

I know the difficulties we have to face in the country to keep our hospitals going. In my electorate we have a hospital second to none in the State. It has been a matter of great difficulty to keep the hospital open; therefore, I hope this Bill will help to relieve the position. Another Bill mentioned in the Governor's Speech is the Constitution Act Amendment Bill. I hope that Bill will have the effect which I desire. I trust that under that measure the number of members of Parliament will be reduced. The Labour Party have for years advocated that the Upper House should be reduced, or done away with altogether. A considerable amount of time is wasted in this House but there is more wasted in another place.

Mr. Corboy: They do not waste it there; they go away and waste the time.

Mr. HERON: The Minister for Agriculture referred last night to the necessity for putting the land alongside the existing railway lines into full use. I regret that no Bill is being brought forward to deal with this question. We have advocated for years past the imposition of a tax on unimproved land values. I think members generally agree that it is essential that such a measure should be introduced. I am disappointed that no Bill is to be brought forward by the Government. I will not touch upon the other Bills mentioned in the Governor's Speech for we will have an opportunity of discussing them later on. I would like to refer to the Railway Department, however, for we know from the speeches delivered in this Chamber that our railways are not paying, and we also know that a number of trains have been cut out. Some trains have been cut out in my electorate and no one has objected to that. Economy has to be practised and something has to be done to rectify the finances of the State. In bringing about such a reduction in the number of trains, however, consideration should be given to the comfort of those who have to travel over long distances. I refer particularly to the goldfields express which arrives in Perth on Sunday morning. The last time I travelled by that train I found that, during the concluding stages, it had been converted into a suburban train. Leaving my electorate at 7 o'clock one morning we expect to reach Perth at about 9.30 next morning. Many people who travel that long distance cannot afford sleepers, in consequence of which they have a very uncomfortable ride. The discomfort of the ride is accentuated during the last few miles owing to the suburban traffic.

Mr. Mann: It only involves about seven minutes extra.

Mr. HERON: You do not travel second class; you travel first class in comfort.

Mr. Mann: That does not affect the time taken.

Mr. HERON: It takes more than seven minutes and as the hon. member travels first class he does not appreciate what it

means to the poorer people. Just when the long distance passengers are busying themselves straightening up their luggage, preparatory to leaving at Perth, they are interfered with by the passengers from the suburban stations. In addition, this alteration hangs up other trains either in Perth or outside the central railway station. I am living at Cannington at the present time and the alteration has meant that our train is often hung up either at the central station or at East Perth. Some change should be made and the convenience of long distance passengers consulted.

On motion by Hon. T. Walker, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.13 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 23rd August, 1921.*

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

### ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Supply Bill (No. 1), £1,640,320.

### QUESTION—RETRENCHMENT, GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY asked the Minister for Education: 1. Is it the intention of the Government to retrench a number of railway and other Government employees and officers? 2. If so, what is the approximate number of employees and officers to be so retrenched? 3. What is the approximate date of such retrenchment taking effect? 4. Have the Government considered the question of finding productive employment for men so retrenched?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1. So far as departments in the Public Service are concerned, every effort is

being made to reduce administration expenses, but no general scheme of retrenchment has been considered. Some retrenchment has taken place in the Railways through fall of trade. Whether this will continue or cease depends entirely upon trade conditions. 2 and 3, No date or numbers can be determined, as the numbers employed will be affected continuously by the revival or fall in trade. 4, The Government are continuously considering the keeping of our community in productive employment.

#### QUESTION—STATE CHILDREN, DETENTION HOME.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN asked the Minister for Education: Has he any objection to placing the file dealing with the construction of the State children's detention home on the Table of the House; if not, will he lay same on the Table?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: I have no objection.

#### PRIVILEGE—BILLS, DISTRIBUTION.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM (North) [4.36]: As a matter of privilege, I desire to ask the Leader of the House whether he cannot make it convenient to lay on the Table copies of Bills when they are read the first time. We have now on the Notice Paper four Bills. I have made it my business to come here twice in order to learn what may be in those Bills, and I have found none of them available. What is the result? Presently the Leader of the House will bring down the Bills for the second reading stage and then, probably, wishing to get on with the work, he will move that we go into Committee—and this, before we have made ourselves thoroughly conversant with the contents of the Bills. I ask that they be placed on the Table after the first reading, so that we shall have time to read them and learn what they are about. Such a practice would save a great deal of misunderstanding and dissatisfaction. I am certain that if the Minister can do it he will. I am expressing the views of several other members.

The PRESIDENT: Does the hon. member wish to move any motion in connection with it?

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: No, I think it will be sufficient to draw the attention of the Minister to the matter.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.38]: It has always been the practice to circulate Bills when the second reading stage is reached. However, I will see to it that Bills are circulated as soon as they are ready. Some are put on the Notice Paper before they have actually left the printer, in order that the formal stages may be got through. However, as I say, I will see to it that they are distributed as soon as ready.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. J. W. Kirwan (for Hon. E. H. Harris), leave of absence for six consecutive sittings of the House granted to Hon. J. E. Dodd (South) on the ground of ill-health.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

##### Fourth Day.

Debate resumed from 3rd August.

