

I bring this matter before the House in order that it may receive further consideration. I hope further consideration will be given by the Government not only to advancing our primary industries by settling the land, but also to advancing and encouraging our secondary industries. The two must go hand in hand. As I had occasion to say the other day, we must recognise the fact that there are many men coming out to this State, and even in this State at present, who are not fitted for going on the land, but these same men might be most useful as operatives in factories or as workmen in other spheres. I hope it will be recognised that the development of our primary and secondary industries must go hand in hand. It is our duty to advance both, because we can never be a self-contained or self-supporting State unless we have both primary and secondary industries flourishing. Subject to what I have said on certain points, I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 31st August, 1922.

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

COUNTRY PARTY LEADERSHIP.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. H. K. Maley—Greenough) [4.35]: With your permission, Sir, I should like to

inform the House that following upon the resignation of the member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) and the member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson) as Leader and Deputy Leader respectively of the Country Party, that party has appointed me as Leader and the member for York (Mr. Latham) as Deputy Leader.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Latham, leave of absence for two weeks granted to the member for Beverley (Mr. Brown) on the ground of ill-health.

SWEARING-IN OF NEW MINISTER.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the return of the writ for the by-election of the Swan electorate. It appears from the endorsement thereon that the Hon. Richard Stanley Sampson has been returned unopposed. I am now prepared to swear in the hon. member.

The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) accordingly took and subscribed the oath, and signed the roll.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Mining Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Mines.
- 2, Pensioners' Rates Exemption.
Introduced by Capt. Carter.

PAPERS—MINING ACCIDENT, GOLDEN HORSESHOE.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier ordered—
“That all papers relating to the fatal accident which occurred on the Golden Horseshoe Estates mine, Boulder, on the 6th December, 1921, be laid upon the Table of the House.”

PAPERS—OIL LEASES, WORK DONE.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier ordered—
“That all reports made to the Minister for Mines in accordance with the provisions of the Mining Act Amendment Act, 1920, relating to work done by persons licensed to prospect for mineral oil be laid upon the Table.”

MOTION—RETURNED SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

To inquire by Royal Commission.

Mr. WILSON (Collie) [4.40]: I move—
That in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that a Royal Commission should be appointed to go into all phases of the “land settlement policy” in regard to repatriated soldiers of the A.I.F. who are now struggling under adverse circumstances and must

eventually relinquish their holdings owing to the heavy financial load that they are at present carrying, unless some permanent relief is given to them in the immediate future.

I do not bring this matter forward in any hostile spirit. I have moved the motion with the intention of remedying certain mistakes that have been made in placing soldier settlers on the land, or in keeping them there. For many months past the various papers in this State have been hammering away at the question of soldier settlers, and discussing the manner in which they have been treated in regard to land clearing and other questions incidental to farming. Most of the complaints I have before me are confined practically to South-West settlers. There have been few complaints from the wheat belt, the bounteous harvests there during the past three years, as well as the high prices they have obtained for their produce, having set many of the soldier settlers on their feet. In the South-West there has been a different tale to tell. I am not the first in the field in bringing this question before any Parliament in Australia. In New South Wales a motion of a similar character to this was brought forward recently. The "Hansard" of that State, dated August 16th, shows that a motion was moved by Lieut.-Col. Rutledge for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into and report upon the administration of and all the conditions attaching to soldier settlement in all its branches, with a view to adjusting grievances and placing such settlement on a satisfactory basis. In speaking to the motion that hon. member said—

The idea I have in asking for it is that the committee, as an independent body, may be able to inquire into the whole question of soldier settlement to see if something cannot be done to make settlers more satisfied.

Capt. Dunn, another member of the New South Wales Parliament, said he looked upon this as one of the most important matters that had come before the House. As a returned man himself he was naturally anxious to do something to help the men who were settled on the land, many of whom had been placed there under all kinds of conditions.

The Minister for Agriculture: They could not be prevented from going on the land there.

Mr. WILSON: That is the very reason why we should assist the voluntary settler in this State, and why the Government should do something to tide them over their difficulties. That is all I want. I want a fair field and no favour in this matter. Before the soldiers went away prominent citizens and responsible men in the community made promises as to what would be done for the soldiers when they returned. Parliament should see that these promises are fulfilled, and that the soldier is placed in a position to earn a crust for

himself, his wife, and his children. There is no man in this State for whom I have greater admiration than the present manager of the Agricultural Bank. It is, however, impossible for him to see every little mistake that has been made, and it is our duty to prevent the institution of a policy of hush under which these men may be sacrificed. While I was in England I was at the Weymouth camp. I received a letter from the Agent General, Sir James Connolly, who asked me if I could go to London to see him. I went, and he asked me if I would be prepared to go before the troops in France, on behalf of the Lefroy Government, and lay before them the scheme of repatriation as endorsed by the people of Western Australia. I agreed to do so, but, unfortunately or otherwise, the negotiations fell through, and I later returned to the State. I say advisedly that the scheme was one of the best that could be promulgated, provided it was properly administered. So far, it has been administered fairly well, but there have been mistakes made, and it is those mistakes that I think should be rectified. The conditions governing soldier settlement were:—

- (1) Selections from the Crown are rent free for five years. Land acquired by transfer, no exemption; (2) all fees and stamp duty are reduced to returned soldiers, but no refund is made for amounts paid before the Act was passed; (3) interest only payable during first five years, redemption payments commence with sixth year; (4) total period 30 years, then repayments of principal start, payable in eight years, interest only for three years, then repayments of principal start; (5) all land held by returned soldiers under C.P. conditions is reduced 50 per cent. in price.

Dealing with the last mentioned portion first, it meant that the farmer, who went away as a soldier and possessed conditional purchase land, received a 50 per cent. reduction in the price of his land when he returned to Western Australia. In the case of repurchased estates, however, a man got no reduction whatever, although the Government might have paid through the nose for that estate.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The men were taken in.

Mr. WILSON: I have no figures to substantiate any suggestion that the Government took advantage of those men. I think the Government gave the men, for the most part, a fair deal. There were exceptions, however, and it is for this reason that I seek to have the position of some of these men remedied. Let us look at the position of the soldier at the present time. It is thought he has paid too much capital for his land. Consequently he is burdened with an interest bill that he cannot carry. He can only hope to get through, but the interest bill, the cost of his capital, and the cost of the clearing of the land on these repurchased

estates make it impossible for him to get rid of that burden. I have a statement made by a very influential man in this State. I refer to Colonel Olden, a man who should know what he is talking about. In June of this year the Returned Soldiers' League held a re-union, and the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) was chairman at that gathering. He proposed the toast of "The Army."

Mr. Johnston: I was a guest there, not the chairman.

Mr. WILSON: At any rate the hon. member proposed the toast I referred to. During the course of his response to the toast Colonel Olden said:—

They had heard a good deal about repatriation. Undoubtedly a lot had been done, in some cases more than was deserved, but in many respects those who had benefited most were not soldiers. They had only to look around and see the number of soldiers settled on the land. Any God's number of them were truly "settled" on estates which had no hope of ever being profitably worked by their previous owners. These places had been cut up and sold to returned soldiers, and in some cases by people who were not entitled to any consideration whatever by reason of their past lack of interest in the result of the war.

In effect Colonel Olden said that these were duds, and these duds were dumped on to the returned soldiers. When one goes through the South-West he is sickened at hearing about dud cows, dud horses, and dud land.

The Premier: Everything will be duds until they are given away free.

Mr. WILSON: I can quite understand that the Premier is not able to know and see these things for himself; he is too busy a man. It is only by means of members representing the various districts travelling round that they can bring this state of affairs before him.

The Premier: I know you have not brought any case before me.

Mr. WILSON: I saw an account of an interview a week or two ago in which Mr. Ewing, M.L.C., who represents the South-West Province in another place, brought a deputation to the Premier from Brunswick, and he dealt with the question of capitalising the interest.

The Premier: Not capitalising the interest.

Mr. WILSON: Yes, capitalising the interest. It is so much nonsense to talk about capitalising interest, because it is only making the burden on the soldier more acute. To use a military phrase, we want to have a "wash-out" in connection with some of these matters. I want to draw attention to the way in which some of these expenses were incurred. When the soldiers came back in their thousands after having been promised so many things, the Government as well as the Federal authorities were anxious to get them started at work as quickly as possible. For that reason they were sent out in batches to clear land. They were sent out irrespec-

tive of whether they knew anything about clearing land or not, and they were sent down to work at, say, 13s. 6d. per day. I will give the House some example of what this meant. I will cite the position of affairs at Capeldene, Balingup and Caseades. Some men who were despatched to that centre were put on to land clearing with a tractor. I will show the House that it has cost over £23 to do that clearing. I have here a pamphlet which should interest Ministers. It is entitled "Four and a Half Years of Labour Government." I believe the Minister for Mines was Premier at the time.

Mr. O'Loughlin: And a good Premier.

Mr. WILSON: Yes. I quote this to show the good work the then Premier did, and I only wish the Government of the day would follow along the lines indicated in that pamphlet. It sets out:—

In the South-West the Government have undertaken the work of clearing land for farmers by traction power; and by this means up to 30th June, 1914, 5,704 acres were pulled and 5,560 acres rolled at an average cost to settlers of £1 10s. per acre.

I am going to show that so far from costing £1 10s. per acre it has in some instances cost £23 5s. an acre to clear the land in the South-West.

The Premier: They never cleared land there at £1 10s. an acre.

Mr. WILSON: I have only read what the pamphlet says about tree-pulling and rolling. The words quoted are not mine. I suppose the present Minister for Mines as Premier in those days helped to compile the pamphlet. It must be fairly true or the statements would have been contradicted long before now.

Mr. Johnston: You must have a different staff doing the work.

Mr. Pickering: They are paying different rates now.

Mr. WILSON: When the member for Perth (Mr. Mann) was speaking he drew attention to the fact that clearing of land in the South-West was costing about £11 an acre. This was what the member for Perth said—

It has been suggested that it will be costly to clear this land. Unless the clearing is done under good supervision and by skilful men it will prove costly. The lumpers are applying themselves well to the job, and according to the figures supplied to me by Mr. Brockman, the superintendent of the settlement the work was costing about £11 an acre. If the other groups can be worked on these lines they will not be overcapitalised as a result of their clearing operations.

Anyone who knows Mr. Hugh Brockman knows that he is one of the best pioneers in the South-West, and if he says it only costs £11 to clear an acre of land in the Augusta part of this State, I do not see why the digger should pay £23 an acre to clear land that has been purchased by the Government

I referred to the diggers being sent down in batches to clear land in the South-West. From 10 to 20 of these men were sent down at a time and they never thought that they would burden the soldiers' settlement in the way I have shown. They did not know that they were "swinging the lead" on the soldiers, so to speak—they thought they were in the employ of the Government.

The Premier: That is a funny thing to say.

Mr. WILSON: It is not funny at all, it is true. The trouble is, it is too tragic to allow it to pass. It is too tragic for these men who are on the land.

Mr. A. Thomson: They are the men who have to pay.

Mr. WILSON: I can assure the Premier it is no joke. Six men were at Capeldene splitting up logs and the soldier farmers tell a joke on them. They used explosives to break up the timber. It was a hot day and one of them said, "Let us take the log into the shade." They did so, and they carried the log on their shoulders into the shade and burst the log there. If the digger on that block is asked to pay for that damage he will—

Member: Die.

Mr. WILSON: That is so. He will blow off himself. It is stated that the men have been using various explosives, including T.N.T. and gelignite to burst the big timber, and sometimes they have put as many as 20 or 30 shots into a log.

Mr. Pickering: They must be good judges of destroying the timber.

Mr. WILSON: Sometimes men do not have sufficient experience to know what they are doing. Other men get careless and do not care what they do. If you put a few holes in logs and the explosive only "bulls" the holes, it is useless to continue trying to blow it to pieces. In any case it is easy to spend a lot of money in this sort of work. I will give the House some examples to show what this sort of thing has cost. Here is the case of a man named Sampson (he is not the Colonial Secretary) who has the block at Capeldene.

Mr. Harrison: Is he a strong man?

Mr. WILSON: Yes, but he is not strong enough to stand this. He has 118 acres and he paid £5 16s. an acre for the land. The Commonwealth Bank loan amounts to £625, while the clearing effected by the Government cost £1,177 8s. 5d. He gets a loan approval for £250. He now has a bill of £2,736 16s. 5d. to meet.

Mr. Harrison: On what area?

Mr. WILSON: On 118 acres. That works out at over £23 per acre. This man has to face a payment of £150 a year interest, or in other words, he has to pay £3 a week before he can purchase salt for the porridge his wife and children eat in the morning.

Mr. A. Thomson: Is the whole of his land cleared?

Mr. WILSON: No. Some 40 acres are cleared on that man's block. There is the case of another man named Good. I have with me the report of the surveyor. He says

in effect that this man has 38 acres fit and ready for immediate cultivation, 13 acres uncleared, 20 acres of dead timber and 21 acres with only a few trees on it. In spite of the fact that this man's property has so few trees and this dead timber, it cost him £10 9s. 6d. to clear it. Here is another case of a man named Ellis, and I can hardly credit the fact that this man's property has so few I had better read the man's letter. He writes to me—

Dear Sir,—You will please find account attached for £648 10s. 8d. which I received from the department for tree pulling on my location No. 2331. I make the acreage about 24, and I might mention the portion pulled was on an old cultivation field with an average of about four trees to the acre. So I fear there must be some mistake. Yours faithfully, F. G. Ellis.

It cost £27 an acre to clear 24 acres! Of course this was principally for tree-pulling. Then taking the £27 and comparing it with the cost of clearing in the time of the Labour Government, we wonder why there is not more settlement in the South-West, and where all the settlers' money is going to. Let me quote now the case of another man who has interest to meet on £2,558. He has 122 acres of land which has cost him £11 12s. per acre to clear, and he has only 30 acres which may be said to be absolutely cleared. There are many more similar cases at Capeldene, but I will leave that district and go on to describe what is happening at Balingup. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) and I went to Balingup and we listened to a number of sorry tales. One man named Shenton put £2,000 of his own money, including the value of his gratuity bond and his deferred pay into his property. Yet he is still prepared to go on. He told us that he had sent six big sacks of onions to Perth and that all he received for them was 4s. 6d.

Mr. A. Thomson: He was lucky that he did not have to pay on them.

Mr. WILSON: What I am telling the House shows that these men are right up against it. There is another case of a man named Johnstone, and he is a digger of the right kind. He has a family of 10.

The Premier: He is rich in one thing.

Mr. WILSON: And he needs to be rich to keep such a family going. His holding has cost him to date £3,965, of which his house represents £1,800. No settler should be asked to pay such a big sum for a house.

Mr. Pickering: They do not debit him with that amount, do they?

