

Mr. C. A. HUDSON (Dundas) : I desire to make a personal explanation.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member for Dundas spoke to me a moment ago, and said he intended to make an explanation; so he had better proceed.

Mr. HUDSON: In the report of last night's proceedings which appears to-day in the *Morning Herald*—poor *Morning Herald*—the following words occur:—

At Phillips River this year about £13,000 was spent in the matter of water supply for the Ravensthorpe district.

Mr. Hudson: What did you get out of the smelters?

The Minister for Mines: What do you mean?

Mr. Hudson: I mean—Oh, go on! (Laughter.)

The Minister for Mines, as I understand, takes exception to that interjection, and imports into the words a meaning which I did not intend to convey. I feel quite sure that his interpretation of my words is not warranted, and is due entirely to his hypersensitive disposition. I do not intend to withdraw or to apologise, but the Minister having taken such a view of my remark, I think it is due to him and to me that I should repudiate any suggestion of corruption or dishonesty on the part of the Minister. I do not think there was any; I did not intend to convey any such suggestion. But I do say, if there was any suggestion in my interjection it was a suggestion of incapacity, and as a suggestion of incapacity it was amply and abundantly justified.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory): When I rose just now I wished to get some explanation from the hon. member regarding his interjection to me last night. I was speaking of the efforts of the Mines Department to assist the mining industry, and was pointing out the amount expended in the Ravensthorpe district, when the hon. member interjected, "What did you get out of the smelter?" I asked the hon. member what he meant.

Mr. Ware: He meant, what did you get as Minister for Mines.

Mr. Hudson: Have I not made the *amende honorable*, on your suggestion?

The MINISTER: I am sure members will be pleased to treat me fairly in this matter, because a wrong impression can be and is being created. On the last occasion when I visited Leonora, a statement was being circulated throughout that field that, on account of the large interests I had at Ravensthorpe, I had no intention of again contesting an Eastern Goldfields seat. I never had, nor have I, directly or indirectly, three-pence worth of interest in that field; nor have I any intention of having the fractional portion of an interest in any mining or land venture, or venture of any description, in the whole of that field. I wish that to be made clear and explicit. Here is a question asked by the hon. member opposite, "What did you get out of the smelter?"

Mr. Hudson: Meaning, what did the Government get?

The MINISTER: I want that made clear.

Mr. Hudson: I have made it clear. What more do you want?

The MINISTER: If the hon. member wishes to make it clear that he referred to my department, and wished to know what the Government got out of the smelter, well and good; but I do not want any insinuation thrown out broadcast.

Mr. Hudson: I made no insinuation. I have explained my position; and if you are not satisfied, you are not a gentleman.

DEBATE — ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Seventh Day.

Resumed from the previous day.

Mr. A. A. HORAN (Yilgarn): I shall not begin by congratulating one side or the other, as most previous speakers have done; but I think the country can be congratulated on the fact that it has borne up so well under adverse conditions, and in that connection I do not think there is much necessity for such an outcry because this State has a slight deficit. Too much notice has been taken of that in the Press, and it

has been the subject of too much talk and attention on every side. The deficit is small, and in any case I fail to see where, so far as the Government are concerned, there is anything in the nature of a real deficit. There cannot be a deficit, except as a matter of book-keeping; for the State must pay its accounts and it wages bills, the State must pay its way; and the fact that we are £200,000 behind is surely not a sufficient ground for so loud an outcry about the depression. At the same time, the fact that we were slightly behind should have warned the Government to seek some other method of obtaining necessary funds when the attempt to impose a land tax proved abortive; and I think the readiest method and the simplest would be the imposition of higher wharfage rates. That did not require the approval of Parliament, but could be done by executive authority; and I find that during last year a small increase of a shilling per ton all round would have added £31,450 to our revenue.

The Premier: The rate has been doubled in the last four months.

Mr. Angwin: On some goods it is six shillings.