Hon. A. H. PANTON (West) [4.40]: Let me congratulate the Leader of the House on his return to good health. I hope that his restored health will now continue, so that he may be with us to lead the House. I also wish to welcome the new member (Hon. F. E. S. Willmott). I am sorry he is not here to-day. I was hopeful that his arrival in the House would get him away from the parochialism he acquired in another place judging by his remarks on the Address-in-Reply. Sir Edward Wittenoom said the new member had the advantage of previous experience. But I am afraid he has quite a lot to learn up here. Coming to His Excellency's Speech, I am inclined to agree with Sir Edward Wittenoom, who said that at a first glance there did not seem to be very much in it, but that on going through it more carefully he was disposed to see red. I am not inclined to see red but, like Sir Edward, I see in the Speech quite a lot of questions which will necessitate some consideration. Naturally the first one is that of finance. I take up the attitude of giving the Government a free hand in finance for this reason: when in March last the general elections for another place were held, the financial position was certainly placed before the people by those opposed to the Government. Opposition members travelled from one end of the State to the other, endeavouring to inform the people as to the actual financial position. It may be only a coincidence, but with the exception of several members of this Chamber no members of Parliament who took the platform during the elections suggested that the Government were unable to control the finances. Consequently, the people having given a mandate to the Government to carry on for another three years, I feel in duty bound to give the Government a free hand. Notwithstanding that, I am not quite satisfied with the references in the Speech to the deficit, or so much of it as was in excess of the Treasurer's estimate. We are told in the Speech that the increase in the deficit over and above the estimate was chiefly due to a falling-off in railway revenue owing to the suspension, in whole or in part, of certain industries, and to the revenue lost as a result of the engine-drivers' strike. It has been claimed by the Premier that the revenue lost in consequence of the strike was £152,000. I think that is a fairly accurate estimate. But not one word has been said by the Premier or

anyone else to show that during the period of the strike at least £90,000 was saved in wages and salaries, and another £10,000 in coal and water. So that there was practically £100,000 saved in coal, water, wages and salaries. The fact has been publicly stated that there was a loss in revenue of £152,000 and an attempt was made to lead the people to believe that the great bulk of railway officials were being paid their salaries during the strike. This was not so. From information I have gathered, I understand there was somewhere about £90,000 saved during that period. Although approximately £152,000 in revenue was lost, I unhesitatingly say there was no necessity for even £52,000, or £1,000, to be lost. As one who took some part in the trouble for a full week prior to the men getting their time, I know that the disputes committee worked day and night to induce the Government to agree to what they actually agreed to a fortnight after the strike started. If any revenue was lost it was lost owing to the fact that the Government were not prepared, until a fortnight after the strike, to listen to anything like reason. With regard to the partial or complete suspension of industries, I am assuming that the reference in the Speech deals particularly with mining. There is no doubt that the closing down of a large number of mines, or their partial suspension, has had a material effect on the revenue of the railway system. Not only is it a question of industries closing down, but there is another factor to be taken into consideration. The general opinion of more especially the consuming section of the people of the State is that there is going to be a big fall in prices; whether they are right or wrong I am not prepared to say at this juncture. That feeling, at all events, is abroad. The consequence is that there is to all intents and purposes a strike so far as the consumers are concerned, in that they are not purchasing at the same rate as they were before, as they are waiting for a fall in prices. The storekeepers and business people generally in the country, to which our railways go, are not purchasing the same amount of goods as heretofore, and there is, therefore, not the same amount of freight carried over the railways. The Speech states that the partial collapse of the mining industry has been brought about, to a large extent, by the cost of production owing to the recent miners' award. At a meeting of shareholders of the Golden Horseshoe Mining Company in London on the 18th May, the chairman of directors, Sir John Purcell, said, as to the recent award of the State Arbitration Court, that there was a general opinion that under it the mining industry must collapse; and to have placed such impossible restrictions on the mining of gold was a blunder which the Government of Western Australia must rectify. I am inclined to agree with Sir John Purcell that the Government have to rectify the position. I do not, however, agree that it is going to be done by reducing the wages

granted to the miners under the Arbitration Court award. Notwithstanding what may be said by those who are industrially opposed to the miners, the award issued by the court was justifiable, and the men who benefited under it were entitled to every penny they got. It is a remarkable fact that almost since the inception of the principle of arbitration in Australia, every case has been fought upon what it costs a man, his wife and children to live. The Western Australian Arbitration Act, by which the Arbitration Court is guided, lays it down that the court can only make an award in accordance with what a man, his wife and three children may live upon in reasonable comfort. When the court made this award in the case of the miners, as I was in the unfortunate position of having to take the case in the court, I was told that we had ruined the industry. To show what was in the minds of the members of the court I will read a few remarks by Mr. Justice Burnside the president of the Arbitration Court at the time when he delivered the award. He said—

It has been stated that the court has departed on a new scheme and on its own ideas in fixing the basic wage. That statement is based entirely upon a confusion of ideas. If as is my opinion the court should be guided by Mr. Knibbs' figures and if Mr. Knibbs' figures are intelligently applied it will be found that the court's award is below Mr. Knibbs' figures not above them. The confusion arises from this reason: Some time ago, some four or five months ago, the court fixed a basic wage for the railway service here in Perth, and it was pointed out that in arriving at that basic wage the figures disclosed by Mr. Knibbs had been taken as the guide: 8s. being the minimum fixed in 1907, 1,000 being the index figure, and 1,654 being the figure at present representing the 1920 index, on a common proportion sum the result will be shown to be 13s. 4d.

That was the amount awarded to the railway union by the court at the time as the minimum wage.