Mr. WILSON: This man has an interest bill to meet on £3,965. He has 85 acres cleared, and there are 245 acres of dead timber on the property. His bill to the Government, as I have stated, is £3,965 and he is practically called upon to pay £4 a week in interest before he is able to set out to make anything for himself. But that is not the whole of his trouble. In the winter

he cannot get to the other side of the town because he has no boat to bring into service, and his little children have to stay at home because they are unable to go to school.

The Colonial Secretary: And what do the big children do?

Mr. WILSON: That is a matter that the Minister will have to find out. Another estate to which I wish to refer is the Cascades. The member for Nelson asked some questions about this property last session, and the questions which he put up have been verified by the Government and by the people down there. Let me quote the case of a man named Hunter, who paid £2 7s. an acre for 268 acres. The land was not cleared; it was practically virgin country and some of it was unfenced. The department cleared 25 acres at a cost of £23 4s. 5d. an acre.

Mr. Harrison: Were the trees pulled down and was the land cleared?

Mr. J. H. Smith: Pulled down and cleared right up.

Mr. WILSON: Hunter has given me his returns. He has put all his deferred pay into the property and he is obliged to take on outside work in order to keep things going. His gratuity bond is now going as well. This is the return which he has given me. In August 1921 he got for cream and butter £2 15s. 9d.; in September, £7 15s. 5d.; in October, £8 15s. 1d.; in November, £7 2s. 6d.; in December, £3 15s. 6d.; in January, £1 8s. 6d., and in July £1 3s. For honey he has received to date £9 1s. 9d. The total comes to a little under £40.

Mr. Harrison: How many cows has he?

The Premier: That man is on good land.

Mr. WILSON: The Premier would be the first to apologise to him if he saw how that man was working. There are five or six more cases of a similar nature. Every one in that district is charged £23 4s. 5d. for having his land cleared in addition to the amount paid for the land. George Amphlett paid £4 16s. for his land and on top of that £23 4s. 5d. for clearing, practically £28 an acre for his land. I am not going to say that the land cost too much in the first instance, but I do say the cost of clearing is excessive, and this is due to the fact that the people who are sent down there to do the work of clearing know nothing about it. If Mr. Hugh Brockman or Mr. Johnson had been in charge of the clearing operations, I am sure the work would have been done for less than half. I would like to read a letter from Mr. Godfrey Hester to Hunter on the subject of the clearing costs. Mr. Hester is one of the most successful men in the district.

Mr. Pickering: He is an authority and knows more about clearing than any man in the South-West.

The Premier: No one questions that.

Mr. WILSON: I accept the assurance of my friend the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) that Mr. Hester is an authority.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Others have cleared land for much less than that.

Mr. WILSON: The letter reads—

It would scarcely be fair for me to put anything like an exact proper price on the value for clearing the land at the Cascades estate, but this I know for certain, that, taken as a whole, the land should not cost more than £10 at the outside for clearing the heaviest of it, and the lighter country about £5 per acre, and taking the whole estate at Cascades £8 would be a good heavy price to pay for the clearing, and I could do the clearing at that price. Want of practical knowledge in clearing will easily over-capitalise the proposal.

That will be all I will have to say about Cascades. I wish now to refer to another estate at Hotham, and my attention was drawn to it by paragraphs which appeared in some of the papers. This is also an estate on which returned soldiers have taken up blocks and have suffered considerably. I believe this estate was bought from a Mr. Brown at 30s. an acre. Before the war he offered it for sale at £1 an acre, and it was turned down. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) will know something about it.

Mr. Johnston: It is not in my electorate.

Mr. Hickmott: It is in my electorate.

Mr. WILSON: The land has never had an axe on it. One would have thought that the mere fact of the boys going to the war and keeping this property safe for Mr. Brown would have induced that gentleman to show them consideration. But no; he squeezed all he could out of the department for it.

Mr. Johnston: Be fair; he did a lot of clearing in the meantime.

Mr. WILSON: That may be so, but the soldiers who took up blocks there complain that they have paid too much for the land. Some of this land would be dear even at a gift. I suppose Mr. Brown could not keep even a couple of rabbits on it, and he thought that the sooner he got rid of it the better. He came to the conclusion that he would have a better chance now to get 30s. than he had before the war of receiving £1.

The Premier: What did you say the price was?

Mr. WILSON: Thirty shillings an acre.

The Premier: Who told you that?

Mr. WILSON: Of course I speak subject to correction.

The Premier: You will be corrected, too.

Mr. Corboy: If 30s. was paid, the soldiers gave too much.

The Premier: I do not know; I am speaking from memory.

Mr. WILSON: I have a paragraph from the "Sunday Times," a most reliable paper.

Mr. Pickering: It is a pity the member for North Perth is not present to hear you say that.

Mr. WILSON: The paragraph reads:—

Many men who have taken up land on repurchased estates under the soldier settlement scheme now believe that they are pay-

ing too great a price for their blocks. The price of the land to the soldier is governed by the amount the Government paid for the property. That being the case, it is felt in some quarters that a move should be made to ascertain whether the Government in the first instance paid too great a price and, if so, could not the settler secure a reduction of the sum he has been asked to pay. At its last meeting the R.S.L. executive had before it a resolution from the Noombing sub-branch for forwarding to the forthcoming Federal congress in Brisbane, seeking a re-valuing of the Noombing repurchased estate with a view to a reduction of the price. As it is a State and not a Federal matter, the executive did not comply with the request to send it to the Federal congress.

It was of no use bringing it before the Federal congress because they could not re-value estates here. It is up to the people here to re-value these estates.

Hon. P. Collier: No one else has any power.

Mr. WILSON: That is so. This is not the first case of its kind. It has been done in this State before this, and why should it not be done now?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It has been done by a Parliament.

Mr. WILSON: Yes. The question is whether, in years past, previous Governments did not pay too much for repurchased estates.

The Premier: We did and we wrote down the values, and before long the land was offered back to the Government for twice the price.

Mr. WILSON: The Premier admits that he did.

The Premier: I did not do it, but it was done.

Mr. WILSON: If the Government of the day could write down values for the people who were here sponging on the Government, surely the Government could do it for these men who fought for the country!

The Premier: You have no right to say they were sponging. You voted for the Bill.

Mr. WILSON: I do not consider that the present Government should carry the baby entirely. Our friends over the way should help to do so. I believe the Federal Government give £625 to each soldier for repatriation purposes.

The Premier: They do not give a penny.

Mr. WILSON: They advance that sum.

The Minister for Mines: They lend it.

Mr. WILSON: I think this should be repudiated. There are men in the wheat belt and in the South-West who do not want one penny that they are not entitled to, but there are these cases I have quoted and a hundred more cases of their kind that want helping. At Kojonup, the estate of Mr. Egan was offered to the Government for about £4,000 and the Government turned it down. The Government, however, purchased the neighbouring estate, which was of inferior quality,

at an enhanced price. Two soldiers have been placed upon it, and at the price they cannot make it pay. Their takings from the sheep will never pay the interest on the money. These points should be cleared up. Then we have the cases at Harvey. I have letters stating that the men at Harvey are not having a fair go. I have a petition before me signed by 30 men in that district, stating that the following resolution was passed on the 18th August:—

That this meeting of discharged soldier settlers is of the opinion that the soldier settlement scheme is doomed to failure, unless there is a re-valuation of the land, a new estimate of the cost of clearing, and a revision of the interest charges.

It was resolved that the petition be sent to Parliament. I do not know that I shall present it now, but it is here for members to see. I have a letter from Colonel Spurge, who gives a typical case regarding the Harvey-Hayward estate. He says—

This estate was repurchased in 1914 at an average price of £3 10s. per acre. The estate was re-classified, resurveyed, and broken up into small blocks of from 10 to 40 acres. The portion under review is known as Plain Paddock. A soldier settler named E. Chard took up an area of 66 acres in two blocks. For 26 acres the price was £10 an acre and for the remaining 40 acres the price was £2 17s. 6d. per acre, a total of £375. The average price per acre was £5 13s. 7½d., and yet the cost to the Government in 1914 was £3 10s. per acre. The soldier pays interest and £53 to the Government for the privilege of being repatriated.

The Premier: I can assure you we do not make anything out of it.

Mr. WILSON: No; the Government are like the owners of gold and coal mines—their overhead charges eat up everything.

The Premier: Not at all.

Mr. WILSON: Here is one phase I wish to mention. I do not regard tree-pulling as being the best method of clearing the land. Of course, it is a matter of opinion. When trees have been pulled, a tremendous time is required to burn them off, and after the trees have been burnt off, the land is left as full of holes as Pozieres was of shell-holes. To fill some of them in is the work of a day. Further, when the trees are pulled, the roots bring up all the worst of the clay to the surface, and that portion of the land is practically spoilt. The land looks, may I say, as if it had had small-pox—it is so pitted. I was in the country when the fire stick was used. The old pioneers in the South-West did not go in for tree-pulling; they rung the timber and used the fire stick. In Gippsland, Tasmania, and all the best-timbered countries the fire stick has done the best work. In this way there is returned to the soil all that the tree had taken out of it, the ashes of the tree making a good fertiliser. I do not wish to labour the question unnecessarily. It is not one of those matters

which a member likes to take up. I might be asked why I have taken it up. The answer is that I was approached, and anyone willing to help our returned men would have done the same thing. The Country Party are pledged to help the primary producers and it is their duty to see that these men get a fair deal.

The Premier: It is a pity you did not mention all this to Mr. McLarty before.

Mr. WILSON: Why should I be a jackal to Mr. McLarty? I say nothing to the detriment of that officer; he has the greatest responsibility of any man in this State and no man is more capable of filling the position, but he has too much to do.

Country Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. WILSON: He cannot be asked to investigate all these pinpricks. If a Royal Commission is appointed, I shall not be a member of it. I have had enough of commissions.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. WILSON: I can stand all the insinuations about Royal Commission fees.

The Premier: I did not say that.

Mr. WILSON: I am satisfied the Premier did not, but I can stand all that might be said on those lines. So long as these men get a fair deal I do not care what is said, but if anyone will argue that it is a fair deal to charge men £23 4s. 5d. to clear land that should cost only £8, then all I can say is, "God help his intelligence and his patriotism." My whole desire is to see that the boys get a fair deal. A man on a repurchased estate is not getting the same deal that a man on conditional purchase land is getting. It is a well-known fact that dud cattle have been supplied.

The Premier: Dud milkers?

Mr. WILSON: Dud milkers and cows with blind teats and everything else that was wrong. One man informs me that he took six cows from the station and only two of the six were fit to milk. He explained that he knew nothing about cows but, after trying this lot, he knew all about them. When our men returned from the war, there was a spectacular debauch of money. Men were sent down to clear land irrespective of the cost. When they went down on that debauch, they thought the Government were paying.

The Premier: You should not reflect on the soldiers in that way; they worked well.

Mr. WILSON: The soldiers know me too well to put that construction on my remarks. The men thought they were doing well. They cleared the land, as they thought, at the expense of the Government. I admit that some soldiers "swung the lead" in France and there are some who would swing it here. I believe that no one would intentionally take down a soldier farmer. The men, however, thought they were working on day labour and they put their hours in. When we find land costing £23 4s. 5d. as against £8, it shows that there is something radically wrong somewhere. I hope the Premier will realise the necessity for appointing this Commission. It is an inquiry which must come sooner or later. The agitation for an inquiry has been

going on for the last six months, but so far the Premier has heard only the first rumblings of the coming storm. Let me tell you, Mr. Premier, that deputations were anxious to meet you when you were about to leave for England. However, they were put off. Without labouring the matter further, I commend the motion to the House.

Mr. PICKERING: I second the motion.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

MOTION—RETIREMENT OF A. C. KESSELL.

To inquire by Select Committee.

Capt. CARTER (Leederville) [5.34]: I move—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into all the circumstances connected with the retirement from the public service of Mr. A. C. Kessell, and his subsequent treatment by the Government.

I make no apology for again opening up a subject which has already been the cause of discussion in this Chamber on various occasions. When moving in the matter last session I was not in possession of certain facts which have since come to my knowledge. I doubt whether I should feel justified in taking up the time of the House in the manner I propose to do this afternoon, were it not that the statements which I propose to lay before hon. members are of a very serious character. It is not my intention to traverse ground which has already been traversed in debate, not only by myself but by other members. I merely desire now to correct myself on one or two points with regard to which I was in error when speaking on this case last session. I then stated that so far as I could find out, there was no direct charge of dishonesty against A. C. Kessell. On going more closely into the file, I have come to the conclusion that if there is not directly a charge of dishonesty recorded against him, there is at least such an inference contained in certain remarks on the file. That circumstance, I hold, warrants me in again asking the House to consider the necessity for giving this man an opportunity to clear himself. Certain statements appearing on the file are of such a nature that they do, in my opinion, affect the man's honour. He holds his honour very highly, as every man should; and I take it this House will readily afford him an opportunity to defend himself. Though the House has on several occasions discussed the whole question, it has never yet said that it is not prepared to give him a hearing and that right to vindicate himself which every Britisher should have. In the past, hon. members have not considered that in his behalf a case has been made out of sufficient urgency to demand such an inquiry as a select committee would provide. The statement which I now propose to read to the House, and which is in the form of a statu-

tory declaration, contains certain assertions which I think will appeal to the reason of hon. members and cause them to alter their opinion as to the advisability of the appointment of a select committee. The document has been sworn before the mayor of Perth as a justice of the peace, and it reads as follows:—

I, Alfred Colenso Kessell, a justice of the peace, and formerly secretary to the Premier, and secretary of the Western Australian Government offices in London, and now employed as confidential secretary, and residing at Mt. Hawthorn, do solemnly and sincerely declare:—

1. That for a period of twelve years, from 1902 to 1914, I was secretary to the Premier's office in Western Australia.

2. I hold high testimonials regarding my service to the State from the present Minister for Works (Hon. W. J. George).

3. Also from six successive Premiers, viz., the Hon. Sir Walter James, the late Hon. H. Daglish, Sir Cornthwaite Rason, Sir Newton Moore, the late Hon. Frank Wilson, and Hon. J. Scaddan. These gentlemen described my service as having been rendered in a loyal, intelligent, tactful, industrious, diligent, and methodical manner.

4. That from 1914 to 1917, a period of three years, I was secretary to the Western Australian Government offices in London, having been transferred from the Premier's office to that position.

5. The Agent General also described my service as having been satisfactorily rendered up to the date of my departure from London.

6. Sir Henry Lefroy stated in Parliament that "there is nothing on record derogatory to the name or service of Mr. Kessell," whilst the present Premier (Sir James Mitchell) has personally assured me that he "knows my name and my service are clean."

