That may be so, but I think he would see the unionists' side first. I was very interested to hear what the Premier said the other evening on the report of the Disabilities Commission. His statement was very convincing, and should be sufficient to indicate to the Prime Minister that Western Australia has had a pretty raw deal at the hands of the Commission. I could understand the Premier's keen disappointment when he read the report. It is a clear indication of what Western Australia may expect at the hands of any Federal Commission. It will increase by many thousands the numbers of those who favour secession. I do not think we had a right to expect any more at the hands of the Commission. The chairman had expressed views disparaging the administration of Western Australia prior to his appointment, and one other member of the Commission had been a resident of Tasmania and another a resident of South Australia. It had been recommended that both of those States should receive additional grants above what they had received in the past. We might have had a better deal if Western Australia had been represented on the Commission. I was pleased to notice in the Press that the Premier had paid a visit to the offices of the Agricultural Department. The more often the Treasurer visits that department, the better it will be for agriculture generally. He has now seen the rabbit warrens the officers are compelled to work in. That is bad enough for the administrative side of the

department, but it is infinitely worse for the scientific side.

Mr. Wise: I complained about that in your time but got no support.

Mr. FERGUSON: The building is only fit for matchwood. The Premier expressed his sympathy with the officers, but I should like to see him make a substantial effort to provide up-to-date facilities for them.

Mr. Latham: The £15,000 which went to the University could well have been spent on that department.

Mr. FERGUSON: Dr. Rivett, the executive head of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, says it is not likely his body will spend much money in going into agricultural problems in Western Australia unless proper equipment is provided for them. Unless the State provides laboratories for scientific facilities, I am afraid Western Australia will reap very little benefit from the activities of the C.S.I.R., as we see those activities revealed in the other States. I understand that Professor Whitfeld, of the University, has been keenly interested in this matter, and has proposed that a joint arrangement should be entered into between the Government and the University for the provision of laboratory facilities on some of the University endowment lands. I have long cherished the idea that up-to-date laboratory facilities should be provided, and I think the most suitable spot would be near the abattoirs at Midland Junction. The laboratories must have a reasonable area of land around them where stock for experimental purposes can be kept. If it is impossible for the Government to provide the money for these facilities, why should they not take the matter up with the University and act in co-operation with that Institution? I understand the University authorities are willing to make available some of their endowment lands near the coast. In addition to the Hackett bequest which provides the remuneration for the professor of agriculture, the University has a lot of bursaries and another bequest worth £60,000. If they are prepared to make these facilities available to their own officers and co-operate with the officers of the Agricultural Department, why should we delay any further in making use of the scientific officers of the C.S.I.R. in the interests of agriculture in this State? Many problems require to be solved if agri-

culture in Western Australia is to make satisfactory progress. The only way to solve them is by the application of science to the industry.

Mr. Latham: As soon as those problems are solved others will arise.

Mr. FERGUSON: We must solve those that are with us to-day. If we cannot do so, the industry will never advance. Surely the Government, the University, and the C.S.I.R. ought to be able to make available the necessary facilities in the interests of those who are engaged in agriculture here, so many of whom have been financed from State funds. I understand we are to have an opportunity to discuss the report of the Agricultural Bank Commission. The extravagant language used by the Commission in their very drastic report will count against it. The way in which the Commissioners have pilloried the trustees is not justified, and the value of the report will be discounted because of the intemperance of the language used. In all fairness to the trustees, those who are of the opinion I have expressed should not hesitate to utter it. I asked the Minister for Railways the other night whether it was intended to issue a new railway rate book, and if so when. The reply was that the matter was receiving consideration. It is many years since the last rate book was issued. It contains a hundred and one anomalies that it would take a Philadelphian lawyer to fathom. All sorts of rebates and concessions are mentioned of which the users of the railways have difficulty in availing themselves because of their number. It would not cost much to issue a new book, which would be greatly in the interests of users of the system. A greater reason for a new book is that if one were issued I believe it would be possible to induce the Midland Railway Company to use it in toto. At present the General Manager of the company uses the rate book, but does not give all the concessions and rebates that are allowed to users of the State system. If a new book were issued I think Mr. Poynton would adopt it. Recently I gave some figures in the metropolitan Press regarding freights on the Midland line. In one instance these were challenged by Mr. Poynton, and I had to admit having quoted out-of-date figures, although they were supplied by the Railway Department. Since then I have obtained up-to-date figures as at the 15th August, and would like to quote

them for the information of members as well as of users of the Midland and Government lines. They will prove some of the difficulties under which we labour through being situated on a privately owned railway. Recently the State embarked upon the export trade in lambs. The Midland districts have not been behind in producing an ideal export lamb; indeed the producers in the Moora and Coorow districts have bred some of the best export lambs put upon the market. They are producing the lambs in considerable numbers. To convey a truck of lambs from Coorow to Fremantle on the Midland line costs £5 15s. 2d., but for a similar distance over the Government system the cost is £5 12s. The charge for a truck of power kerosene of six tons from Fremantle to Coorow is £19 11s. 4d., and on the Government line it is £18 18s. Ten tons of wheat conveyed from Carnamah to Fremantle costs £7 7s. 6d., but for a similar distance over the Government line the cost would be £6 19s. 2d. The freight on a bag of sugar from Fremantle to Moora is 3s. 6d., but on a Government line it would be 2s. 9d. On a ton of groceries from Fremantle to Moora the freight is £3 16s. 4d. and on the Government line it would be £3 7s. 11d. for the same distance. I understand a cut rate has been given to storekeepers at Moora recently to compete with motor transport. For a parcel of harvester parts from Fremantle to Moora the cost is 1s. 10d., but on a Government line it would be 1s. 9d. On ten tons of super from North Fremantle to Moora the freight is £2 9s. 2d., and on a Government line it would be £2 5s. On a truck of horses from Moora to Subiaco the freight is £4 2s. 5d., against £4 on the Government line. These figures show some of the difficulties under which settlers in the Midlands have to labour. In the aggregate this amounts to a considerable sum per annum. If at the expenditure of a few hundred pounds a new rate book could be issued, and the Midland Company could be induced to adopt it, without any of these extra imposts upon their settlers, the expense would be well justified and would be much appreciated by every resident of the Midlands.

The Minister for Railways: A new rate book would not make any difference to that position.

Mr. FERGUSON: There is a possibility that the general manager of the company would waive the freights that he is charging

at present in favour of adopting the Government rates.