Mr. HORAN: Yes; and very improperly too. What I advocate is a shilling additional all round. You have imposed a three-shilling rate on tobacco, spirits, and other goods, which imposition is to my mind utterly illegal. If you are allowed to put a three-shilling rate on tobacco and spirits, you straightway go behind the back of the Federal Government and practically impose a higher protective tariff than the Commonwealth have imposed. I notice there were 629,000 tons imported and exported last year over the Fremantle wharves and the small impost of a shilling would have given us £31,450. That shilling per ton could not have been passed on to the working man or to consumers generally; it was so small that the importers and the merchants would have to pay for it. [*Mr. Angwin:* That has been imposed.] Excuse me, show me how it has been imposed. A few increases have been made on certain goods. [*Mr. Angwin:* This year the rates have been doubled.] Well,

add another shilling to them. The large shipments of cattle pay, I think, only 1s. 9d. a head, and we had 182,168 head landed at Fremantle during 1906, and 2,055 exported, making a total of 184,223. We know the large profits made by the meat ring; and surely the imposition of 2s. per head on those live stock would have been justified in the circumstances, to bridge over a temporary difficulty. That rate would have produced £18,422, or a total for the year of £49,872, practically £50,000; and this could have been done without reference to the Upper Chamber or even to this Assembly. The impost would never have been felt, and could have been removed as occasion demanded when the land tax was brought into operation. I have a word or two to say of the proposals of the Minister for Mines, though I must admit that the straightforward fashion in which he last night announced his proposals regarding labour conditions practically prevents any farther criticism until the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Bath) and the Minister come to terms, and suggest to the House the best method to follow. But I look with suspicion on that proposition to do away with the labour conditions. On a recent trip across the Bight Mr. Hoover tried to drum into my head for a couple of hours the necessity for wiping out the labour conditions, but I was not convinced by him. If the Minister for Mines wishes to assist the small prospector he must do so in another way, by the removal of impositions which exist at the present time. The Minister's proposals may operate beneficially in my district where there are many mines in the hands of small owners. The tendency to shepherd will be pronounced if the labour conditions are removed, and I see no reason to alter the opinion which I have held, and that is utterly hostile to the removal of the labour conditions. On the question of the freezing works, I am surprised the Government have been so solicitous for the welfare of the people of the North-West. I have in my mind's eye many occasions when matters of far more importance have come up for consideration, and the Government did not take so rapid action as they propose

to do in this matter. It seems to me if the Government propose to do this there is no reason why they should not take a larger interest in the shape of shares, so that they will have a controlling interest. They might do as Disraeli did in connection with the Suez Canal. They could buy £36,000 or £40,000 worth of shares in the scheme, so that they could see that justice was done to the small property holder and pastoralist. In Queensland when the necessity arose for the establishment of freezing works the Government went about the matter in a different way. For four years before the freezing works were established they imposed a tax on the persons who would benefit; they imposed a tax of 15s. per hundred on horned cattle and eighteenpence per hundred on sheep. This tax was collected for four or five years by the Government, and this money was loaned out to the different establishments in the different parts of the country. That in turn was repaid to the Government and the Government were able to pay it back to the original taxpayers. That was an excellent system in theory and it worked out well, notwithstanding that for the first four or five years an amount of £97,000 was loaned in Queensland and only about £5,000 was returned. That was for the first four or five years; now things are on a better footing and the tax is paid by the persons who benefit, and repaid back to them. If we desire works to be established here there is no reason why some similar system should not be followed. I cannot satisfy myself that the wealthiest men in the country should receive Government assistance in a matter of this sort. I do not think so far as the country is concerned we would suffer much if there were a monopoly; it would not affect the southern portion of the State if a monopoly existed up North, only the export trade would be affected by it. The export trade in New Zealand amounted to £2,500,000 last year, but they did not employ a huge number of men after all, only about 2,500. If such a system was brought satisfactorily into operation in the North-West it would do good, but I do not favour the

Government loaning £30,000 in the way now proposed. As to the wages boards, I do not think some members need be apprehensive about the spirit of unionism being affected by a more liberal system in the Arbitration Court. While in Victoria I made a close study of the wages boards there, and I had interviews with Mr. Bromley and Dr. Bride in reference to the wages board there. These gentlemen have had very lengthy experience, and I think it would be advantageous to this State to introduce the best points of the wages boards of Victoria and also eliminate the worst portions of our Arbitration Court here. Perhaps we may simplify our objection to the Arbitration Court, and it is this. We expect the Labour representative on one side and the capitalistic representative on the other side to be experts in every trade under the sun. It would be better to have the representative of labour talk across the table with the representative of capital, and they would come to a better understanding, but at present we cannot expect these representatives to be other than blindly prejudiced in many cases. In the Arbitration Court we have only two experts, but in Victoria they have from three to five experts in connection with the wages boards. It does away with the injurious element that the Arbitration Court gives rise to, that is that witnesses have to be sworn and give evidence, and they, so to speak, put their backs against the wall and fight for their lives, and say many strange things and perhaps many things inconsistent with facts at the time. [*Mr. Daglish* : Is that through being sworn ?] They go to extremes which do not alter the case, and which would be more satisfactorily settled if both sides sat across the table and reasoned the matter out. If the wages boards are introduced here, or some portion, and incorporated with the least objectionable portions of our Arbitration Act, we shall have a much better system. I am pleased the Minister for Mines in a recent trip to Pilbarra endorsed opinions expressed before in the House. I would like, before he calls for tenders for the railway, for him to give fuller consideration in providing