7. These gentlemen represented the only departments to which I was attached in the Government service.

8. I was suddenly retired from the service by cable, without any warning, and without any advice regarding the Act or section of an Act under which I was so retired.

9. Naturally, in the course of such service, and the cable advice being so incomplete, this came as a severe blow to me; the effect of it was to leave myself and family stranded in London, as no provision was made for our return to Western Australia.

10. Upon inquiry I was advised that the Government were under no obligation to return myself and family to the State.

11. That I was not actually retired because of being an "excess officer" is shown by—

(a) The fact that an "acting secretary" was simultaneously appointed,

and three other persons have since occupied the same position. According to a statement made by the Public Service Commissioner no inquiries were made by cable from London as to who could best be spared, or who might possibly be considered an "excess officer."

(b) Before my retirement was cabled, the Government were inviting applications in the State for another officer to proceed to the London agency.

(c) Although I was supposed to be retired as an "excess officer," under a scheme of reorganisation, my retirement was cabled apparently before the Public Service Commissioner received his commission from His Excellency the Governor to proceed with such scheme of reorganisation.

12. As the cable did not provide for—

(a) Any reasonable notice prior to retirement;

(b) Any salary or leave in lieu of such notice, as is customarily paid;

(c) Payment of salary until return to the State;

(d) Payment for any unavoidable detentions en route from England to Western Australia; or

(e) The extension of my period of service, with a view to granting a satisfactory pension, owing to deprivation of office,

I was forced to ascertain my legal position.

13. The Government appointed another person as "acting secretary," he then being a sick man, waiting for a short period to elapse before his retirement, which actually came about shortly after his appointment as my successor.

14. Further, by retiring him, instead of me, all expense to the State in returning myself and family, and the subsequent granting of a pension, would have been avoided, had proper cable inquiries been made from London before taking action.

15. Upon my arrival in Western Australia I called upon the Public Service Commissioner who, after hearing my statement, volunteered the remark, "Had I known the conditions in London to be such as you have revealed, I would never have sent the cable."

16. The Hon. Frank Wilson, shortly after my return, called me into his office and said: "Kessell, I realise that I made a mistake in sending that cable, but I am now a sick man, out of politics, and cannot see how I can amend the mistake."

17. Mr. Wilson informed me that he moved in the direction of my retirement because of private correspondence received from Sir Newton Moore, although all official reports in regard to my service were thoroughly satisfactory. The Under Treasurer (Mr. Black) also informed me shortly after my return that during my

service in London everything had reached him through me, as secretary, in a most satisfactory and complete manner.

18. Upon returning from London I applied to see my file, which was first promised by the Public Service Commissioner's office, and then denied me. I had to wait 114 days before the same was obtainable through Parliament.

19. I carefully perused the file when obtainable, and I affirm that there is no evidence thereon which would suggest that I was an "excess officer," or that would justify my retirement on that ground.

20. At the farewell given to me in London, the newly appointed "acting secretary" requested me to tell the Government that he did not want the position; that he was not equal to the strain; and that they should send my successor as soon as possible.

21. I have endeavoured to obtain a select committee or independent inquiry, being conscious of having rendered loyal and consistent service in the positions which I held.

22. I fully believe that my retirement was brought about because I refused to be dishonest behind my employer's back, in that, when asked for my views, and at other times, I expressed disapproval of the use of State moneys for private and improper purposes—

Point of Order.

The Premier: May I rise to a point of order?

Mr. Speaker: What is the point of order?

The Premier: It seems to me that this statutory declaration accuses people who are not members of this House, accuses the Agent General for the moment, I suppose, of dishonesty. Should an hon. member accept a declaration of that kind from Mr. Kessell, or from anybody else, and bring it to this House and read it out to the House? The point of order is that I think a declaration containing such statements as are now being read out should not be presented here, and that the House should not receive such a declaration.

Mr. Speaker: In reply to the Premier's point of order I must say that I have no authority to prevent an hon. member from reading any declaration to the House. My hands are tied in that respect. I have looked through the Standing Orders, and also through the text books and "May," and according to the authorities there is nothing to prevent the levelling of such charges. I am therefore bound to rule that the member for Leederville is in order. I may say, however, that it is a matter for the House. If the House is of opinion that this declaration should not be read, it is competent for an hon. member to move to dissent from my ruling.

Dissent from Ruling.

The Premier: I think the House ought to consider the matter, and in order that it may do so I move—

That this House dissents from Mr. Speaker's ruling.

My reason for taking that step is just this: a person outside this House could make a statutory declaration concerning another person outside this House, charging that other person with any crime that a man can be charged with, say fraud or even murder, and without submitting any proofs—

Capt. Carter: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order! I must first dispose of the Premier's point of order.

The Premier: The person making the charge would, in such circumstances, escape all risk of action for slander or defamation, or indeed action of any kind, in respect of such statements published in this way. In my opinion, the House should take the matter into consideration and should determine that such statements are not to be read here. If Mr. Kessell wishes to make this statement, charging somebody, apparently the Agent General, with fraud, then he ought to make it publicly outside, in order that the Agent General might have opportunity to protect himself. Statements made in the House are privileged, and the House ought to determine that declarations containing charges against a member of the House, or a member of the public, should not be read here. It would be very dangerous if we permitted such things. I should like to hear the member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) on the subject.

Hon. T. Walker: I hope the Premier will withdraw his motion.

The Premier: I will not.

Hon. T. Walker: For this reason: this is a court, the highest court in the land, the high court of Parliament. It is a court to which every citizen can present a petition for the redress of grievances; and the same course can be taken in presenting a grievance as is taken in any other court, namely, by affidavit or declaration, or by a written statement. Those statements may not be true. It is really on the allegations that are made in such declaration that the judgment of the House is to be exercised as to whether or not it is necessary to have a select committee. There is no authority to prevent any member presenting any grievance, even though that grievance in its presentation may have the effect of a libel if uttered outside the Chamber.

The Premier: He can present a petition, of course.

Hon. T. Walker: Well, what is a petition but the expression given to a grievance, or a claim to have a grievance redressed, whether presented in written form or through the mouth of a member of the Chamber? It is open to any member to champion the cause of any wronged citizen; that is to say, a wronged citizen to whom this House has power to give redress. Consequently to ex-

clude a statement of that kind—without approving of its taste or accuracy or any other qualities it may or may not possess—exclusion of that statement would be to curtail the rights and opportunities of this Chamber for the redress of grievances. There is no authority in the whole of our Parliamentary history, or rights and privileges of such Chambers as this, no authority which my friend the Premier can quote to support him. It has been the undoubted custom to permit the utmost latitude in this Chamber, and for members to be free from the exercise of common law or of the law of libel, in order that they may have the utmost freedom of speech.

The Premier: Yes, if the member says what he believes to be true; but here he reads a statement.

Hon. T. Walker: What is being done? The case of Mr. Kessell has been challenged by the member for Leederville. In order that he may support his case he quotes a declaration. He does not vouch for its accuracy. Nobody can. But it is on its accuracy or inaccuracy that we decide whether the claim of Kessell be entertained or dismissed.

Capt. Carter: That is the whole point.

Hon. T. Walker: The hon. member is saying to this Chamber, "This is the case of Kessell."

Mr. Underwood: Should an impostor be allowed to hold up this Chamber?

Hon. T. Walker: I do not know about that. I am afraid it is very often done.

Mr. Underwood: He should not be allowed to do so.

Hon. T. Walker: This is the gentleman whom we heard last night wax eloquent over the blessings of liberty! The member for Leederville is exercising his rights, is not outside his rights. He may have a bad case, but it is for the House to judge after they have heard that case. He may have a good case. The House can judge when they have heard him. But such materials as constitute the case he is fully entitled to place before the House without limitation or restriction. Every authority of Parliamentary practice affirms that.

Mr. Underwood: You are quite wrong.

Hon. T. Walker: Therefore, I trust that, rather than put the House to a division, the Premier will withdraw his motion.

Hon. P. Collier: I believe with my colleague the member for Kanowna, that you, Sir, have no alternative but to rule that the member for Leederville is in order. There is nothing in our Standing Orders or the rules governing debate in this Chamber to prevent the hon. member from reading the declaration if he so desires. It is entirely a question of propriety, a question for the hon. member's own judgment, whether in the circumstances he ought to read such a declaration. But I call attention to this point: there is a great difference between a member having the absolute right of free speech without the possibility of any charge for libel lying against

him, between the rights of a member, and the rights of an outside, private citizen being able to use this House as a vehicle to libel some other citizen. It may be that the hon. member wants to read this declaration in order to establish his case for the appointment of a select committee, or that Mr. Kessell, in order to obtain this inquiry, feels that he is justified in making such a declaration. But there is a very great difference between the action of Mr. Kessell in signing a declaration and having it published outside and so taking the responsibility for it, and his signing a declaration and getting a member to read it in the House, where he himself is free from responsibility.

Hon. T. Walker: He is not free on that point. Anybody who signs a statement takes an oath, and if it is false he is liable in law.

Hon. P. Collier: Even though it is read only in the House?

Hon. T. Walker: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: Then he takes the responsibility. If Mr. Kessell takes the responsibilities for it, although it is read only in the House, just as he would take the responsibilities if it were read outside, then, of course, he is entitled to have it read.

The Premier: Why did he not publish it in a newspaper?

Hon. P. Collier: I do not suppose he would get any newspaper to publish it, for the newspaper would be responsible if it were libellous.

Mr. Simons: It would cost a newspaper £5,000 to publish that.

Hon. P. Collier: However, it is a matter for the judgment of the hon. member as to whether the document ought to be read.

Mr. Richardson: Does not the declaration become the property of the House when it is read here?

Hon. P. Collier: Yes.

Mr. Richardson: Then it becomes public.

Hon. P. Collier: Certainly.

The Colonial Secretary: Is not the swearing of such a declaration equivalent to publication?

Hon. T. Walker: Yes, it is the taking of an oath on a material matter.

Hon. P. Collier: Then in that respect Mr. Kessell takes the responsibilities. In the main, I agree with the Premier as to the ethics revealed in the signing of a declaration charging a man, not only not a member of this House, but not even in the State, and so not in a position to defend himself, or at least not until many months later.

Mr. Stubbs: The motion is that your ruling be disagreed with. The Premier would be well advised to withdraw the motion, for every member must support the Speaker's ruling, since there is nothing in the Standing Orders to prevent an hon. member from reading a declaration if he thinks fit. We have no right to question that.

Mr. Simons: Is there any precedent or ruling to indicate to us whether the reading of

a statement in the House constitutes publication?

Mr. Speaker: I have no precedent to guide me in the matter. We do know that the proceedings of Parliament are public, and that members can make any statement they like in Parliament under the privileges of the House, and defy the law. I have looked for something to guide me, but can find nothing. I do not know of any case of this kind having cropped up in any Parliament in Australia.

Mr. Simons: I would like to know whether a person, having charges to make against another person but being afraid to make them in the ordinary way, might not use a member of Parliament—I do not say that is the case in this instance—as an instrument by which to express some libellous statement.

Mr. Speaker: The only answer I can give to the hon. member is based on what I have gathered since I became a member of Parliament, as to the functions of a member of Parliament. I feel that Parliament was given certain authority on the understanding that no member of it would ever attempt to abuse his privileges. I have already pointed out to the House that I had no other course than to rule that the member for Leederville was in order in reading the declaration in question, and to tell the House that I left the matter entirely to members. It is for members to decide whether they will allow the declaration to be used for this particular purpose or not.

Mr. Mullany: I should like to know whether, in the event of the member for Leederville being permitted to read this sworn declaration, and using it as evidence, before what the member for Kanowna referred to as the highest court in the land, that document would then become the property of the House and be left in the custody of the House. The member for Kanowna has said that the person who signed a declaration of this sort containing statements that were subsequently proved to be false rendered himself liable to prosecution for perjury. So far as I know there is only one copy of the declaration in existence. If that is to be used here as evidence and is subsequently removed, how would there be any evidence against the person who signed the declaration in the event of there being subsequent proceedings in the court?

Hon. T. Walker: It must be laid on the Table.

Mr. Speaker: I will read a passage from "May" which is appropos of the point under discussion—

If a member should say nothing disrespectful to the House or to the Chair, or personally opprobrious to other members, or in violation of other rules of the House, he may state whatever he thinks fit in debate, however offensive it may be to the feelings, or injurious to the

character, of individuals; and he is protected by his privilege from any action for libel, as well as from any other question or molestation. In the case of an action brought in the Irish courts against a member of the House of Commons for words spoken in the House, the court, being satisfied that those words constituted the cause of action, ordered that the writ and statement should be taken off the records of the court, the court having no jurisdiction in the matter.

Hon. T. Walker: That is protection for the member.

Capt. Carter: I hope the Premier will not proceed with his motion. I tried to make it clear that I did not attempt to place this matter again before Parliament until after I had perused the statement in question. That statement has been made in the form of an oath before a Justice of the Peace, the Mayor of Perth. I have an additional copy here, and am prepared to place it upon the Table of the House, if you rule that I must do so. I do not think there is anything in the statement other than those things which Mr. Kessell states are facts, and in my opinion these facts make it incumbent upon me to place the matter before the House. I hope your ruling will be upheld and that I may be permitted to read the remainder of the declaration.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Kanowna has stated that when a paper has been read it becomes the property of the House and should be laid on the Table. That would apply if a Minister read it. It has been ruled in the House that a private member cannot lay a paper on the Table.

Hon. T. Walker: It has been ruled, in reference to Government and official papers, that they must come from the proper source.

Mr. Speaker: It has been ruled in the House that a private member cannot lay a paper on the Table.

The Premier: If an hon. member is permitted to read a declaration by any person who likes to make one, a dangerous situation may arise. Any unscrupulous person outside the House, who desires to take away the character of any other person in the State, can do so if he is able to prevail upon some hon. member to read a statement made by him.

Mr. Corboy: Do you think he could prevail upon any member here to do it?

The Premier: Someone might persuade even the hon. member to read a document which contained not an atom of truth. Unless the House decides that this document cannot be read, it can be read, and any other similar document may be read, attacking anyone upon any subject. It can thus safely be presented to members of the House, and in that way passed on to the public.

Capt. Carter: That depends upon the discretion of the private member.

The Premier: Yes.

Capt. Carter: I ask the House to accept my judgment in this matter.

Hon. T. Walker: It is true there are dangers, but that is the ruling.

The Premier: The Standing Orders are silent on the point. I know the hon. member who desires to read this declaration believes that the man who made it has been unfairly treated, and that he is only actuated by the highest motives in bringing this declaration to the House and asking for the appointment of a select committee. It is a dangerous thing for any member to accept a statement charging other persons with fraud or any other crime unless he is certain the statement he intends to read is true.

Mr. Corboy: He should satisfy himself on the point, if possible.