The Minister for Railways. He has not agreed to that yet.

Mr. FERGUSON: A new rate book would provide an additional argument in favour of his doing so.

The Minister for Railways: The rates are the same between stations on the Midland line as they are between stations on a Government line for similar distances.

Mr. FERGUSON: Ninety per cent. of the commodities that are either received or despatched by settlers in the Midland district are carried over a section of the Midland line and a section of the State line. The hardship arises through there being two short freights instead of one long one. I want to say a word or two about rural rehabilitation. This subject has been much discussed of recent date. People have asked when is the psychological moment to institute this rehabilitation. The psychological moment is with us to-day. We have been told that the aggregate debts of the agriculturists of Australia amount to over £140,000,000, and that the Commonwealth Government have expressed their willingness to provide a considerable sum of money to assist in debt reduction and rehabilitation generally. If that is so, then I regard the present as an opportune time for Western Australia to investigate the question of rehabilitating those farmers who should remain on their holdings—I think the proportion who should remain on their properties is quite a large one, the majority in fact—and the only way we can do that is to recondition the farmers' surplus liabilities. Many farmers are overburdened with debts quite beyond their capacity to pay. If the Minister for Lands will favour the scheme that was placed before him recently, with which I understand he expressed his sympathy, or would approve of some other plan along those lines, he could appoint a committee to commence operations at an early date to mediate between the debtor-farmers and their creditors. The sooner that is done, the sooner will the industry be placed on a reasonably satisfactory basis. With the assistance the Commonwealth Government are willing to provide—and it would appear that the assistance will represent a considerable amount—the present should be regarded as most opportune to take the matter in hand.

The Minister for Lands: What is the amount of the Commonwealth assistance?

Mr. FERGUSON: I do not know any more about it than does the Minister, and the only information I have is that which appeared in the Press. The Prime Minister has stated that he was willing to make £20,000,000 available in the near future. A scheme of rehabilitation would be as much in the interests of the creditors of the farmers as of the farmers themselves. At present they cannot stand up to the obligations they have incurred, and it would be infinitely better for all the creditors to receive some return as interest on their outlay, rather than that a few secured creditors should receive a return and the unsecured creditors should have nothing, as is the position at present. If we are to do something to rehabilitate the position of the men on the land, we must go further and deal with the natural corollary. We must provide facilities, through legislative sanction for the establishment of a statutory board, for the organised marketing of our primary products. It is of little use instituting means of placing the farmer on a more satisfactory basis and then, through a faulty marketing system, allowing him to remain in the deplorable position he has been in during recent years. If the Government intend to tackle the problem seriously and achieve the rehabilitation of our farmers, they must secure to them a return for their labour, by an organised and orderly system of marketing their products. The question of transport has loomed largely in the eyes of the public recently. It is a big problem, one that Parliament tackled and, in its wisdom, passed legislation for the co-ordination of the various transport interests. The dictionary interpretation of the word "co-ordination" is "harmonising of interests." I do not know that the Transport Board have done much so far towards securing the harmonising of the transport interests. Section 10 of the Act, which deals with the powers and duties of the board, sets out that the board may of its own volition or under the direction of the Minister—

(a) make investigations and inquiries into transport matters. In making such investigations and inquiries the board shall give consideration, among other factors, to all or any of the following factors namely:

(i.) The question of transport generally in the light of service to the community;

- (ii.) The needs of the State for economic development;
- (iii.) The industrial conditions under which all forms of transport are conducted;
- (iv.) The impartial and equitable treatment of all conflicting interests.

Then, in Section 36, we find the following:—

Before granting or refusing to grant any such license the board shall take into consideration

(b) The existing transportation service for the carriage of goods upon the routes, or within the area, proposed to be served in relation to—

- (i.) its present adequacy and possibilities for improvement to meet all reasonable public demands;
- (ii.) the effect upon such existing service of the service proposed to be provided.

Let us see if the Transport Board have carried out the injunction they received from Parliament. I am one of those who consider the railways are absolutely necessary for the development of the State. I have taken part with representatives of other districts in urging upon Governments the necessity for the construction of certain railways. Every district where a railway is desired and is proved to be necessary, expects the State to provide the railway, and it then becomes the duty of the people and of the Government to maintain the asset provided for their benefit and to do their utmost to see that the railway is worked profitably. While it is certainly necessary to do that, it must also be remembered by those in control that they must provide a service to the community. I believe Western Australia has more or less run amok in dealing with its transport problems. I am old-fashioned enough to believe that if we had stuck to the railways and horse transport, we would be a long way better off than we are now. We have ample natural native facilities for the propulsion of all our means of transport. We have coal at Collie, and I would like members to consider what activity there would be in Collie to-day if our railways had to transport all produce that could not be moved by horse traction. Collie would to-day be an exceedingly prosperous industrial centre. We have large belts of country where we could breed all the horses we require. Hon. members can visualise what activity there would have been within the State if we had bred the horses necessary for our present transport require-

ments. I am old-fashioned enough to believe that we would now be a happier and infinitely better off community if we had never imported a single tractor or motor truck or one gallon of petrol for their propulsion. Perhaps members perused the brochure that was prepared a little while ago by a well-known businessman of Perth regarding this phase. It is estimated that we have imported 4,000 tractors and 10,000 motor trucks into Western Australia. While those machines are not all operating to the fullest extent, I estimate that they are doing the work of not less than 100,000 horses. The average consumption of hay per horse would amount to about five tons per year, which would be equivalent to 500,000 tons per annum for the 100,000 horses.

Mr. Latham: And it would mean less wheat exported.

Mr. FERGUSON: To produce that quantity of hay for chaff would represent the cultivation of 500,000 acres. In addition, 100,000 acres under oats would be necessary to feed the extra horses used throughout the State. To grow the quantity of feed on the 600,000 acres under hay and oats would mean the provision of employment for over a thousand men. I think the Minister for Employment will agree with me that it would be worth while. It would mean taking off his shoulders the responsibility for providing for nearly all the unemployed. That would be the effect if, in Western Australia, we had relied upon the horse instead of upon petrol propulsion. More than that, on the State's average, over 6,000,000 bushels of wheat would have been kept off an already glutted market.

The Minister for Employment: Yet you raised an objection to what was done.