a different kind of sleeper to those generally in use. I am anxious to see the jarrah sleepers used as much as possible; still it may be necessary to use steel sleepers in this instance; therefore the Minister should bear that in mind before calling for tenders. I cannot agree with the proposition to extend the railway to Point Sampson: it would be a gross waste of money. The tramway provides all the necessities at the present time so far as the town of Roebourne is concerned, and the extension would mean a waste of money. It cost £24,000 to lay the Roebourne-Cossack tramway down and the Government have lost on it every year since, in all £20,000. It stands in the books of the State as a loss of £44,000. When I was there last I made some recommendations to the Government of the day that the tramway should be leased to some firm—Dalgety made an offer, and I may be in opposition to some of my brother members in this matter—for we lose on it every year and if it were leased to a local firm it would be of benefit to the people there and avoid a continual loss to the country. I would like to place on record one matter, I do not suppose it will go farther now, but a deputation, when I was in Southern Cross some months ago, waited on me and asked me to bring before the Government the necessity for building a railway from Ravensthorpe to Southern Cross. The matter has more to commend it than at first sight may appear. The distance is about the same as the other proposition from Ravensthorpe to Broome Hill and in the vicinity of the proposed railway there is auriferous country. At Parker's Range a number of men are turning out three ounces to the ton. There are the Marvel Loch and the Jacoletti mines, and in a short time we may expect to see some 300 or more men on the field. That is borne out by the fact that in the report of the Labour Bureau published for the current year the warden of Yilgarn reports that there is not a sufficient number of miners to be found to work on the field. There never has, he says, been quite enough labour for mining purposes. That is

a pleasing communication on the condition of things in that portion of the world. There is another railway proposition I would like to urge on the Premier. I would urge an extension of the Widgemooltha line to Higginsville, about 20 miles. At present the railway terminates at Widgemooltha, and it is very probable that, instead of loading up at Widgemooltha for Higginsville, the goods will be carried direct from Coolgardie. I urge the necessity of the extension being made as soon as Widgemooltha is reached, allowing the extension to Norseman, though of course I shall be anxious to have the railway construction right to Norseman, to stand until later. I would also urge the necessity of making plenty of reservations in the timber areas, so that companies like the Kurrawang Company and other concerns will not have a monopoly, and so that the small person may put a siding in and compete for the market on the goldfields as well as the other companies. I noticed in the papers yesterday that there is a proposition to increase the detective staff to watch gold stealing on the goldfields. I think the House will agree generally with the remarks made by the member for Ivanhoe last night that protection of life should come first and the protection of property second. Until there is a sufficiently large number of mining inspectors appointed to watch the working of mines and to protect the lives of miners, I do not consider that any Government funds should be expended in watching gold stealing. In any case, I am of opinion that at least nine-tenths of the cost of this proposed detective force should be paid by the mining companies themselves. While stealing in any form is contrary to the law, this is a particular phase of stealing that does not call for the intervention of the State as other stealing would do. We have recently had a lot of criticism about the railways. We had it in the other Chamber and also in this House. I would not refer to it but for the fact that it is an opportune time perhaps to make a few remarks. I observe that in a debate in the other place a well known gentleman in the town (Mr.

Chinn) and his reports were commended and spoken very highly of by the Hon. Mr. Moss, and it was plainly said that at least three commissioners should be appointed and that Mr. Chinn should be one of them. If it is the intention of the Government to appoint Mr. Chinn, an estimable gentleman no doubt, as one of the commissioners, I would recommend them to employ him straight away as junior clerk, so that he would learn something about his business. It might stimulate the interest and anxiety of some of my fellow-members for the goldfields to notice that when Mr. Moss was speaking he commented very strongly on the splendid traffic we had to Kalgoorlie and said that Kalgoorlie people should be made to pay for it. He says, "We have a large consuming population on the goldfields" (quoting from the *Hansard* report)—

Mr. SPEAKER: I must draw the attention of the hon. member to the Standing Order.