Now, if the same principle is applied to Kalgoorlie, what will be found? It must be borne in mind that here, if I may say so, the confusion arises. The basis in Kalgoorlie was 10s. per day, not 8s. per day. In 1902 the court, presided over by the late Mr. Justice Moorhead, fixed the minimum wage for Kalgoorlie for surface labourers at 10s. per day, and if you take 10s. per day as the basic wage for Kalgoorlie in 1902, and carry it on till 1908, 1909, or 1910, when Mr. Knibbs started his calculations, you will find the problem works out in this way: As 1,000—which is Mr. Knibbs' index figure—is to to-day's base figure for Kalgoorlie 1768, so is 10s. to 17s. 6d., and that is the true result Mr. Knibbs' figures apply to this award. To test it by another method, I would suggest to the critics to try this:

In 1902 the sovereign was worth 20s. and the miner was getting 10s. per day. That is to say, the wage at Kalgoorlie paid to the surface labourer was half a sovereign. What is the half sovereign today in actual money? Half of 35s. = 17s. 6d. That, again, coincides with the statistics that Mr. Knibbs gives, so that in the figure we have arrived at of 16s., if there has been any departure, it will be found the departure is on the lower side.

That is the finding of the President of the Arbitration Court. He clearly states that he only awarded the 16s. per day as the minimum rate in Kalgoorlie at the time when the actual rate for the cost of living, according to Mr. Knibbs, was 17s. 9d. I mention that to show how remarkable it is that the Arbitration Court, ever since its inception, has based its awards on the actual cost of living, whereas we now find that the employers generally are asking that the cost of living should not be the basis at all, but a question of whether an industry can stand an award or not. Until such time as the Act is amended I do not see how the court can carry out its functions under the Act, inasmuch as the court states that it must award a minimum rate sufficient to keep a man, his wife and three children in reasonable comfort. As Sir John Purcell said, it is a matter for the State to remedy. The only way in which it can be remedied is for the taxpayers of the State to take their share of the burden instead of asking the miners to take it. That is being done in another big industry in the State. The three great industries in Western Australia are wheat growing, wool growing, and mining. It is interesting to compare the wheat growing with the mining industry. I want members of the Country Party to take notice of what I am going to say about the wheat growers owing to the fact that their leader in the Commonwealth Parliament, Dr. Earle Page, says that they are governing the State now. We find that the wheat growers have a pool. They also have a fixed price for wheat for home consumption, a price which they consider to be a reasonable one.

Hon. H. Stewart: Not in this State, but the Commonwealth.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: We pay 9s. per bushel for wheat for home consumption in this State. I do not care who fixed the price. I know that there was no Arbitration court sitting and no evidence taken by such court in connection with the matter. The fact remains that 9s. is paid here to the wheat grower for a period of 12 months for his wheat for local consumption. I do not even complain that 9s. a bushel is too high. I believe that every worker is entitled to the full results of his labour. When the farmers and the primary producers agree with me on that point there will, for my part, be no more strikes. The farmers, at all events, want the full results of their labour in securing 9s. a bushel for their wheat.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What about the fruit growers?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I will deal with them at another time. The wheat growers also have another pull over the taxpayers. There is some interesting reading in the report upon the working of the railways and tramway system for the year ended 30th June, 1920. I have not been able to deal with any later report, because it is not available. I find from the report that the working expenses per train mile are 98.96d. plus the interest on borrowed money 34.17d., making a total of 133.13d. per mile. The average load during the year was 72.2 tons so that the actual cost was 1.84d. per ton mile. That is the actual amount it cost to run our railways during that year. On page 87 of the report we find an interesting statement as to how the ton mileage works out. Whilst it costs 1.84d. per ton mile to run our railways, the wheat earnings for the year represented 1.06d. per ton mile, showing a loss of .78d. on every ton mile of wheat we carried.

Hon. H. Stewart: On wheat or on all goods?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: On wheat alone. The actual mileage of wheat for the year was 39,197,348 miles, which, showing a loss of .78d. per mile, provide for a running loss on wheat alone of £127,391.

Hon. J. Ewing: Have they not put up the rates recently?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: In the same table we find that the earnings on fertilisers, which are a very necessary acquisition to wheat growing, are .42d. per ton mile, which shows a loss of 1.42d. per ton mile. The ton mileage on fertilisers was 11,178,336 ton miles, which, showing a loss of 1.42d., provided for a running loss on fertilisers of £66,135. We had an actual total loss on wheat and fertiliser of £193,528. I am aware that these figures will not represent the results for the year ended on the 30th June, 1921, because increased wages and salaries and higher cost of materials will probably make a great difference in the ton mileage cost of our railways. However, the fares and freights have also gone up, and probably the relative position will be about the same. Or, rather, I fear there will be a greater loss disclosed by the figures for the financial year which has just expired. It may be interesting to the wool growers to learn that in the same table the wool earnings are shown at 5.06d. per ton mile, and the train mileage of wool at 2,250,047 tons, returning a profit of £30,118. So the wool growers are not exploiting the taxpayer. Naturally, the loss on the carriage of wheat and fertiliser falls upon the taxpayers in general, many of whom are primary producers. In the province which I represent there are numbers of fruit growers and market gardeners—at Jandakot, for instance. To these producers fertiliser is very necessary. Fertiliser is essential even for the growing of cabbages in one's back

yard. During many years the cattle boats from the North-West proceeded to Robb's Jetty and unloaded their cattle there, and then returned to Fremantle; and the lumpers, on the trip back, were industriously unloading the manure into the sea. After considerable agitation, permission was obtained to have that manure sent to Spearwood and Jandakot. On the question of price, the argument was that the stuff was no good to the boats. The Fremantle Harbour Trust were wise enough to see the advantage which must result from having the manure sent to the market gardens and the orchards. Accordingly, they shift the manure into the trucks free of cost. The Railway Department, on the other hand, charge 2s. 6d. per ton for conveying the manure to Spearwood, a distance of 5 miles.