Mr. FERGUSON: No; I supported the Minister in all his efforts. I believe that if we had not imported a single tractor, the whole of our unemployment trouble would have been avoided. All those in receipt of sustenance would have been employed in the cultivation of the 600,000 acres required to produce feed for the consumption of the horses in work.

Mr. Latham: Let us go back to the old thrashing system!

The Minister for Lands: It would solve the unemployment problem not only of Western Australia but elsewhere too.

Mr. Rodoreda: What about cutting out the harvester?

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: And using the scythe?

Mr. FERGUSON: To provide for the requirements of the horses, an expenditure of upwards of £200,000 would be required annually for harness. It would mean increasing the price of our hides, which are at present a drug on the market. It would mean increasing returns to our cattle and sheep producers. I would not mind if the cost of the tractors, trucks and petrol were distributed in Western Australia, the Commonwealth, or even within the Empire. Unfortunately that is not so. Not very much of the money is expended in the British Empire at all. During 1933-34 Western Australia imported 19,000,000 gallons of petrol and over 2,000,000 gallons of power kerosene. The value of the fuel totalled £667,780. It means that nearly £750,000 per annum is sent overseas, and over 1,000 of our own people are deprived of employment in consequence.

Mr. Latham: The result of the importation has been increased development.

Mr. FERGUSON: There has been slightly quicker development on account of the use of tractors, but I am not sure we are better off. These are my own views, and I know there are many people who desire motor transport. Time was when we used to consider the orderly ordering of our requirements, and had them despatched by train or horse-drawn vehicle. Now people are in such a hurry that they telephone their requirements and expect quick transport by means of motors. While we have rail and motor transport side by side, we must secure their co-ordination. The interests of the two forms of transport conflict to-day, and it is the job of the Transport Board to secure the co-ordination of the divergent interests. I am not sure that the board have done their job very effectively so far. I am afraid the board have been obsessed by the railway point of view and have not troubled so much about that of other means of transport. Those concerned in the latter division are just as legitimate in their avocation as is our railway system. I will give an instance of the lopsidedness of the attitude of the Transport Board and an indication of their obsession regarding the railways to the detriment of motor traction. In 1886, Western Australia entered into an agreement with a man in the Old

Country, Mr. John Waddington, to construct a railway from Guildford to Champion Bay. That agreement was wholeheartedly endorsed by the people of Western Australia, particularly those in the sparsely settled district now known as the Midland area. The Government of the day were unable to secure the finance necessary to build the railway, the construction of which was warranted. It was regarded as a proper subject for the work of private enterprise, and that view was applauded by everyone in the State. Mr. Waddington transferred his agreement to the Midland Railway Company, and that company constructed a line from Midland Junction to Walkaway. I am not sure how much money was spent, but it was £1,000,000 or more. The company continued to transport goods over the line for many years. Later another form of transport, road transport, appeared, another form of private enterprise which Western Australia gladly welcomed. The State had approved of the construction of railway by giving a concession of over 3,000,000 acres of land to the company, and the State approved of the road transport enterprise by giving that enterprise a good road. They were two forms of legitimate private enterprise side by side, and in most instances the competition between the two was perfectly legitimate. On some commodities the motor truck was charging more than the railway, and on other lines less. The motor man was getting all the trade he wanted, and the railway was doing pretty well also. But immediately the Transport Board was created to co-ordinate the interest of those two legitimate private enterprises, the board annihilated the road transport in the interests of the railway. That was not fair on the part of the board. The motor man who was engaged in the industry had put £400 or £500 of his hard earned cash into his enterprise, and £400 or £500 was just as much to him as a million pounds to the wealthy financiers in the Old Country who financed the railway. So I maintain the road transport man should have been given a fair chance to carry on his lawful avocation. Now I want the House to picture the plight of some of the settlers whom this motor man was serving. They are situated between the Midland Railway and the State railway known as the Toodyay-Miling line, a district about 14 miles by road from each

railway system. The settlers in that district have been catered for by the road transport, for they are too far from either railway to get the full benefit of railway facilities. It cost them too much to get their goods from the railway to their homes or farms, and of necessity they want to use the road transport. A full 100 per cent. of the people in that district have signed a petition asking for the road transport. In addition to that, quite a number of those people have carried out the advice of successive Ministers of the Crown and officers of the Department of Agriculture to the effect that, not being able to make a living out of ordinary staple products of farming, they should produce side lines. It is not a great wheat growing centre, but is a sheep and wheat district, and the settlers have embarked on pigs, cows, poultry and other side-lines, in an endeavour to stand up to the obligations they have incurred with those financing them. Those are the people who want to use road transport. Here is a particular instance of a settler in that district: he is to-day making from 30s. to £2 per week out of his butter-fat cheque. Road transport calls at his place at 5 o'clock in the morning and lands his butter fat in splendid condition in Perth at nine o'clock. If road transport is not to be allowed to pick up that butter fat, that man must go 14 miles to the railway siding, and 14 miles back. It is a day's work for a horse, and half a day's work for a man. The cream will be put on the railway truck in the morning and it will remain 11 hours on the train, right through the heat of the day, and so when it reaches the butter factory in Perth it will not be worth the amount it has cost in freight. That is what exists to-day, and the Transport Board has refused to grant a license for road transport in that district. Unless the Board revises its attitude, the men in that district will have to go out of dairying, and the money they have put into the industry will be wasted. Surely in the interests of the district as a whole they ought to be allowed to pursue the lawful avocation in which they are engaged. There ought to be sufficient brains in the Railway Department, the Transport Board, the owners of transport traffic, the Government and the people of Western Australia to co-ordinate those means of transport, as the Transport (Co-ordination)

Act intended. When Parliament passed that Act, members had every belief that it was possible to bring about real co-ordination of those conflicting interests, and I still think it can be done. If the Railway Department is to get all this traffic and have all competition squelched as well, it must do something to justify that concession. Only last week I received a stud ram from South Australia. A hundred miles of rail-age for that ram in South Australia cost 2s. 9d. Incidentally, I expect it came down with other rams, which would account for the low charge. From Adelaide to Fremantle the freight on the animal was 10s., and the rail-age from Fremantle to Barberton siding was £1 1s. 4d., after which there was 2s. 6d. cartage to the Fremantle station, and also from the siding to my farm. Motor transport would have taken that ram from the yard at Fremantle to my farm at Barberton for 7s. 6d., and so I would have saved 16s. 4d. That is an indication that the railways have to wake up, if they expect the people to patronise them to the fullest extent. In conclusion let me say the Premier has told us that this is to be a busy session. I hope it will be, for there is a lot of work that requires to be done. But for my part, and I believe I can speak for others also on this bench, any legislation the Government may bring down in the interests of the primary producers and of the State and the people generally, will have our wholehearted support, while when there are any Bills we disagree with we can be depended upon to put up the most constructive criticism of which we are capable.

