

exists for legalising the department. There is another phase of the question worthy of consideration. This department has been brought into being without statutory authority; therefore we have created a precedent by establishing a department without the sanction of Parliament. Parliament should certainly now pass legislation to legalise the State Insurance Department. I do not know what form such legislation should take. If I remember rightly, a Bill was introduced some years ago and it had a very wide range in that it provided for general insurance. A previous Government introduced a Bill to create a State monopoly of industrial insurance only. However, this is a matter that should be dealt with by the Government because thousands more men are employed in the mining industry to-day than were employed when the department was first established. So the financial responsibility has become greater, and in my opinion, therefore, it is necessary that the Government should not delay in submitting the required legislation. I have no intention of dealing with the matters referred to by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition last night. He dealt with quite a big range of subjects and it was noticeable that during the greater part of the time he was on his feet the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Nationalist Party were not present in the Chamber. Thus the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had a comparatively easy job. His remarks were mostly addressed to the Government and I think I can leave them to the Government to deal with. The last matter upon which I desire to touch is that of unemployment on the goldfields. We on the goldfields are in rather an unenviable position in that we have not only unemployed persons coming from the metropolitan area and from other parts of the State, but we also have quite a large number of unemployed men coming from the Eastern States. Perhaps we cannot very well quarrel with them for coming here because the majority of us in this Chamber originally came from the Eastern States. At the same time, we have many unemployed on the goldfields and they find it very difficult to obtain work because of the presence of so many from other districts. Unfortunately since the depression set in, all Governments, when they make work available, describe it as relief work, and unless a man is on sustenance he has very little chance of getting a job on those works. I realise that the Government have a most difficult

proposition to handle, but I do think that the goldfields residents who are unemployed should receive a little more consideration than they are getting at present. They have their homes on the goldfields and to be asked to go to other districts or to the metropolitan area is not to their advantage. It means to them a distinct loss. The Government might give this matter their consideration and see whether it is possible, when Government works are put in hand, for the goldfields unemployed to secure employment. I have nothing further to say except that I think the Government have a good record and I am looking forward to important legislation being introduced this session. I shall have an opportunity later when the Estimates are before the House of bringing other matters under the notice of Ministers.

MR. BOYLE (Avon) [5.53]: I wish to thank the Premier for the graceful tribute he paid to the memory of the man whose seat I occupy to-day. I endorse those remarks and hope that I will be able to work as hard in the interests of my constituents as did the late lamented Mr. Griffiths. I wish to thank members, particularly the members for Murray-Wellington and Kalgoorlie, for their congratulations on my return as member for Avon. I much appreciate their remarks. In offering a few comments on the Address-in-reply, I desire to refer to that statistical compendium known as the Governor's Speech. I notice that the State's revenue for 1934-35 was, in round figures, £9,333,000 against £8,481,000 in the previous year, an increase of £850,000. Of course increased revenue means increased expenditure, but the position to-day is made much easier for the Government by the improvement in the economic position. Unfortunately, however, this improvement does not extend to the primary industries of wheat and wool growing. But the improvement in the great gold mining industry has provided over 11,000 workers in the State with well-paid employment, in addition to which the Government have had the benefit of adventitious aids—if one might call them so—in the tremendous increase in revenue items such as the financial emergency tax, which, in 1932-33 for seven months yielded £202,000, in 1933-34 grew to £411,000 and last year increased to £684,980.

The Premier: Those words "adventitious aids" were first used by Sir Henry Parkes.

Mr. BOYLE: I do not claim any originality in using those words. The hospital tax, which of course is an earmarked tax, certainly relieved the Government of a most important function, and that is the care of the sick. In 1932-33 that tax provided £148,000, in 1933-34 £154,000 and last year £183,000. So the improvement shown by the Government in the financial position has certainly been considerable. Apart from that tax which, as I have already said, is earmarked for a specific object, the Government have had £684,000 from the financial emergency tax, and, according to the report presented by the Minister for Railways last night, the Government have had the benefit of the improvement in the railway position, that is to say, the deficit in the railway accounts was last year only £99,000 as against £275,000 in the year before. So allowing for additional expenditure, the difference in the Treasurer's favour in respect of the railways was £175,000.

The Premier: You would be well advised to wait until you have had a little more experience before you discuss finance.

