

because certain main lines have already been made, I think he will find that the country party, at any rate, will be very much against him. I want to be fair to the Commissioner, and I have omitted to mention that in the correspondence which passed between the late Premier, Mr. Irvine, and the Commissioners, as published in *Hansard*, he said that nine hours was a day's work when he took the railways over. I believe he made that statement under a slight misapprehension. At that particular time the railways were not run on a nine-hours basis. The first time that a nine-hours day was proposed was at the time that the railways were handed over to Mr. Speight and his colleagues. By the way, I may mention that the present Commissioners have increased the enginemen's mileage by twenty miles a day, thereby taking one-fifth more work out of them, and so practically reducing their wages by one-fifth. The proposal for a nine-hours day became a matter of correspondence between the representatives of the locomotive engine-drivers and the Minister of the day, the late Mr. Duncan Gillies. The men then received a promise that the practice that had obtained for so many years of eight hours a day and 100 miles mileage a day should be continued wherever practicable.

The Hon. J. M. DAVIES.—Does it take eight hours to run 100 miles?

The Hon. W. J. EVANS.—It took very nearly sixteen hours the other day to go from Geelong to Ballarat. If the honorable gentleman can beat that he will do well. The question of the hours became the subject of correspondence between the representatives of the men and the then Railways Commissioner. A promise was made that there was no intention of extending the hours to nine, or of increasing the mileage. The men worked on that promise up to the time of the memorable strike. Those instructions were never brought into operation, and the present Chief Commissioner was, no doubt, under the impression that before he came here nine hours were the hours of the engineers, whereas it was not so. The hours of the men in question is a matter of interest to honorable members, most of whom travel on the suburban railways, because, if a man is overworked, he cannot be as vigilant as he should be. In the case of many men at the present time, it takes them thirteen or fourteen hours from the time they start in the morning to get in a day's work on the suburban lines, where a signal has to

be taken every minute, and the work is very trying. I have told honorable members of the particular method introduced for the purpose of increasing the hours in the country. In justice to the Commissioner, I will say I hope he will not make it necessary for further comment to be made on this matter, but that he will do justice to the men. I hope, also, that the Government will see that justice is done to the men, and that the eight-hours system is not put aside, as it is proposed to be, and that the men will be paid for the work they perform. I ask for no more. I thank honorable members for the attention they have given me during my remarks in connexion with railway matters, but I thought that, as there was the opportunity of speaking on this question, I should avail myself of it. I thank honorable members sincerely for the cordial hearing they have given me.

The Hon. R. B. REES.—I took the opportunity a few minutes ago of interjecting, perhaps against the rules of the House, when the honorable member who has just sat down was speaking. The interjection was—"That is a democratic country." The honorable member was speaking of the practice introduced into this State by our Railways Commissioners of increasing the hours of work of the engine-men and the railway employés, and of decreasing their wages. The Chairman of the Railways Commissioners has just arrived here from a democratic country—at least from a country on the borders of a democratic country, on the borders of the great United States of America, which were founded on democratic principles. It is a country which was started by people who called themselves Republicans, who were cutting away from the traditions of the old world, and starting a new country, where they were going to regenerate humanity by new-fangled ideas. And here, sir, we have the shocking example of a representative of ultra-democrats coming to this Chamber and running down the very institution, the very work, which is the result of that wonderful democracy of America and of Canada; running it down here, and saying that it does not fit this new country of ours, which is to go one better than the United States of America. What is this democracy, this Labour Party, that we have heard a good deal about to-night, and which I am sorry is not mentioned in the Governor's speech? What are the ideals of this party, and what will the ideals of this party lead us to?