MR. PIESSE (Katanning) [8.37]: Like other members, I fail to see much that is new in His Excellency's Speech, and in fact very little that calls for debate. At the same time there has been a noticeable improvement in the State's outlook during the past year. We are reminded that the financial position is still extremely grave, and as far as one is able to judge from the experience of the past few years, and from the financial statements placed before us by Treasurers from time to time, it seems that the gravity of the financial position is likely to remain for some time, certainly until the markets for our produce improve and prices become more stable and profitable. Until those factors are brought about, the State

is not likely to make any great headway in extricating itself from its financial difficulties. Rigid economy, we are told in the Speech, is being practised, and until we can get more equitable treatment from the Federal authorities that economy will have to be continued. As already pointed out, principally by the Leader of the Nationalist Party, the loan expenditure has become somewhat alarming, and unless our population is going to increase more rapidly it will not be very long before we shall have to cry a halt to borrowing. We had hoped for some relief from the Federal Grants Commission, but here again we have to confess disappointment, for that Commission has failed to redress our claims for financial help from the Commonwealth. I congratulate the Premier upon the splendid reply he made to the report of that Commission. This Chamber should whole-heartedly show its dissent from that finding, and we should back up the Premier in his refusal to accept that as a fair exposition of our financial difficulties. Seemingly in the Loan Council this State is doomed to disappointment. With an overflowing Federal Treasury, we as a State are still limited by the overlapping of Federal and State taxation, as the result of which we cannot increase our revenue. The Loan Council offers us very little hope of relief or of having our Premier backed up in seeking more equitable treatment under the Premiers' Plan. It is absurd to have Commonwealth and State public servants working side by side in Perth, the State servant being compelled still to accept a 20 per cent. financial emergency deduction from his salary, while to the Commonwealth servant that deduction has been restored in whole or in part, simply because of the overflowing Federal Treasury. As civil servants and other Government employees, Federal and State, were required to make an equal sacrifice, it was expected that as soon as conditions improved, all would benefit equally. While we form part of the Federation, we are reluctantly compelled to look to the Commonwealth for assistance by way of bonuses or bounties to assist our primary industries. It is comforting to wheat-growers to know that at last the Federal Government have realised their responsibility by setting aside a sum of money to guarantee growers at least the cost of production for the coming season. We appreciate anything done to assist us in that way,

but we cannot expect such assistance to continue for ever, and it behoves everyone engaged in primary industries to get production costs down to bedrock, so that it will be possible in future to combat the low prices that no doubt will come again, and deal with the severe fluctuations that occur from time to time. We in this State have to be thankful for the bountiful rains that have benefited the pastoral, wheat and other primary industries. When we consider the unfortunate position of South Australia and parts of Victoria, we have much to be thankful for. Our hopes are for a good season and even a record harvest. At the same time we should be alive to the necessities that will enable us to make the best of our production by following the most up-to-date methods of organised marketing. I am glad that the Government recognise the importance of this question, and trust that they will continue their interest in assisting primary industries in this way. I was somewhat disappointed that the Speech did not make a definite announcement regarding the rehabilitation of the farming industry. After the promise made by the Minister for Lands last year, we expected that the question would have been taken up seriously and dealt with early this session. Possibly the Government are awaiting the discussion by the House of the report of the Royal Commission on the Agricultural Bank. The agricultural industry is so closely bound up with the future of the Bank that one would expect the question of the future policy of the Government to be foreshadowed when the report is dealt with. I hope the Minister for Lands will be able to announce some definite policy and plan to deal with this vexed and important question. The Federal Government are realising more than ever before their responsibilities in this direction. There has been little that the State could do financially without the assistance of the Federal Government, and I hope the closest co-operation will be maintained between the State and Federal Governments so that a definite scheme, essential for the permanent recovery of the producing industries, may be formulated at the earliest possible moment. I wish to refer to one aspect of the report of the Royal Commission that investigated the operations of the Agricultural Bank. I am most keenly disappointed that the Government allowed the Royal Commission to be appointed. I consider that the appointment was not justified. We have to remember

that this institution was founded some 40 years ago on lines that were largely experimental and for purposes purely developmental to enable our lands, which were practically valueless, to be utilised. From Geraldton to Albany it was impossible to borrow £100 on 1,000,000 acres of land in its undeveloped condition, and only by the introduction of the policy of the Agricultural Bank was development made possible. The Bank was a very small concern in the first place, designed by members of the earliest Parliament and managed by the late Mr. Paterson, who gave up his seat as a member of Parliament to undertake that work. We are all aware of the wonderful success that attended the operations of the Bank. At the outset a good deal of care was exercised in launching the institution. It was called a State-aid Bank. It was not intended to be an ordinary banking institution making profit, nor was it intended to be a trading bank. It was an organisation designed to facilitate the development of our lands. There was a very close relationship between the manager of the institution and the Government, and after all the years of close association that have followed, I should have thought that the very last thing the Government would have done would be to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into something about which they already knew everything. I do not blame the present Government for the existing position. All Governments, past as well as present, must accept their share of the responsibility. The policy of the Agricultural Bank all along was ministerial, political. If the present trustees have made mistakes, that fact is generally known and has been known by Ministers past as well as present. It was never expected that an institution which had no reserves, which advanced up to 100 per cent. on improvements, and which discriminated very little between good and light land, could continue without being faced with a loss sooner or later. It was unfortunate that the officials of the Bank, who have grown old in the service, should have been subjected to the full blast of an inquiry by a Royal Commission. I shall say no more on the subject at present because a further opportunity will be afforded when the report is being discussed. Let me express the hope that, though the report may contain much that will be useful to us in deciding the future of the Bank, it will not be accepted without members realising