Hon. J. Nicholson: There is, of course, the running back of the trucks empty.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Quite a number of trucks run up country empty in order to bring back wheat. Possibly the trucks go out to Spearwood full of manure and come back carrying something else. I raise no objection whatever to the farmers' getting their share of the good things going in the Railway Department; but it is unfair that the mining industry should be taxed by dividend duty, income tax, and high railway freights on mining requisites, which, I may say, carry the highest rates charged. Such burdens ought not to be placed upon the mining industry in order to make good the losses incurred on the carriage of wheat and fertiliser. Hon. members will agree that the mining industry has been an important industry in this State and should still be an important industry here. From 1886 to the end of June, 1920, the statistics of gold mining show that 33,999,028 fine ounces of gold have been obtained in Western Australia, valued at £144,418,773. The dividends paid during that period total £27,910,605. The producers in the mining industry, therefore, have just as much right to ask for assistance through the Railways as have the wheat growers.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: What are the mining returns for the last 12 months?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I have not that information. The statistics I have quoted are the latest issued by our Government Statist. However, even if very little gold were being obtained now, the fact remains that there is a great deal of gold still to be got here. The reason why the low grade ore mines are not producing to-day is, simply, the cost of production. In all seriousness I declare that the increased wages are a very small item compared with the other costs of production in the mining industry. If the Government intend to assist the industry, they must render that assistance in the same way as assistance is given to wheat growing; namely, by making the general taxpayer bear his share of the burden, instead of the individual

miner being asked to bear the lot. If the primary producers of this State are going in for economy—and I understand that economy is the battle cry of the Government to-day—I want some further information as to how economy is to be effected. At the primary producers' conference the other day Dr. Page, the Leader of the Country Party in the Commonwealth Parliament, a gentleman of whom some notice should be taken, said, amidst loud applause, that in this State the Country Party had practically attained the position of Government, and he added that the whole of the Commonwealth was looking on to see what would be the outcome of the endeavours of the Country Party of Western Australia to secure economy in administration. I agree that Dr. Page should be supported, but I want to know whether our Country Party friends are setting out to economise at somebody else's expense. From the figures I have quoted, it seems that such is the case. If it is essential that the general taxpayer should be taxed for the benefit of wheat growing, it is just as essential that he should be taxed for the maintenance of any other large industry—gold mining, for instance. According to the Governor's Speech, last year's legislation in regard to tributing has not been submitted to a full trial, owing to the opposition of the mining companies. As one who took some part in the framing of that legislation, I certainly consider that this paragraph in the Governor's Speech calls for further explanation. I want the Government to tell me whether we are to spend our time in this House passing legislation which is to be simply set aside by some section of the community, who declare that they do not care a snap of the fingers for the law of the land. In those circumstances the Government simply say, "Very well, we will have a Royal Commission to see what is wrong with that legislation." Is that to be tolerated? Yet that is what has occurred in this instance. The Chamber of Mines have distinctly declared, not only to the men, but also to the Government, that they will take no heed of that legislation.

The Minister for Education: There is nothing compulsory on the companies in that legislation.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: In that case, what was the use of passing the legislation? And why put the country to the expense of a Royal Commission to inquire into that legislation! The House ought to insist on knowing, before it passes legislation, whether that legislation is to be obeyed, or whether the old rule of one law for the poor and another for the rich still holds good. That is what the workers on the goldfields want to know. If gold mining is to be maintained in this State, it will be maintained by tributing. The companies have had their millions in dividends. The ore is becoming low grade, the depths of the mines are increasing, and,

naturally, the cost of production is rising. Consequently the companies are unable to earn the same dividends as before. Now they say to the workers, "We are prepared to let you have the mines on tribute, but it must be on our own good terms." The Government, quite rightly, stepped in last session to see that the tributers got a fair deal; but evidently the Government are not strong enough to support their own legislation. Had the object of that legislation been to compel the tributers to do something or other, and had the tributers refused to do it, and had their places been filled by other men, it would have been interesting to see what action the Government would then have taken, in the event of the tributers' resisting.

The Minister for Education: There is nothing in that legislation to compel the companies to do anything.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I maintain that every member who helped to pass that legislation did so under the belief that that legislation would represent the law of the land as regards tributing. But the law has been flouted.

Hon. H. Stewart: The result of that legislation was foreseen.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I find from the Governor's Speech that we are to have a new port in the North-West. I read Sir Edward Wittenoom's speech in this debate, and I noted his statement that he considers it would be far better to spend the money in doing something to improve existing ports. I am open to correction if I am not citing the hon. member correctly. Now, I go further and say that, in my opinion, the money can be well spent not only in improving existing ports of the North-West but also in doing something for the ports of Bunbury, Geraldton, Albany, and Fremantle. It seems to me that the Government are setting out to incur an expense which at present is absolutely unjustified. The ports that we already have are practically at a standstill for the want of money which should be expended on them.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Cut the North-West out altogether, and hand it over to somebody else.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Last January I made a suggestion that the railways should be handed over to somebody, and I was nearly struck for doing so. Therefore I advise Mr. Miles to refrain from such interjections. We are told that public works have been restricted owing to the high cost of rails and so forth; and yet the Government propose to extend the tramway system in the metropolitan area. I do not suppose we shall have much voice in the matter, but I must raise my protest against any extension of the tramways in the metropolitan area at the present time. Such expression simply means competition with the ferries and the suburban railway service. Trains are already being cut out because of lack of sufficient passenger traffic.