The Premier: It is impossible for any individual to satisfy himself that a man at this end of the world, charging another at the other end of the world, is speaking the truth.

Capt. Carter: I rise to a point of order. In his remarks the Premier presupposes that I have not inquired as to whether the individual in question believes what he says is true.

Mr. Corboy: You said you took no responsibilities.

Capt. Carter: I have satisfied myself that this document should be read to the House.

Mr. Speaker: I do not see where the point of order comes in. The hon. member did indicate that he was not vouching for the accuracy of the declaration.

Capt. Carter: I take the remarks of the Premier as a reflection upon my judgment.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think one was intended.

Hon. P. Collier: Necessarily, you do not vouch for the accuracy of the declaration.

Motion (that the Speaker's ruling be dissented from) put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes	6
Noes	26

Majority against .. 20

AYES.

Mr. Denton	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Mann	Mr. J. Thomson
Sir James Mitchell	Mr. Mullany

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Johnston
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Latham
Mr. Carter	Mr. Lutey
Mr. Chesson	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Collier	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Richardson
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. Simons
Mr. Davies	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Durack	Mr. A. A. Thomson
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Walker
Mr. Heron	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Munsie

(Teller.)

Motion thus negatived.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Debate resumed.

Capt. CARTER: Before the tea adjournment I had read about half of the statutory declaration of A. C. Kessell. I will read again the paragraph during which the point of order arose, so that members may take up the thread of the declaration—

22. I fully believe that my retirement was brought about because I refused to be dishonest behind my employer's back, in that, when asked for my views, and at other times, I expressed disapproval of the use of the State monies for private and improper purposes and, consequently, refused to sign improper vouchers. As proof of this, I hereby solemnly state that—

(a) I refused to sign accounts or vouchers which represented expenditure of State money for private purposes.

(b) I refused to approve of private expenditure being incurred, and then charged to the Department of the present Minister for Works (Hon. W. J. George), i.e., State Sawmills.

(c) I refused to approve of private expenditure being incurred, and then charged to the Hon. Mr. Colebatch's (then) Department, i.e., State Steamship Service.

(d) I refused to approve of private expenditure being incurred, and then charged to the Premier's and Colonial Treasurer's Department.

(e) I refused to approve of private expenditure being incurred, and then charged to the Colonial Secretary's Department, i.e., Immigration.

(f) I disapproved of a sick Minister visiting London being debited with certain expenditure whereas other amounts had been privately expended, and charged up in a manner which gave no indication as to who was responsible for such expenditure.

(g) I disapproved of incurring expenditure for motor cars and taxis from time to time when there was a State-owned car which should have been (but was not) available for official purposes, or even for visiting wounded Western Australian soldiers in hospital.

(h) I disapproved of the decoration of a private house out of State funds.

(i) I disapproved of expenditure in connection with private luncheons being debited to the State, particularly when there was no "entertainment allowance."

(j) I disapproved, when asked for my view, of the letting of two furnished rooms in the Agent General's offices, at a ridiculous rental, including the services of a competent typiste, the cost of the latter alone being within £3 of the total amount to be received as annual rental for the said two offices. I also disapproved of certain remissions of this low rental.

(k) I disapproved of an office clerk and one of the typistes being occupied so extensively for private affairs, whilst paid for by the State.

(l) I expressed the foregoing disapprovals in my capacity of Secretary and certifying officer, appointed by the Colonial Treasurer's Department.

23. Before leaving Perth, I was instructed to do my best to effect economies wherever possible, and although my efforts were aided by and approved from time to time by the accountant, I failed to receive the support of the Agent General.

24. I had recommended a scheme under which extensive economies could have been effected some time before my retirement came about. This Sir Newton Moore ignored, but it has since been carried out.

25. In connection with a certain official matter, a cheque for £250 was apparently needlessly drawn, and such sum, I was informed at the time I was instructed to draw the cheque, would find its way into certain private pockets.

26. Because in the course of my official duty I saw fit to act conscientiously in all these matters, yet withal merely respectfully expressing my official and personal view regarding expenditure and the wrongful or misleading representation of same to the State, I became a "marked man" by Sir Newton Moore, who endeavoured (on his own subsequent admission) to bring about my removal through private correspondence.

27. I find, also, upon a perusal of the file, that it contains a statement in a minute by Mr. James Gardiner, which went before Cabinet, to the effect that "Kessell accepted £70, instead of £40, and said nothing, with no suggestion of an error, which he well knows." This amounts to a charge of dishonesty, and I submit that it must necessarily have misled Cabinet; its inaccuracy can be incontrovertibly demonstrated.

28. Further, in addition to Cabinet being apparently misled by the nature of the minute referred to, the file shows that a cable which had been received from the present Agent General (Sir James Connolly) suggested that a cable which had been sent to me, and purporting to be signed by certain gentlemen representing various sections of the community, was not, in fact, signed by them. This is tantamount to a charge of the gravest nature. The Agent General's cable was read to me, in the Premier's office, by Sir Henry Lefroy and I immediately refuted the charge or insinuation by production of the cable message bearing the original signatures of the gentlemen referred to. Sir Henry Lefroy then expressed his conviction that the cable was genuine. I, therefore, say that this grave charge made by Sir James Connolly has been and can again be incontrovertibly refuted.

29. In connection with my retirement, Sir Newton Moore offered to ship my furni-

ture to the State freight free; I never asked for this to be done. This offer to ship the furniture was voluntarily made by Sir Newton Moore, and was one which I, quite naturally, gratefully accepted. The offer is confirmed by Sir Henry Lefroy's telegram to the Prime Minister, which is on the file.

30. In due course the said furniture was shipped by a Commonwealth vessel and the bill for freight rendered to me. I declined to pay, pleading "no liability" and "inability," and concurred in a writ being taken out by the Commonwealth Government against the State Government and Kessell conjointly, in order that the matter in dispute might be determined in a court of law.

31. As soon as my counsel entered an appearance to the writ, the State Government, without notifying me, paid the freight, and then, by way of a "set-off," at first withheld the whole of my pension, and later on one-half thereof until such time as the full amount shall have been received by them.

I paid all charges, other than freight, as promised by me before leaving London.

33. I consider that the foregoing matters relating to implied dishonesty, misrepresentation, and the withholding of the pension granted to me by His Majesty the King for faithful service, constitute persecution, for which there is no justification whatsoever. Moreover, the whole of my civil service career dispels any such innuendoes.

34. Furthermore, this persecution has had most serious effects in the financial and business circles with which I have hitherto dealt, and has compelled me to make known for the first time, in my own defence, the facts set out in this declaration.

35. One act of careful attention to administration on my part (when there was no Agent General in daily attendance, or even at times, for ten minutes in a week) led to the Government receiving over £30,000, yet the Agent General never gave me credit for same. This can be incontrovertibly proved. Moreover, it must be remembered that for about eighteen months the Agent General was practically "out of touch" with the London office, which entailed great responsibility and care on the part of the Secretary.

37. That I did my duty conscientiously and to the satisfaction of those interested is evidenced by the fact that over sixty (60) people representing every section of the Western Australian community in London, voluntarily subscribed to a testimonial certifying to my ability and courteous attention to their requirements from time to time.

And I make this solemn declaration by virtue of Section 106 of "The Evidence Act, 1906."

(Sgd.) A. C. KESSELL.

Declared at Perth, this 9th day of March, 1922, before me—

(Sgd.) W. F. LATHLAIN,

(Justice of the Peace and Mayor of the City of Perth in the State of Western Australia).

[Stamp.]

The document from which I have read is not the original statutory declaration, but a copy. It was my intention, however, to hand to the Premier the original document signed by Kessell, the original statutory declaration. I believe that the man himself has stated the case in what he regards as a perfectly open, straightforward, and honest manner. If there is anything to hide, then I do not wish to be associated with the matter. I have taken up the case again this session only because of the extraordinary nature of the charges made in the declaration. In handing the original declaration to the Premier, I do so out of respect for the opinions expressed by various hon. members who spoke on the point of order raised by the Premier. What those hon. members have stated has led me to believe that it would be in the best interests of the House that the original document should be laid on the Table through the medium of the Premier. That this matter is not merely a private vendetta or quarrel is proved by the fact that, after certain research, it has been taken up by other people than the individual concerned. In this connection I quote the following letter, dated the 25th November, 1921, from the general secretary of the Civil Service Association of Western Australia:—

Dear Mr. Kessell,—At the monthly meeting of my council held last night, reference was made to Captain Carter's motion in the Assembly for a select committee to inquire into and report upon your retirement from the secretaryship to the London agency. The council expressed the unanimous opinion that the association would welcome the fullest inquiry into this matter, and authorised me to convey this opinion to the Press. Rather than write direct to the Press, I have concluded that it would perhaps meet the case better to acquaint you with the council's attitude, leaving it to yourself to make what use of this letter you think best.

The main argument I desire to place before the House is contained in that letter. The charges made in the statutory declaration are of such a nature that it is incumbent upon the Government to see that they are ventilated, and that this individual is given one clear chance to stand his trial and refute, if he possibly can, every allegation and innuendo made against him, and to clear away the misunderstandings that at present surround his name. I do not wish to labour the question any further, but I do hope the House will seriously consider the position, because the declaration which I have been privileged to read to the House is of such a serious character as to call for immediate action. I trust, therefore, that the House will grant

Kessell this inquiry, an inquiry which will throw the light of day on all the charges which he has laid against individuals who unfortunately are not in the State at the present time. It is not my intention to say more, except to plead with members on both sides of the Chamber who have heard the declaration to give this man an opportunity to clear himself.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I second the motion.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [7.45]: I have not had an opportunity of perusing the contents of the declaration read by the member for Leederville. The charges, however, are of so serious a character, that I think the House should direct that an inquiry be held. I need not discuss the matter at any great length. The charges are of so serious a character that I think the House should direct that a Royal Commission be appointed to inquire into them.

Hon. T. Walker: Not a select committee?

The PREMIER: No, a Royal Commission. It would be fair to all, to Mr. Kessell, and certainly to the people charged with so much wrongdoing. We should appoint a Royal Commission; if possible, the Commissioner should be a Judge of the Supreme Court.

Mr. Corboy: Will that be to inquire only into the charges?

The PREMIER: No. Into the whole question. I do not believe there is an atom of truth in any of the charges this man has levelled against the late Agent General.

Mr. O'Loghlen: He will be able to answer the charges.

The PREMIER: Of course, Mr. Kessell will have to appear before the Royal Commission, and he will be examined on oath. He will have to be responsible for the statements he makes, and if he makes statements that are untrue, he will have to answer for them.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Witnesses have to be sworn.

The PREMIER: In my opinion, this man has been treated generously by the Government and by the Agent General. It is a very strange thing that when Sir Newton Moore wanted to debit up expenses in connection with his work as Agent General, this high and mighty official objected!

Hon. P. Collier: The office boy objected!

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Parliament made a grant for entertainments.

The PREMIER: This man objected! He considered he was higher than the Agent General and the Government! He was supreme!

Hon. P. Collier: One wonders how he could have allowed it!

The PREMIER: When it comes to a matter, however, of £400 to bring his furniture to Western Australia, of course, it was not an illegal act. That was not wrong. He had already got an allowance of £40. He had already drawn that amount. In fact,

he managed to get £70. The amount for the conveyance of furniture is fixed by regulation.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: That is not a fair way to put it.

The PREMIER: I say it is fair. I am going to put it that way.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: I know the circumstances.

The PREMIER: I know them a good deal better than the hon. member. When it comes to a question of the Agent General saying that he will take the furniture to Western Australia free, it is apparently a perfectly legal thing. It was true that it was thought that the furniture might come by the "Kangaroo." It did not come out by that vessel, but by another boat.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Kessell did not know.

The PREMIER: I do not believe the Agent General promised that the furniture would be brought out without cost. I know it is against the regulations to allow more than a fixed amount for that sort of thing. I will not discuss the matter at any length. We have discussed it time and again. Let us appoint a Royal Commission to go into the whole matter. We will get behind the truth and get to finality. I do not know why, when a man is retired from the Civil Service, we always have the question brought up.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Why is this man retired and given a pension?

Mr. Johnston: A young man too!

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He could have gone back to the Railway Department.

The PREMIER: If an injustice has been done, it should be inquired into. I do not think any injustice has been done. It seems to me that there is no reason why the Crown should continue to employ an officer when it is felt by those in authority that he is no longer filling his position satisfactorily. Why should the Crown keep such a man? The member for North Perth (Mr. MacCallum Smith) does not keep a man in his employ, when he does not wish to do so.

Mr. Corboy: He cannot keep those in his employ whom he wants to.

The PREMIER: It is probably fortunate for so young a man to have a pension. If he has ability—and there is no doubt that he has ability—

Capt. Carter: He has shown that ability under six Premiers.

The PREMIER: At any rate, he has been retired on a pension. I ask the House to agree to the appointment of a Royal Commission. I do not think any good can result from discussing this matter at any length this evening. In view of the serious charges made against an honourable man like Sir Newton Moore, no hon. member would question for one moment the wisdom of appointing a Royal Commission. We shall be doing justice to Sir Newton Moore. I repeat that I do not believe there is one word of truth in

the charges against that gentleman. I move an amendment—

That the words "a select committee" be struck out and "in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should" be inserted in lieu.

Capt. CARTER (Leederville—on amendment) [7.53]: I thank the Premier for the view he has taken of the question. I do not altogether agree with certain words he has used.

Hon. T. Walker: Are you speaking on the amendment?

Capt. CARTER: Yes, I am not speaking in reply. I concur in the Premier's suggestion because I believe that, with such a person as the Premier has mentioned, namely a Supreme Court judge, or some individual of high standing, there will be no question left in the minds of the public, of Kessell or of any individual concerned, that the matter has not been properly inquired into. That is all I ask. If the course suggested by the Premier be followed, then my work is done. I am perfectly satisfied. I think I am right in stating that a man with 12 years' service under six different Premiers, must have evidenced a certain amount of ability, and that must have dwindled—

Mr. SPEAKER: That has nothing to do with the amendment. The hon. member cannot reply at this stage. If he wishes to reply I must be satisfied that no other hon. member wishes to speak.

Capt. CARTER: I do not wish to reply at this stage. I accept the amendment.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.55]: I desire to say only a few words. I agree that the charges contained in the document read by the member for Leederville are of so serious a character as to warrant the most searching investigation. To do that it will be necessary to have at least a Royal Commission. I am concerned, however, as to how any Royal Commission can be appointed—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member had better leave that aspect until I put the amendment.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is relevant, because I wish to discuss how the Royal Commission can deal with it.

The SPEAKER: That is all right.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I want to be satisfied that a Royal Commission will be able to carry out the work. In this case unfortunately one of the persons concerned is in London.

