rabbits from coming here. I desire to support the motion.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.7 p.m.

# Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 14th February, 1918.*

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

[For "Questions on Notice" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

## BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Curator of Intestate Estates.
2, Electoral Act Amendment.
Transmitted to the Legislative Council.

## MOTION — RABBIT PEST, SELECT COMMITTEE TO INQUIRE.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the motion by Mr. Smith, "That in view of the alarming position created by the rabbits, a select committee of this House be appointed to immediately inquire into the present system adopted by the department for combating the pest, with a view of recommending more effective methods of dealing with this national menace."

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [4.43]: I welcome this motion moved by the member for North Perth, and am very pleased to support his request for the appointment of a select committee of this House to deal with the rabbit question. I am sure all members recognise that the rabbit represents a big menace to Western Australia, and I agree with the words of the motion that the position at present is alarming. The time has arrived when we have to consider whether the lands of this country shall produce sheep and other stock and grow wheat, or produce rabbits. Hon. members well know the devastation which has been caused in the Eastern States by the rabbit pest, how large territories have been laid waste and the settlers upon them compelled to abandon their holdings. But I realise that, though this is an important subject, and one which should be grappled with, at the same time I would inform the House that the Government, through the Agricultural Department, have a policy with regard to it. That policy is to co-operate with the farmers and settlers in every possible way for the destruction of the rabbits. It is not the province of the Government to destroy all the rabbits; it is the duty of the Government to co-operate in every way, and to assist farmers and others in dealing with the pest. It is no good for settlers and landowners and others to approach a Minister or a member of Parliament when rabbits have been seen on a particular property, and ask what the Government intend to do. I remember not long ago being approached on a railway station in this State by a farmer who said that a rabbit had been seen on his place, and he wanted to know what the Government intended to do. My reply to this man was, "What are you going to do?" He replied that he did not know, and I told him that the best thing he could do was to kill that rabbit. The idea seemed to have gained ground that directly a rabbit was seen on a property it was the duty of the owner of that property to immediately communicate with the Government and request that someone should be sent from Perth to kill the rabbit.

Mr. Johnston: The Government are the owners of land where the rabbits are.

The PREMIER: That is the spirit which has existed all along, and it is the wrong spirit. The Government are prepared to do everything they can to co-operate with the farmers in the eradication of the pest, and it would be idle for me to say, and it would not meet with the approval of the House, that the Government intended to attempt to destroy all the rabbits, while the people themselves stood by and looked on. The policy of the Agricultural Department is to co-operate with the farmers and others. We have a Rabbit Act and that Act must be enforced, and if it is not stringent enough it must be made more stringent. The people must be taught to recognise their responsibilities in this matter. The object of the measure is to bring about the eradication of the pest, and certain penalties are provided if people do not carry out the provisions of the Act. If the penal sections of the Act are enforced the people must not squeal. I well remember the trouble we had in this State in connection with the eradication of scab in sheep. Scab is one of the very worst diseases which ever existed in Australia, and Western Australia was longer in eradicating it than any of the other States. It was not until the Scab Act was rigidly enforced and the people were made to recognise their responsibilities, that the disease was stamped out. I may tell hon. members what scab in sheep really is, because many of them are too young to have seen anything of the trouble which existed in this country many years ago. Scab is considerably worse than either tick or lice in sheep, and once having got into the flocks it is most difficult to eradicate, more particularly if all concerned are not compelled to dip and carry out the provisions of the Act. As a result of most rigid inspection and enforcing the Act, we have had clean flocks in Western Australia for the past 20 years. In 1894, soon after I first entered this House, with that precociousness which is born of a new member, I moved for the ap-

pointment of a select committee of both Houses of Parliament to inquire into the best means for the eradication of scab. I was scoffed at to some extent at the time, but I had a large majority of the House with me. I was asked why I considered it necessary to put into motion such big machinery and use such big guns to endeavour to carry out my purpose. I stated that the position was so serious that it was necessary to bring everything one possibly could to bear upon the question. The select committee was appointed and met, and went thoroughly into the question. It put, if I may say so, the fear of God into the hearts of those who were breaking the law, and it gave further encouragement to the inspectors whose efforts had not, up to then, been properly backed up. In two years the scab was eradicated from the flocks, and it has not been seen since. If a select committee is appointed to deal with the rabbit question, I hope the result of its efforts will be similarly successful. I do not for a moment imagine that we are going to eradicate the rabbits entirely from the State, but we can do a great deal to keep them down, and the menace is so serious that it behoves everyone in the State who has the country's interests at heart to back up the Government in their efforts to destroy the scourge. As I said before, we must decide whether we shall continue to grow sheep, cattle and wheat, or whether we are going to grow rabbits. If the question is not grappled with, and if the farmers and others do not realise the seriousness of the position, there is no doubt that the country will have to be given over to the rabbits. It is impossible for the Government to do everything, and moreover, I do not believe that the House would vote the money if the Government alone had to tackle this question; the efforts of the Government will have to be seconded by the farmers and owners of land. It is the duty of these people to use every means to co-operate with the Government. It is interesting to know that if two rabbits—a buck and a doe—are put on to a piece of country and they are left there to breed in favourable conditions, in the course of twelve months those two rabbits will have multiplied to the extent of 2,000. A rabbit starts to breed at the age of three months, and the period of gestation is only one lunar month. The difficulties ahead of us will thus be easily recognised. The policy of the Agricultural Department is distinctly against making rabbiting an industry in Western Australia. All the States of Australia have found by experience that to make rabbiting an industry is only to increase the trouble. The most effective means of dealing with rabbits is by poisoning alone. A certain amount of work may be done by trapping, but poisoning is the only effective means to deal quickly with the pest. If it is made an industry in the eastern districts of this State, where the rabbits are most prevalent at the present time, and the people are allowed to trap and dispose of the rabbits by sending them to market, that will not alone get rid of the rabbits. It would have to be supplemented by poisoning. If poisoning and trapping for marketing are carried on at the same time, we will run the risk of having a number of people poisoned. It is quite possible for rabbits to find their way into the traps after having taken the poisoned baits. Phosphorus is recognised as the standard poison throughout Australia for the destruction of rabbits, and it is used in conjunctio. with pollard. It takes several hours for the poison to be effective, and it is easy for a rabbit to get into a trap before dying. That rabbit may find its way to the market, and the result can be imagined. I would not think of eating a rabbit on any account if I knew that poisoning was going on in the country where the rabbits were being trapped. Moreover, if rabitting is carried on as an industry, it becomes a vested interest, and those who are engaged in the industry will be encouraged to see that the rabbits do not die out. Hon. members will therefore see that it would be suicidal to encourage rabbiting as an industry. In 1916 a select committee was appointed by the Legislative Council in Queensland to inquire into the rabbit question, and the committee reported as follows:—

> Your committee have examined witnesses and their evidence is attached to this report, together with the minutes of the proceedings of the committee. The committee have devoted attention chiefly to the question of the issue of permits for trafficing in the carcases of rabbits; and whether the general trafficing in the skins and carcases of rabbits would result in a diminution or increase of their number. The whole of the evidence shows that the custom of trapping tends to the spread of rabbits instead of confining them to a limited area where they could be more easily exterminated by the free use of poison. The evidence is unfavourable to the general traffic in carcases of rabbits and the committee suggest it might be allowed only in the vicinity of established freezing works until it is ascertained that the experiment is a success. The evidence shows that in New South Wales rabbiters are forbidden, without the permission of the proprietors and lessees, to trap on any holding, being confined to waste lands, reserves, and roadways. The majority of the committee recommend that permits to rabbiters in Queensland should only be granted by the Minister with the advice and concurrence of a local board.

That is the opinion held in Queensland, an important pastoral State. I think it is well to take the advice of those who have had experience in these matters. Some people think that trapping is a good and expeditious means of destroying rabbits; but I would like to point out that poisoning is undoubtedly the most effective means of achieving that end. By their squealing, trapped rabbits frighten all the untrapped rabbits, and in consequence these disappear for a certain time, with the result that the owner of the land thinks he has got rid of them. But after a space all the untrapped rabbits come back again, whereas rabbits poisoned are gone for ever. It has been suggested that the rabbit department has not used the fullest efforts to get rid of this scourge. One

of the reasons why the department has not been able to deal as effectually as it would have liked with the destruction of the rabbits is because the Rabbit Act does not confer all the powers required to enable the pests to be coped with. We intend to ask the House to agree to an amendment of that Act which will make it more drastic in character and give the inspectors fuller power to deal with those persons who are not carrying out the provisions of the Act. The Government are prepared to supply poison carts at cost price to landowners, or on three years' terms to roads boards and vermin boards, and are prepared also to supply poison free. Already the rabbit department have nine poison carts at work with four more under order. These carts are working in the Eastern districts. The Government have been endeavouring to make people realise their responsibility in regard to the menace, and have urged the necessity of forming vermin boards, of making every roads board become a vermin board. These boards could then deal with the question locally, with the assistance and inspectorship of the officers of the rabbit department. In my opinion, that is the proper way to deal with the pest. In the outback areas the people themselves must rise to the occasion; if they do so, the Government will be prepared to co-operate with them in every possible way. Some 14 roads boards have already formed themselves into vermin boards, and other boards are coming in. If these boards will carry out their work properly and efficiently, they will be able to deal with the difficulty in a way much superior to anything possible to the Government single handed. These vermin boards represent the people. They are answerable to the people who elected them. That being so, those people themselves should take the keenest interest in backing up the vermin boards and in supplementing their endeavours for the eradication of the rabbits. If that is done, I am sure the pest can be kept down. But it is impossible for the Government, without the assistance of the people themselves, to cope with this scourge. With the aid of the rabbit carts the Government have destroyed hundreds of thousands of rabbits, and in addition have destroyed many thousands by fumigating the burrows. Throughout the area within the No. 2 fence I am informed that over a thousand burrows have been fumigated and their colonies of rabbits destroyed. The rabbit department, like all Government departments, works to a great extent silently. Officers of the different departments are not allowed to correspond in the Press, and when they come to town after completing their labours they are not in a position to publish paragraphs setting out all the wonderful things they have been doing.

Hon. P. Collier: It is rather a pity that the same embargo is not laid on some Honorary Ministers.

The PREMIER: These officers have worked silently and well. Like the mills of God, they grind slowly, silently, and well.

Hon. P. Collier: The Honorary Minister in another place does not grind very silently.

The PREMIER: The rabbits are now inside the No. 2 fence, and are to be found in places from Northampton to Augusta. Now is the time that people should wake up and do something themselves to cope with the pest rather than wait for the Government to do it. If the select committee can do anything to further the objects I have in view, much good will be done. As I have said before, I welcome the appointment of the select committee. It is not very often that select committees do much good, but I think no means should be left untried for coping with this terrible scourge. If hon. members consider that assistance can be obtained through a select committee, let us have a select committee; if valuable assistance and advice is given by that select committee, much good will accrue. I would like the House to realise that the Government have been doing something, and that the chief inspector of rabbits and his small staff have been diligent in their work. In South Australia there are 43 vermin board inspectors, and two Government inspectors. That is what we want in this State, vermin boards with an inspector attached to each. In Victoria there are 63 vermin board inspectors and four Government inspectors; in Queensland there are 50 vermin board inspectors and four Government inspectors. In New South Wales they have 80 vermin board inspectors appointed by the Government but paid by the vermin boards. So it will be seen that in all the other States they have their vermin boards and the Government are not left to cope with the pest single handed and alone. In Western Australia all that we have are four Government inspectors; we have no vermin board inspectors.

Mr. Pickering: Are the vermin boards subsidised?

The PREMIER: No, the people in the Eastern States have been taught to realise that they must bear some responsibility in dealing with this scourge. Moreover, in New South Wales three per cent. of the vermin rates collected are paid to the rabbit department to help in its upkeep.

Mr. Pickering: As between the several States, what is the difference in the area of Crown land available for the breeding of rabbits?

The PREMIER: That is not the question. The question is, how are we to cope with this scourge? The question of whether we have a larger extent of Crown land here than exists in the Eastern States is not before us. Some hon. members will urge that because there is such a tremendous area of Crown land in Western Australia, the Government should keep an army of men on all the Crown lands, endeavouring to destroy rabbits. That is not done in any of the other States. I think that if the Government supply these poison carts for the use of settlers at cost price, and provide the settlers with free poison and with inspectors to see that the Rabbit Act is enforced, we will have done a great deal towards dealing with this question. The people themselves should do something to assist in combating this pest, but whatever they do should be done

at once. They should not wait until the Government come along and do it for them, but should be prepared to help themselves. There has been too much in the past of leaving things to the Government. We will never build up a strong self-reliant race if we are going to encourage people to be entirely dependent upon the Government of the day.