Mr. HORAN: I observed that Mr. Moss states that a larger amount of profit should be made out of the traffic to the goldfields. The people on the goldfields have considered, rightly so, all along that they have been very harshly treated and that the advantages have all been on the side of the coastal districts. Mr. Moss considers that a higher tariff should be placed on Kalgoorlie because it is isolated and compelled to get all its produce and supplies by rail. [Mr. Eddy: It is the only system that is paying.] That is so. I do not wish to go into unnecessary figures, but I will clear the atmosphere so far as the criticism that has appeared in the newspapers is concerned. I may just as well start to prove by juggling with figures that our railways are the most profitable in the whole world. I could very well do it. I might do this, at any rate—show that so far as our railways are concerned, we are earning £4 6s. 8d. for every £100 expended on them, whereas in Queensland, so much under notice, they only earn £3 2s. 10d. In the circumstances, our railways are paying far better than the Queensland railways. Members should not be misled by the extraordinary

conglomeration of figures that have appeared from time to time in the newspapers lately from the pen of Mr. Chinn. His object is certainly a very worthy one and he deserves every credit for it, but while I was in Queensland I saw some of the communications received from Mr. Chinn. He simply asked straight out questions and of course got straight out replies. No one was more amused than Mr. Thallon, the Queensland Commissioner of Railways, at the absurd deductions Mr. Chinn drew from those figures. For instance I remember one question I saw on Mr. Thallon's file. It was "How many clerks are employed in the Chief Accountant's Office?" Mr. Thallon replied "Fourteen." Mr. Chinn immediately compares that with the Chief Accountant's Office in Western Australia where there are 101 employed, and of course he draws deductions at once highly inimical to the profitable working of our railways. But what are the facts? While the Chief Accountant's Office in Queensland is simply a record office, there is an office where all the accountancy of the Loco. Department is done, and there is an office where all the accountancy of the Way and Works Department and Permanent Way is done. Here in Western Australia the whole of the work is done under one head. Therefore there are three staffs in Queensland as against one here. So we see these absurd deductions are not warranted, because the full facts were not known. Again in connection with accountancy Mr. Chinn draws an extraordinary deduction that because there are twice as many miles of railway in Queensland as here, therefore our expenditure should be only half as much as that of Queensland. It must appeal to anybody with a moment's thought that the question of mileage does not in any sense govern the amount of accountancy work for which the staff is employed. To put it plainly, suppose there was 100 miles of track and a station at each end, and then another 100 miles of track with stations 10 miles apart. There would be ten times as much accountancy work in the one place as in the other. These conclusions are only drawn on limited evidence by a

prentice hand in railway work. Anyone looking at the railway map of Queensland and comparing it with the railway map of Western Australia will see at a glance the wonderful difference in the two countries from a railway point of view. Queensland has thought so much of the cattle and wool traffic that in the railway map it is deemed of greater importance than population itself ; and instead of showing the population of the towns, the map goes into every square degree and shows the number of cattle and sheep to be found in that vast colony. The traffic in Queensland in live stock and wool is the most profitable to engage in—four times more profitable than any other kind of traffic, and it forms the backbone of the revenue there. Mr. Thallon was good enough to say at once when I spoke to him that the reason for the cheaper railway administration in Queensland was the fact that they have a return traffic, whereas on the other hand we have none here. Our railways convey supplies to the goldfields—there is practically no machinery going there now worth speaking of—and the waggons have to come back empty ; therefore the conclusions drawn by Mr. Chinn are utterly beside the question. Every railway manager must recognise that the most profitable kind of traffic to deal with is wool, which is the handiest and which pays the highest charges, and secondly when you have return traffic in every direction, needless to say your costs come down enormously. At the same time there are some phases of railway administration here that I think might command the attention of this House. Though Mr. George is gone and officially dead, still I believe he will have a resurrection on the Opposition benches some of these days, and in such case we will probably hear from him ; but there is one thing I would urge upon the Government, and that is the maintenance of a continuous departmental policy. The country will find it expensive to have frequent changes in management. If we change our managers from time to time, no sooner does one come in than he disapproves of what the previous manager has done and