Mr. Mann: Two are in London.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Perhaps three.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: There are a good many witnesses in London too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not aware whether the Royal Commissioner's Powers Act provides for a Royal Commission taking evidence on commission. I would not offer a definite opinion on the matter, but, so far as I know, a Royal Commissioner will not have that power. He will

be able to examine Kessell and any other witnesses in this State who can give evidence bearing on this question.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Can the Royal Commissioner go to London?

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the matter is to be sifted thoroughly, he may require evidence from London.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Anyhow, the accounts are here.

The Premier: I think a Royal Commissioner can take evidence on commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Documents bearing on the case are in the State.

Mr. Mann: The matter of the cablegram can be investigated here.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Apart altogether from the evidence that may be extracted by a reference to the files and documents, there will be the other most important factor, namely, the evidence of the man who is charged with these offences. This is one of the most serious, if not the most serious of the charges that have been levelled since I have been a member of this House. When an Agent General is charged with the misappropriation of public moneys for private reasons, it must be recognised that nothing more serious could be charged against a public man. It is incumbent upon us to see that the matter is thoroughly sifted to the bottom, and that every opportunity will be afforded to the individual concerned to give evidence before the Royal Commission or to put his views before anyone we may appoint.

Mr. Money: That would be provided for in the terms of appointment of the Royal Commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That will not be provided for. The scope of the inquiry will be included in the terms of the Royal Commission but that will not enable the Commissioner, if there is no other power, to take evidence on commission—

Hon. T. Walker: Outside the State.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The terms of the Commission will not enable evidence to be taken outside the State. However, it is futile for us to discuss that now. I rose only to bring before the House the possibility of having a full and thorough investigation, and the question whether it will be possible to have a Royal Commission to take evidence in England. No inquiry can be complete without the evidence of Sir Newton Moore and others at present in London.

Amendment put and passed.

Question, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION—RAVENSTHORPE SMELTERS, PRIVY COUNCIL APPEAL.

Mr. CORBOY (Yilgarn) [8.1]: I move—

That in the opinion of the House the decision of the Government, as publicly announced, to appeal to the Privy Council against the decision of the High Court of

Australia in the matter of McNeil and Bernaldes versus the Crown is unwarranted, and should not be proceeded with.

I do not intend to traverse the ground we went over last session, but I wish to reiterate the request I then made, and have repeatedly made to the Ministry outside the Chamber, namely, that they go into the whole question closely and examine the position to see if they cannot realise that by prosecuting further appeals they are merely throwing good money after bad in costs. In approaching Ministers on this question I have found a good deal of difficulty. Prior to the Premier's departure for England I proposed to him an offer for a settlement in this case, and pointed out that a settlement on the basis suggested would mean to the Government a saving of £10,000 on the verdict. That was subsequent to Mr. Justice Burnside's decision. The offer was not accepted. The appeal to the High Court of Australia was persisted in. I want to refer to the remarks of the judges of that court, to portions of their judgment, and to the attitude of the Government. In taking the case to the High Court of Australia the Government put up the plea of the Crown Suits Act in respect of the first five campaigns on which they were being sued for fraud, the plea that the Crown Suits Act debarred action on the part of the plaintiffs. The remarks of some of the judges respecting this plea throws light on what is thought by others of this point raised by the Crown. Having presented that point to the court, counsel for the Crown was asked by the Chief Justice whether the attitude of the Government did not mean this: "You contend," said the Chief Justice, "that the Government, having stolen the money, intend to keep it?" In my opinion that is a most serious remark when made by a Chief Justice of the Commonwealth.

The Premier: You know that we have not a penny of that money.

Mr. CORBOY: I have heard the Premier say that before, but I have not yet had a satisfactory answer to a question I asked in the House last session. There was then lying in the Treasury, under the heading of State Smelter Receipts in Suspense, an amount approximately equalling the amount in dispute. The Premier will remember that when I asked him for the details of that amount and what moneys it represented, his reply was that it was not considered good policy to disclose what those moneys represented. If the Premier wishes to be fair with this thing, he will tell us what that money represents. On the Premier's own plea that the Crown were merely agents for the ore producers, any moneys lying in suspense must belong to the producers.

The Premier: They have had it all, every penny of it, so I am informed.

Mr. CORBOY: The Premier is also informed that the amount involved is £80,000, whereas, in fact, it is £55,000.

The Premier: Still, that is a big sum.

Mr. CORBOY: Yes, but it shows how unreliable is the information you are getting.

The Premier: But you may be wrong.

Mr. CORBOY: That is so. I am still waiting for a satisfactory explanation of the business. The Premier has not shown where my figures were wrong last year.

The Premier: Another tribunal, representing both parties, has dealt with the matter, and you have got full information now. You will remember that it is still before the court.

Mr. CORBOY: I am aware of that. I wish to make a public appeal to the Premier not to go on what he is informed, but to investigate the matter for himself. If he does that, I am convinced he will drop the appeal. I do not wish to go over the details in respect of those campaigns, but I want to repeat one or two of the comments of the judges. Mr. Justice Starke said—

The account sent to the ore getters is wrong in this case by reason of fraud. If the account is wrong by reason of fraud, then whether the account was sent out by the Minister or by a servant of the Crown, it is fraud on behalf of the Crown, which is the same thing. When judges use such expressions, it shows that the Government's case must be fairly hopeless. All will agree that it is useless spending thousands more in a Privy Council appeal.

The Premier: I know that the people claiming the money wish us to stop.

Mr. CORBOY: I do not think Mr. McNeil would wish it, because if he wins you have to pay him 8 per cent. interest for the whole time. It is better interest than he can get anywhere else, and probably he is not in want of a pound or two in the meantime. But there are in the Ravensthorpe district many people hard up against it, men to whom the disbursement of this money would make a great difference. I have in mind one man with nine children, who is having a great struggle to get even food, clothing being out of the question. They are all in rags. Under this claim he is due for £1,600. It must be remembered that there are others besides Mr. McNeil involved in this case. I appeal to the Premier to give it his personal attention.

The Premier: It has already had a good deal of that.

Mr. CORBOY: But not sufficient: I have not any particular love for Mr. de Bernales or one or two others in the case. They fought very bitterly against me at the last election, but that does not affect the validity of their claim. The judges of the High Court in Melbourne appealed to counsel for the Crown to endeavour to get our Government to withdraw the plea of the Crown Suits Act. Counsel wired over here. The Premier being out of the State, Mr. Colebatch dealt with the matter. Counsel thereupon informed the court that a reply to the question had been received from Western Australia to the effect that if the court decided in favour of the Crown on the Statute

of Limitations, it would not seek to retain the money the right to which would be Statute barred, and that the amount for the whole period would be adjusted on the basis that was determined to be correct. In other words, Cabinet had decided that if on those campaigns which did not come within the Crown Suits plea, the court decided in favour of McNeil and de Bernales, the Government would settle for the whole nine campaigns on that basis. Mr. Colebatch made a statement which is reported as follows in the newspapers of the 22nd March—

The Acting Premier (Mr. H. P. Colebatch) commented yesterday on the telegraphed report from Melbourne of proceedings during the Full High Court's consideration of an appeal against Mr. Justice Burnside's judgment in the case of Neil McNeil and Claude de Bernales v. the Crown. "A telegram was received by the Government on Monday afternoon with reference to this case," said Mr. Colebatch. "The telegram asked if the Government would stand on its legal rights and refuse payment in respect of certain portions of the claim on the ground that the claim was not entered in the time prescribed by Section 37 of the Crown Suits Act. The telegram was brought under my notice by the Solicitor General (Mr. W. F. Sayer). I at once approved of his recommendation that a reply should be sent that the Government would not stand on its legal rights in the way suggested, but would observe the spirit of the judgment of the Court, whatever it might be.

The Government were being sued in respect of campaigns one to nine inclusive, and the High Court decided that McNeil and de Bernales were not entitled to succeed on the first five—governed by the Statute of Limitations—but that they did succeed on the remaining four, on which they had sued in time. If Mr. Colebatch's statement meant anything at all, it meant that the Government were going to abide by the spirit of the judgment, and would, therefore, pay on the whole of the nine campaigns. Yet, as soon as the High Court delivered judgment and ruled that the Government were entitled to succeed on their appeal on the first five campaigns under the Crown Suits Act, the Minister for Mines told me that the Government did not mean that at all, that they intended to retain the moneys they had got for the first five campaigns, and pay on only the remaining four, if on any. If that position is taken up by the Ministry, it is an improper one. The Ministry gave a definite assurance to the High Court that they would pay on the spirit of the judgment, whatever it might be. Mr. Colebatch, in his public statement, gave a definite assurance that the Government would not retain money to which they were entitled only by reason of the Crown Suits Act. Yet the Minister for

Mines told me that the Government intend to retain the moneys on the first five campaigns. I want an assurance from the Premier that, even if this case does go to the Privy Council and the Government lose it, they will stick to the guarantee given to the High Court and the statement of Mr. Colebatch that the spirit of the judgment would be observed. In dealing with this matter last session, I mentioned what had been said by Mr. Justice Burnside in his judgment. He said definitely that the action of the manager of the State smelters at Ravensthorpe, Mr. Shepherd, in conjunction with the State Mining Engineer, undoubtedly constituted fraud.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: And he is still employed by the Government.

Mr. CORBOY: He is employed by a board on which the Government are represented, and the Minister for Mines is at present on his way to see him.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: He is a nominee of the Government, anyhow.

The Premier: I thought he had left the State?

Mr. CORBOY: I wish to refer to the separate judgment in the High Court of Mr. Justice Isaacs, who said—

Though no more money was deducted than Shepherd and Montgomery believed the vendors were liable to bear for total expenses, the course adopted was wholly improper.

The Premier: That is very different from fraud.

Mr. CORBOY: Perhaps the Premier will find it is not very different from fraud before I have finished quoting the judgment. It continued—

It deceived and was intended to deceive the vendors.

If that is not fraud, I do not know what is. It led them to think the Government still regarded the regulation smelting charges as binding and complete, and that the actual costs of realisation as distinguished from smelting were higher than they really were. It was intended to induce the vendors to believe they had no reason to challenge the Government's construction of the August notice, and the inducement succeeded. If the figures had been truthfully arranged, the vendors could and probably would have there and then challenged the deduction and as it appears with success. It was fraudulent notwithstanding the motive. Whether in law this is fraud which can be imputed legally to the Crown, I do not find it necessary to decide. I will add only two observations. I do not think that the subsequent events such as the deputations and balance sheets can be taken from any standpoint as sufficiently discharging the obligation of displacing the false belief intentionally created by the untrue costs of realisation.

Further on Mr. Justice Isaacs said—

The essential of a sufficient disclosure is that either it should in fact successfully convey to the mind of the party to whom the misrepresentation was made that it was a misrepresentation, and what the truth was in substance, or that the disclosure should be such as is calculated to convey that information to a person in his position. The second observation is this: Governments may be expected, if not as a matter of law, at any rate of conduct, in litigious matters to set a very high standard. In the course of the argument, I asked the learned counsel for the Crown what course the Crown would adopt with respect to the first five campaigns if the court took the view that the final payments for those campaigns were less than the contractual obligations between the parties justified, and yet that Section 37 was fatal to the claim. The answer was to the effect that the Government would in that case voluntarily apply to the first five campaigns the same rule as the court applied to the later campaigns, subject to not treating the 3s. 6d. per unit as fixed realisation.

There is a definite statement by Mr. Justice Isaacs that the High Court was given a definite guarantee that the Government would voluntarily pay on the first five campaigns if the court decided in favour of McNeil and de Bernaldes on the last four, even though the Crown won on the Crown Suits Act. I want a reiteration by the Premier of that guarantee.

The Premier: Do you?

Mr. CORBOY: The Premier says "Do you," as if he does not intend to give it. If the Cabinet are prepared to go back on their word to the High Court, their word is not worth anything. If the Premier goes back on the word of the acting Premier and his colleagues given to the High Court during his absence in England, he would go back on anything.

The Premier: I have not said I will. You are a very good pleader, though.

Mr. CORBOY: I wish I could so plead with the Premier as to induce him to go personally into this matter. He would find that the Government were not employing particularly brilliant people at that time. If the Premier personally investigated the matter, he would drop all thought of appealing to the Privy Council. I do not wish to labour the question. Enough was said during the discussion last session to disclose what took place, but the Government should not waste money in costs on a Privy Council appeal. The remarks of the High Court judges and of Mr. Justice Burnside are sufficient to convince any reasonable man that it is impossible to win the case at the Privy Council. The worst possible thing the Government could do would be to withdraw from the guarantee given to the High Court. If the Minister

for Mines is not under a misapprehension, and if Cabinet have decided to back out of their promise given to the High Court, then the Government are unworthy of a moment's consideration at the hands of the country. I believe the Premier will not attempt to back out of a definite promise of this nature. When Cabinet realise that the High Court was given an assurance and accepted it as a guarantee, they will not attempt to break their word.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

MOTION—NARROGIN-DWARDA RAILWAY.

To inquire by select committee.

Mr. HICKMOTT (Pingelly) [8.23]: I move—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the advisability of constructing the Narrogin-Dwarda railway, and that all work on that line be suspended pending the report of committee.

In moving this motion I am actuated by no motive, personal or otherwise. I am moving it solely in the interests of the State. This railway has been authorised by Parliament and, unfortunately, some work has been done on it, but I contend that in the best interests of the State, the time is not opportune to build the line. The railway will be about 34 miles in length and the estimated cost is £4,000 per mile, or a total of £136,000. It was admitted by the Minister for Railways and other members when the railway was authorised that it would not be of any particular benefit to the community. The particular object in authorising it was to link up the South-Western and Great Southern Railways.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Who admitted that?

Mr. HICKMOTT: I think the hon. member did.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, I did not.

Mr. Johnston: It is the first I have heard of it.

Mr. HICKMOTT: I have heard it from several members. I think the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) mentioned the other night that the object of the line was for the better working of the railway system.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That was one point in its favour.

Mr. HICKMOTT: That is a partial admission. I have since been in communication with the Commissioner of Railways and heads of the Railway Department, and they say that the new line will be of no benefit whatever to the Working Railways. They say that the grades are so steep on the Dwarda-Pinjarra line that it would be impossible to haul a load over that line if the new railway were built.

Mr. Johnston: To whom did they say that?

Mr. HICKMOTT: To me, and a series of questions asked in another place last week fully bear out that statement. The questions and answers read—

What is the steepest grade on the railway line from Pinjarra to Narrogin going east, via Dwarda?—One in 30.

What is the steepest grade on the same line from Narrogin to Pinjarra going west?—One in 40.

What is the steepest grade on the line from Perth to Narrogin via Spencer's Brook, and what is the steepest grade on the same line from Narrogin to Perth?—One in 45 in the ranges, but the general ruling grade is one in 60.