Mr. Green: There is too much socialism amongst the farmers.

The PREMIER: The people should really do something to help the Government, but we find that those who are interested in a matter, instead of helping the Government, are sometimes retarding them in their efforts to deal with any serious question. Allusion has been made to the recommendations of the Agricultural Royal Commission. I would point out that all these recommendations have been dealt with, most of them before the Commission's report was framed. The question of the fencing of all water supplies and dams was dealt with some time ago, and practically every Government dam is fenced in at present with rabbit-proof netting.

Mr. Thomson: You mean in those areas where there is danger of rabbits?

The PREMIER: In the areas which are infested by rabbits.

Mr. Johnston: I think the Agricultural Bank have a few dozen farms which are not fenced in?

The PREMIER: I do not know about that. Hon. members often speak in this way, but I wish they would give specific instances. I do not like generalisations. If they will tell me where the Agricultural Bank has failed I will endeavour to see, if it is a part of their duty to fence these dams in, that it is done.

Mr. Johnston: I could give you some instances.

The PREMIER: Up to a few weeks ago there were only two Government dams which were not fenced in with rabbit-proof netting. The two which were not fenced in were not quite completed at that time, but I understand that they are now fenced, or will be very shortly. The Agricultural Department has for years been doing a great deal in the direction of encouraging people to fence in their holdings with wire netting. I do not therefore, like people to say that nothing has been done. It has become a common practice in these days for people to say that nothing has been done, but they should bring some proof forward and not merely make the assertion. I have told the House what the Government have done and what they propose to do in the future. During the regime of the Scaddan Government some years ago the Agricultural Department supplied rabbit-proof netting to settlers who required it at cost price, on long terms of repayment. At the present time it is impossible to get rabbit-proof netting, and we are therefore unable to carry out the recommendations of the Royal Commission in this respect. As we cannot get this netting we have to adopt the best available means of dealing with this curse, though, of course, the most effective means of doing this is for every man to fence in his holding with rabbit-proof netting. If the producers of the country will co-operate with the Government in this matter the Government in turn will do what they can to assist the settlers. We are desirous of increasing the production of the country, and of encouraging people to produce from the soil in every possible way. At the same time, we have no wish to build up a community which is always expecting to lean upon the Government, but to build up a community which is self reliant and which will be a credit not only to itself but to the State as a whole. I hope the House will agree to the appointment of a select committee, and trust that the committee will go to work in a practical manner. I placed this motion early in the Orders of the Day because I considered that the subject was an important one, and if the committee are to be appointed they should be at once. A select committee cannot sit during recess, and it will be necessary to complete their labours whilst the House is in session. I have given the House an opportunity of discussing this motion to-day so that if members consider the appointment of a select committee would be an advantage to the State, it should be appointed at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [5.23]: So important did I consider the question of the invasion of rabbits into this State, and so necessary did I think it that we should take advantage of the dry weather, that I made a special feature of this subject in the course of my speech on the Address-in-reply. I was actuated in doing this by a desire to draw special attention to the fact that if we did have a continuation of dry weather, the work of poisoning should be undertaken collectively, and at the one time, in every part of the State where rabbits are found to exist. Unfortunately, we have since had rain in the wheat belt, and have green feed there, with the result that we should not now meet with anything like the success that we ought to have had if the weather had continued dry. One of the reasons why I got up to speak this afternoon was that I understand that our Implement Works are manufacturing poison carts, and are afraid of making an over supply. Some thirty years ago I was connected with a firm of engineers engaged in manufacturing a line of rabbit exterminators, and as we knew the demand that existed at a certain period of the year for these exterminators, we got together a stock of these machines so that they could be supplied immediately an order came in. I should like the Minister for Works to realise that there will be a difficulty in always having a supply of these carts on hand unless steps are taken to build up a stock.

The Minister for Works: We are making 50 carts to start with.

Mr. HARRISON: I do not mind if the Minister is making 500.

The Minister for Works: I do.

Mr. HARRISON: I do not think there will be any danger of the Implement Works building an over supply if the machine is a good one, and the public know where they can get one. The best means of coping

with the rabbit pest is by poisoning, all other methods of destroying them must give way to this particular one. We cannot net in the country because we cannot secure the necessary netting. Trapping is not effective, as this only increases the migration of the rabbits. Rabbits are caught in traps and are mutilated, and those that are not killed outright bring about a migration. Rabbits can never be exterminated by means of traps, and the only thing left to be done is to endeavour to check the invasion by means of poison carts, or some machine that will make a furrow, or a line of newly scratched ground, into which the poison can be dropped. The rabbits will then follow this line and pick up the poison. Farmers can band together in groups of four or five, and work one of these carts between them. By this means the cost will be considerably reduced, and the farmers will be more able to fulfil any conditions which the Government may think fit to enforce in connection with the destruction of rabbits. The Minister should realise that unless these carts are built they cannot be supplied. I remember on one occasion that a single firm of squatters in New South Wales took 34 machines costing £10 each in order to destroy rabbits, irrespective of what had been purchased prior to that time, or what was purchased subsequently. I think there is no doubt that rabbits are more numerous in the Eastern States at present than they are here. Many people have come to Western Australia from the Eastern States, and know well what it means if the rabbits get hold of the country. Crops in this State were destroyed, or partly destroyed, last year by the rabbits, and to all appearances we shall have more crops destroyed this year unless we get to work at once. I do not wish the Minister to take what I am saying in any wrong spirit.

The Minister for Works: That is all right.

Mr. HARRISON: I really believe that there will be a demand for these carts which is not expected by the Minister. Even if there are a few carts over at the end of the year it does not matter. The standard parts will have been made, or can readily be cast, and the machines thus easily put together. I recommend that a certain number of these carts should always be kept on hand.

The Minister for Works: Can they be used all the year round?

Mr. HARRISON: It is not customary to use them all the year round, but it can be done. In poisoning it is usual to run the cart round those places where the rabbits are plentiful, between their feeding grounds and the places where they usually take their cover. If there is succulent feed in every direction the rabbits are not likely to damage the crops to a great extent, but at the same time even with plentiful feed the rabbits will always go for the most succulent feed, and that will be the growing crops. Rabbits generally travel between their cover or breeding grounds to the crops night and morning.

The Minister for Works: I was informed that these carts could only be used for about four weeks in the year.

Mr. HARRISON: They can be used all the year round, and a certain number of rabbits can still be caught. But one cannot get the rabbits at anything like the rate when there is the food supply. This dry season of the year is the best time to deal with the rabbit pest.

Hon. P. Collier: What has this to do with the motion?

Mr. HARRISON: The motion is that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the rabbit pest and I am speaking as to the destruction of the pest. I wish to stress the point that the Minister should realise that there is going to be an extra demand on the department for poison carts. If the growers of cereals know they can get carts at a reasonable price, I am sure the farmers will assist to protect themselves.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [5.31]: It is gratifying to know that the Government have decided to appoint a select committee to inquire into this matter. The member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) last night was advocating that the sum of £20,000, now spent in the maintenance of the rabbit-proof fence should be spent in the destruction of the rabbits inside the fence. But anyone who knows the condition of affairs would never support such a proposal. Rabbits at the present time are to be found in tens of thousands on the eastern side, while on the western side, thanks to the fence, very rarely are rabbits seen, only on rare occasions and then west of the fence. The Premier has told us that the Rabbit Department have a policy for the destruction of rabbits, and I compliment him at any rate on part of the policy as outlined by him today. But the policy for the destruction of the rabbits must be a very new one, for I have here a report of the Agricultural Commission containing the evidence of the chief inspector Mr. Crawford, which was taken on the 1st October, 1916. At that time the chief inspector was asked by Mr. Venn, "Are the rabbits troubling the farmers at all?" And his reply was—and it is less than 18 months ago—"I have not heard of them doing any damage to speak of; there are a good many of them about." Then he went on to speak of other matters besides the rabbits. Therefore, it will be seen that very little official recognition of a means of destroying the rabbit pest was then taken notice of. The Premier urged at length that settlers should bear the main burden of coping with the rabbit pest. Only today I read an advertisement in the "Western Australian" in which the Government threatened to prosecute the settlers who did not comply with the existing Rabbit Act by eradicating the pest.

The Minister for Works: Make some effort.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Government are quite right. The settlers are making every effort, but I ask that this destruction should apply equally to all lands. I say the responsibility of getting rid of the rabbits on Crown

lands and reserves, which to-day are the main breeding grounds of the rabbits, rests with the Government of the State. Let every landowner do his duty; let the Government keep the private landowners and the farmers up to their duty to the very letter of the law, but let the Government also take the responsibility on the lands which they own. In this connection the remarks of the Premier in regard to the eradication of scab were most interesting and very much to the point. Private people had scab in their own sheep depastured on their own land and the Government of the day, at the time the Premier was taking the same prominent part in the public life of the country as he is to-day, compelled the landowners to eradicate the disease in the sheep on their land. With the rabbit question it is entirely different. The settlers were on the land and the whole of the rabbits have come down over tens of thousands of acres of Government land to attack the settlers' holdings. Had the Crown at that time, as they have to-day, private sheep farms, socialistic farms, it would have been the duty of the Government to eradicate the scab on the stations, and so it is their duty to-day, when compelling the private owners to get rid of the rabbits on their holdings, to destroy the rabbits on the huge reserves and areas of Crown lands which to-day are their main breeding grounds. The question is a national one. The self-reliance that the Government wish the farmers to display should be displayed by themselves as far as getting rid of the rabbits on their holdings is concerned. I am sure the settlers are prepared to, as they are doing, assist to a considerable extent in poisoning and getting rid of the rabbits which come in from the Crown lands, but the action of the settlers can only be regarded as a mere palliative and of no value at all unless the rabbits on the main Crown lands are dealt with equally with the action which is taken by the settlers themselves. I hope the Government will continue poisoning. It is necessary to have a large increase on the nine poison carts at work to-day and which certainly are very valuable, but the number is small compared with the huge area of rabbit infested country in Western Australia. It has been pointed out by the Premier that we cannot grapple adequately with rabbit-proof fencing until the material is again available. So that, until the war is over and the policy of supplying rabbit-proof fencing on long and easy terms of repayment is again started, it will not be possible for the farms to be rabbit-proof netted. Where farms adjoin and are not intersected by main roads, it is only necessary that the boundaries should be netted. That will save great expense to the Government and the settlers, compared with netting the boundaries of each individual holding. I would like to say, in conclusion, that when rabbit-proof fencing can be obtained on reasonable terms so that the man on the land can carry on his work on a proper basis with rabbit-proof netting so as to keep the pest out of his land, we shall have done our best.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [5.40]: The State Implement Works are quite willing to make the poison carts. They have produced a satisfactory pattern and have already supplied seven carts, in addition to the nine which have already been spoken about for the Agricultural Department. We are making 50 carts as a start and we can turn out six per day afterwards in 24 hours'notice. In making these carts we are using parts which are employed in other implements so can thus draw on our stock. The price was fixed at £24 but we have reduced that to £20, and if we get anything like 300 or 400 carts to make we can reduce the price to £15. We shall not make any profit at that price, because they will cost us that amount, but I shall be satisfied in getting my proportion of the working dead expenses out of the £15. This rabbit business is a great peril which the State is faced with, and we should do everything we can to induce people to get their implements cheaply. That is the policy which we are working at to-day and which has led to the reduction in the selling price.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.41]: I desire to preface my remarks by thanking the Premier for giving members an opportunity of discussing this question. Last August, when the Farmers and Settlers' Association and roads boards were sitting in conference, delegates from the boards met the Minister for Agriculture and formulated a scheme by which the whole of the area contained within the No. 1 rabbit-proof fence and the coast should be dealt with. I think that certain amending Acts were required but a great deal must be done to allay the unrest that exists in the minds of those in the south-western portions of the State. Since the Minister has taken action in this regard I have had applications from certain bodies for exclusion from this particular Act. I think it is very unwise on the part of these boards to desire to be excluded from the operations of the Act. I think it would be much better if the South-West were to join with their brothers in adopting measures to deal with the pest before it has gone too far. One thing I desire to say is in regard to a certain remark in "Hansard" which emanated from the member for Northam. He said last night that the member for Sussex knew nothing, or less than nothing, about the rabbit pest. Since I have been associated with the Farmers and Settlers' Association I have given a great deal of attention to the rabbit pest, and whilst in New South Wales I spent two years of my life in a district much larger than would meet with the purview of the member for Northam, which was infected with this pest. I understand that in the other States the vermin boards receive some form of payment from the Government for dealing with the rabbit pest. This statement I make on the authority of the chairman of the pastoral protection board in New South Wales, and I think some reliance can be placed on the statement. I am quite sure the whole of the settlers of Western Australia will do their utmost, in conjunction with the Government, to perfect a policy which will bring about the eradication of the pest, including the south-western portion of the State.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.45]: It is satisfactory to learn, on the assurance of the Premier, that at least on this matter the Government are not without a policy, even though I fear we shall have to admit that their discovery of that policy has been of quite recent date.