puts the country to great expense in remodelling the whole of the works. Mr. George has done good work, I will say that for him ; he has reduced the cost from the time he took office until he left, and there is no question but that he has done very many beneficial things for the staff and for the people of the country. So far as the permanent way is concerned, I may say that it is absolutely the best in the whole of the Australian States. When I was in Queensland I was in the Roma Street railway yard with a high official, and I could kick off ends of the sleepers, they were so decayed ; they were half rounded and just adzed on the top. Some of the office-buildings in the principal stations in Brisbane were in such a state that if similar conditions existed in Western Australia the Board of Health would have prosecuted the Commissioner and all his staff. My object is to draw attention to the necessity for some continuity in policy here, and I am going to prove it by a few examples. Some years ago the railway management thought fit to build barracks at Wagin—elaborate barracks—and at Northam and Southern Cross, and the engine men and guards were stabled at them every night or every day as the case may be before taking the return trip. Then this work was remodelled and Wagin was thrown out of use and Northam practically out of use, and subsequently the barracks at Southern Cross also were thrown out of use. There had been a large expenditure of money on these buildings, they were elaborately constructed with bath rooms and dormitories, but they are practically useless now and the country has had to pay. At the time the eight hours principle was introduced on the railways Mr. George decided to construct a set of barracks at Karalee and Merredin, and shifted the men from Southern Cross. I raised the question last Parliament and got very little satisfaction. It was as a surprise to the old town to have a couple of hundred men removed and sent out into the desert with their wives and children ; children that were attending school at Southern Cross. Mr. George's contention was that the eight hours principle

having been introduced it compelled him to recognise that the day of 24 hours should be divided into three sections. I think that when Parliament approved of the principle it only meant that 48 hours was to constitute a week's work and not necessarily that each man was to work eight hours a day, and consequently I believe that it was a spirit of vindictiveness that influenced Mr. George in shifting the men from Southern Cross and sending them out into the desert at Karalee on one side and Merredin on the other. I showed last session that the engines were to be pooled. At the instigation of the Railway Department a report from America was read in this House showing that the pooling of engines was a common practice there; but it is recognised in America that locomotives are only worked for a certain time at high pressure and then thrown on the scrap heap and new ones obtained. Engines in Australia are not manipulated in that way. It has always been shown as the result of long experience that a man having his own engine takes great care of it and treats it as his own property. It is not the case here, and cannot be when one engine is used by as many as six sets of men from the time it leaves Northam for Kalgoorlie until it gets back again. I am told by drivers that the engines are getting into very great disrepair, and that in fact very few of them are fit for the road. It is not to be wondered at therefore that so large a sum as £86,000 is set down for repairs for engines; and the necessity for these repairs can be attributed to the facts I have mentioned. I appeal to the Minister for Railways to go into the whole matter again with the present administrator of the railways, and see if the system adopted elsewhere cannot be brought into existence here. With regard to the barracks to which I have referred, I understand that the department are now sorry that they ever put them in those places; Mr. George himself almost admitted as much to me on one occasion. It will be in the interests of the department that the men should go back and take up the quarters at Southern Cross. The other barracks

are only temporary and can be utilised and distributed in various parts of the country where they are required. There is a large number of buildings and cottages at Southern Cross, and these have been empty since the changes were made; but if the men return, farther revenue will be received by the Treasury. I will refer to another case of questionable expenditure which shows the necessity for someone being permanently in charge of the railways. Some time back there were constructed about 16 sidings between Northam and Kalgoorlie. Shortly afterwards a heavier type of engine was brought into operation, and it was decided not to use these sidings for train crossings; consequently 11 of these sidings are now useless and 15 of them are not being utilised as crossing stations. This is a clear case of the expenditure of money which is not justifiable. Had the Engineering Department at the time known that a heavier type of locomotive was being built, those sidings would not have been constructed. Again, there is the duplication of the line to Armadale. That was approved, I believe, by the Rason Government. Either he or the heads of his departments should have known that the construction of the Jandakot line would divert a huge amount of traffic to Fremantle, and therefore that the duplication to Armadale would have been unnecessary. Had this work not been constructed a saving of £40,000 would have been effected. If there were continuity of policy right through there would be none of the bungling that has taken place, and many works which subsequently proved to be useless would never have been undertaken. The permanent way is in a very high state; but I question if it would not be better to do as elsewhere and make it bear a relationship to the revenue obtained from the various lines. I do not think it necessary to have the permanent way perfect except on the main lines, and great economies might be effected in the reduction of expenses in the maintenance of these lines, which need not be placed in such a very high standard. A large reduction should take place not in the staff but in the amount