Hon. J. Duffell: There is no ferry at Belmont.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The tramway system of Perth is, I consider, an absolute disgrace. Nothing else can be said about it. On a recent visit to the Eastern States I was particularly struck with the tramway systems there; and after seeing them I am thoroughly well ashamed of what we have in Perth. If there is £50,000 to be spent on the tramways, I hope the Government will devote that sum to the improvement of existing tracks and of the rolling stock that we have. People would sooner walk than ride nowadays. How can we expect anybody to pay to ride in our cars when they are allowed to get into such a condition? It is rather pleasing to have an admission from the Premier that the business undertakings, and not the trading concerns of the State, are responsible for the loss. It must be very gratifying to most members here to have that assurance from the Premier. The sum paid into revenue by the much-abused trading concerns last year was £7,784. In other words the deficit would have been £7,784 greater but for the much-abused trading concerns. I am prepared to take the Premier's statement. It was a very definite statement made in another place amid loud applause and many interjections, but the Premier made it apparent to the public that the business undertakings, the railways, tramways, and so forth, which have always been State owned, and not the much-abused trading concerns which the Labour Party were guilty of instituting, were responsible for the financial loss. Members should be fair and should either contradict the Premier's statement or else refrain from talking about the trading concerns.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Look at the accounts.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I presume the Premier had all the figures before him. I looked at the financial statement for the year ended the 30th June and found that the revenue received from the State trading concerns amounted to £7,784, but against that amount I could find no item of expenditure. The hon. member could not have seen the accounts.

Hon. T. Moore: There is none so blind as he who will not see.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The hon. member may put it that way. I am rather pleased that the battle-cry of this State has been changed from that which has been raised during the last two or three sessions. For some years past the battle-cry not only of the Government of this State but throughout the world has been produce, produce and more production, but that battle-cry has gone. We have now the battle-cry economise, economise and still more economy. That is the battle-cry to-day.

Hon. J. Nicholson: And more population.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: During the last three or four years while the cry of produce, produce was being raised, the workers of Australia and of Great Britain, too, heard the cry and went on producing for their lives. Now they are told to economise. They are walking about the streets unemployed

after listening to the cry produce, produce, after having filled the factories with clothes and boots, themselves having very little of either to wear. The flour mills of the State are full of flour and the men are walking about out of work, and yet bread is dearer than ever it was. Perhaps that is the reason why the cry has been changed from produce to economise. Thousands of men in Australia and Great Britain are unemployed. Worsted and woollen mills in England are idle owing to the importation of worsted and woollen goods from Germany. We are selling our wheat in Germany cheaper than our own people can buy it, and yet we are told to economise. I came across a rather interesting statement from a Bradford correspondent, which I hope I shall be permitted to read because it deals with the question of economy. During the first four months of last year England imported 4,336 square yards of worsted cloth from Germany. In the first four months of this year England imported 19,575 square yards of worsted cloth from Germany. During the first four months of last year 14,518 square yards of woollen cloth was imported from Germany, whereas during the first four months of this year 56,569 square yards of woollen cloth was imported from Germany into England. It would be interesting to know how much of that cloth finds its way to Australia to the detriment of our own woollen mills. We won the war; no one denies that, but it would be very hard to say who is going to benefit most from the war. The Prime Minister when in Western Australia during the war said, "Never again will we trade with Germany." Yet here we are trading for our lives. I have no objection to that.

Hon. J. Cornell: Australia is not trading with Germany.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Is not selling wheat trading with Germany? I am given to understand that wheat has been sold to Germany. That may not be trading. I will call it selling and buying.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It was only a sale.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: It was a pretty good sale so far as Germany was concerned. I am satisfied that many grave problems will confront the Government during the next 12 months or two years, especially industrial troubles. There are problems not only before the Government, but before the whole of the commercial community. The cries of "Down with wages," and "Abolish the arbitration courts" are not going to solve those problems. It is all very well for the Premier of South Australia, Mr. Barwell, to talk about downing wages; it is all very well for the Acting Prime Minister, Sir Joseph Cook, to talk about abolishing the arbitration courts; it is all very well for Mr. Lee Steere to say "We won't have the arbitration court," and for the Tsar of the Country Party, Mr. Monger, to talk of what "we will do" to the workers. The fact remains that the workers the world over have put up a big and bitter fight for what they