What is the difference in tonnage that an engine would take to Narrogin via Spencer's Brook versus via Pinjarra and Dwarda?—A class "M" locomotive would take to Narrogin via Spencer's Brook 275 tons; from Pinjarra via Dwarda, 140 tons.

What is the difference in tonnage that the same engine would take from Narrogin to Perth via Spencer's Brook versus Pinjarra?—A class "M" locomotive would take from Narrogin via Spencer's Brook 370 tons; from Narrogin to Pinjarra via Dwarda, 235 tons.

Do the Commissioner and the heads of branches of the Railway Department consider that the linking up the railway from Dwarda to Narrogin would assist in the economical working of the Government railway system?—No.

Those answers are plain enough, and they come from the people who would have to work the new line. I think this information provides conclusive evidence that the line would not be of much use; in fact the heads of departments have told me personally that if the line were constructed, they would still pull their loads on the main trunk line, the Great Southern, and would allow any difference of tonnage on that line.

Mr. Johnston: Those are the grades on the existing lines.

Mr. HICKMOTT: Those are the grades on the route which would have to be followed; there is no other way. This work involves the useless expenditure of a very large sum of money which, in the present state of the finances, could be used to much greater advantage in other directions.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: What would be the saving?

Mr. HICKMOTT: Thirty-four miles to Fremantle.

The Premier: The people who would be served are nearer to Bunbury, are they not?

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Could not the grade be altered?

Mr. HICKMOTT: Each port should have the tonnage naturally due to it. Bunbury is the nearest port to Narrogin, and all the

tonnage to the south of Narrogin should by rights go to Bunbury. There are four or five railways already linked up with Narrogin, and the line we are now discussing will serve no useful purpose. It will not open up any new country that is not already served by some existing railway. The people along the Dwarda line are served by that line, and those farther away are served by the Great Southern line. The advisory board recommended a line along the Hotham Valley to serve soldier settlements there. The line should be stopped and cancelled at once. I am supported in this view by numbers of letters and telegrams which I have received.

Mr. Harrison: Do you know the district personally?

Mr. HICKMOTT: Yes.

Mr. Johnston: Have you been through it from Narrogin?

Mr. HICKMOTT: No. There are two large estates on the western side of the proposed line, and one on the Dwarda-Pinjarra line. Only three or four people would be served by this extension. If a select committee is appointed and it is found necessary to proceed with the work, it will not have been long delayed by reason of this motion.

Mr. LATHAM (York): I second the motion.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [8.35]: I wish the hon. member had been more frank in regard to this railway. When the line was passed by Parliament, there was considerable discussion as to whether it should not be diverted to a point in his district. It was thought by many that the line should terminate at a point in that electorate.

Mr. Hickmott: It is in it now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, it is at a dead end. The matter was left in the hands of departmental officials. The Government did not say where the line should terminate. Mr. Babington, the engineer, in the course of his report said:—

The proposed extension of this railway at first looks a simple matter from a local point of view. Three propositions present themselves to my mind, viz., to cover up with existing lines, either at Williams, Narrogin, or some other point on the Great Southern railway, say at Pingelly or Popanning.

Are those places in the hon. member's district?

Mr. Hickmott: Yes.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The report continues:—

But outside of parochial influence this matter should be considered in a more comprehensive manner. I think it is to be duly recognised that at some future time the traffic will warrant a trunk line being constructed from Narrogin or Brookton to Armadale, and this contingency must not be lost sight of; and I further desire to point out that in coupling up this line (Hotham railway) practically no new country will be

opened up. The distance from the present terminus (Dampier) to Williams as the crow flies is $21\frac{1}{4}$ miles, and from the same point to the Great Southern railway is $26\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Considering all the circumstances, I beg to suggest that the opinion of the Working Railways as to the point of linking up the railway should bear the greatest weight. I have no hesitation in recommending that the Dampier extension should be taken to Narrogin, if it be deemed necessary from a Working Railways point of view to extend the line; otherwise I see no urgency for the extension at present, as I have already pointed out it will not practically develop any extra area of country, and although it will convenience many farms, will not add anything more directly to the revenue.

Mr. Latham: That is the point.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The matter was submitted to the Railway Department, which recommended Narrogin. The department has depôts there, and pointed out it would increase the cost to have several depôts along the railway. The recommendation of the department was carried into effect. The hon. member said there was no land that would be served by this line. In dealing with this question in December, 1914, I said:—

Within a 12-mile radius of the proposed line there are 133,000 acres alienated and 45,000 acres not alienated. Of this latter area 6,000 acres are first class, 13,000 acres second class, and 26,000 acres third class land.

There was, therefore, some land within a 12-mile radius of this line.

Mr. Harrison: Does that refer to land already served by a railway?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This is information which came from the files. It is the area given by the officials that would have been served by the extension of the line at the time. There was a difference of opinion as to where the line should junction. The member for the district at the time thought it should go to Brookton. It was thought that within some reasonable time the railway would be carried on to Narrogin, where there is a railway depôt.

Mr. Money: Have you seen the more recent report of the Railway Advisory Board?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have to deal with the reports placed before Parliament when the construction of the line was approved. It was approved by Parliament on the recommendation of the officers.

Mr. Johnston: And the advisory board.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course. The people who were settled in the district, and those who took up the 45,000 acres, were guaranteed that the line would be constructed.

Mr. Hickmott: There are not 45,000 acres not served by a railway.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: At the time there were 45,000 acres not alienated within a 12-mile radius of the line. We must keep faith with those people. I am not prepared to say that there is any immediate necessity to construct the line, but the railway engineers

stated that Narrogin was the place where it should terminate.

Mr. Money: Now they say it is not the place.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If the Railway Department had their way, not another mile of railway would be built until the land adjoining the existing railways is properly used.

Mr. Money: There is some sense in that.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: They may change their minds next year.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: These are the conditions under which the construction of the line was approved by Parliament. A definite promise was given to those persons residing near the line. The member for Pingelly now desires that we should break that promise. His one aim is to violate the promise which Parliament made.

Mr. Hickmott: You are wrong.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member asks in his motion that work on the line should be suspended.

Mr. Latham: That does not mean a repeal of the Act.

Mr. Harrison: It means holding it up.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It may mean stopping the work for many years. The Act was passed in 1914, and it is eight years since this promise was made. Owing to the war, and the fact that the wrong Government came into office, the line has not been constructed. Had we remained in office all the railways passed in that year would have been built, and the indebtedness of the State would not have increased to the amount it has to-day. It was necessary at the time that the line should go to its proper junction, and that there should not be a dead end. It was considered advantageous to the working of the railway system that this line should go on to a junction. What the position is now, I do not know, not being in the confidence of the Railway Department.

Mr. Johnston: There has never been a railway repudiation Act yet in this State.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity of addressing himself to the question later.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not permitted to discuss other parts of the State or other railways. I am allowed to discuss only what is in the motion. Once Parliament has given a promise, that promise should be carried out. We may have made a mistake—I do not know—but the mistake, if made, was made on the advice of officials of the Railway Department and the Public Works Department. Those officials advised what they then considered best in the interests of the railway system.

Mr. Harrison: A good deal of water has run under the bridges since 1914.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Merely because eight years have elapsed are we to appoint a select committee to inquire into every one of these railways which have been authorised? If one authorised railway is wrong, another may be wrong. Is a select commit-

tee to be appointed in every instance? The member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) may argue in that way; I will not. If the hon. member thinks that railway communication is required by a district to which Parliament has not yet granted that facility, then he should ask for a select committee in every case. I regret that after eight years, after settlers have taken up 45,000 acres of land in the district on the faith of Parliament's approval of this railway, any member, and especially a member of the Country Party, should ask that the construction of the railway be suspended.

On motion by the Premier debate adjourned.

MOTION—PATRIOTIC FUNDS CONSOLIDATION.

To inquire by Royal Commission.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON (Moore) [8.51]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that a Royal Commission without pay should be appointed to inquire into the amounts of funds collected during the war by various bodies and organisations for the purpose of assisting soldiers and their dependants within the State, and into the disposal of surplus funds, if any, held by the various bodies and organisations since Declaration of Peace Day, June, 1919, with the object of consolidating all the funds of the various bodies into one common fund to be under the control of three trustees, to be appointed, one from the Returned Soldiers' League, one from the combined bodies and organisations, and one by the Government.

I asked a question on this subject as far back as the 21st December, 1921. The Premier then was good enough to say that he would give the matter due consideration. Since then quite a lot of water has run under the bridges, and we are still in the same position. We still have no assurance from the Premier that the funds will be consolidated. It may astonish hon. members to learn that various bodies and associations in this State collected for the soldiers a sum of nearly 1¼ millions sterling. Such was the sum subscribed by the good people of this State for the troops at the front. A list that I hold in my hand shows the total of the collections as £1,148,156 8s. 4d. Not for one moment do I suggest that this money has not been spent wisely and well; but it is believed that after three years of peace some of that money is still available. I wish to know how much. I regret to have to say that there are in this State quite a number of distressed soldiers. We should not have that distress amongst them, because they went away to fulfil a certain obligation, whilst our obligations to them have been gradually lost sight of. Out of that sum of £1,000,000 odd surely there is something remaining. At a

recent congress of returned soldiers held in the Eastern States this business was brought up, at the instance of a delegate from this State. We were first in the field, and we ought to put our house in order. Nobody can gainsay that during the war Western Australia bore her share of the burden. We have now in our midst a number of wingies and stumpies—80 in all—who are walking about looking for work. Surely out of that enormous amount of money collected there must be something available to help these poor fellows with. We did not send them away in order that they should come back maimed and destitute. These men fought for us, and I am anxious to see that they receive justice. Mr. Cornell went across to the returned soldiers' conference, and there he suggested what I brought up here eight months ago. However, we are still in the same position. While the Premier was in England Mr. Wilson and I interviewed another gentleman on this subject, but we got no satisfaction. We have no satisfaction up to date. I may refer to the Victorian A.I.F. Canteen Fund, which was administered by a gentleman named Lockyer, formerly Collector of Customs in Victoria. All matters connected with that fund have been entirely cleared up, as is shown by papers which I have here available for the inspection of hon. members. As regards our Western Australian funds we are not in that position. We do not know where we are. I repeat, I do not for one moment wish to suggest that there is anything whatsoever wrong with the administration of these funds; but we do want the matter settled. For the sake of those 80 maimed men we want the funds finalised. I am sure the Premier is with us in the desire to have the matter cleared up. I originally moved in the matter last year, and now we are getting well on to 1923, and nothing has been done. The time is ripe for having the whole thing thoroughly ventilated, and I do not intend to sit quiet until that has been done. To show the need for action, let me give one instance of a fund collected at Bunbury. The Bunbury children put in their pennies and twopences towards a "Soldiers' Toothbrush Fund," which reached a total of £5. I am informed that there is at present 7s. 6d. in that fund. For the soldier not one sou was spent. The fund was built up, and then it was absorbed by bank fees. Did those children think they were contributing to a bank, or did they think they were contributing to the soldiers?

Mr. Clydesdale: Very few banks made that charge.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: I know that, but the fact remains that out of a sum of £5 collected by small children for the soldiers a sum of 7s. 6d. remains in the bank and the rest is gone, without any portion of it having been spent for the benefit of the soldiers. I do not wish to labour the question; I do not think I ought to. The case is pre-eminently one calling for inquiry; something must be done in the matter. In my opinion, a Royal

Commission should be appointed to finalise the funds and put the whole matter in proper order.

Mr. LATHAM (York): I second the motion.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [9.0]: The member for Moore (Lieut.-Colonel Denton) asks the House to agree to the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire concerning all amounts collected by all bodies and persons throughout Western Australia during the war.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: I can give you that.

The PREMIER: That is what the hon. member asks shall be done. He asks that the Royal Commission shall look into this question, and, I suppose, make a close examination of all accounts to see that the funds have been properly disposed of. That will be a pretty big order. These funds have been collected in every centre from Wyndham to Eucla. Is it the intention that the Royal Commission shall visit all these centres?

Mr. Clydesdale: If so, you should transfer this work to the Forests Commission.

The PREMIER: Apparently the members of that Commission are busy enough now writing their report. This thing is to be done thoroughly.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: We have asked for this information for a long time.

The PREMIER: The Commission is to be given powers of inquiry which are very wide. If there is any surplus in hand, the people who collected the money during the war should hand it over to one common authority. Many of these funds were started during the war period and some were for the provision of sand bags, and so on. With the termination of the war the object for which those funds were raised, ceased to exist. There can be no further need for those funds, and probably some of the money in hand can be used for maimed and distressed soldiers. I suppose a lot of that money has been used in that direction.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: You had to sell some land.

The PREMIER: That is so. I have no objection to the funds which have been collected being amalgamated. I suppose those who collected the funds would have no objection to that.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: Why should they?

The PREMIER: Probably they would be glad to get rid of the funds in the circumstances. The Government, of course, have no right now to call upon these people to hand over the funds to some central authority. Even if the inquiry be held, it will probably be found necessary to furnish the Government with power to make the people hand over the funds. I do not know why the remaining balances should not be collected.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: I know it is not a very popular proposal.

The PREMIER: I do not know that. I have not heard any expression of opinion on the point. For my part, I have no objection

to it. Probably it may not be popular if it is thought to put these people who good-naturally collected the money and put the funds into the bank for safety, to a lot of trouble at this stage. For my part, I think it easy to go so far as to make it unlikely that anyone in the future will undertake to collect funds unless he has an accountant with him. Perhaps it is possible to go so far that the move will do no good.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: I do not think so.

The PREMIER: At the present time, a lot of ladies go round collecting money in shillings and other small sums, and it would be impossible for them to say who gave them the money.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But those people hand over the money to a few, and the money does not belong to those few to do with it what they like.

The PREMIER: If the money, when handed over, is entered up in books, it is a different thing, but we do not want to discourage people from doing this work.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: That is so.

The PREMIER: I have no objection to raise to the proposal to find out what the balances are and whether they are being used for soldiers. In some cases, I presume, the funds are being used to help distressed soldiers in the various centres. If the funds are being properly used for the purposes for which they were intended, then I do not think we can get control of them. If, for instance, there is a fund in Wagin which is being used to help distressed men there, it should not be necessary to take control of that money. I think a select committee would serve the purposes of the member for Moore just as well as a Royal Commission.

Hon. P. Collier: It is really work for an accountant.

The PREMIER: I told the hon. member that a long time ago, but more than that was wanted. Those who are concerned in this matter want to hold the inquiry rather than simply advertise for information through an accountant.

Hon. P. Collier: It is too late to do any more than that now.