The Premier: We have always had a policy.

Hon. P. COLLIER: On this matter?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston), in quoting the evidence of the Chief Inspector of Rabbits before the Agricultural Royal Commission, showed that at all events at that time the officer in question, who above all should have known what was doing, had no policy and had no idea of the seriousness of the situation. I cannot share the enthusiasm of my friends on the cross benches regarding the willingness of the Government to have a select committee appointed. From that enthusiasm one might imagine that the whole trouble would be solved once a select committee of parliamentarians had been appointed. In my opinion the House would be wise to reject the motion as absolutely unnecessary. The motion asks for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into the system at present adopted in combating the pest. Surely it does not require a select committee of this House to inquire into the departmental system, if any, of combating the pest; nor does it require a select committee of this House to indicate the best way of dealing with rabbits. Have we in Western Australia arrived at this stage, after the experience of 30 or 40 years of rabbits in the Eastern States, and after an expenditure of £328,000 on the construction of a rabbit-proof fence, and of about £12,000 annually for upkeep of the fence during a number of years, that we suddenly discover we know nothing about the subject and require a select committee of politicians to decide what is to be done? The matter is a simple one. The man in the street, anybody, can tell the Government the most effective way of dealing with rabbits—the only effective way—namely, poisoning and netting. If the select committee were to sit for ten years they would not discover anything different from that. The whole question of the destruction of rabbits is a matter of money, a matter of expenditure.

Mr. Griffiths: And of urgency.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The urgency is admitted. The urgency is apparent on the face of the matter. We do not need a select committee to tell us the question is urgent and important. We know that very well. We know that practically the whole of our agricultural areas are in danger of being wiped out by the pest. All that is known. What we do want to know is, have the Government money to meet the position as it is now? The motion proposes that we should have a select committee to deal with a matter which has been already dealt with by an expensive Royal Commission—the Royal Commission as to which we were told the other night by cross-bench members that their advice and recommendations were going to be so valuable to the agricultural industry of Western Australia. They considered this very matter, and they made certain definite recommendations in regard to it. Eighteen months ago they made a recommendation to the Government as to what ought to be done in the matter of the pest. They recommended poisoning and netting. And that is all that can be done. The only question is how to find the money, and it is waste of public time and of public funds to appoint a committee of members of Parliament who, after all, perhaps have very little experience of the rabbit question, to devise a policy for the Government. The proposal is in keeping with the shirking of responsibility, of the duties of government, by Ministers; in keeping with their policy of passing on responsibilities and duties to boards and committees and anybody rather than standing up to them, as it is the duty of the Government and of the House to do in this instance. I shall vote against the appointment of a select committee on the ground that it is not required. Any schoolboy knows that the way to deal with rabbits is to poison them. The Premier tells us the Government already have a policy on the matter. They are constructing poison carts, and are supplying poison to the settlers. All that can be known on the subject is already known to the Government, or ought to be. We have had an expensive department to deal with rabbits in this State for years past, and at the head of it a Chief Inspector of Rabbits receiving a salary of £504 per annum, whose business it was, or should have been, to keep himself au fait with the methods of rabbit destruction in the Eastern States. That officer ought to be in a position to advise the Government on the matter in the course of a half-hour's report.

The Premier: He is, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe so.

The Premier: He is entirely capable.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe it. That is why I am surprised at the Premier's welcoming the proposal to appoint a select committee.

Mr. Johnston: A select committee may advise Parliament to grant more money.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Just fancy adopting this cumbersome method of getting advice of that description, advice to grant more money! The Government say they are alive to the position. Therefore it is only a matter of finding the utmost amount of money they can for the purpose. No select committee can help the Government in finding money. The committee may pass along the advice that money has to be found; but that will not overcome the Government's difficulties.

Mr. Johnston: The select committee could press Parliament, and Parliament controls the Government.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member is extremely unsophisticated. We have reached this stage of government now, that everybody is inviting the advice of everybody else on every subject under the sun, while nobody will do anything. The proposal to appoint this select committee is quite characteristic of that policy of drift, of passing the thing on. In October, 1916, the Agricultural Royal Commission dealt with the rabbit question. So urgent and important was

it in their opinion, that they sent a special report to the Government. Evidently no action was taken on that report, because only during the past few weeks have the Government awakened to the situation.

The Premier: We have been at it for the last 18 months.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In a small way.

The Premier: We started at the earliest possible moment.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Agricultural Royal Commission, at very heavy expense, discovered this rabbit danger, and made recommendations to the Government as to what they ought to do to meet it.

The Premier: We had already done it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In that case, what does the Premier expect to get from the select committee?

The Premier: We have not done all of it, but most of it. We could not get wire netting, and you know that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Will the select comittee help the Government to get wire netting?

Mr. Johnston: The settlers will be driven out before that difficulty is solved.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the salvation of the settlers depends on this select committee, then God help the settlers. The appointment of the select committee will merely mean passing on the responsibility once more, and adding to the State's printing bill without any advantage whatever. Not one of the members who waxed so enthusiastic in support of this motion offered even the smallest suggestion as to what the select committee were likely to recommend that would be of advantage—not one.

Mr. Smith: The select committee are to get evidence.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I repeat, it is perfectly well known that poisoning and netting are the only methods of coping with the rabbit pest. Those of us who come from the Eastern States knew, before we were 12 years old, as much about effective methods of dealing with the rabbit pest as the select committee will be likely to tell the Government even if they sit from now until the end of the next recess.

Mr. Griffiths: Why do not you sit on the committee?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Because it is a useless one. In five minutes this afternoon I have given the Government as much advice on the rabbit question as I could give if I were to sit on the select committee for months. The matter is merely one of finding the money, and the Government know what money they have available for the purpose. I therefore shall vote against the motion, because the select committee would represent merely a useless expenditure of public funds.

Mr. SMITH (North Perth—in reply) [5.56]: I have not much to reply to, because all the speakers, with the exception of the leader of the Opposition, have been unanimous as to the necessity for the appointment of a select committee. The great objection raised by the leader of the Opposition is that the matter has been already dealt with by the Agricultural Royal Commission, who made certain recommendations to the Government. I maintain that that fact, instead of being an argument against, is an argument in favour of, the appointment of the select committee, because the select committee will want to know why the Government have not carried out the Royal Commission's recommendations.

Hon. P. Collier: And then, later, you will want another select committee to find out why this committee's recommendations have not been carried out by the Government.

Mr. SMITH: Let us deal with one select committee at a time. The trend of the observations of several members indicated that they thought I had argued in favour of trapping. I did no such thing. I merely mentioned trapping as one means of getting rid of the rabbits. It is quite possible that the select committee, after taking evidence, may be altogether opposed to trapping. At this stage, however, we do not know whether trapping is to be recommended or not. As regards poisoning, no matter how efficacious that may be at certain seasons of the year, one cannot always succeed in eradicating rabbits by poison. There is another well known system of destruction which has been strongly recommended—the Rodier system. That system also would be considered by the select committee. There is really nothing for me to answer, and I submit my motion to hon. members with confidence.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ayes | .. .. .. | 34 |
| Noes | .. .. .. | 8 |
| Majority for | .. .. | 26 |

AYES.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. Angelo | Mr. Munsie |
| Mr. Broun | Mr. Nairn |
| Mr. Brown | Mr. Pickering |
| Mr. Davies | Mr. Piesse |
| Mr. Draper | Mr. Pilkington |
| Mr. Durack | Mr. R. T. Robinson |
| Mr. Gardiner | Mr. Rocke |
| Mr. George | Mr. Smith |
| Mr. Griffiths | Mr. Stewart |
| Mr. Harrison | Mr. Stubbs |
| Mr. Hickmott | Mr. Teesdale |
| Mr. Holman | Mr. Thomson |
| Mr. Hudson | Mr. Underwood |
| Mr. Johnston | Mr. Veryard |
| Mr. Lefroy | Mr. Willmott |
| Mr. Maley | Mr. Hardwick |
| Mr. Mitchell | (*Teller.*) |
| Mr. Money | |

NOES.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. Angwin | Mr Lutey |
| Mr. Chesson | Mr. Willcock |
| Mr. Collier | Mr. O'Loghlen |
| Mr. Green | (*Teller.*) |
| Mr Jones | |

Question thus passed.

Select Committee appointed.

Ballot taken, and the following appointed a select committee—Messrs. Griffiths, Lutey, Maley, Troy, and the mover (Mr. Smith).

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. SMITH (North Perth) [7.30]: Following upon the appointment of the select committee I move—

"That the committee have power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, to adjourn from place to place, and to report this day three weeks."

Question put and passed.

Mr. NAIRN (Swan) [7.31]: Shall I be in order at this stage in moving a motion incidental to the resolution just carried? I propose to move that the evidence to be taken before the select committee shall be merely typewritten and not printed.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think that Standing Order 207 prevents my acceptance of the motion. The motion does not initiate discussion itself, and it is incidental to the resolution just carried. I will accept the motion.

Mr. NAIRN: I move—

"That the evidence taken by the committee be not printed, but be made available in typewritten copies limited to ten."

Let me briefly state my reason for the motion. It is on the score of economy. Usually, when evidence is taken before a select committee, it is set up in type, a more or less costly process running into not less than £120 or £130. In this instance the report and evidence are not likely to constitute a historic document, and consequently I think the full purpose of that document will be served if sufficient typewritten copies be prepared.

Question put and passed.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1917-18.

### In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 12th February, on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and the Annual Estimates; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Vote—His Excellency the Governor, £1,573.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [7.35]: We have been hearing repeatedly of late that we are passing through a grave financial period. The natural corollary would be that in the consideration of the Estimates we should maintain that gravity which the present position calls for. It is somewhat hard to bring one's self to a state of seriousness and gravity in considering the Estimates when we realise that we are discussing votes concerning money spent during last July, August, and the succeeding months up to the present month, February, 1918. Again there is the question of the cutting down of these votes. This will be of interest to new members. I can imagine the member for Albany coming here filled with a zeal for economy, and determined to cut down certain votes which he thinks are verging on the extravagant. After labouring successfully to get one or another of these votes reduced by £50 or £100, he goes back to Albany filled with jubilation at his success, only to find, when he returns here next session, that the £50 or £100 cut off from those votes has been duly spent by the departments, and presented in the form of supplementary Estimates. If this is not an absurd position, I should like to know what is. On the question of dealing with next year's Estimates in July or August next, I hope the Committee will insist upon the Estimates being brought down within a reasonable time. On this occasion we are considering the Estimates eight months after the time when they should have been presented to us. The Treasurer the other night expressed a pious wish to have next year's Estimates down in time, and I hope the Committee will see that this is carried into effect. Here we are discussing Estimates when two-thirds of the year has gone; we are asked to carefully consider votes which have been already spent. I take it we have to look upon the discussion of the Estimates more in the light of an annual stock taking. I am sorry to see such pessimism existing among members. Even the Treasurer seemed to be very despondent. Perhaps he knows more about the inner running of things than I do.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He would require to, since you talk so much about the damage done by the rabbits.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I deplore this pessimistic attitude, and would far rather see more of the cheerful optimism of Lord Forrest of Bunbury. As I once heard him ask in the old Chamber, "What is a million, what are two millions, what are five millions?" Seeing the assets we have in the State, I think that with wisdom and energy we should be able, by directing that wisdom and energy——

Hon. P. Collier: But if they are lacking both, where are we?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: By eliminating waste and utilising our natural resources we shall find a way out. I have been looking around during the past few months for this strong man everybody talks about. Some people seem to want a sort of Napoleonic person, a strong tyrannic individual, who will, somehow, do things for them whilst they go on being silly. This idea of wanting a strong man has never appealed to me. I think that to-day we want every man in the State. I am reminded of that military poster with the accusing finger and the suggestive line, "Wanted a man." That finger should be pointed at every man in the State to-day, urging him to do his bit to help the old State out of its present rut. I find that the Perth Chamber of Commerce, some time ago, at last recognised that it owed a duty to the State; it awakened to the fact that it owed responsibilities to the State. We then looked to this body of our leading business men for some good suggestion to help us out of our financial slough of despond. We got one. This mountain in labour brought forward, amongst other things devised to help the country in its financial stress, the proposition to cut out the driving allowance for school children in the country. Then the elections came along, and our hearts beat high with hope. We were going to get a strong man, a man who would come to show us how things should be done here, a man who would instruct and lead the way for the future Premier of the

State. I refer to the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington).