We have heard a good deal about the caucus. The result of this caucus business in the United States is to create a Tammany Hall. The result is—perhaps I should not say it in this chamber, but I think I can say it—to create in the United States the most corrupt system of government, so far as the municipal section of that government is concerned, that is to be found anywhere in the world. The caucus system in New York has landed them there in a Tammany Government. The sale of franchises in New York is a disgrace, as it also is in Buffalo and Chicago. It is a disgrace to any nation or people, and yet that is what the caucus that is being foisted upon us in this country is going to land us in. It will land us in this Tammany business, a corrupt state of selling franchises and privileges, whether Government or municipal, which I am happy to say does not exist here at present. If we allow this great caucus business to grow, this government by a clique, such as the Political Labour Council is, all we want to complete our corruption is to have a powerful man at the head of that organization—a Boss Tweed or a Croker—and we shall have Tammany pure and simple. We should be led by that organization, and the whole of the government system of the country would fall into its hands, or the hands of its boss, provided he was strong enough. I think, therefore, we should set our faces most clearly against the system of caucus, against this system of binding ourselves hand and foot to irresponsible people outside, and we should continue free, as at present, and come into a free Legislative Council to do our duty fearlessly and without favour to any clique or section of the people. I had better come right away to the questions before the Chair. I should like to deal with two matters mentioned in the Governor's speech. The principal question, I think, here dealt with is the question of water conservation. The next is closer settlement. Of course they are allied, and run closely together. In the area which I have the honour of representing, one is dependent to a great extent on the other. One honorable member here, Dr. Embling, mentioned that we had gone a great deal beyond our powers, and beyond what was legitimate in the construction of water schemes in Victoria. I see by a return that something like £5,000,000 has been borrowed to construct waterworks, but a good many honorable members forget that over £3,000,000 of that amount was

borrowed in order to construct the Coliban scheme. Every honorable member will admit that that scheme was absolutely essential when it was constructed, in order to maintain the splendid city of Bendigo, and the towns that are supplied from the system. That money was spent at a very expensive time in the history of this country. When the gold-fields were at their height water was required in order to supply Bendigo and to develop the mining industry in that quarter. They had to conserve water up in the Malmsbury Ranges, and to do that they had to draw labour from the productive and profitable industry of mining. Before they could draw away labour to the work they had to pay very high wages. The Coliban scheme, as I saw by a return prepared some few years ago when the question was under discussion, was constructed at that expensive period, and probably £2 were spent in that work for every £1 that would be spent if it was constructed to-day. When saying that a large amount of money has been spent on irrigation, we must look at one scheme in particular, which is almost illustrative of other schemes, and that is the Coliban scheme. That scheme was constructed at that expensive period for the specific purpose of supplying water quickly for mining purposes. It was a national work. For many years afterwards it did not pay its way, and a very large sum of money, if I mistake not, was written off the Coliban scheme.

Several HONORABLE MEMBERS.—No, no.

The Hon. R. B. REES.—I will submit to honorable members if I am wrong. I understood that when the discussion was on as to the general writing down of indebtedness of irrigation and water supply schemes, a very large sum of money was written off the Coliban scheme.

The Hon. J. M. PRATT.—That was not touched.

The Hon. R. B. REES.—That only strengthens my argument, that if we give a reasonable time for these schemes to develop they will pay of themselves, without writing down, as has been the case with the Coliban scheme. For many years it did not pay interest and working expenses. I understand that nothing has been written down, and that the Coliban scheme now pays. Well, why should we be so timorous in regard to our other irrigation schemes? It is only fifteen years since a great orator, as Dr. Embling stated, enthused this country with his oratory, and brought about large irrigation

schemes in the north. The Coliban scheme, I venture to say, did not pay for thirty years after it was constructed. It has come to pay now.

The Hon. J. M. PRATT.—It does not pay full interest.

The Hon. R. B. REES.—I am only taking what Mr. Gray said. I submitted to his statement. Fifteen years is a very short time for these schemes to develop, and I cannot see why the country and honorable members should be so timorous of expending money on irrigation schemes, seeing that a great scheme like the Coliban took over thirty years before it came within a reasonable distance of paying interest and working expenses. If the great irrigation schemes pay within twenty years, we should not be told that they will not pay. When enormous works are carried out, such as weirs on these various rivers, it takes a number of years to have the reticulation channels constructed, and the country commanded by these channels fully supplied with water.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—What is the good of channels without water?