expended in re-sleeping and re-laying of the lines. Re-sleeping has been undertaken to an extent that would not be tolerated or warranted in any other country. I desire to speak in the very highest way of Mr. Dartnall, the Engineer for Existing Lines, who is a very capable officer; but I think the time has arrived when, on account of his valuable services to the State, in the past, he might be given a rest and someone younger, more vigorous, and with more up-to-date methods be appointed to his position. He would be able to keep the permanent way in a safe condition at a less cost. Mr. Dartnall is afraid to take the slightest risk. For instance, if a pair of axles carrying $9\frac{1}{2}$ tons have to run over rails which according to the stipulated formula should bear only $9\frac{1}{4}$ tons he would write to the Commissioner refusing to take any responsibility in the matter. That places the Commissioner, or the Minister controlling the department, in an awkward position, for while the weight of the axles is frequently within the margin of safety the engineering department disclaims all responsibility. A person who holds a responsible position must take some risk on his shoulders now and again. So far as the rank and file of the department are concerned, they are not overpaid, and they certainly have to suffer many disadvantages and have to do objectionable work unlike other portions of the staff. There is no doubt about it that economies can be effected along many lines. In Queensland they amalgamate the traffic manager's position with the engineering. Certainly they pay the officer who undertakes the dual position a high salary. At Townsville he gets £700 a year. He is called the traffic manager, but he is the engineer as well; he attends to the traffic and the engineering. That is the case also in other places in that State. If a similar course were adopted here it would be a step in the right direction, and would do away with a great deal of the correspondence that has grown to such dimensions in the Railway Department. It was owing to this vast increase in correspondence that Mr. George recently had to suggest the building of a huge suite of offices

to accommodate the clerks. If you have one man in charge of both departments—and there is no reason why you should not do so—there would be no necessity for this unlimited correspondence between branches. The correspondence in the Railway Department is out of all reason. When I was in the office at Kalgoorlie—it was only a small office—we had 20,000 files accumulated there in one year. Each file held some 10 to 20 letters; and therefore some half-a-million letters were written in one year from that office. To illustrate the methods in operation, I will give an instance. A weigh-bridge had to be shifted from the platform at Kanowna to the goods-sheds. The machine could have been lifted by four men and been carried across in about ten minutes. The stationmaster wrote to the superintendent about the matter, and the latter communicated with the chief traffic manager in Perth; that officer wrote to the chief engineer for existing lines, conveying the request, and the latter wrote to the resident engineer at Coolgardie and asked him to do the work; that officer wrote to the inspector of the permanent way asking him to move the bridge, and he wrote to the ganger at Kanowna and told him to do it. The ganger then wrote to the inspector of the permanent way informing him that the work had been done; that official communicated with the resident engineer; the chief engineer for existing lines, in Perth, was communicated with and he notified the chief traffic manager; the latter communicated with the district superintendent at Kalgoorlie; and told him that the chief engineer for existing lines had told him that the work had been done and asked him if that were true. The district superintendent wrote to the stationmaster at Kanowna and asked if the statement were correct; the stationmaster said "yes"; the superintendent wrote to the chief traffic manager, informing him of that reply—and that closed the incident. Seventeen letters were written on that small matter. If the departments were combined a man would not need to send all these letters, and the traffic superintendent would be able to do everything. Most people can-