Mr. Green: You should have let him speak first.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That hon. member arrived in this House, and to his speech on the Address-in-reply everybody listened with great eagerness, waiting for the wisdom to fall from his lips. Of all the disappointing speeches I have listened to in the House that speech stood alone. Whether it was that our hopes had been built so high, that we were expecting something creative and big, I do not know, but we sustained a bitter disappointment.

Mr. Nairn: You are making up for it now.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The hon. member was asked to throw out some idea, but he, like many others in the House, simply waved his hands in hopeless fashion and said he had nothing to suggest. He did not know much about it. Then we had the leader of the Opposition the other night. We have all heard him say how anxious he is to help the Government, and we expected something from him. His was a clever speech, I admit.

Mr. Green: You are a good judge, I admit.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The hon. member spoke for two and a quarter hours, and it all resolved itself into this, "We did, and you did not." I am afraid the Premier's reply to the hon. member was very much the same sort of thing.

Hon. P. Collier: After all this you will surely give us something worth waiting for.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: We have had nothing constructive from any of these members.

Hon. P. Collier: Now let us have something constructive.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I will give you all the constructiveness you want. In the newspaper the other day, I read a letter from Mr. Shalleross, a man fairly well known to goldfields members. Mr. Shalleross initiated an idea which, not this Parliament nor any Parliament in the Commonwealth, has the guts—I beg pardon—the innards—to follow out. I refer to total prohibition. We have not the backbone, and are not game enough, to advocate such a thing in this State. It is found in the United States and Canada, and are we any bigger or more important than those countries? They see further than we do; we only see as far as our noses. These nations have seen the benefit of it, and we should have the backbone to bring it into operation here. We have heard the words "produce, produce, produce." repeated all round the House. We had them from the member for Albany (Mr. H. Robinson) and from the member for Bunbury (Mr. Money). The Attorney General referred to them in the town hall and told us we would have to produce. The question is, how are we to produce when 30,000 of our most virile workers, the best of our wage earners, are away fighting for us at the Front? The only thing that appears to be following this advice in the State is the rabbit. The problem which lies before us is that the whole of our revenue is required to pay the interest and sinking fund, and the working expenses of our Railway, Water Supply, Educational, and magisterial services. After these are provided for, we have left a sum of £936,311 to pay for the other requirements of the State, including the salaries of civil servants.

Hon. P. Collier: What are you going to do about it?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: We will have to use our brains and see in what direction we can render assistance. The paramount idea in the minds of most of us is the necessity for economy. But the economies which are being effected represent a small sum in comparison with the amount of which we are short. We know that the payment into our sinking fund has been postponed. We are faced with increased taxation, and there are strong advocates for a stoppage of all public works, and the most drastic retrenchment. This, to my mind, will be a more serious remedy than is warranted by the disease. We cannot consider the question of drastic retrenchment, or the total stoppage of public works, in the present circumstances. The suggestion has also been thrown out that we should surrender our powers to the Commonwealth, or seek for some form of unification. It is, perhaps, a little early for us to reach that stage, although this has been in the minds of the people of the State. With regard to departmental economies, we are told by Ministers that many economies are being effected. I heard the leader of the Opposition say that we were economising in respect to the salt in the dining room. Many economies have been brought into operation.

Hon. P. Collier: That was just a suggestion.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I do not cavil at these economies because, in the aggregate, they amount to a fairly large sum, always providing, however, that efficiency is not impaired in any appreciable degree. At the same time there are larger economies, upon which it is well that Ministers should keep their eye. In this regard it has been suggested that the number of members in both Houses of Parliament should be reduced. Some of us might be out of a job if this was brought about, but we might find some other work upon which we could be better engaged. Ministers tell us, however, that they cannot effect these economies, or make these amalgamations, or get the speeding up that they would like, or do away with the duplication that exists in certain positions, because of the fact that they are tied down by Acts or regulations in such a way that they cannot put these reforms into operation. If that is all that stands in the way, it would be an easy matter for the Government to ask the House to approve of amendments in order to give them the necessary powers to effect the economies required in the civil service generally. Another point, to which I desire to refer, is in connection with the various buildings which have been resumed in West Perth. Is nothing being done in this direction? Unfortunately, I do not know what is at the back of Ministers' minds, but I do know that various buildings and blocks

of land in West Perth have been resumed. The Education Department has been transferred from offices, which, in my opinion, could have been made quite suitable up to the end of the war, to other offices in St. George's-terrace at a cost of £550 per annum. Could not the buildings in West Perth have been used for this department after small additions had been made to them?

The Minister for Works: They are not suitable.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I consider that there has been a waste of money in moving the Education Department to the new premises. The Labour party, when in office, was just as bad as the party now in power. They moved the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank to offices in the A.M.P. Buildings, and in doing so not only threw up a nine months' lease of other buildings, but incurred an annual expense of £1,020. Can this be classed as true economy?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You would not allow us to build offices for these departments.

The Minister for Works: Are you referring to the premises that were resumed for the markets?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I am referring to those buildings, one of which was taken by Mr. Albany Bell. If economies are to be effected let us not tinker with the business. There is a proposal to do away with the dining and refreshment rooms of Parliament House. A report will be brought before us by the House Committee, but it is not expected that the saving that will be shown in that direction will be as big as was expected, whilst, at the same time, the efficiency of the staff will be impaired. If the dining room is going to be cut out, let it be cut out altogether. We know that the earnings of our railways have gone down enormously, and I would like to hear from the Minister whether the working expenses have been reduced in proportion to the falling off in the earnings. We have in this State one mile of railway to every 95 persons. In New South Wales the figures are 446 persons per railway mile, and in Tasmania 354 persons, in Victoria 345 persons, in South Australia 199 persons, and in Queensland 137 persons. We have the smallest population per railway mileage and the lightest direct taxation of any State in the Commonwealth. It appears to me that we want something in the form of a railway policy in this country. We have heard that an examination is going to be made by an expert into the working of our State railways. It would be well that hon. members should consider this question of a railway policy. It does not matter how drastic the departmental economies are, they will not lift us very far out of the mire, and in the direction of effecting those reforms which must be carried out if we are going to stimulate land settlement. The first thing we have to do is to make land monopoly an unprofitable business, and to remove some portion, at all events, of the crushing burden of taxation that is now borne by the genuine settler. To this end we want an appreciable tax on land values, and a diminution of the present excessive rates, which will serve both purposes. We cannot expect that this will fill the bill in the immediate future, for the reason that anything between 30,000 and 35,000 of our people are away at the Front, but it will pave the way to a certain extent. It is our duty to see that a policy of land settlement is carried out on a proper footing, in order that we shall be in a position to place these men back in employment on their return. Much of our best land is lying idle, and unless our lands are able to pay the interest and sinking fund, and the upkeep of nearly 4,000 miles of railway, we cannot expect to become a prosperous community. The best way to raise money is the topic of the hour. We shall require some form of taxation by which we shall be able to take the money out of the pockets of the taxpayer without his knowing anything about it. I think it was one of the Chancellors of the Exchequer in the Old Country who, on one occasion, said "You can tax a man's shirt off his back through the Customs without his knowing it." We have not much to do with the Customs in this State now, and I do not think it is the desire of this body of the representatives of the people to endeavour to tax the shirt off a man's back. We have to see that whatever taxation is imposed is just, and will bear rightly and equitably upon the whole of the people, and not upon a section of the people. Our railways cost us over 17 millions of money, which we had to borrow, and the whole of the money has to be raised by the freights which are paid by the outback settlers. Perth and its suburbs pay railway fares, but very little in the way of freights. The Commissioner for Railways is obliged to make his freights pay his interest and sinking fund if possible, and this fund has to come out of the rates and freights that are charged to settlers in the outback districts, on the goldfields, the wheat areas, and any centre to which the railways extend.

Hon. P. Collier: The sinking fund has never been paid out of railway revenue.

Mr. Smith: What about the tramways?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The fault lies in the fact that the interest and sinking fund has been made a charge against railway revenue, and not against the State's revenue. After all, these are national railways, not goldfields railways or wheat field railways, they belong to the State. The interest charged amounts annually to £625,250 and until this burden is lifted and distributed equitably, no further burden should be placed on the shoulders of the country people. The railways in normal times earn £2,088,000, the working expenses are £1,511,545, showing a profit of £576,455, but this profit has to be used to pay interest and sinking fund on the railways. Consider who earns these freights and fares, who keeps Perth going. Build a wall around Perth tomorrow and keep it there for a month and everyone would be out of the City before long. Therefore, the country pays practically the whole of the interest and sinking fund. Is that a fair burden on the country people? We cannot reduce the fares and freights by removing the amount of interest and sinking fund. I propose there should be an equitable form of land value taxation, so as to find the interest and sinking fund, and that will more

than supply the money we are short of to-day. The primary industries of the State range from gold, coal, potatoes, and so forth, and they will not make headway with advantage without a reduction of the railway freights. There is low-grade ore to be worked in the mines. We have heard that a lot of the mines are tottering on the brink to-day, that they are going out, and we know that Collie coal will have an advantage over the imported article. Firewood is no small item on the goldfields. That should be reduced, so as to remove some of the cost of living to the outback settlers. All these things should be considerably reduced to the agriculturist, so as to give him a chance of making a fair living. We are the lightest taxed people of any State in the Commonwealth as far as direct taxation is concerned, and all our revenue is coming from our railways and public works. Direct taxation only pays 7.42, land brings in 7.65, miscellaneous 6.93, Commonwealth subsidies 12.31, and public works and railways 65.69. The number of landowners in this State holding from 1,000 to 5,000 acres is 50,620, and the unimproved land value in the metropolitan area amounts to seven million pounds odd; in the goldfields area it is £202,000 odd, and in the other towns one million pounds; while in the country it amounts to £8,875,977; leases £1,425,416. The metropolis therefore pays about one-third of this taxation, and the country districts the balance. Boiled down, the argument is that the vacant land pays nothing towards interest and sinking fund. This vacant and non-productive land increases in value because of the railways that are brought to its doors. It is quite apparent that the State gives substantial value to the landowners who do not produce anything. But we penalise the man who uses the land. I was in the country the other day and I met a man who made this remark—"Are they going to conserve the natural products and increase production; they are going to do so as far as potato growing is concerned, but they are going to increase our freights." He further said, "I am sorry I put my money into land as far as potato growing is concerned. We have to get our super from Perth by train at an increased cost." I suppose previously he had got it by boat. He further pointed out that there was an orchard tax, a vermin tax, a dog tax, a machinery tax, roads board tax, and now it was proposed to put up the railway rates. What ought to be done now is to put a poll tax on the farmers, particularly on those who have been fools enough to go out into the country and invest their money; anyone who has been so foolish as to go out on to the spur lines to work deserves all he gets.

The Minister for Works: What is he growling about?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Because it is anticipated that there is to be a rise in freights between Albany and Perth. He pointed out the value of potatoes and onions imported into the State last year, but no one would be encouraged to grow these articles if the freights are increased. It gave me great pleasure to hear the references made by the Attorney General as to utilising our natural resources, and that gentleman should be given the highest credit for the interest that he has taken in this matter. All of us ought to do what we can to forward the projects which the Attorney General has in hand. We are at present somewhat in a shadow, and when the war is over we shall have to do what we can to assist in the utilisation of our resources, to do the best we can with our natural resources, and place them to the best advantage. In short, we must sell more brains and less raw material; we must utilise the products we have here. Wool, for instance. Why cannot we turn some of the wool into the common everyday lines such as they do in South Australia, at Onkaparinga. I am going to assist the Attorney General all I can in the utilisation of our natural resources. We are a big wheat-exporting State. We have got to the stage now when we send our wheat away. There is one thing I would like the Ministers to consider. No doubt members saw an interview in the Press some time ago in regard to an inquiry in connection with the islands to the north of us. In Java there are something over 40 millions of people.