The Hon. R. B. REES.—I am coming to that. It does not matter if a scheme does not pay in twenty years. So long as it ultimately pays the country, I think it is justified if it is carried out in a reasonable manner. That brings me to the question of what is the good of water channels if there is no water to fill them. I am sorry to say that that has been the case in the north to a great extent. I am sorry to say that a lot of our channels in the north were constructed—well conceived works, so far as the main channels and the general scheme was concerned—but, unfortunately, the sources of water supply were not adequate to serve the country commanded by those channels. I may mention the case of the Kow Swamp irrigation works. That great depression or lake is filled from the overflow from the Murray River. The water flows into that for three or four months, but during the period when the farmers are wanting water from the Kow Swamp the river is at its lowest. At the very time when the comparatively small storage at Kow Swamp runs out there is no water to fill the channel. The difficulty has been this: A man lays down a lucerne plot on the plains alongside a water channel, and he may be able to irrigate it during the months of August, September, and October, and, perhaps, until Christmas. Then the sources of supply run out, and

during the very dry and the hottest months, January, February, and March, when he requires water, there is no water to be had. The result is that he loses his crop, and loses also the stock he had purchased and reared, and which is dependent upon that crop. The result is a complete failure, so far as that man is concerned.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—What is the loss by soakage in the channel?

The Hon. R. B. REES.—If there is only water available, the loss would be comparatively small. I do not suppose the loss in the Mallee channels would be more than 3 to 5 per cent. It depends on the length of the channel, and the country it travels through. The loss on the plains would be greater. If the supply had been there, as we have at present in the Goulburn, and if we deal with the Murray properly, our irrigation schemes would not have been failures. At least, I do not think they have been failures. They have been great in educational results. We were infants in the matter when we tackled this great question, and during the last fifteen years of experience the irrigation trusts have paid, if only in teaching our farmers and agriculturists the way to use the water, and how to deal with it properly. And so I do not think we need be timorous at all so far as constructing the water scheme foreshadowed in His Excellency's speech. I am glad to see that the Government mention that they are going to construct important works of water conservation and irrigation. That really means the great work now in hand, of constructing the Waranga basin. In the Goulburn we have an enormous source of water supply, at any rate during the flood period, and, while filling the Waranga basin, we can also draw from the inexhaustible stores of the Goulburn River, where we shall replenish the easily exhausted supplies of water on the plains at present. In carrying out that scheme we shall make effective the money spent on schemes in the north. The work that has already been done has been to a certain extent abortive. That is to say, it has not paid interest on the cost of construction and working expenses.

An HONORABLE MEMBER.—A certain amount of money has been written off.

The Hon. R. B. REES.—That is quite right, so far as certain irrigation works are concerned, because they were wrongly planned by the responsible officers of the Water Supply Department. I think a nation justly should bear the expense of the mis-

takes of the officers whom they have placed in charge of these works. I think it is a fair proposition that where the Water Supply Department, or the Public Works Department, makes a huge mistake in the construction of earthworks, or in carrying out reticulation works, the district that was to be served by those works should not be penalized in the charges on account of the mistakes. I certainly say that, so far as the irrigating schemes of the north were concerned, writing down was quite a just arrangement, and dealt justly with the people who would, otherwise, have been penalized by the mistakes of the Department. But we are now going to remedy a good many of those mistakes by carrying out a great work that should have been carried out at the start. If Mr. Deakin's proposition had been carried out on the lines laid down when his scheme was first initiated, or if the late Mr. McColl's scheme had been carried out—that was to construct a huge canal from the Goulburn right through the Mallee country—there would have been enough water to have made these irrigating schemes successful almost from the start, and we then should not have had any question of repudiation, or writing down, such as we have had to face as the result of the mistakes, which, it is alleged, were committed by the Water Supply Department. Therefore, that writing down was just. There may be one instance where that was not fair, and that is the case of the Rodney Trust. I believe that in the case of that trust, situated as it is right on the banks of the Goulburn, and commanded by efficient channels running from the Goulburn River, with an inexhaustible supply of water at almost any time, it was unjust to write down the indebtedness. They should be made to pay, and pay up like men, their indebtedness to the State.

The Hon. W. L. BAILLIEU.—Would you restore it again?