The PREMIER: I do not know whether that is so, but I think that if some inquiry is to be made, a select committee could be appointed. I told the member for Moore that he wanted an accountant. I thought at first that we would require an Act of Parliament to compel people to notify the funds held by them. The hon. member did not think that was necessary. He suggested that if an inquiry were carried out, it would be better. I think if a select committee were to act with power to employ an accountant, the matter could be simply adjusted.

Mr. Angelo: Would an accountant be necessary? This should be a very simple matter.

Hon. P. Collier: Very simple, of course!

The PREMIER: The motion is for an inquiry into the disposal of these funds during the war.

Hon. P. Collier: No, it refers to surplus funds.

The PREMIER: The motion aims at an inquiry into the funds collected by various bodies during the war. I presume it is meant that this may extend to an audit of the books of those bodies.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not think so.

The PREMIER: It clearly indicates that.

Mr. Latham: The inquiry should show what the funds have been used for.

The PREMIER: I have no objection to raise to such an inquiry. If the people have money in hand still, I do not think they will object to give information.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: If they collected one and a quarter million pounds, there must be some left.

The PREMIER: I think the wording of the motion could be altered. There should be an inquiry to ascertain the balance remaining. It could be made a much simpler matter.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: You have not read the motion correctly.

The PREMIER: I have read the motion. The motion aims at an inquiry into the amount of funds collected by various bodies and organisations during the war for the purpose of assisting soldiers and their dependants within the State and as to the disposal of surplus funds.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: If any.

The PREMIER: Then the hon. member asked for authority to compel those bodies to hand the funds over to a central organisation, to be controlled by three trustees. I have no objection to the appointment of a select committee or Royal Commission, even if that is what is wanted.

Mr. WILSON (Collie) [9.10]: I support the motion. When I spoke regarding the appointment of a select committee to deal with the war gratuity bonds, I made certain statements which were true then and are true to-day. I may be pardoned if I refer to those remarks again.

The Premier: Tell us what you want done.

Mr. WILSON: I did not interrupt the Premier when he was speaking.

The Premier: You were not here.

Mr. WILSON: Let the Premier have a little patience and I will tell him what we want. On the occasion I refer to, I said—

I believe there are a lot more things to be cleared up arising out of the war. I say this advisedly, that as a result of many of the activities during the war, money was collected from various sources to help win the war and help relatives of soldiers.

I then suggested that the time had arrived when such money should be pooled. The member for Moore took the question up and in December last he brought forward a motion on all fours with that before the House tonight. A question was asked along these lines and the Premier said that he would give the matter consideration. Sir James Mitchell went overseas and I presume the matter was overlooked.

The Premier: We had no power to act.

Mr. WILSON: When we found the matter had been overlooked, Lieut-Colonel Denton, Mr. Richardson and I saw the Acting Premier, Mr. Colebatch, and put the case before him. A statement showing that 1½ millions had been handled was presented to Mr. Colebatch.

The Premier: That was the amount collected.

Mr. WILSON: Mr. Colebatch told us he would give consideration to the matter. He said that he would have certain inquiries made. We have not been informed as to the result of those inquiries. The deputation waited upon the Acting Premier again and he told us he would go into the matter and see what could be done. We suggested that a Royal Commission should be appointed because we felt we would get better results by that means. As we got no advice from the Acting Premier subsequently, on the 23rd June we sent the following letter to Mr. Colebatch—

Further to our recent interviews with you in regard to the consolidation of the War Patriotic Funds, we desire to bring under your notice that, although we have both interviewed you on several occasions, so far we have not been able to receive any reply to these visits. The matter has now been going on for quite a long time; indeed, it was brought up, as you are aware, in the House in December last. We would be glad if you would give us an immediate reply, as we feel that it is in the best interests of the subscribers to these funds that the matter be finalised forthwith. In conclusion, we desire that the matter receive your earliest consideration.

At that time we suggested that we knew of some funds not on the big list. The member for Perth (Mr. Mann) knows that as soon as the question was asked last December, he received a sum of money from Brown Hill with a request that he, as a member of the "Uglies," should distribute some £15. That has been done, and the soldiers have had the benefit of the money. But while one organisation holding money has proved to have a conscience, it is possible there are others with no conscience. The member for Moore (Lieut-Col. Denton) spoke of a certain fund in Bunbury. When I was in Bunbury last March electioneering, Mr. George Clarke, an ex-Mayor of Bunbury, said to me, "I see Col. Denton and you are moving in the matter of the patriotic funds. You are on the right track. I am a trustee of two funds, and I do not know where to send the money. With Mr. Logan, I am trustee of the sand bag fund, with £30 odd at credit. Then we have another fund. Some young ladies and school children conceived the brilliant idea of organising a tooth brush fund. About £5 was collected and vested in me and two other trustees. However, one young lady went off and got married without leaving her address, and

in consequence no money has been withdrawn from the fund. Nevertheless, only 7s. 6d. is left." I said to Mr. Clarke, "Where has the rest gone to?" Mr. Clarke said, "The bank charges have eaten up the balance." I reported that to the War Gratuity Bonds Commission. They were a bit sceptical about any bank eating up bawbees collected by children for the benefit of soldiers. We sent the following letter to Mr. Clarke:—

You will remember that when I was in Bunbury a few weeks ago in company with Mr. Jackson, electioneering, you gave me certain information about the Sandbag and Tooth Brush Fund, including the fact that you are a trustee of both funds. Col. Denton and I shall be pleased if you will supply us with details, confidentially or otherwise.

This was Mr. Clarke's reply:—

I have to inform you that the amount lying to the credit of the Sand Bag Fund at the Bank of Australasia in Bunbury is £31 4s. 10d., Messrs. Clarke and Logan being the trustees. The other fund is a few pence in credit, but this will be used to pay the cost of keeping the account at the Union Bank.

If most of the funds had been conducted the same as the Tooth Brush Fund, there would be no money at all to pool. It has been said that we are out to create an atmosphere of distrust among those who have collected money. Nothing is further from our intentions. It is only right that all the odds and ends of these various funds should now be pooled so that those for whom they were collected might get the benefit. We still have the Army and Navy Fund, although it is no longer needed for the purpose of extending welcomes.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: In Victoria it has been cleaned up.

Mr. WILSON: So much of that fund as may be left ought to be devoted to the dependants of those who have fallen. There is no longer any reason for maintaining the Welcome Home Fund, or the Trench Comforts Fund. At Collie £200 was collected for the Trench Comforts Fund, but none of the money was sent forward, and afterwards it was divided into two sums, £100 for a memorial hall at Collie and £100 for the monument. The money was not collected for those purposes, and if anybody had a right to give it away it was the tunnellers, for whom the fund was collected. There are 101 of these little funds still in existence, and it is only right that they should be consolidated. The contributors to the Amelioration Fund in Perth have agreed that it should be pooled. There is money lying at Kalgoorlie and all over the place. Obviously, if those for whom it was collected are agreeable, it should all be pooled. It is very gratifying to see the R.S.L. taking a hand in the same some time after the commandant (Lt.-Col. Denton) moved

in the matter. At a conference of the R.S.L. in Sydney a question was asked which Colonel Denton had asked six months ago. I hope they will now agree to come into line with us, and that the motion will be passed and a Royal Commission appointed. Nobody who has not anything to hush up will be the least perturbed by the inquiry. The sooner the work is done the better.

Mr. J. THOMSON (Claremont) [9.25]: I must oppose the motion, for the reason that in every town and village people have collected money, and so have a right to look after it. Down in Claremont we have £300, and I am quite sure the people who collected it are not going to hand it in to a common fund.

Mr. Clydesdale: They are too Scotch for that.

Mr. J. THOMSON: We are still spending that money on the purposes for which it was collected.

Mr. Wilson: Why be selfish?

Mr. J. THOMSON: Let the hon. member spend the Tooth Brush Fund in Bunbury, where it was collected. We are going to spend our money in Claremont. I will oppose the motion.

Mr. Angelo: What was it collected for?

Mr. J. THOMSON: For the soldiers, and we are spending it on the soldiers. If every member would look after his own electorate and see that the money collected there is spent there, nothing more would be required.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [9.27]: I will assist the hon. member to obtain the proposed Royal Commission. Some £1,148,000 was collected in this State and while practically the whole of it has been spent, there must still be some of it knocking about. All that is required is that there shall be some machinery for consolidating those funds, without which there is no chance of getting the accounts wound up. I disagree with the member for Claremont. When those moneys are pooled, if it be found that there is anything in Claremont worthy of expenditure, some of the fund will be spent there. The people who are to have the handling of the money will do what is just. There is no suggestion that it should all be spent in one place. In order to consolidate the various small sums lying about, the proposed Royal Commission is necessary.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. R. S. Sampson—Swan) [9.28]: I believe the organisations concerned will welcome the motion. In certain cases no doubt there has been a good deal of misapprehension as to what is to be done with the funds remaining. I was chairman of the Soldiers' Sick Children Committee. That fund is in credit nearly £100. A resolution was carried that the money be retained to a certain date for the purpose for which it was collected, namely, to provide medical attention for the sick children of soldiers.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That was the balance of the War Patriotic Fund.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, it was associated with that fund, but collected separately by a separate body. When the period is up, it will become a question of what is to be done with the balance. The motion will serve a very useful purpose, and will be a subject for gratitude on the part of those committees who are naturally anxious that the several funds should be satisfactorily wound up.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascayne) [9.29]: I am in sympathy with the motion but, like the Premier, I think a select committee would do, at all events to begin with. If, later, it be found that the powers of that committee are not sufficient, it can be converted into a Royal Commission. I was surprised to hear that a well known and powerful bank should have made charges against a war fund, as suggested by the member for Moore (Lieut.-Col. Denton). I feel sure if that has been done, it has been due to the laxity of the trustees of the fund. If the account was opened in the name of two trustees without any mention of it being for a particular fund, the bank would not know it was a trust account and would, of course, make the usual charge. Not only the bank mentioned but all the chartered banks have been very generous indeed in their treatment of all these funds. No charge has been made for keeping accounts; the exchange to England and to the other States has been rebated, and everything has been done without charge. It is only fair to point out that, if what has been stated has occurred, it has not been with the knowledge of the bank.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE BOARD, ADMINISTRATION.

To inquire by select committee.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.32]: I move—

That a select committee be appointed to make full inquiries into the administration of the Industries Assistance Board.

My reason for asking for the appointment of a select committee is on account of the discontent existing in various parts of the State with regard to the Industries Assistance Board. The Premier, in answer to a question asked by me on the 10th August, stated that the total amount owing by clients to the board at the 30th June, 1922, was £1,416,017.

The Premier: That includes the soldiers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I also asked the Premier the total amount owing by clients whom the board considered unsatisfactory and hopeless. The Premier's answer was, "Not ascertainable without a special analysis of the accounts and valuation of security."

Hon. P. Collier: Perhaps it was not desirable to give it.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Just after the Premier left for England, a statement was published in the Press that the board had reduced the sustenance to a number of clients, because they were considered to be unsatisfactory and hopeless. If the board did not have that information at the time they reduced, or probably cut out altogether, the sustenance to these clients, how could they know that the clients were unsatisfactory and hopeless? They must have known when they reduced the sustenance allowance to clients—they considered unsatisfactory and hopeless; otherwise they could not have made a reduction on those grounds.

Mr. Harrison: They most likely took the inspectors' evidence without any further report.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am pleased to have that interjection. If that is so, it shows the necessity for inquiring into the administration of the board.

Mr. Harrison: I agree with you.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Not only from that point of view is inquiry necessary. It is necessary to ascertain what action has been taken by the board to reduce the debts to outside creditors—debts which have been standing over for eight years. The Premier has informed us that last year there was over £600,000 and that at present there is between £340,000 and £350,000 still due to outside creditors. These creditors are becoming disinterested with the position.

Mr. Stubbs: The creditors would accept 5s. in the pound.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Some of them would accept less. Every client of the Industries Assistance Board is working under a moratorium. The creditors have no means of ascertaining whether the board are justified or not in retaining the moratorium. To give an instance, I was in an hotel one night waiting for a train. The manager of a firm came in and handed the owner a letter. The latter, on opening it, found an account for an amount of over £100 torn in two, and written across it were the words, "I am under the I.A.B."

Mr. Underwood: A good place to be under.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That was the treatment received by this creditor who, in times of distress, had advanced this sum to assist a settler on his holding. Doubtless many other creditors have been treated similarly. Members are entitled to know the position of the Industries Assistance Board. We do not know whether the State is making a big loss. We do not know under what conditions advances are being made, or how surplus funds after each crop are being divided up, because the division is now made at the discretion of the Treasurer.

The Premier: No, it is according to the Act.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Act was amended in 1917. The schedule was struck out, and the matter is now entirely at the discretion of the Treasurer. No one knows how the institution is being worked, and creditors are crying out for their money. One man told me the other day, "I have debts handed over to the I.A.B. amounting to over £4,000, and I would be glad to accept £750 to-day." That amount has been standing over for eight years. During that period many of the men under the board have increased the value of their holdings considerably. If due inquiry were made, it would probably be found that the assets of these people to-day are such that, if the moratorium were removed, many of the creditors who have been paying high rates of interest on their overdrafts, and who cannot afford to stand out of their money any longer, might be paid.

The Premier: It would be removed if a man can pay and won't pay.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That all depends. The board keeps on advancing for crop after crop and, no matter what improvements are made on the holdings, the clients are protected.

Mr. Latham: They do not permit improvements to come under the I.A.B.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They can use money for that purpose.

The Premier: They do, too.

Mr. Mann: They usually draw on the Agricultural Bank for improvements.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Some of them do, but if they can get it from their surplus after the I.A.B. accounts have been paid and use it on their farms, it is an advantage to them.

Mr. Latham: That is so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Such money, however, belongs to their creditors.

Mr. Harrison: The creditors' claims come before improvements.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, it has been left to the discretion of the Treasurer, which in this case means the discretion of the board. When the Act was passed in 1915, it contained a schedule setting out how the surplus should be divided. In 1917 the schedule was repealed, and ever since the division has been at the discretion of the board. According to the latest report of the board, it was considered that no less than £96,000 had been advanced which had been a dead loss to the State. We know that the board are advancing money as sustenance to a number of clients whom they consider unsatisfactory and hopeless, and whom they desire to cut out. This sort of thing cannot continue. What is the use of having the board if their recommendations are not given effect to? What is the use of having the board controlling 1½ millions of advances to settlers, certain of whom will not give to their farms that attention which they should and are using the money advanced to them recklessly and wastefully, if the board cannot say whether the advances should be continued or not? That is the position to-day, and it is one which should

not be permitted to continue. The board have been in existence for eight years. No banking institution would stand it; no private institution would stand it.

Capt. Carter: It is killing a lot of private firms.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It might be advantageous to the State if those men, for whom everything possible has been done and in spite of which they can make no headway, were found employment other than on the land, or, as the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) would say, were sent out to get work.