Mr. Green: Thirty-two millions.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: As far as Java is concerned, there are only blackfellows there. In the capital city of that big island there are two thousand motor cars; they have two fine clubs and thousands of wealthy people live there. That applies also to the Straits Settlements. These islands are prepared to take our wheat, our biscuits, preserves and fruit, and in return send us their coffee and the other articles which they produce. In the Comonwealth last year there was no less a sum than one million pounds lost through the careless branding of cattle. That is going on throughout the pastoral districts. There are members here who know something about this. I do not know much. Members may tell me that they knew of this years ago. The trouble is that though we know of these things we do not remedy them. I have been informed on the very best of authority that one million golden sovereigns are lost to us every year just in that simple matter of careless branding of stock. The stock is branded on the rump, from which the sole leather, worth 1s. 3d. per lb., comes, whereas leather from the neck is worth only 4½d. per lb. That is the contrast between the two ends of the beast as regards branding. Hon. members laugh, but he laughs best who laughs last. The Attorney General has told us about the distillation of timber. Some 30 tons of timber, it appears, have been sent to munition works in the United Kingdom for the purpose of being tested in that respect. It will be a great thing for Western Australia if it turns out that the distillation of our woods is a commercial success. In company with the Attorney General I saw the process of distillation of tar, ether, and so forth from our timbers carried out at the Technical School, and I then asked the hon. gentleman whether it was a commercial proposition. I say again, we want to sell more brains and less raw material. Further, as regards Collie coal, it is a well established fact that powdered fuel

can be used on railways. Powdered Collie coal ought to be used on our railways. Then myself and other country members would not have to get up here session after session to protest against the use of Collie coal in the wheat areas during the summer months. We representatives of one primary industry do not at all like having to bark up against the representatives of another primary industry. Our desire is to help the Collie coal industry. The officers of the Railway Department know that no less than six railway systems of the United States use powdered fuel. There is a record of one test as a result of which, after 400 miles' run, there was only a double piston full of slack. Why have not our Railway Department inquired whether Collie coal can be used as powdered fuel on our system instead of Newcastle coal? The Minister for Railways recently informed me that the matter was not being overlooked. I know that Ministers have to excuse their officers; but the scientific heads of the Railway Department should long ago have inquired into and settled this question of powdered fuel. A great deal has been said about the utilisation of our natural resources, and there has been much discussion of the Agricultural Royal Commission. Our agricultural industry has now arrived at the same stage as the agricultural industry of other new countries, and notably that of Canada. We should now follow the example which Canada has set us. In that country the industry was in such a parlous state that many farmers threatened to go out, and some did go out—exactly as in this State. Thereupon the Canadian Government sent a Royal Commission, not merely to adjoining States, but to European countries as well. Every phase of the agricultural industry was investigated by that Royal Commission. It was proved that the fine position of the industry in Germany, France, and Denmark had been achieved in the first place by widespread agricultural education, by placing the latest technical knowledge of the professors in the possession of all the farmers. Such knowledge was distributed among the many instead of being restricted to the few. This State has been gathering agricultural information for years, so that when the Agricultural Royal Commission visited the Agricultural Department the Under Secretary was able to bring out a huge file of valuable information which had been lying in the department's pigeon holes. The foreign countries I have mentioned have made such information the common property of the farmer; improved technical methods are brought to the attention of the individual farmer. The most important factors of all, however, have been the encouragement of co-operation and a system of organised credit. The province of Saskatchewan, in Canada, has attached to its Agricultural Department an agricultural co-operative organisation branch, whose special work is to encourage co-operation. Our Premier has done a very wise thing in deciding that co-operative effort generally amongst our farmers is to be encouraged. It was by systems of co-operation and of organised credit that Germany raised her farming industry to prosperity—aided, it is true, by a little protection, which was no doubt to the detriment of her industrial workers. The German Government saw the danger of Germany becoming a one-sided industrial country. After two years of war there was Professor Eltzbacher, with his company of scientists, answering the question whether Germany's food supply could last. This was the reply—

> We can last, and that we can do so is thanks to our agriculture, which, under the powerful protection of Governments whose clear foresight foresaw the danger of Germany becoming a one-sided industrial country, has been encouraged to that extent that we are to-day able to feed 65 millions of people on 125 million acres of land, without outside help.

One hundred and twenty-five million acres of land represent a territory about two-thirds the size of New South Wales. We have started here by getting a Royal Commission to inquire into the agricultural industry. I do sincerely hope that one outcome of the Royal Commission's recommendations will be the establishment of a permanent board of agriculture in this State. In this connection I expected an interjection from the other side to the effect that the Royal Commission's report mooted that the Commission should continue to exist for the term of the natural lives of its members. I do not advocate that. The findings of the Commission, however, should be carried into effect, and there should be continuity of Government policy as regards the agricultural industry. In that respect too much party spirit has been shown. One Minister comes in, and reverses the policy of his predecessor. So long as that sort of thing prevails, there will be no advance in our agricultural industry and no chance of this country's getting its own as regards agriculture. There is a good deal more I could say, but I think I have spoken long enough. One thing I do wish to emphasise is the necessity for agricultural education. Some gentlemen have urged that this State could afford to let its children lose a year's education. The opinion of those who should know, however, is that education is of equal importance with war service. I do not for a moment advocate extravagance in the Education Department. If economies can be effected in that department, let them be effected; and let any duplication which may exist be done away with. The Commonwealth sees to our first line of defence, in our cadets. If we are to take our place in that bigger war which is coming after this one is over, if our children are to hold their own amongst the nations who study the making efficient of their citizens, we also must study the problem of effective citizenship. That is a national affair: and the Colonial Secretary has lately voiced the opinion that the time has arrived for deciding whether the Commonwealth should not take its share of the responsibility of creating the second line of defence, by means of the higher education and the vocational training of our children.

Mr. Stewart: On German lines?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: No. But there are some things we may copy from the Germans—their industry, and patience, and research.

Mr. Stewart: What about their culture?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The hon. member need not have made that interjection, because he knows very well that we do not want German culture here. But we can learn something from our enemies, and if we fail to do so we are very foolish.

The Minister for Works: I think they are learning something from us, too.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I hope they will learn more. The Germans have shown us some very dirty points, and before the war started they showed us some very clever points. Look at the way they exploited us over benzol in our own territories. As a result, when the war started we had no high explosives. We had to rob the gas factories in order to get benzol. Shortly after the outbreak of war I received a letter from a friend in Staffordshire, telling me that certain firms approached the Staffordshire colliery owners and offered to put up certain plants merely on the condition that they, these firms, got the benzol, presumably for commercial purposes, presumably for driving motor wagons and so forth. The Germans got at us in that matter. They got at us in regard to the dye industry. We invented the dye industry, and they exploited it. We were too slow to get out of the wet. Before the war, nine-tenths of the world was coloured by German dyes. As I have said, I do not advocate that we should adopt German culture; but there are many things we can learn from the Germans. As regards agriculture we can learn much from them, both on practical and on scientific lines. There is very much, also, that we can learn from Canada and the United States. The undoubted resources of this portion of the British Empire should enable us to take our place in the world after the war, and to join fully in the general awakening; but to this end we require the assistance of every man and every woman within our borders. Only thus can we get out of the slough of despond into which we have fallen.

Mr. PILKINGTON (Perth) [8.29]: I need hardly say that it is with extreme trepidation I venture to address this Committee on the subject of finance. Apparently, if one ventures, as a new member, to criticise the Government in their financial attitude, even in the gentlest manner, one is liable to be subjected to the rapier-like tongue of the Premier and the subtle wit of the member for York. However, I listened with great interest to the speech which has just been delivered by the member for York, and I found in it one observation which oddly enough was worth hearing, and it was—and I repeat it most seriously—that the responsibility for the financial condition of this State and its remedy rests upon every single member of this House. I do most earnestly hope that every member of this House will do whatever in him lies to see that the financial position is remedied. We have heard from the Treasurer a statement of the finances which has been already described, and rightly described, as extremely clear. Not only was that statement clear, but with the returns with which we were furnished, we were able to follow more easily the figures which the Treasurer spoke of. That statement, clear as it is, shows the horrible condition in which our finances stand. It shows quite plainly that this year we may expect a deficit of £986,000. I take those figures from the Treasurer's speech, and they include the £50,000 involved as a result of the recent railway award before the Arbitration Court. In round figures we may reasonably expect at the end of the year a deficit of one million pounds. The Treasurer told us that next year he proposes certain taxation which will produce the sum of £225,000. He also told us in the course of his speech that the increase in the difference between the revenue and expenditure from last year to this year, an increase which may be called not improperly an automatic increase, was £236,000. Therefore, it appears that the automatic increase which we may expect next year will be sufficient to eat up the total of the additional taxation which the Treasurer has mentioned. It follows from that, that we should have next year, so far as remedial measures at present suggested go, a deficit of nearly a million pounds. I think it is not improper to ask out of what fund is the Government paying the deficit, and out of what fund do the Government propose to pay the difference between the revenue and expenditure. I take it that as the loan funds are, I believe, expended, the money is now coming from trust funds. As I understand from the Treasurer's statement that he requires the £700,000 which he is borrowing from the Commonwealth for the purpose of carrying on loan works until the end of the next financial year, there is no fund except the trust fund from which we can draw in order to meet the difference between revenue and expenditure. It is a fair thing that this House should understand clearly what the fund is, from which we are drawing to meet the expenditure.

The Colonial Treasurer: It is borrowed money.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I shall be glad to have a clear statement of the borrowed money. As I understand the figures before us, the money borrowed has already been exhausted by the deficit. We are into the trust fund I think to the extent of £600,000.

The Colonial Treasurer: We are funding the debt.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I am leaving out that book entry. The fact is that we are into the trust fund to the extent of £600,000 and we mean to go further. I think the House and the country should know that so as to get an idea exactly where we stand and for how long we can go on meeting this enormous difference between revenue and expenditure and how soon it will be before we may find ourselves unable to go any further. The circumstances under which we are living demand that the Government should put forward a definite financial policy, and I agree with the statement made by the leader of the Opposition the other evening to the

effect that no such policy has been submitted. The Premier said in the course of his observations the other day that the Government had not promised to square the ledger. That is not the point. Nobody supposes that the ledger is going to be squared in the course of a few years. Nobody ever suggested it, but I do submit, without making any pledge on the hustings, that when Ministers take office as a Government they do, by that very Act, represent that they consider themselves capable and willing of taking such steps as will lead towards the remedying of the financial position; in other words that they are willing and able to put forward a definite financial policy. The Government have come to this House and have put forward, as I understand it, no policy. They have asked for suggestions from members. They have called for assistance. That is all. They apparently are helpless and they are calling for help. Their policy may be summed up with that one word "Help." The Government are in duty bound to put forward a financial policy.

Mr. Nairn: Are you prepared to help them?

Mr. PILKINGTON: I am doing my best now. I am aware that the Premier most vigorously repudiated the suggestion that he had no policy. He said he had a policy and I took a note as well as I could—I am not a shorthand writer—of the remark which he made, and it was to the effect that the policy of the Government was to exercise economy—I have no doubt, the strictest economy—and to reduce expenditure in every way without creating a panic. And that is seriously put forward by the Premier of this State as a policy. I submit that any Government which puts forward such a thing as a policy does not know what a financial policy is. It is perfectly plain to any person that if a Government comes forward with a financial policy, and its ultimate object is economy, then the policy will be a statement of those economies which the Government intend to exercise, and if one of the objects of the Government is to reduce expenditure, then the policy of the Government will be a statement of those reductions of expenditure which it is intended to make. That would be a financial policy. This thing which I have read out is nothing less than a platitudinous generality. It means nothing; it is no policy. It cannot be criticised. It is the duty of the Government to tell us what the economies are they intend to exercise and what the reductions are they intend to make in the expenditure, and show us how they propose to meet the deficit. How is that million deficit which we are going to have next year to be met?

The Colonial Treasurer: No no.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I repeat, a million next year.

The Colonial Treasurer: There will be £255,000 more taxation.

Mr. PILKINGTON: Yes, and the automatic increase this year was £236,000.

The Colonial Treasurer: No, £60,000 more expenditure this year than last year.