The Hon. R. B. REES.—Nothing is beyond the power of Parliament, and, so far as restoring a sum unjustly written down is concerned, I would support it. The question of closer settlement is very much interwoven with the question of water supply. Our difficulty in the north is that we construct very long channels through country which is not occupied. I think it is really not right that certain men should occupy, say 320 acres or 640 acres of land within the irrigating area, where they are not using more than 20, or 30, or 40 acres for intense cul-

ture. The success of our irrigation schemes must lie in people holding small areas, and going in for intense culture on those areas. The great drawback to Mildura is that they have constructed some very long channels through ground which is not occupied, and which is not used. If the settlement is close, and all within the settlement use water, and pay up their rates for the water they use, then the irrigation area must necessarily be a success. Our comparative failure is through people holding too large areas in this irrigation country, and what we want up there is closer settlement on the areas commanded by the irrigation channels. Now I come to a question that I think should be dealt with. At any rate, I think we ought to urge it on, although it is really a matter for the Federal Parliament. That is the question of immigration. I conceive that we have not the population here that we should have. We have not the class of population to a great extent that we should have, and could have, if we only pressed the question, and got from the Old World the people who are now going to the United States of America and Canada to swell the revenue and population of those countries. I say we should do all we can to press this question on the Federation while we are spending a lot of money on irrigation. We should try to get population from the Old World. It is a revelation to any man who travels from Europe to America to see the people who are going from Europe to the great western States. They are people who, if we could draw them into this country, would make the northern areas of Victoria very prosperous, and increase our export trade in perishable and other products. I notice that the Premier the other day went to the University. He went there to see what he could do to help that institution out of certain financial difficulties it is in. I am not going to say one word against the £13,000, or £14,000, or £15,000 that we contribute to the University, but I should like to ask you, Mr. President, what the University turns out. I call it a great machine for turning out a class of people—I am speaking now of the majority—who are really unsuited to the requirements of this State as at present constituted. They are turning out professional people, such as doctors, lawyers, and members of other professions that are already crammed and jammed with people who cannot make a living. I should like to know how many people the University turns out who are skilled —

The Hon. J. M. PRATT.—In agriculture.

The Hon. R. B. REES.—That is right—skilled in agriculture; educated to go on the land, or to go into factories where they will produce, and prevent the importation of goods into this country. I say that the number of people fit to enter the reproductive ranks of this country, turned out by the Melbourne and Sydney Universities, and similar institutions, is infinitesimal in comparison with the number of people turned out for professions which are already crowded. I should like, if possible, to concentrate our effort, not to turning out only professional men, but to turning out men skilled in agriculture, as Mr. Pratt says; men skilled in technical work, in making machinery and various other things required for the development of this country. I was very much struck with a statement by Mr. G. H. Reid, when at Kyneton the other day. He said—

We have spent, all through Australia, enormous sums of public money for the necessary primary and secondary and literary education of our youth, but the grandest education of all in a Continent like this is the education of the Australian youth in those pursuits that lie at the heart of sound national development.

That should be the key-note of the educational system of this country, and if we concentrated our efforts on technical education, that is to say, agricultural education, and education so far as reproductive works are concerned, we should help the producing interests and the manufacturing interests, and assist in the development of this country. That, concurrently with the importation of a good class of immigrants from the Old World, would help to populate our northern areas, would help to populate the whole of Victoria, and increase the railway returns, and increase employment for the very people we are producing a plethora of in this State of Victoria at present. There is one question in connexion with the immigration question that I have taken a great deal of interest in, and it is that of allowing certain institutions in the Old World to send out desirable immigrants to this country. I see by the press—the press are referring to it continually—that there are offers by a very great man in the Old World, and a man whom I thoroughly believe in—General Booth—to send a lot of immigrants to this country. Some years ago I had the privilege of going through the Salvation Army's city colony in London, and also its farm colony, and about four years ago I re-visited those places. And what did I see there? I

saw not merely the flotsam. Certainly I saw a lot of the flotsam and jetsam of the slums of London, Manchester, and Liverpool, and of other great cities of England in the city colony, and I saw some of them also on the farm colony. But I can venture to say that a large proportion of the people whom I saw in the city colony of the Salvation Army, and also in Dr. Barnado's homes, were the very class of people we want out in this State of Victoria for its development to-day. They were agricultural labourers who, under the pressure of the agricultural depression in England, had been driven out of employment in the country, and had gradually drifted into the larger cities of Great Britain, ultimately finding their way to the East End of London to try and find work at the docks. That seems to be the gravitating spot for all those people who are driven off the land in England. They seem to gravitate to the docks at Liverpool and Manchester, and also to the great docks at London. General Booth and his officers seem to get hold of those people, and to restore them to a certain extent. They place them in the city colony, and gradually draft them on to the farm colony; and I believe that if you could get that class of people out here, it would be for the benefit of Victoria. They are not over-educated people; they are not people turned out by the Universities who do not know how to work. They know how to work, and are prepared to rough it in the back country here. They would be quite ready to settle in our back country, to form homes, and to rear families, and, in my opinion, they are the very people whom we want out in this country for its development. I cannot understand why it is that the Labour Party put up their backs against the immigration of such people into the State of Victoria, and are doing all they can to prevent the introduction of a desirable class of immigrants, whether they come under contract or do not come under contract. For my part, I think it is even better for men to come out here under contract than as free men; that is to say, under certain conditions, and the conditions could always be so regulated as to be fair both to the individual and to the State. With regard to men coming here as free men, of course the difficulty in Australia, as it has been and still is the difficulty in America, is that, provided a man can scrape together £50 or £60 to pay a first-class passage, and comes out as a great swell on one of the P. and O. or Orient