that whatever the faults of the past may have been, they must be the responsibility of Ministers and members. Regarding the administration of the State Transport Coordination Act, it is being generally stated in the country that many members of Parliament wish to plead that they did not know what a serious effect the passing of the measure would have on existing road transport services. One mistake Parliament made was that it did not refer the Bill to a select committee. I consider that insufficient time was allowed to permit of a full discussion of a matter of such importance. The duties of the board would have been lighter and easier had the Bill been submitted to a select committee of this House or a joint select committee of both Houses. Much information could have been elicited that would have proved of assistance to the board. It was due to members that such information should be available to them, so that they could have provided for some of the contingencies that have arisen from the delicensing of many vehicles that were operating on the roads when the measure was passed. This House decided against paying compensation. It was very difficult at the time to induce members seriously to consider that compensation should be paid. The House having decided against it, however, the board was left with no alternative. Members were unduly hasty last session in dealing with that phase of the situation. Some reason does exist for consideration of this kind being given to the people concerned. It was not anticipated that the board would deal so drastically and so quickly with the delicensing of trucks which had been operating on the roads. Many of the people concerned were encouraged to compete with the railways by reason of main roads having been constructed parallel to the lines. Some of these drivers had been operating for four or five years. They had carried on their work legally and put all their capital into the undertaking. The Government could reasonably extend the period before complete delicensing. The matter is somewhat sub-judice just now, but I feel it my duty to say something at this juncture. I do not know what is to become of these persons, who will be thrown upon the State for relief as soon as their occupations are taken from them. I do not wish to reflect upon the board. The Government made a good selection when they appointed Mr.

Munt as chairman, and Mr. Bath as a member. I do not know Mr. Hawkins, the other member. The work is so important that it should have been regarded as a full-time job. When Mr. Munt was appointed chairman he should have been relieved of most of his other duties, to enable him to concentrate upon the new work. I am very pleased he was able to go to Kojonup recently at the invitation of the member for Wagin, and meet a large and influential number of local people. I am sure that much good will result from the visit. Even now more time should, I think, be given to the license holders in which to continue their operations.

The Minister for Works: I assure you the Minister will not interfere with the board.

Mr. PIESSE: Then Parliament should be enabled to do so.

The Minister for Works: That is a different matter.

Mr. PIESSE: We should be given another opportunity to express our views. The Bill was before the House for only 21 days, and unfortunately was not referred to a select committee. I am sure the Minister does not desire to do an injustice to anyone, or ruin anyone who through no fault of his own embarked upon a certain occupation. The Government will lose nothing by extending the licenses for another three or four months, and thus enable the board to make further inquiries. The board have not yet had time in which to make the necessary inquiry, nor have all the licensees had time to find other occupations. When the Bill was going through it was thought that every opportunity would be afforded to those who were delicensed to go to other routes or find some other work. The board could not at one operation abolish something that has existed for five or ten years. It would have been impossible for the board to do that in the first place, and it would be very unfair and unjust to deal so harshly with those who took up these operations in good faith. I am in accord with the idea of assisting the Government to bring about the control of road transport and prevent unfair competition against the railways. The board have done something by extending the licenses for two months, pending appeal. What will happen at the end of that time? These men have invested all they possess in the business. Surely something can be done to give them more time. What I ex-

pected was that the board would recommend that certain services should be subsidised. Is it the intention of the Minister or the board to assist in the co-ordination of transport by way of subsidies? A new road was recently built from Cranbrook to Boyup Brook to take the place of the promised railway. That has been constructed according to the latest Main Road Board specifications. Here is an opportunity for the institution of a co-ordinated service. Another new road has been built out to Frankland River.

Mr. Wansbrough: When the Commissioner of Railways provided a truck the settlers would not use it on that road.

Mr. PIESSE: I think they would do so now. The truck owners, the Transport Board, and the local people could, I think, co-operate to make a success of the service. One cannot expect the board to investigate all these routes in two or three months. More time should be given and more forbearance should be shown by the Government. I do not want the responsibility taken out of the hands of the board. The Bill was rushed through the House without receiving full consideration. I hope that consideration which ought to be given to the people concerned, will be given. I am pleased to notice a decided improvement in the unemployment situation, and congratulate the Minister concerned upon the results he has achieved. I have always found him ready to do his best to meet any of the unfortunate positions that so frequently arise when we are seeking for work for the unemployed. Possibly his department is not as mindful as it might be of the single unemployed men. Those who are in the city, because they are more in touch with the Perth office, may possibly get better treatment. I thank the Minister for what he did at Katanning in finding work for the unemployed who had been in the town for some months. If the single men revert to the position of two or three years ago, when they had to tramp from town to town receiving a shilling's worth of food at one place and being pushed off to the next place, and never being able to secure employment, they will find themselves in a deplorable state. The Minister would be well advised to see whether he could not get these young men transported quickly to some centre where they could be kept under supervision and where work could be found for them.

The Minister for Employment: The Government have already found work for many hundreds more than were employed at this time last year.

Mr. PIESSE: I know of many young men who are both able-bodied and anxious to work, who are likely to lose their spirit if they have to continue going from town to town in search of work.

The Minister for Employment: I have offered to find employment for many of them in a district where employment is available, namely on the fields, and to transport them to it.

Mr. PIESSE: I thank the Minister for what he did recently. The position of the unemployed is not as acute as it was. It seems to be no one's business, however, to find work for the single men. On the whole the police are very good, but one cannot expect them to be on the alert all the time. They do not know when men will suddenly turn up and ask for work, and they have not a number of jobs waiting to be filled. I should like to see all these young men concentrated at one point, kept under observation, and provided with work as soon as the opportunity offers, instead of their being left to roam around the country looking for it. With the large amount of money the Ministry have available from loan funds this year—I have said before that the position becomes alarming when so much loan money has to be spent on works which are not reproductive—I should have thought the Government might have given close and favourable consideration to a renewal of the single men farm subsidy scheme. As we know, at harvest time there is a danger that men may be put on Government relief whilst they could find jobs. No one wants the Government to do anything which will operate in that direction: but I suggest that some men, instead of doing the work they have been put on, would be more profitably employed if the single men farm subsidy scheme were renewed. After all, under that scheme the men would be producing something, and would have a home.

The Minister for Employment: Other farm labourers would be sacked so that these single men could be taken on and a subsidy obtained. That was done before. It will not be done again.

Mr. PIESSE: That aspect could be watched closely by the police and by the Minister's organisation in the country. Even

if there should be a small percentage of cases of the nature suggested by the Minister, there would yet be a material improvement in production. There would be some immediate results.

The Minister for Employment: Production is not increased by simply sacking one wages man and putting on another.