not understand that such a state of affairs could exist; but this is the way in which the departments are run, and unfortunately there is a certain amount of hostility between the branches. There should be an amalgamation of the district officers. I see no reason why in Geraldton the superintendent and the engineer's office should not be amalgamated and run the northern line, the engineer taking on the traffic work; also at Albany, and perhaps at Bunbury, although I am doubtful about the latter. With regard to some of the resident engineers, there is one at Coolgardie. He seldom moves over the road, but sits in his office and signs letters; and this as a rule is what all heads of branches do. The Government are not justified in continuing the present policy, but should reduce the staff to normal proportions. At present the staff has certainly grown out of hand, and I think that Mr. George during his time was anxious to have a large staff—for it was significant that at the functions which took place every year he was always pleased to refer to the fact that he had some six or seven thousand men under his control. Evidently, to him, this seemed to indicate the importance of his position, and he was proud of the fact that so many men were under him in the service. There are too many inspectors in the staff. These officials number 46, and, barring the inspectors on the permanent way, a number of them are quite unnecessary. I hope that the Minister will see that the head of the department makes the necessary reductions there. Too many inspectors simply serve to harass men; and as I have had personal experience of this myself I know what it means. [*Mr. Bolton*: Are the inspectors getting increases?] I do not know of that. Again, there are a great many engineers and surveyors stationed at the different places. I question whether they are competent; and I know of instances where the inspectors of the permanent way have had to go out and rectify the work of the surveyors. A number of alterations should be made in that branch of the department. I do not think that many of the law-suits that Mr. George

engaged in were justifiable. He has shown a litigious spirit during the last few years; and I advised the last Government with regard to this on more than one occasion. I have not had occasion to do this to the present Government. Many cases were proceeded with and cost thousands of pounds in which the essential witnesses were either dead or else were scattered to the four winds of heaven. The result was that when the cases were tried without them the country was run into an expenditure of a very large sum of money. I can well understand that a sum of £15,000 is set aside for stationery and printing, seeing the methods of correspondence which exist in the department and to which I have already referred. There are also very many foolish transactions undertaken in connection with the department, and cases frequently occur where as much as £5 is expended in trying to recover, say, 2d. This surely does not commend itself as a business proposition. It is due, however, to the necessities of the Audit Act; and in other countries where such an Act as ours does not exist the dealing with such small items as this can be transacted without undue expenditure—and so it should be in this State. I am aware that the Audit Act compels officers to be very accurate in all their statements; but it is certainly not justifiable to spend several pounds in recovering so small an amount. The Minister might also devote his attention to the Ways and Works Branch, and in this regard I will give an illustration of how the work is carried out. In the event of a pane of glass being broken, say at Northam, a report goes to the resident engineer at Coolgardie. He sends down an inspector to take the measurements and see what is wanted. The wages of this inspector are 15s. per day, and it takes him a day and a half to make the trip; consequently, on that account the cost is 22s. 6d. His expenses amount to 7s. 6d. per day. He returns to Coolgardie, measures out the pane of glass and sends a man down to Northam to put the pane in. The wages of that man are 12s. a day, and as he takes a day and a half to make the trip and his expenses

amount to 5s., the cost of his visit to Northam totals 23s. That makes a total expense of 54s. for putting in at Northam a shilling pane of glass. If the station master at Northam, or in any other place, were given the proper authority, he could go next door, get a glazier to put in a pane of glass, and for 1s. could have the work done instead of its costing the country about £3. Similarly with all small jobs of that kind, I would urge the Minister to adopt a system of decentralisation. There is too much concentration in the head office, Perth. Combine the functions of traffic managers and engineers, call them traffic managers and give them power to attend to these local matters without consultation with the head office. The superintendents, although they receive £500 or £600 a year, cannot spend one penny, cannot without authority buy even a penny stamp. This seems to me absurd. I believe in the Chinese proverb:—"If you employ a man do not distrust him, and if you distrust him do not employ him." A superintendent can by careless management waste hundreds of pounds that can never be traced, and yet in the actual expenditure of money he is not trusted at all. The question whether ministerial or commissioner control of our railways should obtain will be dealt with later; and I take it the three aims of railway management should be efficiency, safety, and economy; and any expenditure which fails to secure these is open to condemnation, while any that goes beyond constitutes extravagance. A word or two on some other matters. I have before me, and cannot help drawing attention to it though I am disinclined to do so, a report in the *Australian World* of speeches at the Western Australian dinner in London, on the 30th May last; and I observe that Sir Edward Wittenoom, after praising the wine, etc., on which he is no doubt an expert, and I am sorry he did not keep to that subject, said:—

"The Labour party is so well supported and led with so much energy and ability, that it is very difficult to confront it. The legislation it is pro-

moting can only have the effect of keeping capital out of the country. Now to my mind the introduction of capital into a country like Western Australia is an absolute necessity."