Mr. Harrison: You could get over that by appointing two valuers, one representing the farmer and the other the board, to inquire into each case.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Dissatisfaction has arisen among members of the primary producers' party, who are opposed to the board being the arbitrators. They contend that they should have a right to appoint a committee to advise the board. They desire through political pressure to squeeze the board into doing something which the board know well is detrimental to the best interests of the State.

Mr. Latham: That is not their intention.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: What else can it be? The board is made up of practical men, three or four of them having been farmers all their lives.

Mr. Harrison: They do not know every position.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I presume they pay strict attention to their work and go into the reports placed before them by the officers they appoint. These officers must be thoroughly experienced or they would not have been appointed. After considering the position of each client the board and the board only should be the people to say whether the State can continue to advance these funds in order to keep these settlers on the land.

The Premier: They do so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They should do so. I have it on the best of authority that sustenance is being received by many persons whom the board regard as unsatisfactory and homeless.

Mr. Latham: Why are they advancing the money?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is what I want the select committee to find out. It is one of the most urgent questions ever brought before this Chamber. There is a million and a half of money involved. We do not know the position we are in and the reports do not tell us. Last year we had the first report for four years, and goodness knows when we may get another. We should know what is going on. We should know what the loss has been and what advances have been made. The Industries Assistance Act was merely a temporary measure to tide over a time of war and distress. Owing to a severe drought there was scarcely a new farmer able to continue. This Act was brought in by the Labour Government to assist the men as well as the State. There

are some people who continue under the L.A.B. because they get certain privileges under this temporary measure which never would have been accorded to them but for the Act. It is important that at this juncture a select committee should be appointed to make full investigations concerning the administration of the board.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans): I second the motion.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

MOTION—AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE SYSTEM, REGISTRATION OF CALLS.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [9.50]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should, for the protection of its citizens, take steps to arrange with the Federal Authorities for a private investigation (preferably by a State official) into the working of the telephone systems in this State, including the methods adopted for registering successful and unsuccessful calls, and the crediting to customers of calls where wrong numbers have been obtained.

The telephone system is, of course, a Federal matter, but it is the duty of the Government and this House to protect the interests of our citizens in cases where we think they are not properly looked after. I wish to enter a protest on behalf of the people of the State concerning the delays that occur in enabling persons to become subscribers to the telephone system. I know people who have had to wait 12 months for a telephone installation.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The instruments are not available.

Mr. ANGELO: That is so, but the Federal Government should look into the matter.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why not get your member to take action?

Mr. ANGELO: I have also known of a person who applied for a telephone and received one in a fortnight. That is not fair to others who have waited as long as 12 months.

Mr. Mann: That person must have known of someone who was abandoning his number, and obtained a transfer.

Mr. ANGELO: Many subscribers have complained about the bills they receive for the calls they have made. During the past six months I took the trouble to keep a rough check on the calls made on my own telephone. The bill that came in was nearly three times greater than my own estimate. I called at the Telephone Department and was shown the recording instrument. The manager assured me that calls were only charged up when a reply was received. That would have been all right, but I have also been assured by a person who was employed in the department that every time the receiver is taken off

the hook a call is registered. I do not know whether that is correct or not. One of the State electrical engineers should make an investigation into the working of the system, and see whether local subscribers are being charged for calls irrespective of whether they are successful or not. Doubtless many members of this Chamber have asked for a certain number and have been put in touch with another one. During the busy times of the day I estimate that fully 10 per cent. of the calls result in wrong numbers being obtained. In my own house the other day I rang a certain number six times, but obtained wrong numbers. I then made an effort to ring the complaints office, but after trying three times and obtaining three more wrong numbers, which made nine wrong calls in one endeavour to obtain a subscriber, I suspended operations for an hour. I was then successful in obtaining the complaints office, and told the officer what had happened. The officer told me that if I could give him the numbers I had obtained in those nine calls a refund would be made to me. I replied, "Surely you are not charging me when I have obtained the wrong number," and I was told that was the case. I presume those calls will have cost me at least 1s. 3d. owing to the faulty system of recording them. That kind of thing may happen all through the busy hours of the day. If only one wrong number has been called in a day it works out at about £2 in a year, and if we multiply that by 5,000 subscribers we find that the aggregate loss is £10,000 a year. This is another instance of how we are mulcted in unwarranted charges by the Federal Department. What I want the Premier to do is to get the permission of the Deputy Postmaster to put in one of our State electrical engineers to check the system.

Mr. Mann: He has not the power.

Mr. ANGELO: I was allowed to see it but I am not an electrical engineer.

Mr. Mann: What good would that do?

Mr. ANGELO: If this officer found that a wrong method of registration was being used something further might be done.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [9.58]: I agree that some inquiry should be made into this matter, but am not sure whether it is a matter this Parliament can deal with. Undoubtedly the Government should protect the interests of our citizens.

The Premier: Against the Federal Government?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: They could confer with the Federal Government upon anything—

The Premier: Yes, confer.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That affects our citizens. I move an amendment—

That in line 4 the words "a private" be struck out and "an" inserted in lieu, and that the words "preferably by a State official" be struck out.

If the motion is put in that way we shall have some right to deal with the question. Our Government would have the right to approach the Federal Government on those lines. In view of the position of the various Parliaments, it must be admitted that we cannot pass resolutions binding the Federal Parliament.

The Premier: The Federal Parliament would tell us to mind our own business.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes, as we should tell the Federal Parliament pretty quickly if it did anything in the opposite direction. I suggest to the mover that he accept the amendment. Without a motion being carried here, our State Government might ask the Federal Government to look into the matter.

Mr. Mann: Through the Federal members.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Possibly it would be more effective if the complaint were made by the Premier of this State.

Mr. Mann: It would be rather a reflection on our Federal members.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I do not think so. However, if I were called upon to reflect on our Federal members, I would be prepared to reflect on several of them. At this juncture I am not called upon to do so. I do not think the motion as it stands is a proper one for us to carry, because we have no right to dictate to the Federal Government what methods of investigation they shall adopt. Still, we have the right to ask the Federal Government to make an investigation.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [10.5]: I hope that neither the motion nor the amendment will be carried. There is no principle involved. The matter is merely one of detail. The mover tells us of his experience with telephones, and no doubt that is the experience of many other people. The telephone system is not satisfactory. But I think that in reply to this motion the Federal Government would probably say, "Mind your own business."

Mrs. Cowan: They also charge for the length of time. If one is over the three minutes allowed, one has to pay extra. That accounts for the heavier bills.

The PREMIER: Anyone who wants more than three minutes over the telephone is over the odds. We have Federal members and even Ministers to whom complaints can be addressed. I do not think the House should pass the motion in any form.

Hon. P. Collier: Pass it into the waste paper basket.

The PREMIER: I cannot go to the Deputy Postmaster General over this matter. I hope the mover will withdraw the motion. He himself can make direct representations to the Federal Government.

Mr. Angelo: Surely it is the function of the Government here to protect its own citizens.

The PREMIER: Against the Federal Government? The matter having been ventilated, the motion had better be withdrawn.

Mr. SIMONS (East Perth) [10.8]: I shall vote against the motion, as a protest against the time of the House being wasted on such trifling details. I deprecate the tendency to hold up 50 people in the discussion of this kind of business. It is like coming down to a broken drain, or a culvert washed away. It is wrong to harry the Government with such a matter. The House might as well be asked to deal with a broken gas pipe. The machinery of Parliament is too big to apply to such a petty matter as an overcharge on telephone calls. With all its faults, our Perth telephone system is one of the best in Australia.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [10.11]: I join with the last speaker in protesting against the time of the House being wasted over such a matter. Instead of carrying either the motion or the amendment, we should consign the whole subject to the waste paper basket as speedily as possible. The mover has on more than one occasion in this Chamber treated us to a dissertation upon the shortcomings of Federation and Federal Governments. He has repeatedly dealt with big problems and big principles, for instance the whole question of the relation of the State to the Federation, and the financial relationship between the two. In those matters he has rendered good service. But it seems to me he is descending from the sublime to the ridiculous now. Because the hon. member spent one day, from dawn to dewy eve, endeavouring to get a number on the telephone, and because seven unsuccessful attempts cost him 1s. 3d., he places on the Notice Paper a motion of about a dozen lines and wants the whole machinery of the State Government, the whole influence of the Premier and his Ministers, to make representations to the Commonwealth so that he may recover that 1s. 3d., or else that he may be safeguarded from spending another fruitless 1s. 3d. in the future. If we have an inquiry at all, let us appoint a Royal Commission, and let us appoint Percy Brunton as the Royal Commissioner. The hon. member should not have brought this motion before the House at all. If the State Government made representations as desired by the hon. member, they would be politely told by the Federal authorities to mind their own business. The Federal authorities would refuse to take any notice of such a request. This is not a matter of a big principle, but merely a small detail as to the registration of telephone calls. The hon. member is practically asking that a steam hammer be brought to crush a mosquito. If there is anything wrong with the telephone system, why does not the hon. member ask the City Council, as representing the major portion of the persons concerned, to make representations to the Federal member for Perth, Mr. Fowler? The address of that gentleman is Parliament House, Melbourne, where any correspondence will find him.

Mr. Simons: And there are our Senators.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I could excuse the mover if he was not acquainted with the names of all our Senators. However, we have a Senator who is a Federal Minister. The hon. member, instead of ringing up seven times, might well have dashed off a letter to Senator Pearce. And what are the names of the other Senators again?

Mr. Simons: There is DeLargie, and the robust Lynch.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes; and Henderson, I think. Those Senators might be communicated with, and they could deal with the matter. The member for Gascoyne ought not to take up the time of this House because of something that cost him 1s. 3d. I never before suspected the hon. member of being Scotch. We ought to leave to Federal members the performance of duties that properly belong to them. This is a Federal matter and representations should be made to some Federal member. If a matter is brought up in the Federal House, it will receive infinitely more consideration than would be possible if the Premier were to communicate with the Federal Government in the present circumstances. The Federal member is in a position to submit a motion in the House and take direct action regarding the Government.

Mr. Corboy: Do not suggest direct action.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In fact, the Federal member in a better position to act than the Premier of Western Australia. Then again, the hon. member suggests that it should be a private investigation.

Mr. Underwood: I will move to strike that reference out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will support the member for Pilbara if he moves in that direction. I do not know what the member for Gascoyne wishes to cover up.

Mr. Corboy: Perhaps he wants to get his 1s. 3d. back.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I hope the motion will be put in the waste paper basket without any further waste of time.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne—on amendment) [10.16]: I compliment the Leader of the Opposition and the member for East Perth (Mr. Simons) on the consideration they have given to this matter. I have timed them and I find that the Leader of the Opposition has occupied the attention of the House for twice as long as I took in moving the motion, while the member for East Perth took as long.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the hon. member speaking to the amendment?

Mr. Simons: No, he is speaking to us.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne—in reply) [10.17]: This is not such a little matter that it should be ridiculed.

Mr. Simons: It is a 1½d. matter.

Mr. Corboy: No, it is a 1s. 3d. matter.

Mr. ANGELO: I mentioned those nine calls simply as an illustration of what hap-

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Ninth Day—Conclusion.

Debate resumed from the previous sitting.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [4.35]: I desire to be associated with the remarks of hon. members extending congratulations to yourself, Mr. President, and welcoming new members. To judge from the statistics and the general information already given to the House by the new member for the South-East Province (Mr. Burvill) it seems that that hon. gentleman will make up for the lost opportunities of his predecessor. I am interested in the legislation forecasted in the Governor's Speech, particularly that dealing with miners' phthisis and amendment of the Arbitration Act. Representing as I do an industrial centre and a mining district, I am specially concerned to know what steps are proposed by the Government for the relief of men affected with miners' phthisis and tuberculosis, if under the measure they are compelled to leave the mining industry. I am also specially interested in the Hospitals Bill. Again, the Speech makes mention of a proposed extension of the workers' homes scheme to the country districts, a step which I believe will be endorsed by the majority of hon. members and by the country. I shall be glad to learn whether the proposed extension will include the goldfields, where, I understand, no workers' homes have yet been approved. Undoubtedly the most important feature of the Speech is the immigration policy. Immigration is much needed. Obviously, if we are going to develop this vast State, we shall need millions of people and tens of millions of money. I congratulate the Government on having a scheme. But is it a practicable scheme, or is it impracticable? One essential is that the large amount of money referred to by the Premier as being obtained at a very low rate of interest should be used for reproductive purposes. Another essential for the success of the scheme is preparedness on the part of the Government. At present that preparedness seems painfully inadequate. The information which has been given in the Press regarding the scheme is scrappy; and I hope that the Leader of the House, when replying, will shed a ray of light on the proposals of the Government in this connection, will inform us of the details of the scheme, and let us know what is actually

peus nearly every day. It was only by complaining about those calls that I secured information which I doubt whether many members were possessed of. I doubt whether members knew that they are charged for these incomplete calls unless they can supply the number that has been wrongly obtained.

Mr. Corboy: Have you acquainted any of the Federal members with that position?

Mr. ANGELO: No one would give the number if asked for it.

Hon. P. Collier: It would cost you 2d. to write to a Federal member!

Mr. ANGELO: That is all very well. I know what anyone gets when he complains to the Federal departments. One gets very little satisfaction.

Hon. P. Collier: Or from Federal members?

Mr. ANGELO: The Federal members are in Melbourne and they give us very little of their time and very little attention. I am satisfied that this system is costing the citizens of Perth anything from £10,000 to £20,000 a year. That is nothing to sneer and laugh at.

Hon. P. Collier: No, but it is not our business.

Mr. ANGELO: Then why is it that if it is considered that the tariff is wrong, motions are carried in this House?

Hon. P. Collier: Fancy comparing the tariff with a penny ring on the telephone!

Mr. ANGELO: Many such motions have been brought forward in this Chamber. However, I wanted to ventilate this question.

Hon. P. Collier: You should fumigate it, not ventilate it.

Mr. ANGELO: I desire to ventilate this matter because I have been robbed by this cormorant-like department. The system means that we are taken down. If a complaint is made, the reply is received that one need not have a telephone. Business people must have telephones but that does not say we should be asked to pay for these incomplete calls. In my case, I was fraudulently robbed. The object I had in view has been attained. Probably some reference will appear in the Press to this matter and that may be sent to Federal members. If that be so, we may get some redress. It may be that the Deputy Postmaster General here—I have always found him to be a very fair-minded man—will, when he learns that this question has been brought up in Parliament, take some action to see what is wrong. In the circumstances, I ask leave to withdraw my motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By The PREMIER: The original copy of the statutory declaration made by A. C. Kessell, referred to earlier in the day.

House adjourned at 10.22 p.m.