have to-day, and they are going to put up a big and bitter fight before they lose what they have, unless there is a big reduction in the cost of living. That is the position we are faced with. Everyone knows that during the war the price of commodities went up by leaps and bounds. It was absolutely impossible to keep wages anywhere near the soaring prices, even with an aeroplane; but now that there is a levelling down of the cost of commodities, we find that there is a cry to bring wages down. Although the cost of commodities went up at the rate of 75 per cent. and was followed by an increase in wages of only 12½ per cent., they now want the wages brought down by 25 per cent. notwithstanding that the cost of living has declined by only about 2 per cent. The workers will sit tight, and observe with interest what is going on. Members must realise and the commercial community too must realise that the purchasing power of the workers' wages is lower than it was 10 years ago, and that it is useless to ask the worker to toil for eight hours a day for something less than is sufficient to keep himself, his wife, and family. I do not think members wish that this should be done, but they are overlooking the great fact that the purchasing power of the workers' wages is lower than it was 10 years ago. The statistics prove this; it is a fact which cannot be denied. All the talk in the world cannot gain-say this fact. We have the certified declaration of the Commonwealth Statistician; we have the finding of the Basic Wage Commission; we have the utterances of the arbitration court judges all over the Commonwealth, and the workers surely cannot be expected to give up what they have obtained only after a very big fight. In conclusion, I appeal to members and if possible to the commercial community of this State also to continue as they were doing a few months ago, namely, in the direction of settling these disputes around the conference table. For some reason or other this system has been stopped. During the whole of the time that the cost of living was going up when wages were still lagging far behind, I stated from the floor of this House that the Employers' Federation were prepared to assist at all times at round table conferences. In that way we got over most of our difficulties. During the last three years I have had as strenuous a time as almost any man in the Labour movement attending these conferences.

Hon. J. Duffell: The wages board system would overcome the difficulty.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I do not care what system is adopted, but the bulk of the community to-day are urging that the arbitration court is unsuitable. I agree that the arbitration court cannot keep pace with the work. Other people, however, are saying that they are going to get wages down whether we like it or not, either at the point of the bayonet or by some other means, but the worker in Australia will not stand that. I know the worker of Australia as well as

most men, and he is to-day what he always has been. He is prepared to sit at a conference table and talk over wages and conditions and go to the arbitration court and put up his fight there for those wages and conditions, but he will not suffer what he has won to be torn from him ruthlessly by the employers with the police supporting them. It is well for the commercial community to get any idea of this kind out of their heads. It will not come to pass. If the commercial community and the Government want industrial peace, my advice is to let their battle cry for the future be "Hands off arbitration and let us get around the conference table."

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [5.25]: I was not present at the opening of the session and I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to join in the expressions of regret which have been uttered regarding the fact that our old and esteemed colleague, Hon. E. M. Clarke, is no longer with us. In an experience extending over twelve years, I always found that gentleman kind in thought and word and deed. He was typical of the best type of those pioneers who helped to make Western Australia what it is, and his shrewdness often was of material assistance in our deliberations in this Chamber. In welcoming his successor, it is gratifying to know that he is a gentleman who has had Ministerial experience, one who by reason of his experience in another place and especially his experience in the Cabinet will be of help in this Council. At no time in the history of the State was there greater need for men of ripe experience and sound judgment than at the present time. We were never faced with graver problems. I would like to express appreciation of the remarks of Mr. Panton regarding the mining industry and the treatment it has received, not only from the present Government, but from the Governments in the past. The goldfields members for a great many years have been pointing out how the assistance which has been extended to the mining industry has never been equal in generosity to the assistance which has been extended to other industries, but those of us who have continually harped upon that question seem to have been almost beating the wind, and very little result has come from it. However, I would like to point out that at no time has the consideration of the Government towards the mining industry been more necessary than it is at present. When Mr. Panton was speaking an hon. member interjected, "What is the gold output at the present time?" Because the gold output is declining, because it is small, there is all the more necessity for the Government to give all the help they possibly can to an industry that never needed it more than it does just now. Great as might be the necessity to extend help to the mining industry, great as might be the necessity to extend help to farming and other indus-

tries of this State, still more important to my mind is the gravity of the financial situation. I am not going into figures to stress the seriousness of that question, but I think it is one that ought to exercise the attention of the Government and of every member of Parliament to a greater extent than all the other questions that are now before the country. Next in gravity to the financial question, I would put two other aspects that call for attention by the Government at the present time. In Western Australia we have a population of some 330,000 people, or merely a handful holding a third of this vast Continent. Western Australia is a huge empty space that needs to be filled and the necessity for encouraging immigration comes, to my mind, next in importance to the necessity for attending to the financial aspect. After that in seriousness I would place the fact that the recent census returns have shown an extraordinary drift towards the capital in Western Australia. Dealing with the financial question, no matter how the Treasurer or the Government may explain the position, the fact cannot be denied that during the two years the present Government have been in office we have spent about £1,300,000 more than our income. That sort of thing cannot possibly go on. Each year, no matter whether it be the present Government or previous Governments, we have been met with promises of improvement in the financial position, and with promises that the deficit will not be so large as in previous years. Despite these assurances, we see no evidence of improvement whatsoever in the financial results of each succeeding year. When the Leader of the House comes to reply to the remarks which have been made regarding the financial position, he will tell us, no doubt, as he has told us before, and quite rightly so, that we should never forget the annual contributions to the sinking fund. Doubtless also he will make a comparison between the annual contributions to the sinking fund—something of the sort appears in the Governor's Speech—and the deficit, and indicate that the position is not as bad as the mere bald statement of the deficit would suggest; so that the position would be better if, as the Treasurer has already said, it were not for the losses on what the Treasurer has described as "our utility services." It has been said that there would be no deficit if it were not for these services. The loss on them amounted to nearly £600,000. I think the exact figures given by the Treasurer in another place were £594,000 for the year. We will be told, too, that if there had not been these losses the estimate given by the Treasurer would have been realised. All these "ifs" and "buts," which continually crop up in the speeches of Treasurers in succeeding Governments, are becoming very tiresome. No matter what the Leader of the House may say, he cannot get away from the fact that the financial position is getting worse and that we are drifting quickly to leeward. The total deficit is in the neighbourhood of five millions.