I should like to know why we vote money for the Western Australian dinner, at which our friend Sir Edward can make a speech like that? Why in the circumstances did not Mr. Rason say something in contradiction of the statement? Here we are on the one hand trying to introduce immigration, and spending money somewhat carelessly, though I hope the expenditure will in the long run be justified; but on the other hand we are spending money in order that a gentleman like Sir Edward Wittenoom may announce to the world that Labour legislation here is tending to keep capital out of the country. That is very wrong, and the least that could have been expected from Mr. Rason was that he should set the people right by telling them there was no such tendency. But I should imagine that in all probability Mr. Rason nudged Sir Edward, and said something like "Go it, Ned; give it to them, Ned." In the same connection I must refer to some matters previously discussed in this House, concerning the shipping ring in the North-West and in London. I notice that year after year the same persons are invited to the Western Australian dinner, and they include the English shipping brokers with whom I had to deal when a member of a Royal Commission appointed by the last Government, which resulted in some astounding revelations. I notice amongst those present at the dinner representatives of Messrs. Trinder, Anderson & Co., Messrs. Bethel, Gwyne & Co., and Messrs. Marden & Co., who have for years past been making money out of the people of this State. The Royal Commission on Ocean Freights showed in their report that £489,000 had been made out of the pockets of the people of Western Australia for brokerage alone by these three firms: and to that profit the Western Australian Government were the largest contributors, to the extent of £5,000 per annum. The sum I have mentioned does not represent profits

from freight but from brokerage; and it was on this account that the Commission denounced so strongly the appointment of Mr. Sandover as shipping agent of the State. He took the hint and resigned; and now I understand the business is being done by the Agent General's office. The same gang, however, seem to be inseparably associated with the Agent General's office, and I certainly look with suspicion on the transaction, for it seems to me that £5,000 at least per annum which the gang are making out of the Government shipments accounts in some way for their regular attendance at those dinners. The member for Pilbarra (Mr. Underwood) and others spoke of the necessity for subsidising a line of boats to the North-West in order to counteract the rebates of the shipping combine. The Royal Commission made that very clear in their report and recommended something of the kind. Fortunately, the ship brokers took considerable notice of our report and reduced freights by 5s., but the brokerage remains the same, and the profits they are making out of Western Australia are undiminished. I shall be entirely agreeable if the Government can see their way to subsidise a line of boats to the North-West, and indeed I should go much farther, as the Commission did in their report, by inserting a paragraph for which I was responsible. The Commission, I may say, consisted of the late Mr. Diamond, Senator Needham, and myself. Paragraph 57 of the report is as follows:—

"Whilst your commissioners would welcome the establishment of an Australian mercantile fleet under Commonwealth control, for the transport of mails and cargo between Australia and the United Kingdom, capable of being commissioned in time of war, we believe this ideal is not within measurable distance at present."

However, as time has shown, that ideal was not so far off as we thought, and the question came very prominently before the public when the Commonwealth Government were recently trying to enter into a fresh mail contract. They should take a step in the right direction, and if

need be build their own fleet as we run our own railways. I and other members on this (Opposition) side of the House would be pleased indeed to see our ships Australian-owned and Australian-manned and carrying Australian products to every port in the world. I wish to thank the Minister for Mines for the attention he has given to all the requirements of my district while I have been its representative. On every occasion where the mining industry was concerned, whether the request was for water supply, for a battery subsidy or for anything else of the sort, the Minister has promptly complied; and in these circumstances I have great pleasure in giving credit where credit is due.

Mr. E. C. BARNETT (Albany) : The first question I asked on my return to the State after a recent visit to Ceylon was, "Is the timber trouble ended?" and along with the majority of the people in the country, I was gratified to hear that a settlement had been arrived at, though I heard with extreme regret that it had been necessary for the Government to make a farther concession to the Timber Combine, which concession will probably cost the State some thousands of pounds a year. I would draw attention to the fact that the Government might easily have asked from Millars' Karri & Jarrah Forests, Ltd., and other owners of timber areas a *quid pro quo* for the concession in respect of freights. As we are all aware, large portions of the timber land of this State are held by the Combine and other companies as concessions. These concessions have been worked for many years, and in them many thousands of acres have been denuded of marketable timber. According to the evidence given before the Royal Commission on Forestry, of which I believe the Premier was chairman, some of the leading employees of the Combine stated that fully fifty years must elapse before the land cut out would be fit to be cut over again; and in the circumstances I think the timber companies might reasonably have been asked, before the concession in freights was granted, to consent to all lands on which the tim-