boats he is welcomed into Victoria with open arms. His whole equipment, however, may be a good starched collar, and, perhaps, a good rig out, and what happens to him afterwards? He comes to Melbourne, and he gradually settles down among the unemployed, swelling the ranks of those brazen-throated people who are calling out for employment about the streets of Melbourne. They are the very people, or a lot of them are, who are the loudest in declaiming against Victoria, which is the best country for the working man, and, indeed, altogether the best country I have struck, and I have been all over the world. I cannot understand why it is that people such as the six hatters, for instance, and skilled persons of that kind, even although they come out under contract, should be debarred by the labour organizations of this State, and Australia generally. I say that we, as a Legislature, ought to do all we can to try and stop that kind of thing being perpetuated. We should make ourselves felt in the Federation, and compel them to allow desirable people, whether they are brought out by institutions or brought out under contract, with proper safeguards, or whether they come as free men—compel the Federation, I say, to allow them to enter this country in order to create prosperity and help us along in the State of Victoria.

The Hon. J. STERNBERG.—I rise, Mr. President, to join with other members in congratulating you on the unanimous action of this Chamber in electing you to the high and honorable position which you fill. I feel that in your hands the destinies of this House will be quite safe, and that you will continue to act as ably and impartially in the position of President in the future as you have done in the past. In regard to the Governor's speech, I recognise that the Government have brought forward many good proposals, which, however, no doubt, will require a good deal of thrashing out in order to bring them as near as we can to perfection. I entirely concur with the Government in the desirability and necessity that exists for making proper provision for irrigation. While saying that, however, I recognise that in the past we have been far too lavish in connexion with the expenditure of State money, so far as irrigation is concerned. Irrigation, as we all know, has a great future before it, provided the money is expended under reasonable and fair conditions, but I venture to assert that in the past a great deal of the money spent in

connexion with irrigation, particularly in the northern districts, has been so expended as not to be in the slightest degree reproductive. In connexion with the writing down to which reference has been made to-night, although large sums have been written down, I do not say that it was not necessary to take that course, because I contend that it meant absolute ruin to those men who were situated on the land if the Government had decided to insist upon enforcing the payment due in connexion with irrigation trusts. Take for example the case of the Tragowel Trust. That trust obtained about £260,000 in advances, and I do not think that on any portion of that money is the Government getting interest, or, at any rate, if so, it is very little indeed. But that trust was constructed in the expectation of receiving a fair and reasonable supply of water, whereas the Government did not go far enough in connexion with the matter. Had they provided, in the first instance, proper water areas and headworks, where the water could have been conserved, and whereby the people situated in the northern portion of the State might have obtained water, I think that under those conditions the people would have been prepared to and able to pay interest on the large sums which were lent by the State; but when dry seasons came and those people recognised the difficulty of remaining on their land under the conditions that then existed, it behoved the Government to recognise the position, and to write down portions of the money advanced to those trusts. There was really no alternative, but I consider that if, in the first instance, instead of large sums being advanced in connexion with areas that were doubtful, the Government had proceeded under conditions that were favorable to irrigation, such as in the trust referred to by the honorable member (Mr. Rees), the Goulburn Valley or Rodney scheme, where land was really improved by irrigation, and where there was an abundant flow of water, there would be a different state of things. The Government in that case by encouraging them by writing down only a reasonable sum—and there was only a reasonable sum written down in connexion with that trust—did what was only fair to a body which has given an example to the State of what can be done in connexion with irrigation. There is no doubt, however, that in the past money has been spent too lavishly in connexion with the question