Mr. PIESSE: I wish to indicate to the Minister another avenue of employment which might be explored. The big handicap of the people in the Great Southern district beyond Beverley is, and has been for many years, illustrated by road transport competition. At Kojonup recently it was brought out clearly that the local people have to pay 90 miles more transport by rail than by road. The average resident of the Great Southern district beyond Brookton has been paying for years, in fact ever since the railway was constructed, a distance of 70 miles more by rail than direct by road. I suggest that the construction of the earthworks of the proposed railway from Brookton to Armadale might be put in hand immediately. No more profitable unemployment relief work could be taken up by the Government; and as soon as things became normal and the State more prosperous, the Government would probably be in a position to buy the necessary rails. Consider what that would mean to the development of the district, how it would expedite the handling of produce from the district. At present wool produced there has to be carried a long way from its natural port to the sales at Fremantle, has to be brought as far as Mt. Barker and around that bend. This cannot be avoided until the Brookton-Armadale line is constructed. I am grateful to the Government for having appointed the Aborigines Royal Commission, and I am hopeful that much good will result from the Commissioner's report when he is able to present it. The Government, I observe, are still looking for revenue, and with that end in view propose to introduce a Bill to amend the Administration Act so as to increase the death duties. According to the figures given, the duties here are lower than those in other Australian States; but I ask the Minister who will bring down the measure to be mindful of the fact that many of the securities subject to that taxation are not realisable.

Mr. Latham: You should not anticipate legislation.

Mr. PIESSE: We have been told that legislation is coming down.

Mr. Latham: Not for that purpose, though.

Mr. PIESSE: Yes. At any rate, I wish to warn the Government that it would be unfair to pile responsibility—

The Minister for Mines: The average man has to pay this taxation. Why should not the wealthy pay it?

Mr. PIESSE: Properties may have large marginal equities, and yet be absolutely unrealisable. In such circumstances a property may prove a severe load if succession duties are high. I hope that aspect will be borne in mind by the Government in drafting the proposed Bill. In conclusion, let me express the hope that before long we shall hear of the appointment of the Secession Delegation that is to be sent Home. Whatever the immediate result may be, the State must benefit in the end. Surely justice must prevail notwithstanding the unfavourable report of the State Grants Commission. I hope that as a result of the sending of the delegation Western Australia will at last receive justice from the Commonwealth.

MR. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [9.22]: First of all I wish to join issue with the member for Northam (Mr. Hawke) in respect of his congratulations to the Primary Producers' Association on having passed a resolution adopting the policy of preference to unionists. This, like many other planks of the association's platform, has been pinched from the Labour movement. I trust that from now on we shall not hear quite so much criticism of that policy from the Opposition benches as we have had to listen to so far in this debate. Personally, however, I am glad to know that the Primary Producers' Association have had the courage to adopt preference to unionists. They have, of course, not been compelled to fight for the adoption of that policy among the farming fraternity in the same way as leaders of the Labour movement had to fight for it originally. It is those leaders who have cleared the way for the policy. I trust that from now on the representatives of the Primary Producers' Association will not exhibit that convenient memory of which there has been a display in this Chamber. Like the member for Northam, I consider that it will be an advantage to the primary producers to com-

bine their efforts, even, may I say, at the cost of compulsory unionism. In spite of all the criticism of the Lieut.-Governor's Speech from the Opposition benches, I regard that Speech as pleasant reading for Western Australian taxpayers, to whom, after all, the unemployed problem and sustenance payments must have occasioned grave concern during the two years preceding the last general election. I believe that that feature had a strong bearing on the result of the election. At all events, the Government, and in particular the Minister for Employment, should receive credit for the great strides made during the last 12 months. The figures have been quoted often enough without my repeating them. They are to be found, moreover, in the Speech. Both the Minister for Employment and the Minister for Mines are entitled to great credit for the manner in which they have dealt with the unemployment problem. I extend to them my congratulations on behalf of the electorate I have the honour to represent. Even our political opponents in the Federal sphere think so highly of the Government's achievement in this respect that they are now advocating on the hustings the appointment of a portfolioed Minister to look after the unemployment problem. In this respect they are following the example of the present Government of this State. That is a feature well worth pointing out to the Western Australian public. People who have read the criticisms of our opponents here during the last fortnight may well have been misled, may well have reached the conclusion that what has been said from this side of the Chamber and what appears in the Speech is not so well-founded as it seems. Such people, upon realising that our political opponents have thought fit once more to follow the lead set by Labour, will come to a different conclusion. I shall not deal at length with the other features of the Speech. I have been led to believe that the Address-in-reply affords an opportunity for members to air grievances, and I feel that at least on this occasion I may be a trifle parochial. I look the more confidently for pardon because, owing to a generous opponent, I missed the opportunity of the last Address-in-reply debate to bring before the Government various local grievances. Now that I have the opportunity, I propose to refresh the memories of Minis-

ters controlling departments and activities to which I desire to draw attention. First let me say that I am indeed pleased with the activities of the Minister for Mines in relation to the North. His agreement to subsidise the geological aerial survey represents a real achievement of the Government. For the ordinary Southerner it is difficult to realise what such a survey may mean to the far North. True, it will be expensive; and many people may be critical of the huge amount to be placed upon the Estimates for the purpose and may not realise the benefit, and indeed the necessity, of the project. I regard the agreement in question as one of the most important proposals ever advanced for the development of the North. Many minerals are known to exist there, but the vast areas and the seasonal conditions of the North prohibit a satisfactory survey by any other method than that of aerial transport. Under such an arrangement, much more country could be prospected, surveyed, photographed and so on. It should mean bringing much of the country into wealth production and some of the northern towns would once more attain the position of important gold-producing centres. The Kimberley district was the alma mater of the Western Australian goldfields. Owing to transport difficulties and heavy charges generally, prospectors relinquished their efforts there in favour of the more conveniently situated finds that were made down south. Up to the present there has been no systematic or thorough survey of the North-West, a work that is so essential. I am also glad that the Minister for Mines has agreed to subsidise the flying doctor scheme, which will prove of wonderful advantage to the residents of the North. The strain on married people alone will be greatly relieved because of the knowledge that communication can be obtained with the doctor, a facility never before enjoyed in that part of the State. Other steps taken by the Minister will prove of increasing benefit in the future. Under the previous Administration, a system of leased hospitals obtained, and it was unsatisfactory. Now that the hospitals in the North are Government-controlled, the conditions are much brighter, and this has brought greater peace of mind to the residents of the Kimberley area in particular. I appreciate the efforts of the Minister for Agriculture in dealing with the pleuro trouble. His work will prove of great advantage to the