Mr. PILKINGTON: The automatic increase in the difference between expenditure and revenue was £236,000. True, the increase in the expenditure was £60,000, but there was a decrease in the revenue, so that the automatic increase was £236,000. Now I hope the Treasurer understands me. We may reasonably expect that automatic difference to be equally great next year, and it will be sufficient to eat up the whole of the taxation which has been proposed so far by the Government. I am well aware that the attitude of the Government is one which renders it difficult for any private member to speak on or to make suggestions on. They made no propositions whatever; they put forward no policy. They have all the facts and figures and all the assistance of the departmental heads, and of course if private members put forward suggestions, they will probably be shown to be impracticable because of the fact that the Government possesses the knowledge which is not disclosed to private members. Consequently, private members are in this curious position, that instead of the Government with all the knowledge and advantages they have, making proposals to us and allowing us to criticise those proposals, we are under the tremendous disadvantage that without any knowledge, comparatively speaking, without the power to get facts and figures from the heads of departments, we are expected to make suggestions to the Government, while the Government will sit there waiting to show us that our suggestions are wrong. The position is hopeless. The Government after all are only human and they would feel much hurt and upset if any private member was able to make suggestions worthy of notice, and which the Government had not been able to make, notwithstanding the fact that they have all the advantages. There have been continual references by the Premier and other members of the Government to the fact that we are not living in normal times. That is true, and it is given as a reason why they cannot straighten the finances. But what I would like to point out is that if we are going to wait for normal times to return to put our finances straight, then we shall never put them straight. I do not understand what the Premier means when he speaks of normal times. If he means times similar to those which existed before the war, then we shall have to wait for a great many years. The Commonwealth of Australia will have a debt of between £200,000,000 and £300,000,000 to bear, and it will be many years before we can get back to normal times in the full sense of the term. No doubt we may expect in the course of the next five or six years to get back to times when the country will have to some extent recuperated from the tremendous strain of the war, and what one is to look for is the means whereby the country can tide over those five or six years and avoid going on the rocks in the interval. So that, if possible, when times come in which the affairs of the country are recuperating, we may then be able to start and recuperate without having repudiated our liabilities.

That is what it seems to me we are looking for, some means whereby we can tide over these five or six years in a business way, so that we can avoid the danger before us of not being able to pay our way. That must be done during times that are not normal. We cannot wait for normal times. We are told continually by the Premier and others that the remedy for the present state of affairs is increased production. Of course, increased production—at a profit—is the secret. It is the sole way by which any country becomes wealthy. It really means prosperity, and this policy of produce, produce, produce, might just as well be stated as prosperity, prosperity, prosperity. No doubt that is the secret of the wealth of any wealthy nation, the production of wealth. But it is quite plain to me that it is hopeless to regard an additional production of wealth as being the remedy for our present extremely urgent necessities. The increased production of wealth is something that can only grow slowly. It cannot grow quickly. It is a slow grower. The growth of wealth, normal and healthy, is always slow. To expect our productive power to expand within the next few years sufficiently to get us out of our present difficulty is to be, not merely optimistic, but sanguine beyond all reason. The point I wish to emphasise is this: we are in serious difficulty and we require a sudden, immediate remedy. The facts are put by the Treasurer's figures. Speaking in round figures, we have a net revenue of £2,400,000; the fixed charges under Statutes, etc., amount to approximately two millions, in round figures. That leaves somewhere about £400,000 to meet the administrative expenses, amounting to £1,300,000. Looking at those figures it seems to me perfectly clear that we must have a remedy which is almost immediate. It must be a sudden remedy and it must be sufficient in extent. There are but two ways of creating that remedy, namely, heavy taxation and very violent retrenchment. I venture to suggest that without both those methods it will be utterly impossible to get the State on a proper footing. I take it we are all doing our best to deal with this problem. I may say I am putting my head in the nooze when I make a suggestion, but what we require to remember is this: that we have to perform a sort of surgical operation. If I am right in my view, we are to use very violent measures, which, however, are only temporary measures; the violent taxation and the violent retrenchment which I believe to be necessary would be necessary only to tide us over a few years. I ask hon. members to bear in mind that, however violent the remedies may be, and however much one may be pilloried for suggesting them, they are temporary measures only, devised to tide us over a very serious crisis. I do not profess that I have anything new to suggest, but I propose to make a few suggestions with the object rather of starting discussion and thought in the minds of hon. members than of putting them forward as being definite proposals of means whereby I think the difficulty can be overcome. A suggestion was made last year, I do not know by whom; it was this: that if some tax could be imposed which would rake in some of the loose money floating around Perth at the present time—it will not be floating around for very long after peace is declared—it would be a very proper form of taxation. If, for example, Western Australia had the power to impose an additional tax on liquor through the Customs, that would be a very proper tax to impose. If there be any means whereby a tax could be imposed which would have a similar effect, that is to say, would fall on the consumer of liquor, it seems to me that would be a proper tax to impose. As I have said, it was suggested by someone last year that a tax which would compel everybody who had a drink to pay an extra penny for it, and if that penny could be raked into the exchequer, it would be a very proper tax.

The Minister for Works: We are paying more than a penny extra now.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I am not unaware of the additional tax. I am suggesting a tax which would be a Western Australian tax, and would represent a penny extra on the present price of a drink. I am sorry if the Minister objects to it. If such a tax could be brought into the exchequer, it would be a proper tax. It would tax some of the loose money which is being spent throughout the State to-day. I believe that such a tax can be devised.

Mr. Holman: Would you put that tax on milk and tea and ginger beer?

Mr. PILKINGTON: It cannot be done. I do not know whether the hon. member would like to put it on those things, but it cannot be done. If we put a tax such as I suggest upon liquor, we would collect it through the retailers of liquor, who are mostly the retailers of drinks under general licenses, wayside licenses and the like, people who sell liquor over the bar. But, if we were to put such a tax on, say, tea, we would be met in this way: persons who wanted to get tea without paying the tax would buy it from the other States, and by reason of the Commonwealth Constitution we could not put on it a tax which would prevent the article coming in free from the other States. But that would not apply to liquor, because the man who goes into a hotel for a glass of liquor cannot import it from Adelaide. That is why such a tax can be put on liquor but cannot be put on many other things which I would like to tax, such as tobacco.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott (Honorary Minister): What about the man who buys a bottle and takes it home?

Mr. PILKINGTON: I am not just now dealing with this thing in detail; I am making the general suggestion. It is not a new thing.

The Attorney General: The suggestion made last year was for a sales tax.

Mr. PILKINGTON: A very similar tax; I am not suggesting a new thing, I am merely pointing out that it can be done. There is no harm in the suggestion.

The Colonial Treasurer: It is quite right, it is a very good suggestion.

Mr. PILKINGTON: It is well worth the consideration of the Committee. The proposition I am putting forward is this: we would have to impose upon different classes of liquor,

such as spirits, beer, wines, and there might be further subdivisions, such a tax to be paid on return made by the vendor of the liquor that he could recoup himself by adding the sum of a penny to every drink sold.

Mr. Pickering: It would take some check-ing.

Mr. PILKINGTON: No, a child could do it. We cannot get it absolutely accurate, but there would be no difficulty in arranging it. The result would be that the whole of the tax would fall on the consumer. Of course there would be a provision exempting from the tax the wholesaler, because we do not want to tax it twice. The retailer alone would collect the tax. If that were properly done, and carefully worked out, the tax would fall on the consumer alone, as it should. I am not in any way wedded to the particular form of the suggestion I have put forward, but I suggest that in that particular form the tax is one well worth considering. I have looked into it in a general way, and I do not pretend to give to the Committee the exact figure which it would produce, but I believe it would produce something approaching £250,000 per annum. That taxation, together with the taxation the Treasurer has proposed, would bring us up to £475,000 next year. Then I would ask the Committee to set its teeth, and the Government to take a hold of themselves and decide to reduce the Education Vote by £150,000. I urge the Committee to bear in mind the difficulty of finding anything that can be helpful. We know that this vote can be reduced. The Premier admitted it the day before yesterday. When we do these things we are not following out the permanent policy of the country, but are merely performing a surgical operation in order to see ourselves over a grave crisis. Those propositions would amount to a large sum, over £600,000, to go towards meeting the deficit.

Mr. Thomson: Will you indicate where you would reduce the Education Vote by that amount?

Mr. PILKINGTON: I cannot say, because I do not know. If I were responsible for reducing the vote I would do as any Minister would do, namely, go to the permanent officials of the department and say to them, "Where can I reduce the vote by £150,000 with the least harm?" Some of them would say, "Let us do away with the secondary schools, or let us make parents pay for the secondary schools." I was a good deal struck by the remarks of the leader of the Opposition the other night when he said, what I had not previously known, that children of five years of age are going to these schools, and that the schools were being used as nurseries, and that they would be used as nurseries. I understand the Act now says that the age is to be six. The leader of the Opposition remarked the other night that he had not sent his children to school until they had reached the age of seven. No harm would be done, but indeed a great deal of good, if we did not send children to school until they were eight. That is a matter upon which I think the leader of the Opposition will be found to be in agreement with most of the educationists of the present day. It is the greatest mistake, and I believe the best opinion is to that effect, to send young children to school who cannot learn, and hate the idea of being taught, and whose minds are not able to get a grip of the matter they are trying to learn. This is not good for them. In so far as schools are used merely as nurseries, which I think is largely the case, the children do not learn any lessons at all, and they should not be there, and we should not be put to the expense of providing nurseries for these children. I think this is one direction in which undoubtedly large savings might be made. I am not prepared to say how the £150,000 should be cut off. I use these figures because they represent a good large sum to cut off. I suggest that this amount should be cut off for the present, so that we could pay our way, because I believe we can cut it off. The Premier the other night spoke with pride, and rightly so, of having cut down certain expenditure by £22,000. How far does this amount take us in respect to the deficit? It is merely a drop in the ocean. We must try some means that will cut things down by a very much larger amount, or some means by which we can tax in large sums, otherwise we have no hope.

Mr. Pickering: What about the University?

Mr. PILKINGTON: That accounts for £13,500 per annum. That might be reduced, and I would not object at all. I should like to say a few words about the railways. If £600,000 odd can be got, we would still be a long way from meeting the deficit, and a great deal more remains to be done. The Railways are showing a loss—I do not mean a working loss—in the sense of the sum, which has to be found out of revenue as against that of expenditure, of £559,000 for this year. The Treasurer's figures were £509,000, and I am adding to that £50,000 extra as a result of the Arbitration Court award. These figures are amazing, and make one feel like the Honorary Minister who was gasping a year ago, just as I am gasping to-night. One hopes that a great saving may be made. I was a little pained to hear that it was the intention of the Government to obtain the services of an expert to report upon the railways. I cannot help thinking that this practice of getting experts to report savours of shelving the question for the present, and giving Ministers some breathing space. I cannot understand how the greatest railway expert on earth could come here, and, in the course of a few weeks or months, learn more about the question than our own local experts.

Mr. Pickering: On general principles.

Mr. PILKINGTON: If an expert came here and showed things to our local experts, which would enable them to make a substantial reduction in the cost of running the railways, and our own local experts could not show this themselves, then I should say that our local experts were not fit to be in charge of the railways. Our own experts, the Commissioner and his staff, should be quite capable, in my opinion, of dealing with the matter, but what they want is a free hand.

Mr. Thomson: The only thing they have suggested so far is to increase railway freights.

The Minister for Works: The suggestions of the staff have not yet been made in the House.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I should be very much surprised to learn that this was a suggestion from the staff. I venture to say with confidence—I have no knowledge, of course, of the staff—that if the experts of our Railway Department were told something like the following, "You see our position. What are we to do? Tell us, as a Government, frankly what you think ought to be done. Never mind about Acts of Parliament or regulations. Tell us the basis upon which you can largely reduce this tremendous cost. You make out, as railway experts, the basis on which this thing should be carried out, and we, as a Government will back you up. We will see that it is carried out so far as it can be carried out within the bounds of possibility, and we will not shelve the responsibility upon you, but will take the whole weight of it upon our own shoulders," and I have no doubt they would do it. The answer to this, on the part of Ministers, will doubtless be that the Government have been in communication with the staff for years past, but what a difference there is between the Government communicating with the staff and continually asking the Commissioner what they ought to do, and the position that the staff would be in if they were asked "Let us know definitely the conditions under which you can bring this railway concern into something like a reasonable financial position. Tell us how you can do it, and the Act and the conditions of employment can go"?

The Minister for Works: The conditions of employment are settled by the Arbitration Court.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I am speaking of the conditions of employment that are in the form of the Acts and regulations, which in the Railway Department are stringent and difficult to deal with. As a private member, I cannot get information from the railway staff as to facts and figures.

The Minister for Railways: You have the annual report of the Railway Department.