Mr. BOYLE: I am certainly pleased with the position as disclosed. The improvement in the finances decidedly is to the benefit of the State; I do not dispute that for one moment. But it has been stated that the deficit now has been reduced to £167,000, and I wish to show that the reason for that reduction is to be found in the various taxation measures. I, as president of a certain organisation, supported the action of the Government when they introduced the Transport Act. The organisation with which I am connected raised no objection to that legislation; on the contrary we stood with the Government in the fervent hope that the railway revenue would increase to the extent that it would be possible to provide some relief for the primary industries. The revenue derived from the carriage of wheat alone last year was £528,000. Altogether I venture to say that wheatgrowing in itself provided close upon £700,000 of revenue to the Railway Department of Western Australia. I understand the difficulties. The Premier said that I should wait until I have had more experience before I criticise Government finance. Anybody who takes an intelligent interest in finance must take notice of figures. I do not think anyone can claim a divine right or has any prerogative in the understanding of ordinary financial affairs.

I sympathise with the Treasurer of this State, and indeed the Treasurers of the other States, in the difficult position in which all find themselves in the relationship between the States and the Federation. According to the latest Commonwealth Year Book in the year 1932-33 the revenue of all the States was £116,000,000 while the Commonwealth managed to raise and spend £70,000,000. So the position to-day is that the States have been left with mainly the spending departments, while the Federation has taken over the departments of revenue. The decrease in unemployment from 11,175 persons at the 30th June, 1934, to 9,173 on the corresponding date of this year is very gratifying indeed. But the goldfields have again proved great helpers in this regard, and we find the increased employment on the goldfields to be 2,600 persons over those of the previous year. So again we can say truly, "Thank God for the goldfields," as we did in 1892 and 1893. But I should like to draw the attention of the House to the steady exodus from the land, which is going to make it very difficult for the Government, any Government, to cope with the unemployed problem. It is estimated that 500 wheat farmers are leaving their farms annually. I emphasise that while our primary industries are slowly bleeding to death, no Government, however well managed, can restore economic equilibrium in a State such as this, with an agricultural revenue of 72 per cent. as against the 52 per cent. of the Eastern States. Until Governments realise that, I am afraid the spectre of unemployment in this State will never be laid. There is one thing on which in another sphere, I complimented the Government, namely, the appointment of the Royal Commission on Bulk Handling. That Commission's report has been submitted, and I, for one, accept it. I realise the difficulties that Commission had to face. The organisation to which I was attached certainly desire that the wheatgrower of this State should have a controlling interest in the policy of any bulk handling scheme put forward, and the commissioners, in their report, recommend that legislative protection for wheatgrowers be afforded; in other words, that there be passed an Act of Parliament to see that the interests of individual wheatgrowers are conserved.

With that proposal I am in cordial agreement and I will do my best to assist the Government in any methods they adopt for the extension of bulk handling in Western Australia. I am a convinced bulk handler of wheat. It is most extraordinary that Australia is the only exporting country in the world exporting wheat in bags. In the past we have been buying from India jutes, the value of which in 1930-31 amounted to £751,000. The average seasonal quantity of bags used by the wheatgrowers of Western Australia would represent £400,000 in value. I notice that the Royal Commission say the saving in bulk handling is from the farm to the siding, that is to say, in the cost of cornsacks. But I should like to remind the commissioners that the price of cornsacks has a fluctuating value and that if we were to lose the 25 per cent. exchange, one has to assume the savings would depreciate to that extent. I disagree with the commissioners in attaching the importance they do to that point, for experience has shown that there should be a saving in bulk handling right from the farm to the point of destination. The commissioners point out that there is a saving of 2s. 6d. per ton in overseas freights. How much of that is coming to the wheatgrower? The commissioners say that on the bulk wheat handled, $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel went to the merchants. When one realises that $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel means in every million bushels £2,080 extra rake-off, one can understand the position. Without some influence that can only be wielded by Parliament—it is beyond the functions of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd.—other interests will continue taking a rake-off of £2,080 on every million bushels. We owe nothing to India in this regard. For years we have been bled in buying cornsacks from India. Some years ago the State steamer “Kangaroo” was laid on the berth in Calcutta. I was speaking to Mr. Baxter, the then Chief Secretary, and was given to understand that the “Kangaroo” was to lift jutes for Western Australia; but the “Kangaroo” lifted no jutes for Western Australia, because the cornsack people have their own ships, and their own ships carried those jutes to Western Australia at a freight of 45s. per ton as against the 16s. 6d. per ton that had to be paid on wheat as back loading—nearly 30s. per ton extra in bringing combine con-

trolled jute to Western Australia as against taking our wheat back to Indian ports. Rural rehabilitation is a work in which I have been seriously engaged for nearly five years, and it is with a great deal of sadness and disappointment I notice that from our peak year, 1931, when we had 3,955,000 acres under wheat, we have fallen to 2,763,000 acres this year, or a decrease of 1,200,000. And the decline is going to be accelerated unless we take steps to bring back prosperity, or at least contentment, to the wheat belt. The settlement of the wheat belt was never a party question, and I say the re-settlement of the wheat belt should not be a party question either. It should be the duty of every member of the House to see that so important an industry is brought back to at least the position it occupied five years ago. It may be asked, how will that be done? It can be done. When the pioneers settled the wheat belt, were not they in infinitely worse case than we are to-day for re-settling the wheat belt? To-day there are fully 1,500 farms abandoned. Undoubtedly there are certain areas that should never have been settled, at least from a wheatgrowing point of view. I have had a great deal of sympathy with the officers and controllers of the Agricultural Bank in that regard, for during recent years I have travelled 7,000 miles per annum in and out of the wheat belt. So I know what the people of the wheat belt are suffering to-day, and I think the House should not allow the important wheat industry to become the care of the Country Party or, indeed, any other single party. It should be the care of Parliament, and whichever Government may be in power, every assistance should be given to overcome these problems.

The Minister for Lands: When did it become the care of the Country Party? It never has been.

Mr. BOYLE: The Minister for Lands has drawn my attention to a statement he once made.

The Premier: Our party has done more for the wheatgrowers than ever the Country Party has done.

Mr. BOYLE: To a deputation that waited on him, the Minister for Lands said that as the wheat belt did not return Labour candidates, the people of the wheat belt should not expect the Government to be interested in them.

The Minister for Lands: When was that statement made? Was it made by me?

Mr. BOYLE: It was made at a deputation in your office, at which I was present.

The Minister for Lands: It was never made.

Mr. BOYLE: I say it was.

The Minister for Lands: It is the first I have heard of it.

Mr. BOYLE: The wheatgrowing industry to-day is a bankrupt industry, and should be approached with that viewpoint in mind. I may be again departing from the—

The Minister for Justice: Truth.

Mr. BOYLE: No, I am speaking the truth as I know it.

The Premier: Are you a wheatgrower, or a P.P.A. man?

Mr. BOYLE: I think we had better have a Royal Commission to go into that question.

Mr. Seward: You are hitting them on the raw.

Mr. BOYLE: The wheatgrowing industry is a bankrupt industry. The Federal Royal Commission, I suppose the finest Royal Commission ever appointed in Australia, proved beyond doubt that the wheatgrowing industry in the Commonwealth is a bankrupt industry.

The Premier: The Leader of your party said your word could not be taken.

Mr. BOYLE: Because the leader of this party said that, does not necessarily mean that it was true. I am not interested in what the leader of this party may have said; the platform of this party is what I signed allegiance to, not the leader of the party. He is entitled to his opinion, and so am I to mine.

The Premier: He said your word could not be taken.

Mr. BOYLE: As the result of inquiries made by the Federal Royal Commission into solutions of wheatgrowing difficulties, that Commission has laid down in its report—and it should be supplemented by action in this State as, for instance, the question of a compulsory pool—

The Premier: Anyhow, we have known your leader for years and we know what he said, but we do not know you.

Mr. Seward: You will know him.

Mr. BOYLE: The solution as laid down by the Federal Royal Commission is a perfectly feasible one. When that Royal Commission was first appointed, the opinion given by Sir Herbert Gepp, their leader, was very different from the conclusions now

arrived at by the commissioners. Three things are absolutely necessary.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. BOYLE: Three things are necessary to rehabilitate the national industry of wheat growing. It is essential to fix a minimum price at sidings of not less than 3s. a bushel. That is the view of those with whom I have been associated for the past five years. It is the result of careful consideration and of communication with organisations in the Eastern States. In representing the association with which I was connected, it was my practice to make one or two visits a year to the Eastern States, when wheatgrowers' representatives from all over Australia conferred. The result of our deliberations is epitomised in the report of the Royal Commission. There is only one point of disagreement and that is an important one, namely the compulsory writing-down of farmers' debts. The Commission recommended that the farmers' excess debts should be held in cold storage. That is the principle embodied in the Farmers' Relief Act of New South Wales. The writing-down of farmers' debts to their capacity to pay is essential, according to the Royal Commission, and they place the value of wheat at 3s. a bushel, of wool at 6d. per lb. for farmers' lots, and of lambs at 10s. For us in Western Australia it is essential also that the farmers' tools of trade should be put into such a condition as will enable them to carry on the industry economically. The estimated cost of doing that in Western Australia is £1,000,000. The Royal Commission, in their report, said that the cost throughout Australia would be £10,000,000. That is why I, with others, strenuously object to the Federal Government's finding £1,500,000 for a compounding of farmers' debts in Western Australia. That can have no direct value whatever. The mere writing-down of excess debts to the extent of £1,300,000, with £200,000 in reserve, is merely a means of providing for the payment of that money to somebody, and the probable destination of the money will be in financial institutions. In my opinion, that will have no real effect in improving the position of the farmers. Practically every State of Australia has evolved legislation to protect the farmer. In New South Wales there has been operating for

some time what is known as the Farmers' Relief Act. From a governmental point of view—and in saying this I am making no invidious comparisons—I consider that the Government of New South Wales have kept well abreast of farmers' requirements. For some time the Act has been operating with considerable success. In the Press to-day I read that Mr. Main, Minister for Agriculture in New South Wales, is submitting to Parliament a Bill to provide for a compulsory pool in that State. As one of the speakers mentioned to-night, Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution is the lion in the path of marketing legislation. A High Court decision has upheld the marketing legislation on the statute books of some of the Eastern States. The disinclination of the Federal Government—I say this with regret—to implement the promises made during the last election is responsible to-day for a concerted movement in wheat-exporting States to get farmers to adopt the principle of a compulsory pool. In New South Wales, as I have indicated, a move is already being made. I have a wire from the secretary of the Wheatgrowers' Federation of Australia, who is also a member for the district of Albert in South Australia, asking what steps the Government in this State propose to take in the matter of setting up machinery for a compulsory pool. The Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act of this State falls far short of efficiency. It contains many good sections; in fact the Act is commendable with the exception that it falls down on the most important point, namely, a compulsory adjustment of debts. Section 11, Subsection 7, will not permit of a composition of farmers' debts unless four-fifths of the creditors agree. In Western Australia this practically places control in the hands of the first mortgagee. If members examine the figures given by the Royal Commission on Farmers' Disabilities, which sat in 1931, they will find that the Agricultural Bank has close on £14,000,000 involved in the agricultural areas and the Associated Banks about £11,000,000, making a total of £25,000,000 out of the £32,000,000 involved. Therefore the financial institutions show no great alacrity in the matter of writing-down. No effort will be made by the financial institutions to bring about a writing-down of debts. They say their position is secure, and so long as the properties are kept in working

order—we were told recently that these cycles run in periods of 20 years—there will be no relief from that source. According to the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, the number of sheep in Western Australia in December, 1934, was 11,163,000, compared with 7,700,000 in 1925, showing an enormous increase in the number of sheep carried. Of the 11,163,000 sheep in the State, no fewer than 5,570,000, or a little over 50 per cent., are carried in the agricultural districts; that is, the districts excluding the Murchison, the goldfields and the North-West. The member for Irwin-Moore (Hon. P. D. Ferguson) referred to a plebiscite that had been refused by the Minister for Agriculture. I know that in the agricultural districts a strong feeling prevails that the small growers, who together produce slightly over 50 per cent. of the wool, should have some say in the marketing of it. That is one of the reasons why provision should be made for a ballot. I wish to commend the Government for the introduction of the Agricultural Bank Act. The Agricultural Bank Commission was the outcome of a resolution passed at the 1933 conference of the Wheatgrowers' Union. I believe that the Commission did a fine job, and it was no reflection on the former trustees of the Bank, Messrs. McLarty, Moran and Maley, that the Bank's affairs had fallen into such a chaotic condition. The trustees were working under an obsolete Act that was not suitable for existing conditions. In certain publications I gave a favourable review of the Act, and I am still of opinion that the Act makes provision for a writing-down of the debts of Agricultural Bank clients to the capacity of the farms to carry. That is a common-sense provision in Sections 64, 65 and 66. The present Commissioners of the Bank are charged with a great responsibility. A point I made plain during my addresses in the wheat belt was that no Act could operate with any degree of satisfaction unless it was sympathetically administered. To-day we are all waiting for a declaration of policy by the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank. Mr. McCallum said that the Commissioners were enforcing Sections 51 and 52. It is reasonable to expect that they will withhold any drastic enforcement of those sections. Last year, as president of an organisation, I circularised every member of the Legislative Council requesting that a measure of protection and sympathy be extended to the farmers grow-

ing what are known as sidelines. Many farmers have been able to remain on their holdings only on account of their work in the preparation and sale of sidelines. I have mentioned that I am prepared to assist the Government to the utmost of my ability to restore to the farmers of the wheat belt some degree of comfort and security. In this State it is a national work; it is not a party question. If to date we are not satisfied with the progress made, there is no reason why we should not make a commencement and pull together as one to restore the key industry of Western Australia to the position it once held. To-day the position of the man on the land is deplorable. With the general improvement in conditions in Western Australia, the improvement on the goldfields where 11,000 men are in full work, the improvement in the timber industry and the building trade, we are left with a plain duty to perform, namely to use our best endeavours to restore the key industry of the State to the position it once occupied.

MR. MOLONEY (Subiaco) [7.45]: I did not desire to speak at this stage. No doubt there are some members, better versed in the matters we are dealing with than I am, who will take advantage of the opportunity offering and constitute themselves judge and jury by leaving their orations until the last. Nevertheless I feel it incumbent upon me, as the Whip desires that someone should fill the gap, to address myself to the motion before the Chair. I was impressed by the remarks of the Leader of the Country Party, made in the course of a well-delivered speech. Although many of his utterances were greatly exaggerated and were full of carping criticism of the Government, there remains the fact that he was doing those things which postulate a pre-election speech. No doubt from the point of view of the Country Party he did his job well. He took the Government to task because of the income they had received by way of revenue, for the reduction in the annual deficit, and for the fact that they have been getting more loan money than the previous Mitchell Government received. I throw my mind back to the time when the present occupants of the Treasury bench went before the people. We were told by the Opposition, then holding the reins of office, that if a Collier Government were returned all confidence would cease, and that bad and all as things were, they would be infinitely worse

under the rule of a Labour Government. One of the panaceas for our ills at that time offered by the Leader of the Country Party was a reduction in the basic wage of 11s. 1d. per week, so that it might conform to the Commonwealth standard.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: That has whiskers on it.

Mr. MOLONEY: It will bear repeating as it is such a significant statement. It meant reducing the amount each person in the community would receive, and that in turn meant loss of purchasing power compared with what it would otherwise have been.

Mr. Thorn: You know he did not say anything of the sort.

Mr. MOLONEY: We were told there was no possibility of effecting any improvement. They told us they would do what they had done in the past, namely, nothing. Absolute stagnation prevailed at the time. It is remarkable that one of the high priests of the Country Party, who made his first speech in the House to-night, publicly proclaimed that the only Government which ever did anything for the primary producer was the Labour Government.

Mr. Sleeman: He has forgotten about that.

Mr. MOLONEY: We are told the Government should anticipate the wishes of the Country Party. The Leader of that party suggests that the Government should give the farmers wire netting for nothing, that they should not send men into the country, to poison dogs or foxes or even emus, but should leave that all to the man on the land. I obtained first hand knowledge of what is being done by men on their holdings when I accompanied the Minister for Lands to the group settlements. If the destruction of vermin were left to the men on the holdings that I saw there, then emus would certainly never be decimated.

Mr. Thorn: There are no emus down there.

Mr. MOLONEY: We are told that the basis of Government is sound finance, that a policy of reform should be instituted, and the Government should stabilise the finances, that they should make credit available, and should at all times balance their budget. We have been told these things so often we accept them as truisms. The very people who are now castigating the Government for ineptitude and extravagance, and for getting too much money, are the people who could least afford to do any castigating. They found they were impotent to secure