Derby cattle owners. I formerly agreed with a previous Minister for Agriculture that a certain amount of caution was necessary, although I realised the damage that was being done to the cattle industry through the enforcement of the pleuro restriction regulations. The present Minister for Agriculture has done all that is possible for the moment to ease the hardship upon the Derby growers. I suggest to the Minister, however, that he should do everything possible to hasten the progress of the investigation that has to be carried out. If a laboratory were temporarily established somewhere near Broome, it would expedite the attempt to combat the disease. Either that, or the Government could increase the number of officials dealing with the matter. The cattle industry in the Kimberley area is in a precarious position at the moment. There is a multiplicity of reasons why the industry is affected, the principal causes of which are known to most members. Recently I noticed reference to a proposal to establish meat-works at Derby. That proposal is not new. Some years ago I advocated the establishment of chilling works as the only hope for the producers in the West Kimberley district. I repeated that suggestion before the North-West Committee appointed by the late Mr. Davy when Attorney General. I received no assistance from my colleagues who represent the North from a definite political angle, for they thought that another State trading concern would mean the very finish of the cattle industry. I am not concerned as to who builds or controls the works, but I am anxious about the position of the growers and those who are dependent upon the cattle industry for a living. On many occasions I have expressed the opinion that the Kimberley area will be a pastoral and mining district for many years to come. I still adhere to that opinion. Now that the cattle industry has been firmly established, it is the duty of the Government to do everything possible to assist the growers. All Governments have given whatever consideration they could to the industry. There is not much that a Government can do, but what has been possible has been done by past Governments to the limit of their financial resources. In any event, the pastoralists and others interested in the establishment of chilling works should receive every assistance possible from any Government who may be in power in Western Australia. There are many isolated spots in the Kimberley dis-

trict that can be made productive in other directions. There are at least ten growers who are producing peanuts. At the Government Aborigines Station, Munja, £400 worth of peanuts was produced last season, and private settler named Merry sold £60 worth, while several others sold up to at least £200 worth each. Those peanut growers should receive every encouragement and there are one or two directions in which the Government can assist them. The ten growers in the Kimberley district are producing annually about 53,750 lbs. of peanuts, and the local market absorb between 8,000 and 9,000 bushels per annum. Approximately 53,000 lbs. of peanuts are imported annually from China, leaving 164,169 lbs. to be imported from Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. With some slight help and advice from the Tropical Expert and possibly with some assistance from the Government and the Agricultural Department with regard to necessary machinery, I believe those ten growers could produce sufficient peanuts to supply the local market. If that were done, something would be achieved.

The Minister for Employment: That super-inspector of factories is still required apparently.

MR. COVERLEY: The Kimberley growers labour under disadvantages compared with other growers. They have to transport their products to Broome by lugger, and the freight charged is £5 a ton. For trans-shipment south, the local coastal boats charge double freight rates for the peanuts, whereas the ships on the Queensland coast charge only one plus one-quarter freight on dead weight of peanuts only. Therefore, the Queensland growers have a distinct advantage over our growers. I hope the Minister representing the Chief Secretary in this Chamber will take up the matter with the Minister who controls the State Shipping Department, and secure reduced rates of freight in the interests of the peanut growers. I trust the Minister for Agriculture will see to it that the growers are visited by the Tropical Expert this year. That officer could report on the requirements of the growers, and indicate what machinery is necessary to enable them to expand their operations. With the benefit of expert advice and the reduction of freight rates, the growers would have an opportunity to pro-

duce enough to supply the requirements of the local market.

The Minister for Employment: Would there be any difficulty in getting rid of their produce?

Mr. COVERLEY: No, I believe they can dispose of all they can grow. At the outset there was some difficulty with Plaistowe's, because the nuts were not suitable and a limited quantity only was required. Dalgely and Brown and Dureau are satisfied that they can place all that can be grown in the Kimberleys at between 5d. and 6d. per lb. If that price could be obtained, the growers could compete with those operating in the Eastern States. I hope the Government will render whatever assistance is possible to the fishing industry. Not much has been done in that direction in the North apart from pearl and trochus fishing. Several companies have embarked upon general fishing, but for various reasons have not achieved much success. Recently another company was formed to exploit a new process under which tropical fish can be dealt with properly. I hope the Government will render every assistance to those concerned. If that activity should succeed, I can visualise an improvement in the pearling industry as well, and that would mean the employment of a great number of men. To get back to the Medical and Health Department. I want to draw the attention of the Minister for Health to the Inland Mission Hospital at Hall's Creek. This hospital is performing wonderfully good service for the people of the district. It has been conducted on a voluntary subscription basis, and up to the last couple of years the subscriptions were very high. But with the introduction of the Hospitals Tax Act the voluntary subscriptions have been considerably reduced, and the hospital now finds it necessary to draw funds from other sources. I have discussed the position with many cattle men in the district, and have pointed out that if they pay a voluntary subscription to the hospital they can, by application to the Commissioner of Taxation, receive a deduction. But one can imagine a man 200 or 300 miles from civilisation carrying a writing pad and pencil in order to make application for a deduction of some trifling amount. The population at Hall's Creek numbers about 70, but there are quite a few people in the district who depend on the hospital for medi-

cine and treatment when they met with sickness or accident. Their wish is to pay contributions to the local hospital, not to the hospital tax. No words of mine could adequately describe the wonderful work of the fully qualified nurses controlling that hospital. They have on many occasions travelled miles in a buckboard buggy to attend to a stockman with, perhaps, a broken leg. They have to act as dentists and perform all sorts of medical services, and needless to say they are fully capable. I am sure I express the sentiments of every member of the House, and of the whole of the residents of the North, when I attempt to pay a tribute to those wonderful nurses, who isolate themselves up there and suffer much discomfort for the benefit of their patients. If those Inland Mission hospitals, of which there are several in the North and North-West, were to be closed up, it would be incumbent on the Government to carry them on. Under the previous Government's system many hundreds of pounds were paid to various hospitals in the Kimberleys, and in my view it is up to the present Government to increase the subsidy to the Inland Mission hospitals, particularly that isolated at Hall's Creek. I have wanted to make a few remarks on the questions I asked on Tuesday about the traffic in birds. Of course I got the usual reply, a negative to both questions. I am not in a position to contradict the reply given to the second question, but I point out to the Minister controlling the Fisheries Department that there is something going on in the Kimberley district as a result of which he is losing revenue and bringing the Fisheries Act into contempt. I asked whether the department was aware that in the North poachers were trapping birds and running them by motor transport into South Australia. Certainly those birds reach the market much earlier than birds forwarded in the ordinary way. The cream of the market is gobbled up by poachers using motor trucks. If the department did not know that this was going on, now that I have issued a warning I hope it will see fit to appoint a temporary inspector to look after this traffic. Of course he should be a man with local knowledge, for it would be useless to send up a person from the South to Kimberley, because the known water holes where these birds are trapped would be foreign country to a stranger, and while he was trying to find