Mr. PILKINGTON: If one wanted to understand a business and was given a balance sheet from which to obtain that knowledge, one would feel inclined in one's rage to throw it in the man's face. It is absurd to suggest this report as a means of obtaining information. Take the best business man on earth, and ask him to go through a business place and say to him "This business is losing. In that room you will find all the books of the business. Tell us what is wrong." The result would be that he would not be able to say anything about the business.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I found that out in the implement works.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I found it out, too, when private members were asked to make suggestions. We cannot make suggestions of any value. We can only suggest the way in which Ministers might go if they really meant to put this thing right, and face the position, even if it turned out that they were doing something which would make them unpopular, and which was difficult to accomplish.

Mr. Lutey: If the Government were in favour of an unimproved land tax would you vote for it?

Mr. PILKINGTON: I am not speaking in favour of any unimproved land tax as an unimproved land tax. I am in favour of putting a tax on unimproved land if such a tax will raise revenue, and if it will not do any serious injustice. I am not particularly fond of that tax, or indeed of any other tax. Taxes are disagreeable things, but sometimes necessary. We must get money somehow, and this certainly is one means by which we can get it. I wish to make a few remarks concerning the public service, I mean the service which is under the Public Service Commissioner. I am aware that it is a comparatively small thing, and that the total salaries only amount to something like £360,000 a year. It appears to me that the Government have no right to reduce these salaries. To do this would in effect be to tax the public service instead of the whole community, and this does not appear to be either fair or right. I do say most emphatically that the Government have a right to insist that every man in the public service shall pull his own weight in the boat, and that if he does not he should be pushed out. At present he cannot be pushed out. If the Government mean to put the public service into order they must amend the Public Service Act. Knowing human nature as we do, we understand that the moment a Minister sets about getting rid of useless hands in his department at that very moment, quite naturally, every man in the department is against him. The Minister must be in a position to say to the various heads and sub-heads of departments, "This thing has to be done. If you will not do it I will get someone else who will do it."

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Will that apply to the heads of departments?

Mr. PILKINGTON: Yes, to everyone. Up to within a short time ago every servant of the Crown in Western Australia, and indeed generally throughout the Empire, could be dismissed at a moment's notice without any reason being given. That power was done away with by the first Public Service Act, but was reinstated by an amendment in a subsequent Public Service Act. Then the present Public Service Act was brought in, and under that a man cannot be dismissed unless his office is abolished, or unless he is made a supernumerary officer under the Public Service Commissioner, or unless a charge is laid against him of incompetency, and proved, which, in nine cases out of ten, cannot be done. There is a type of man very common in the public service, who never gets his work done, and always has a valid excuse for not doing it. We all know him. The only thing that the Government can do with men of this sort is to get rid of them, for they cannot prove incompetency against them. That alteration is

very necessary in order that Ministers may get vigorously to work, and take the necessary steps to reduce the expenditure in their departments.

The Minister for Works: Would you make it a penal offence for a member of Parliament to try to use his influence to prevent a dismissal?

Mr. PILKINGTON: I should imagine that members of Parliament would not use their influence improperly in that direction.

The Minister for Works: You do not know them.

Mr. O'Loghlen: The Minister should give instances.

Mr. PILKINGTON: My ignorance of Ministers or hon. members leaves me in a haze. The suggestion has come rather suddenly, and I am not prepared to say that my answer must necessarily be a correct one. I believe it is unnecessary, surely, to make it a penal offence for members to try and use their influence in an improper way as a means of preventing a dismissal. I do not think any such influence should be used. I quite understand that a Minister may very properly ask an hon. member if he knows anything about a particular person, but I do not know whether that could be said to be using influence. It is, perhaps, true that members of Parliament might most improperly use their influence with Ministers on millions of things, and if this were all to be penal this House might be comparatively empty—I do not mean now, but in former years.

Hon. P. Collier: There is such a thing as political influence in securing positions in high places.

Mr. PILKINGTON: One is fortunate in being a new member, and in being unaware of these things, with which the interjectors seem to be so familiar. I have advanced what necessarily appear to be vague ideas of the course which may be adopted, in the hope that those ideas may be of some assistance in the general effort of members of the Committee to help the Government to bring our finances into a proper condition.

Mr. NAIRN (Swan) [9.15]: I am sure we have all listened with great interest to the remarks of the member for Perth (Mr. Pilkington) during the last hour. I do not know that I have come to quite the same conclusions as the member for York (Mr. Griffiths), who judged the member for Perth on his first attempt. But I think most members of the Committee feel, with me, that for any real assistance, any effective contribution, towards the solution of our difficulties, we are still lost in a maze, and as much bewildered as ever. With all due respect to the member for Perth, and with particular respect for the first half of his speech, I do not think that a member who adopts merely the role of fault-finder is of much assistance to the country at the present time. The member for Perth having expressed his views of the Government, I am entitled to express mine concerning him. In opposition to the member for Perth I say, with all sincerity, that it is the duty of each individual member to help Ministers wherever he can.

Mr. Thomson: The member for Perth said that, too.

Mr. NAIRN: The member for Perth has offered only one remedy.

Mr. Johnston: No; several.

Member: That is malicious.

Mr. NAIRN: No one has suggested that the member for Perth proposed any malicious action. I disagree with the statement of the member for Perth that it is no part of his duty, and consequently, I presume he means, no part of the duty of any private member, to assist the Government by making any definite proposal. The hon. member made that statement in the first part of his speech, as "Hansard" will prove. In that respect I entirely disagree with him.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Premier said last night that he did not expect any assistance from this side of the Chamber.

Mr. NAIRN: I wish to express how I feel regarding the sum total of our individual and collective responsibility at this juncture in the history of Western Australia. There is not a member of this Committee, either new or old, who has not in some measure contributed to bring about the present regrettable condition of the State. This condition has been made by the people at large, and those who are the Government's sternest critics to-day are those who, not very long ago, urged the people on to extravagance. I refer particularly to the Press. From one end of the State to the other the Government were urged to proceed with works which, as to-day we can all see clearly, represented reckless extravagance. "A thousand miles of railway at a thousand pounds per mile" was one flag which was being waved all over this country. And because the Government accepted such suggestions——

Mr. Johnston: At the time, they were very good policy.

Mr. NAIRN: For Williams-Narrogin, yes; but Williams-Narrogin is not the whole of this State. I acknowledge that those suggestions were made in all good faith and without any desire to disturb the equilibrium of Western Australia; but, simply because events which neither the present nor any other Government could have foreseen or controlled have rendered certain public works unprofitable, it is not fair or manly, it is useless, for any person to say, "I shall not offer any suggestions to the Ministry." It is the duty of members of this Committee to assist the Ministry. To be a fault-finder, to be hypercritical, is easy; nothing in the world is easier. But it is a difficult thing, and it requires some courage, to indicate a clear road out of our financial difficulties. I do not agree with the opinion of the member for Perth that a system of drastic taxation and drastic retrenchment—to use his own words—will save this country from a cataclysm. I believe just the opposite. I think the carrying out of the suggestions of the member for Perth would lead to greater injury to the industries and the credit of this State than anything else could bring about. The first plank of the platform of the

member for Perth was unification. But the present condition of Western Australia is due largely to our contributions to the war, and, next, to the youth, the immaturity, of our primary and secondary industries, leaving us industrially unfitted to meet the crisis. It will be a poor recompense and a poor advertisement for this State, which has done so much for the Empire, if it is to be told that all we can do is to hand ourselves over to the pity of the Commonwealth. I do not approve of any such proposal.

Mr. Pickering: It was Mr. Colebatch who advocated unification.

Mr. NAIRN: The member for Perth more than once argued that unification was going to save Western Australia. It may be wise for us to try and realise some of the factors which have brought Western Australia to its present condition. We may then discover means of extricating ourselves from our financial difficulties. One important factor has been the undeveloped state of our primary industries, as compared with those of the other members of the Commonwealth.

Hon. P. Collier: And we have no secondary industries.

Mr. NAIRN: I am coming to that. But can we help the situation by imposing further burdens on our producers? That course will only aggravate the position. Next, as regards our secondary industries, our manufacturing industries. In return for its contributions to the war, this State is receiving less than any other State of the Commonwealth. Practically we are receiving from the war expenditure only the wages of our soldiers. Out of the expenditure of scores of millions of pounds on the equipment of Australia's soldiers, we get practically nothing. That is one of the principal causes of our present unfortunate position. Having visited the Eastern States, I say in all sincerity, in view of the natural potentialities of Western Australia, this State is suffering by reason of its newness. But for the member for Perth to say that it will take us 20 years to retrieve our losses is simply absurd. Within two years of the declaration of peace, most of our industries will again be profitable. Is it going to take 20 years for our railway service, our timber industry, or our fruit industry to recover? One who makes such a statement does not realise the numerous causes which have contributed to bring about our present unfortunate condition.

Hon. P. Collier: It will take a few years as regards shipping.

Mr. NAIRN: That is true. But it is not given to any man to say exactly what is going to follow after the war. There is no man with sufficient brain-power to look so far ahead. When the war is over, I believe with many others, there will be a more rapid return to prosperity than ever before in the history of mankind, because the universal desire of mankind will be to get back to where they were three or four years ago in the matter of production. Is Western Australia going to be left behind in that race? Are we going to destroy ourselves, practically, by leaving ourselves unprepared for the future after the war? We cannot have retrenchment in the manner suggested, without destroying the whole social fabric of the State. There may come a time when sheer, dire necessity will compel us to retrench in that fashion; but I do not think any man will contend that that time has arrived now. This State is not exhausted financially; and I think the Treasurer will be able to tell us that by making reasonable adjustments, by cutting our cloth a little shorter, and by the co-operation of every Minister and every member of this Parliament, Western Australia will be able to keep afloat until smooth waters have again been reached. Of course, if the war goes on for an interminable length of time, we in common with the rest of mankind may be compelled to do anything. But to say that that stage has already been reached is to plumb a depth of pessimism into which I hope the majority of this Committee have not plunged. I do not approve of this general attack on Ministers, as though it were humanly possible for any Minister to solve the country's difficulty in the manner which has been suggested to-night, without bringing about a crisis. I want to avoid that crisis if possible; and those who have interests in the State desire, I am sure, to avoid it also. For that reason I hope every member of the Committee will do whatever is in him to help the Government to get the State out of its difficulties. I know that this can be expected from hon. members sitting opposite. The thing I regret is that we are not in a position to make use of the best brains of every section of the House. I do not say that with any idea of raising a party question at all. But it is regrettable that in this time of crisis the State cannot avail itself of the best brains of every party in this Chamber.

Mr. Holman: You were not allowed to choose the best brains on your side; so what are you talking about?

Mr. NAIRN: I may regret it all the same. That would not alter the position in the slightest. This is a time for united effort, a time for laying aside all those little things which, after all, do not count for so very much.

Mr. Munsie: It is a great pity you did not advocate that some time ago.

Mr. NAIRN: I have never at any time adopted the attitude which the interjection of the hon. member would suggest.

Mr. Munsie: I never heard that you were a very helpful critic while you were on this side of the House; you did nothing but abuse the Labour Government all the time they were in power.

Mr. NAIRN: I have no desire to follow the hon. member in his vivid imagination. We know where it takes him and that it loses him. Hon. members who know me know that I have always endeavoured to avoid being a vicious or party critic. Whatever may have happened in the past, the time has now arrived when every member in this House should give the best that is in him, and we should hold this State up and show to the people of Australia that we are not lost because we have a deficit. There are other countries which are suffering just as we are suffering to-day, but they have found ways out of the difficulties, and I venture to say that it is only those who

have adopted a drastic and unreasonable attitude who will suffer. There are undoubtedly means by which the Government can effect economies; I have no hesitation in saying that. Of course there is no one here who is satisfied with what the Ministry have done so far. It would be flattery and foolishness to suggest that we were satisfied. We would like them to do a great deal more, and if we are able to help them to go further, the Government have the right to claim that help from us, and we should freely give it rather than attempt to destroy what has been done and upset those who are at the present time endeavouring to do their best.

Hon. P. Collier: It may be that a little fault finding will do good.

Mr. NAIRN: I have no objection to a little fault finding, but there is one thing that I do object to in a mule and it is that he can break up without building up. We can all smash up but when one can be of value it is when he can offer suggestions in the direction of constructing. That is what we want. Up to the present time I admit I have been bitterly disappointed with the only suggestion that has been made. We heard the leader of the Opposition's temperate speech, but the sum total of it was the keeping away from school of some of the younger members of the community.