It is quite true that it is extraordinarily difficult to make any tangible suggestion as to how the Government can improve the finances. All sorts of statements are made as to what the Government ought to do, but it is extremely difficult indeed to say what course is best to adopt. Some members of the Ministry have gone so far as to say that nothing further can be done than has already been done. I am not one of those who believe that nothing further can be done than has been done. On the contrary, I think it is possible to improve the financial position to a considerable extent. Because this improvement has not been effected by the present Government or by previous Governments, the deduction I must make is that the task of improving the finances is really beyond the capacity of the various Treasurers and Ministers. The problem requires men with more financial and business ability than members of the Government possess. I suggest that the Government seek the assistance of men of financial and business ability in order to advise them how to get out of the difficulties confronting them. There is nothing in any way derogatory to the dignity of the Government in asking for the assistance of such men. The Imperial Government have just formed a business committee for the purpose of making recommendations to the Government and to see whether any reduction can be made in the expenditure; whether means can be adopted for improving the revenue and generally to advise how best the finances can be straightened. The Opposition in another place have been generous enough to say that they will help in every possible way. Personally I do not think that the business or financial capacity of the members of the Opposition is equal to a task of such a nature even when it is combined with the talents of the present Administration. I think assistance might be got from men of financial experience and from leading business men, just as the Imperial Government have sought assistance in straightening out the finances at Home. I am perfectly satisfied that if there had been a business committee in existence proposals which have been brought forward from time to time would have been carried out long ago. I notice that the Minister for Railways has promised that motor trains will be utilised in the back country. That will mean a considerable reduction in the expenditure on the running of trains.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The motor trains would require to be different from those in Victoria.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: At any rate, that is one suggestion which I am sure would have been made years ago if such a committee had been in existence. That one suggestion will unquestionably mean a great saving in connection with the railways. Nearly every day I notice the train running between Boulder and Kalgourlie. It is a very heavy train composed of a large number of carriages and is daily dragged up a hill. The train makes that journey many times during the day. All

the requirements would be met by a light motor train running over those rails. That is only one example of what we can find all over the State. A committee of business men would inquire into the expenditure of utility services which, according to the Treasurer, are responsible for the deficit, and they would be able to make recommendations of material assistance to the Government. Of course, if the Government appointed some committee that would merely be a sort of white-washing body which would say that the country was being run on the most economical lines and which would fall in with the Treasurer's statements—although we are going back to such an extent in the finances, the Treasurer persists in saying he is practising economy—such a committee would be of no advantage whatsoever. I do not know whether the associated banks would be prepared to nominate a couple of members to sit on the committee, but if so, two members could be drawn from their ranks and the Chamber of Commerce could nominate a couple as well. The committee would be, of course, merely an advisory one, but it would help to create confidence abroad, inasmuch as the appointment of such a committee would show a desire on the part of the Government to run the country on business lines. If the British Government can appoint a committee to assist them in dealing with the finances of the British Isles, surely the State Government are not too superior to seek the assistance of some committee in order to help in straightening out our finances.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Hear, hear! Quite right.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Business men and financial men do not often go into Parliament, and, as a matter of fact, when such men are anxious to do so, as a rule they cannot get elected. Men of the type I refer to are usually absorbed entirely in business affairs, making it practically impossible for them to turn their minds to politics and become successful. Such a committee sitting around a table and talking over the financial affairs of the country and going into them thoroughly, would be of some help and at any rate the proposal would be worth trying.

Hon. G. W. Miles: If the Government were strong enough to carry out their recommendations, that might be so, but they would not be strong enough.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: If the Government did not carry out the recommendations of the committee, still those recommendations would be on record. If the Government came forward with the committee's recommendations to Parliament, those recommendations would materially assist the Government in gaining Parliament's approval. If the Government could say to the House, "This committee has advised a certain course of action and we recommend its adoption," such an announcement would influence a large number of members of Parliament. We are

now in such a financial position that anything that possibly can be done to inspire confidence abroad ought to be done, and I think that the Government could very well follow the example set them by the Imperial authorities.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: The committee might take the place of the Government.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Perhaps that would do no harm. I am inclined to think that a committee of the nature I suggest, would get us out of our financial difficulties much more expeditiously than the Government. The Government would have to take into account the question of the development of the country.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: If you get the Primary Producers' Association to endorse your suggestion, the Government will adopt it.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Judging by the resolutions passed by the association demanding economy, I should say that that organisation would probably endorse the proposal. It is rather a pity that the association did not advance the proposal long ago, for had they done so, the probabilities are it would have been adopted before this.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I thought we had all the business men in town in this House.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: The hon. member does not know very much about the financial and business men of Perth if he says that they are all in this Chamber.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I meant some of them.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I think there are many more business men outside Parliament than you will ever find in Parliament. On the question of immigration, I was in England last year and what struck me while I was there was the great interest that was taken by the people generally in Australia and in Australian questions. The war proved such a great advertisement for Australia that everybody wanted to know something about the country, and as I travelled about, in trains or trams or 'busses, wherever I went, and engaged in conversation with people whom I met, all seemed to think well of Australia. They appeared to be of the opinion that Australia was a land where there was bread and work for all, and where the sun was always shining, and I was amazed at the number of people who had it in their minds to come to Australia, or to get their sons or dependants to come to Australia. I am quite satisfied that there are vast numbers to-day, in England who would be eager and willing to come to this part of the world if they had the chance. Some of those whom I met were suitable in every respect and some had a certain amount of money which they were willing to bring with them.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Why do they not come?

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: The hon. member asks me why they have not come to Western Australia. That is one of the things

I would like the Government to explain, because there has been a great falling off in immigration in comparison to what it was before the war. In the five years prior to the beginning of the war, over 8,000 immigrants per annum came to Western Australia. In the last two years the total was 3,400, that is, at the rate of 1,700 per annum. When I went to the Agent General's office I found the place crowded with people who were making inquiries, and all appeared anxious to come out. They seemed to be of a good type, but at that particular period, I understand, there was a good deal of difficulty about shipping. But whatever the difficulty is, it should be explained to the House. It is a great pity in a State such as this, and when such a large number of people are anxious to emigrate to it, that every possible facility should not be given to those people. In Western Australia our trouble has been that the conveniences and requirements of the people are far ahead of the population we have. There are railways everywhere, roads built, schools erected, and we have an Agricultural Bank and an Industries Assistance Board, and, generally speaking, the people who come here to-day are in a vastly better position than the people who came out in the early days. Those who came out in the years gone by and opened up the country had none of the advantages which I have quoted, and they had not the knowledge of the uses to which they could put the land. The immigrant to-day who cannot make a livelihood is not worth his salt. The Government, in connection with their policy of immigration, should not hesitate to encourage people to come out. They will be a poor type indeed if they fail. The other point to which I wish to refer is the alarming drift of the population towards the capital. According to the census returns, this drift has been at a greater rate in Western Australia than in any other State. The population within 12 miles of Perth is out of all proportion to the population of the rest of the State. Mr. Panton suggested one scheme which, to my mind, ought to be put forward with a view to preventing that drift towards the capital, and that is to open the outlying ports of the State to a greater extent than has been done in the past. No matter to which port one may go, one hears constant complaints of the want of facilities in regard to shipping. At Albany a separation movement is talked about, and at Geraldton they are talking in much the same way, and all because there has not been sufficient attention paid to the opening up of those ports. The Government, if it is desired to stop the drift to the capital, should give every encouragement to the men in the back blocks, those engaged in developing the natural resources of the State. After all, those men who are away in the back blocks are the back bone of the country, and without them the city could not exist. For that reason,

personally, I welcome the growth of the Country Party, although I am not a member of that party and am never likely to be one. Still I welcome their growing strength because I think they will check the evil of centralisation and will cause more attention to be paid to the men outback who are the most deserving citizens of the State.

On motion by Hon. J. Cunningham, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 5.53 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 23rd August, 1921.*

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

### QUESTION—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT, AMENDMENT.

Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Works: 1, When does he intend to introduce an amendment of the Municipal Corporations Act to give to municipalities the option of rating on the unimproved value of land? 2, In view of the fact that the municipal year commences on the 1st November, will he consider the advisability of introducing the Bill at a sufficiently early stage to allow of its being brought into force for the next municipal year?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, If possible this session. 2, No avoidable delay will occur.

### QUESTION—MIDLAND WORKSHOPS, APPRENTICESHIPS.

Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Who are the members of the Apprentices Selection Board at the Locomotive Workshops at Midland Junction? 2, What is the method adopted in selecting apprentices?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, The workshops manager, shop foreman of trade concerned, union representative of trade concerned. 2, (a) Educational qualifications are tabulated and considered; (b) candidates are interviewed by the Board, and physique and personality noted; (c) candidates with outstanding qualifications in (a) and (b) are given preference; (d) candidates with approximately equal qualifications in (a) and (b) ballot for order of appointment.

### QUESTIONS (2)—WHEAT.

#### *Firm offers for Export.*

Mr. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Has it been the practice of the State Wheat Marketing Scheme to give exporters of Western Australian wheat firm offers of wheat for export for 48 hours, to enable them to arrange freight and quote for the delivery of the wheat in, say, South Africa? 2, Has this system been terminated under instructions from the Australian Wheat Board in Melbourne? 3, Are the Government aware that this action will prejudice the sale of Western Australian wheat, as grain exporters in this State obtaining only tentative quotations locally will be unable to quote against Victorian exporters who are in close touch with the Australian Wheat Board in Melbourne and are able to obtain firm offers of wheat there? 4, Will he protest to the Australian Wheat Board against the disadvantages imposed on the export of Western Australian wheat in this respect, and the consequent loss to the Western Australian producer?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, Yes, to certain destinations on behalf of the Australian Wheat Board. 2, Yes. 3, The export of the actual grain of the Western Australian harvest to desirable markets may be affected, but the local pool will share in any Australian wheat sales effected overseas. 4, (a) Yes; I have done so. (b) There is no loss to the Western Australian producer.

#### *Local Contract Notes for Export.*

Mr. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Has it been the practice of the State Wheat Marketing Scheme to issue contract notes locally for sales of Western Australian wheat for export? 2, Is it true that this practice has been stopped under recent instructions from the Australian Wheat Board in Melbourne, and that the Australian Wheat Board has decided that all such sales are to be finalised in Melbourne in future? 3, What are the reasons for this alteration? 4, Is he aware that this new system will place Melbourne brokers at a great advantage as compared with residents of Western Australia in regard to handling Western Australian wheat for export, with a corresponding loss to the Western Australia-