some particular trapping place the trappers would be in at another one, get their load of birds and be off again before the inspector knew anything about it. The department would have no trouble in getting a local man to take on a temporary position as inspector. In conclusion, I hope the Government will carry on their roads policy, which has been of greatest benefit to the North-West. I remember the Minister for Works saying that in his idea the roads in Kimberley were not roads at all, and that one of the greatest difficulties up there was the lack of transport. He thought the only way to overcome that was to spend a lot of money in providing roads. Certainly the northern part of the State has first claim on money for roads, for we have no railways and no other means of transport. I hope that when the Minister decides as to what money can be made available, he will do it early in the year and so give the road boards a chance to get the work done at the most suitable season. If due notice be given, those boards can get exceptional work performed for the money expended. I hope the Minister will be able to announce to North-West members next week how much money will be available for this purpose.

MR. F. C. L. SMITH (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [9.55]: I desire to congratulate the Government on the improvement that has taken place in the employment position. In private industry this is particularly gratifying, because the men thus employed receive full work at full-time rates. The improvement effected by the transfer of men from sustenance relief to sustenance work is also gratifying, inasmuch as it represents a considerable improvement in the position of those men. But I think members will agree that the finding of sustenance work, inasmuch as it does not ensure to those men a living wage for a full period, is not a solution of the unemployment problem. There is one aspect of the Government's policy which has come under my notice this evening, and which has provoked me to take part in this discussion. I was not aware of it previously, nor did I know it was part of their policy. The member for Katanning (Mr. Piesse) referred to single unemployed men in country districts, and the Minister for Employment interjected that he was prepared to frank

those single unemployed men to the Eastern goldfields, where the work was.

The Minister for Employment: I did not say the Eastern goldfields; I said the goldfields or elsewhere, where the work was offering.

Mr. F. C. L. SMITH: Well, where is the work offering? It is not on the goldfields. There is plenty of work on the goldfields, but there are men available and doing it. There are plenty of single men on the goldfields, some of them approaching manhood, who were born and reared on the goldfields and who have never worked in their lives. We find also that even in relation to the mining industry, boasted as it is as one of the most prosperous industries in the State, there are men on the goldfields, well experienced in the work of that industry, who cannot find employment. Moreover, the policy of the mining companies during the last year or two seems to be tending in the direction of creating intermittent employment for at least a percentage of the men in the industry. Only last week up there I heard of one mine which, in the previous week, had put off 50 men. Whether that policy is inseparable from the work of the industry, I am not in a position to say, but I know there is not to-day the same security of tenure for those employed in the industry as there was formerly, when a number of the mines on the Golden Mile were worked as separate units and not as amalgamations, as they mostly are to-day. I trust that if it is part of the Government's policy to frank single men to the goldfields, that aspect will be re-considered.

Question put and passed; the Address adopted.

BILLS (9)—FIRST READING.

1, Constitution Acts Amendment.

2, Forests Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Works for the Premier.

3, Tenants, Purchasers and Mortgagors' Relief Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Employment.

4, Administration Act Amendment.

5, Reduction of Rents Act Continuance.

6, Supreme Court Criminal Sittings Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

7, Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act
Continuance.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

8, Metropolitan Public Utilities Trust.

Introduced by the Minister for Works.

9, City of Perth Superannuation Fund.

Introduced by Mr. Needham.

House adjourned at 10.8 p.m.

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

QUESTION—WORKERS' HOMES, INTEREST RATES.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary: Seeing that the Associated Banks have reduced the rates of interest to their clients to 4½ and 5 per cent., when can people who have erected their homes under the Workers' Homes Act expect to have their interest rates similarly reduced?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: Approval has already been given for a reduction to be made in the rate of interest charged by the Workers' Homes Board.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eighth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. J. YELLAND (East) [4.35]: With other members I welcome you, Mr. President, on your return from the Old Country. You had a very worthy object in visiting the Homeland. I wish I had the

same opportunity of doing so myself. It broadens one's vision, and gives one an opportunity to see other parts of the Empire, and acquire some knowledge of their resources and political and civic conditions. It also makes one more acquainted with the outside world. It is a great privilege that you have. It has also provided you with the opportunity to advance the interests of Western Australia. We are glad to know you have consistently done your best in that direction, and this has been greatly appreciated, I am sure, by all sections of the community. There seems to be very little in the Speech calling for comment. It contains a citation of the events that have taken place during the previous year. It mentions the conditions which have existed. These are already known to most of us. It is probably necessary to make these statements in order that the public, who read the Speech, may get the gist of the conditions that have been in existence during the period under review. The portion of the Speech referring to the proposed legislation is not very illuminating. It merely whets the imagination, and causes us to look forward to the coming legislation with a certain amount of interest. A unique event of the current year, an outstanding one, is the projected visit of a member of the Royal Family. Our thanks are due to His Majesty for again sending one of the princes to Australia. This will be the third visit of a Royal Son to the Commonwealth. On every occasion they have been shown that loyalty which is such a characteristic feature of the people of Australia. The coming event will provide us with a unique opportunity of showing our loyalty to the Throne. When the question of secession first came up we were accused on several occasions of disloyalty. I do not think there was any ground for the accusation. I am a secessionist. It is the desire of the secessionists to obtain a closer union of parts of the Empire, but we do not want our loyalty attached through the Commonwealth. No one can doubt our loyalty. The visit of the Prince will give us an opportunity to counter the accusation which has been preferred against us, especially by the delegates who came from the Eastern States during the secession campaign.

Hon. J. Cornell: Who, the Prime Minister?