Mr. Munsie: Are you satisfied with the suggestion put forward by the Government up to date?

Mr. NAIRN: I do not think there is much use cross firing with the hon. member because he is not likely to see things as they exist at the present time.

Mr. Munsie: I am trying to find out.

Mr. NAIRN: The hon. member is trying in an extraordinary way.

Mr. Munsie: The hon. member has not replied to my question; abuse is no argument.

Mr. NAIRN: It is the duty of Ministers to do more than they have done at the present time, but I am not condemning them for what they have done. There are departments which require something in the nature of drastic treatment on the part of the Government to correct them. I will give one instance; the Railway Department, some of the officers of which are not working in the best interests of the State. The engineers who were responsible for the State suffering a big loss by the deviation of the tramway line to Murray-street are, in my opinion, not fit to hold their positions, and if Ministers do not see that that kind of thing is not repeated they will always be subjected to criticism.

Mr. Munsie: It was political influence that was responsible for that.

Mr. NAIRN: It was obviously wrong and foolish to construct the line in Murray-street.

Hon. P. Collier: I know you desire to be fair to the engineers. They were not responsible; it was the Government of the day who were responsible; it was policy.

Mr. NAIRN: With all due respect to the leader of the Opposition who should know all about it, we had good reason to believe that the railway authorities were responsible. The work was carried out in face of a protest from responsible bodies and also in face of a petition signed by 23,000 people. If that were the only thing one would not mind so much, but there are scores of such instances in various parts of the State. The Government are entitled to expect from their officers that service which will help in the saving of money, not in the extravagant expenditure of it.

The Minister for Railways: You are assuming that the engineers were responsible.

Mr. NAIRN: Perhaps it would be better to say railway officials. We have never had complete knowledge of what happened except that the State has been landed in a loss of several thousands of pounds which it will never regain and that happened through the persistence and stubbornness of certain men in high positions. Ministers should be in the position to deal with those men. I only want to register the opinion that it is our duty to assist the Government in the present crisis, I do not care which Government may be in power, but it is our duty to so preserve the State that it will be saved from those who want to save it by wrecking it.

Member: What about education?

Mr. NAIRN: We have heard a good deal about education, but I will be able to express my opinion when the vote is under review. Briefly the Education Department, like every other department, must be subject to close scrutiny. The principle I subscribe to is that of free and compulsory primary education for every child in the community. That principle has been established and must be maintained. There are many defects in the Education Department which should be corrected and there are many frills which ought to be got rid of, and I shall be able to tell the Minister of them when the time arrives. All I want to do is to give a fair chance to those who are occupying high and responsible positions. To expect to be able to improve the condition of things by the drastic suggestion which has been made to-night to my mind will be utterly impossible and futile at the present time.

Mr. JONES (Fremantle) [9.40]: Like the 30 odd members of this House who will address themselves to the Estimates, I am going to endeavour to do my bit to help the Government. If I am optimistic in what I am going to say it will not be because I believe in the Government but because I believe in humanity. I would like to congratulate the member for Swan upon the fact that he is a changed man since the party to which I belong has ceased to be in office. He has reached a state of grace. So far as I remember the member for Swan was never then characterised by that wonderful tolerance which he has shown towards the Government he is now supporting. It is a pleasure to all members of this House that at last the curtain raisers with which the Government have entertained hon. members, are over, and that the curtain itself has been raised upon the drama of the Estimates, which the Government have boomed under the title of "Economy." It is, I believe supposed to be a serious drama, but the plot is as old as the hills. We are all acquainted with that play wherein the characters pretend to be something they are not, in which

the walking gentleman who is only a used up comedian pretends to be the hero and the old lady plays the part of the heroine.

*Mr. Holman:* The Minister for Works must be that old gentleman.

Mr. JONES: Quite so. This drama which has been produced has degenerated into a farce in which the part of economy is being played by not merely the Estimates, which have been put before us, but also some of the actions of the Government during the past few months. The Government have had the unblushing audacity to come forward and talk of economy, as the member for Perth has explained. The Premier said that the policy of the Government was to exercise the strictest economy and reduce expediture. I was pleased to hear that because I thought from the remarks of the Attorney General that the policy of the Government was "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" it is, however, a piece of absolute brazen check to talk of economy in face of some of the facts which have been put before the House in recent months. Fancy talking of economy when a sum of £1,093 16s. 11d. was expended to gaol one old man. The incarceration of Candish cost this State £270 a month—£10 a day. How Candish must smile in his cell in the solitude of that little stone house where the Government has placed him at Fremantle on thinking that at his age he should be worth that amount of money to the Government of the State. But that is not the only episode in the farce of economy which the Government are playing. At the Fremantle wharves the National Labour Bureau which the Government have erected cost, according to the Estimates, £2,500 and Heaven only knows if that is the end of the expenditure. It would be interesting to know if the Government are spending any money at the Fremantle wharf at the present time. My experience of the employing classes of the community is that they are not philanthropists so far as the employment of workers is concerned, but yet we find on the wharves at Fremantle little incidents such as this occurring daily: Eight lumpers shifted, during eight hours, something like 18,000 bags of wheat, while the same number of scabs shifted 12,000.

The Attorney General: The schoolboys did as much in one hour as the lumpers did in a day.

Mr. JONES: That tale, as the Attorney General knows, is the invention of an imaginative mind.

The Attorney General: One has only to watch them working to know that any schoolboy can do more.

Mr. JONES: I would like to hear that the Attorney General ever attempted to do a day's manual work; I think it would have been good for his soul.

The Attorney General: Probably I have done more manual labour in my life than have you.

Mr. JONES: The question is not as to whether the Attorney General has done more work than I, it is as to the audacity of the Government in calling themselves a Government of economy while this expenditure of money has been going on along the wharf. It is my duty to warn the Government. I do not wish to see them rush over a steep place down into the sea. I would have done as much had I been in Judea when Christianity was being founded. It seems to me the same position is being adopted in regard to the stacking of wheat at Midland Junction, Spencer's Brook and the other centres, the same scenes are being repeated, and the same expenditure by this Government of economy is being indulged in. Tents are being erected. I do not know whether some highly paid officials from the Works Department will go along and attend to the cooking for those men, but the same position is being established during the present trouble, and in every case preference is given to those scabs who, according to the Attorney General, are such excellent workmen. In every case the victimisation of the genuine unionist is being practised and is being bolstered up by public money subscribed by the taxpayers. I am sorry the Government have become so hysterical that they are mistaking the refusal of a few men to be sweated for a new phase of the Russian Revolution, and are sending up, wholesale, police constables to guard the wheat stacks at an extra cost of 6s. per day per constable. It would appear that the Government can afford to pay this extra money for wholly unnecessary police protection, but cannot afford to pay the extra sixpence per hour for broken time in the stacking of wheat. During the course of the debate the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loghlen) was sternly rebuked by the Premier for remarking that the Honorary Ministers had been good boys. Judging by the Premier's rebuke it would seem that they had not been good boys. I do not refer to the member for Nelson (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott), who perhaps has been no worse than George Washington, who chopped down the cherry tree, but I refer to the Honorary Minister in another place, who directs the operations of the wheat pool. That gentleman has control of the wheat stacks at Midland Junction and other centres, and for some reason or other he seems to think it his duty to be firm and refuse to grant to the men working at Midland Junction and other places the condtions under which the men similarly employed at Geraldton have been working ever since the beginning of the operations. The conditions enjoyed by the Geraldton men are being asked for by the men who have ceased work at the other centres, but the Honorary Minister, with a Napoleonic gesture, says "No; I have spoken." If I might venture to apply the words of Mark Anthony to this boy whom the Premier will not agree is a good boy, I should describe him as a peevish schoolboy. The Government are talking about economy in the public service. I do not know exactly what they mean, unless their methods of economising are to create unemployment. Some members are unreasonable enough to say that the Government have no right to get rid of a man unless they can show him some other avenue in which he can earn a living. I am one of those, and I say

if the Government must retrench why not retrench those willing and ready to work as national volunteers on the wharf? They have shown their preference for other employment, and they have demonstrated that their services can be dispensed with in the department. In these circumstances I submit that it is only right and fair to retrench those indivuals, if the Government must economise by the process of sacking men. There is one item of expenditure in the public service into which the Government might put the pruning knife; I refer to the iniquitous system of tea money, the practice of paying overtime at the rate if 1s. an hour to a man who goes back to work and stays for an hour and a half. The tea money system, I think, was invented in order to allow middle clerks to annoy the understrappers in the various departments. If the Treasurer were to go into this question he would find that the pruning knife could easily be put into the tea money.

The Attorney General: What is tea money?

Mr. JONES: It is overtime at the rate of 1s. an hour which is paid to any man who will stay behind in a Government department for an hour and a half after he need be there.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is handy if they want to go to a theatre any night.

Mr. JONES: One feature of the Estimates which I view with serious alarm is the proposed increase in the Police Vote.

Mr. Davies: Do you object to the police getting a living wage? For that is the purpose of the increase.

Mr. JONES: I object to no one getting a living wage; I would not be on this side if I did. I was not aware that the member for Guildford was Colonial Secretary. Probably he is in full possession of all the facts, and so it mght be as well to ask him for an explanation—after I have finished.

The Minister for Works: Your objection is to the police at all, it is not?

Mr. JONES: Personally I do not need them; I do not suppose the hon. member has any need of them either. I am wondering what this increase in the Police Vote is really for. Does it mean that we are to have more prosecutions similar to the conspiracy charges on which poor Candish was sent to gaol at a cost to the State of £10 per day? If so, it will be necessary for many societies to look out for themselves. There is the Theosophical Society, there is even the West Australian Farmers, Ltd. No one will be safe if the police once get active tracking up the authors of statements such as "Children should have grass to play upon in the school yards." No one will be safe if the prosecutions are to follow the lines followed in the recent conspiracy cases. Not that it would do some members any harm to have a night's experience of Roe-street. Had such an experience not been altogether unknown among members, the lice which dwell there would probably have been discovered at a much earlier date. I trust that some of the increased vote is to be spent on improving that lock-up and on the purchase of insect powder for the Roe-street establishment. Also I would suggest that provision be made by which prisoners shall not be required to wipe on the same towel with a venereal prisoner. Probably the Minister for Works will say I am looking after my own future interest. If the work of the Police Department is to be judged by results, it is significant that the population of the Fremantle gaol has decreased during the last 12 months to such extent that we find the maintenance fund has been reduced by more than £1,000. From this it would appear that the police, to whom the increases have been granted, are not showing the results they were giving prior to the increases being asked for. I have made reference to the constables whom the Government in their hysteria sent to guard the wheat stacks, and to their being paid at the rate of 6s. per day, extra pay, for doing entirely unnecessary work. We find at the same time that the Government could only afford to pay prison warders, who were engaged in constructive work at Rottnest Island, in charge of prison gangs, and were really doing useful work in the production of wealth, at the rate of 1s. a day. This strange anomaly would appear to be a part of the idea of the Government to effect economies. It is the duty of someone to warn the Government that this idea of sacking men is not an economy at all, and anything but an economy. This tends to create unemployment, and to reduce the number of producers in spite of the fact that members on the other side of the House have as their slogan the cry "Produce, produce." To decrease the number of producers is to decrease the production of wealth, and, in addition to that, to decrease the population to whom the wealth that is produced is sold. We find that the ideas of the Government in the direction of economy are entirely out of count so far as real economies are concerned. They have to seriously consider a policy of repatriation, which after all is only an aggravated unemployment problem. In doing that they cannot afford to create a lot of unnecessary employment. The problem of repatriation will mean new industries, for which no provision is being made by the Government. The Government are rather hindering the creation of new industries by dispensing with the services of such men as the Commissioners for the South-West and the fruit industry, and other experts connected with our lands. Had we the necessary expert opinion, showing us where flax could be grown, what parts of the State were most suitable for silkworms, and how wattle bark could be produced for our fell-mongering trade, we should be indulging in a policy of real economy, which is entirely at variance with the present policy of the Government.

The Attorney General: All these things are already being done.

Mr. JONES: I am pleased to hear that. Perhaps there are other things on my list upon which I might be able to give some assistance to the Government. We find that there are many sewerage areas which are waiting for the work of installation

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

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

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

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

Mr. Johnston: The farmer pays the lot.

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

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

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

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

*Progress reported.*

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

# Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 19th February, 1918.*

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

## BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Rabbit Act Amendment.
2. Vermin Boards Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary.