

the State, where does State control come in? These obligations can be met in the case of 20 as well as one.

Mr. Pickering; Not on the same basis.

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes. There is nothing to prevent it. It may be that in competition amongst each other the weaker will go to the wall, and only a few will be left in the business. That happens everywhere, but there will be competition amongst the strongest. It is in that respect the State may afterwards obtain better advantages than are now proposed by the Government. I wish to protest strongly against the innovation of granting to a sole company or firm the control of our rare and precious asset in the shape of sandalwood. I want the State to preserve all its rights in that to the utmost, to be, as it were, the seller having the monopoly only of selling under conditions that will protect all concerned and the Government as well. The facts having been published, I do not see any advantage in having these tenders laid upon the Table of the House. I do not deny the right of the House to ask for them, or the wisdom of granting that right to Parliament. It will, however, be sufficient if we simply enter our protest against the granting of a monopoly to a single company under the terms suggested by the Government. I wish to make a vigorous and clear protest against the granting of a monopoly, with the object of enabling those who have declared against a monopoly to vote without confusion. There are really two issues involved in the motion as it stands; one that we protest against the granting of a monopoly, and the other that we desire the acceptance of tenders to be postponed until all members have had an opportunity of consulting the papers connected with the transaction after these documents have been laid upon the Table of the House. In order that we may vote clearly upon the matter I move an amendment—

*That all the words after "Government" in line 5 be struck out.*

On motion by Minister for Mines, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 16th October, 1923.

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

### PETITION—WEST AUSTRALIAN TRUSTEE, EXECUTOR, AND AGENCY COMPANY, LIMITED.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON presented a petition from the West Australian Trustee, Executor, and Agency Company, Limited, praying for the introduction of a Bill to amend the West Australian Trustee, Executor, and Agency Company, Ltd., Act.

Petition received and read, and the prayer of the petition granted.

### BILL—WEST AUSTRALIAN TRUSTEE, EXECUTOR, AND AGENCY COMPANY, LTD., ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. J. Nicholson and read a first time.

*Referred to Select Committee.*

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson, Bill referred to a select committee consisting of Hon. A. Lovekin, Hon. J. J. Holmes and the mover, to report on 25th October.

### SELECT COMMITTEE — PINJARRA-DWARDA RAILWAY EXTENSION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

*Report Presented.*

Hon. J. A. GREIG presented the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into this Bill.

Report received and read, and ordered to be printed.

### BILL—LUNACY ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from 27th September.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [4.49]: When the Bill was last before the House, consideration of it was adjourned in order that hon. members might procure further information from the files. I have not seen the files deal-

ing with the particular case quoted in connection with the Bill, but I have looked through the Lunacy Act and its amendments. I have come to the conclusion that I can do no other than support the Bill. There are one or two matters to which attention may be drawn. So far as I can see, a person sent to the asylum by due process of law, has the right of appeal to the Inspector General for the Insane, who can release him if he sees fit. In the case referred to in connection with the Bill, the Inspector General has not seen fit to release the individual concerned. Whether I am speaking correctly on that point, I do not know, as I have not seen the files. According to my reading of the Act, that is the position. Seeing that this particular man had to apply to the court, evidently the Inspector General did not see fit to order his release. My principal reason for supporting the Bill is that I consider a man who is sent down to the Hospital for the Insane, after being committed on a charge of murder, for instance, should have the same right of appeal as a sane man who commits deliberate murder. A sane man who commits deliberate murder has the right of appeal, and that is all the Bill seeks to give the insane man. The Governor-in-Council, which means the Cabinet, has the final say as to whether or not a person shall suffer the extreme penalty of the law and determines whether or not the sentence shall be commuted. If we give that right to the sane man, we should give the same right to a man judged to be insane when he is tried. Points that arise are whether we should give this special right of appeal, to whom it should be given, and by whom it should be considered. I cannot understand why the sponsors of the Bill have not given us some explanation regarding one point. I find that by the amending Act of 1920, Section 107 of the original Act was amended, the amendment reading as follows:—

Except where a person has been declared of unsound mind under Part X.—

These particular cases do not come under Part X.—

and the question was determined by a jury—

All these questions are determined by a jury—

the judge may, if he thinks fit, on the application of the person so brought before him, order that the question whether such person is of unsound mind be determined by a jury, and in such cases the provisions of Section 115 shall apply.

That means to say that the question to be considered is whether there shall be a common or a special jury. The effect is that in the cases referred to, the judge may, if he thinks fit, consider whether the question of sanity should be determined by a jury. I would have liked some explanation regarding this aspect by those in charge of the Bill.

It has been suggested that the Bill may apply to one man only. That will not be the position if the Bill be agreed to, because it will not only apply to any person in the Hospital for the Insane to-day but to all persons who may be in that institution for similar reasons. It will also apply to all persons affected in the future. The Bill simply says that, in the application of Section 107 of the principal Act, "the judge shall forthwith send a report to the Governor." I take it that "Governor" means the Governor-in-Council, which really means the Cabinet. If a man is detained in the Hospital for the Insane by some due process of law, the judge has no power to deal with him. That is what we have been told by a judge. The Bill provides that in such cases a report shall be sent forthwith to the Governor-in-Council and Cabinet will decide whether the man shall be released or shall be detained. I can see nothing wrong in that proposal. Surely, if a man has committed a crime while insane and subsequently becomes sane, it would be a terrible position to place him in, if the law were to say he should have no right of appeal for release from such an institution. These are my main reasons for supporting the Bill and the principal reason is that an insane person should have the same right as a sane person.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan, [4.55]: I have had an opportunity of looking into the amendment proposed by the Bill. I have come to a conclusion similar to that arrived at by Mr. Dodd, and will support the Bill. If one looks at the amendment that it is proposed to add to the second paragraph of Section 107 of the principal Act, it will be seen at once that there is a deficiency in that particular part of the section. Section 107 gives full power to the judge in certain circumstances to examine and make inquiries into the case of a man who is supposed to be sane and is detained in the institution. It also gives him power to order the man's release or discharge. There is an exception made in the case of a man who is detained for some cause, by due process of law. We can readily conceive cases where men may be detained by some process of law. The section stops at that point and does not go on to say that in the case of a man detained by some process of law a judge, after making his examination and being satisfied that the man has recovered his senses, shall have power to do anything further. Thus the section stops short. It is clear, therefore, that those responsible for drafting the section originally must have overlooked this feature, or imagined that it would be implied that some action would be taken by Cabinet in cases such as those I refer to. These things cannot be implied; they require to be included in the Act. I can understand that judges would have some difficulty in knowing exactly what to do regarding applications where the circumstances are such as I have referred to—a man having been detained under some

process of law, subsequently recovers his senses. The amendment proposed will be advantageous and I support it.

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

## BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT (CONTINUANCE.)

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from 3rd October.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [4.58]: It was in 1915, after much trouble following upon the drought year, that this special legislation was first introduced. I well remember that one of the principal reasons for the legislation being enacted was that up to that time most of the people who settled on the land had been dealing directly through the Agricultural Bank, or had been drawing advances from the various commercial institutions or private dealers in money. It was due to the action of the then Government, who distinctly laid it down that they desired to stop trafficking in land, and to prevent as far as possible, the operations of people who were dealing with those who were on the land. For that purpose an edict was issued by the Minister for Lands stating that the Government would not grant transfers to people who, in many cases, were merely taking up land, carrying out a few improvements, and then selling the property to others. No doubt it was a mistake, because the fact of people being able to sell their land and make a satisfactory profit only induced them to take up more land and develop it. Many men were very successful by undertaking the first opening up of land; others did not care to tackle virgin land, but preferred to purchase partially developed blocks. Owing to the Minister's edict that no transfers would be approved, the confidence of financial institutions was destroyed; the security was regarded less favourably and advances made to settlers were called up. An impasse was reached which, more than the drought itself, necessitated the introduction of special temporary legislation, and the I.A.B. was inaugurated to tide over the settlers that were in difficulties. Many settlers who had received assistance from financial institutions were able to secure help from the Agricultural Bank or from the I.A.B. Instead of the board operating for only one or two years, as was anticipated at its inauguration, it has continued year after year and is still in existence. The work of the board has certainly resulted in an immense amount of good. Many settlers have met with great success when, but for the board's assistance, they would have been compelled to leave their holdings. We may congratulate ourselves on the fact that an enormous amount of clearing and settlement has resulted from the work of the board. Nevertheless, this House and another place have repeatedly asked for the repeal of this special legislation. Last year a select committee ap-

pointed by the Legislative Assembly inquired into the transactions of the board, and concluded its report in the following terms:—

The board has been in existence for seven years, and during that period the farmers have been able to make some recovery from the loss sustained during the 1914-15 drought. Conditions have again become normal, and your committee is of opinion that no new clients should be taken by the board. Steps should be taken to finalise the accounts of the board, and the board should cease to exist after its accounts have been finalised. In the event of any difficulty being experienced in finalising the accounts, the administration should be handed over to the Agricultural Bank trustees, and, if necessary, the Agricultural Bank Act should be amended so that all assistance to land development may be granted under that Act. If this were done it would enable the security to be watched the more closely and the funds of the State to be protected better than is possible under the Industries Assistance Act with its wide and open provisions.

The report of the operations of the board for 1923 shows that the advances made during the year totalled £1,103,085, an increase over those of the previous year of £85,000, attributable to the fact that 165 new accounts were opened up with soldier settlers. The amount owing by borrowers was £1,635,632, an increase over that of the previous term of £455,952. The costs of administration have increased by £3,960, due to an increase of inspectorial staff and the operation of decentralisation. It is remarkable that so little notice has been taken of the report of the select committee. Instead of the board being closed down, there has been an enormous increase in advances and 165 new accounts have been opened. The select committee recommended a very much safer method of dealing with land settlement, namely, under the Agricultural Bank Act, and it is the wish of many people, who earnestly desire the development of the State, that this method should be adopted. There is no desire to curtail the advances made by the Government, but we are not getting the best results from the settlers through the Industries Assistance Board. The earnings of the board last year amounted to £26,637 less than their expenditure, so that they are practically a trading concern—losing money. While the board continue their operations, a large number of outside creditors are being kept at arm's length by the clients that remain on the board. Many settlers owed money to storekeepers, and, when the Government granted assistance, the storekeepers had to stand aside. Though some clients are financial, they remain on the board and still do not pay the accounts they owe outside. They are shielding themselves behind the board, and the board have rather assisted them in this by keeping in hand a sum of £400 or £500 to meet the needs of the coming season. Outside creditors feel that the Government are shielding these clients who should have paid their debts

years ago. I have several letters from creditors that have been kept out of their money by clients who have been able to get various advances from the board without paying these accounts. The board should not have granted further advances until the outside accounts were paid. There is a strong feeling throughout the country districts that a number of clients are abusing the Act. When the Bill was under consideration originally, some of these dangers were pointed out, but it was said that the Government would insist upon the interests of outside creditors being adequately safeguarded. Many clients have honestly paid their outside accounts, but many have not, and there are still many clients who intend to go on abusing the Act. Further, there are men that are not bona fide settlers, but have taken up land and are prepared to remain upon it so long as they can draw the sustenance allowance of 9s. or 10s. a day. These men consider they have a very good job. If the sustenance allowance were stopped, it is probable they would leave the land. It is very difficult indeed for the inspectors of the board to act. The operations of the board should be closed down, as suggested by the select committee of another place, and there should be an amendment of the Agricultural Bank Act allowing the bank to carry on the few accounts which would remain. Further, existing legislation should be amended so that local committees could be formed to advise the bank or the Minister regarding instances in which men go on drawing the 9s. per day without any prospect of ultimately succeeding. The local committees would know, and would advise, which of the cases were worth carrying on and which should be closed down. In some instances the man is a better asset than the land. Assuredly the local committees would warn the Government as to the danger of carrying on certain men. An amendment is also needed to empower the Industries Assistance Board to write down some of the accounts. They are cases in which the settlers have been wrongly advised. Possibly a settler has been told to grow wheat, whilst the land was not a wheat proposition at all, but a stock proposition. In many cases settlers have been involved in heavy losses due to the action of those administering the Industries Assistance Act. I know of men who have had all their seed and machinery sent along, but have not received fertiliser until too late in the year. Those men have been charged with the full cost, and also with interest on the money, although they have lost the whole season. Many grave errors of that nature have occurred, and therefore the Act should be amended so as to permit the Government to write down the liabilities on such properties. If some of the men in question were put off their properties, new men would not take up those properties loaded with the present liabilities. Many of the present holders have a real love for the land they have been working on, and the fact that they are in difficulties is due to no fault of their own. Some of the cases amount to real

tragedies. It would be an act of grace to write down the amount of the debt in such cases, and leave the man to work it off, rather than turn him out and put in a new man who would not have the same love for that particular patch of land, and almost certainly would not know as much as the original holder about the possibilities of growing certain crops. In most cases the present holder has now the knowledge which is necessary in order to make a success of the land. I presume that Parliament would have to vote a sum of £40,000 or £50,000 to enable the Government to write down liabilities as I have suggested.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: That was done by the Lefroy Government.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I realise that liabilities would have to be written down on a great many properties. Yet to the State as a whole this writing down would not represent a loss, because the great majority of assisted settlers have made or are making a great success of their holdings. In fact, the losses on the few are almost infinitesimal as compared with the benefit resulting from the success of the great majority. Probably it will be necessary also to do a good deal of writing down in connection with the group settlements. I feel, however, that in writing off such liabilities the State will be doing the right thing. It is far better that the settlers should receive reasonable help from the community as a whole while they are developing these areas. We do not desire a repetition of the experience of years gone by, when many settlers had to live a life of misery through more than one generation, eking out a bare existence. Those early settlers had no cash whatever. There was no Government help for them. As the result of great hardships and struggles, those men gradually developed their land. They lived on something like half-a-crown a day. In many cases, I am sorry to say, their struggles only resulted in someone else getting the benefit of their toil. Now it is a case of humanity versus cash. The sustenance allowance granted to new settlers enables them to live reasonable lives, while they are developing their holdings, not only for their own benefit, but also for the benefit of the Australian race. Not for a moment do I wish it to be inferred that I am against the Government making sustenance payments to the men who are developing our lands. In the great majority of cases the State will reap the full benefit of all that is being done in the way of settlement. The men who are not worth backing can be satisfactorily dealt with by local committees, but only by local committees. There are men who become involved to a certain extent, and then the department feel that they must carry those men on. The local committees will be much better qualified than the inspectors to judge of the capabilities of the individual settler. I hope we shall not see the Industries Assistance Act indefinitely continued. The system is too wide, and thus involves far greater liability of loss. The Industries Assistance Board should not be continued as an independent

organisation, but should be incorporated with the Agricultural Bank. I trust that next session, at latest, the Government will take note of the recommendation of the select committee of the Legislative Assembly to that effect. With this reservation I support the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. J. MILLS (Central) [5.28]: As one who knows something about the settlement of people on the land, and about the early trials involved, I desire to repeat what I said last year on a Bill similar to this one, that in my opinion an Industries Assistance Act is the natural corollary of an Agricultural Bank which aims at settling men on the land, irrespective of what means the men have. The setting aside of the Industries Assistance Act will mean spragging the wheels of land settlement in this State. I know it is the proud boast of our older farmers that they had no assistance whatever in their early days. The statement is quite correct, and redounds to their everlasting credit. Forty years ago, however, conditions were utterly different from what they are now. At that time, if a settler was short of money to meet an urgent bill, he could go out and get a load or two of sandalwood to tide him over the difficulty. Or he could do carting for wealthy neighbours, such as squatters, in those days when railways were less extended than they are now. But all that kind of thing is past. Men who now go on the land have to depend entirely on what they grow. At starting, many of them do not know too much about the business. It is impossible for a man to maintain his family by doing clearing and so forth until such time as he gets a crop. Therefore, if the Industries Assistance Act is done away with, it will be doing away with agricultural settlement.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Does the hon. member wish to make the Industries Assistance Board a permanent institution?

Hon. J. MILLS: Yes, certainly.

Hon. E. H. Harris: What about amending the Bill in that direction?

Hon. J. MILLS: I am perfectly willing. The time is much overdue for amending the Industries Assistance Act as I have suggested. Local committees were formed in the various districts about a year ago to examine all the accounts and make recommendations. I believe the whole of their reports are now in. At all events, they should be if there has not been unreasonable delay. So far as I see, up to the present the Government have acted upon only such recommendations of the local committees as are adverse to the settlers. In fact, recommendations of that kind have been carried into effect immediately. But other recommendations, in favour of the settler, have not been given effect in any way at all. Mr. Hamersley says he would recommend the writing down of some of the accounts. So would I. But where is the use of writing down Industries Assistance Board accounts without bringing in the creditors and arranging a compromise? Otherwise we should be weakening one side and strengthening the

other. The creditors should have a fair crack of the whip, but to say that the farmers are taking shelter behind the Industries Assistance Board is nonsense, because there is no protection to-day. If a man is in credit with the Industries Assistance Board I am not to be told that his farm is worth only the value of the improvements and the advances made. Some of the farmers are getting along quite well.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That is why they remain with the Industries Assistance Board.

Hon. J. MILLS: Nothing of the kind. In many instances of farmers hopelessly behind, it is not the fault of those farmers. They have struggled hard enough, goodness only knows. They have worked from daylight to dark. Holidays are unknown to them. It is wrong to brand them all as wasters and drunkards, as not being triers. There are exceptions, of course, but generally speaking, all the Industries Assistance Board farmers are good men and have done their utmost. The loads of some of them are increasing, and those men are now heartbroken. I suggest there should be some amendment of the Act, under which the Industries Assistance Board, in conjunction with the managing trustee of the Agricultural Bank, would recommend to the Premier the writing down of the accounts and the putting of the clients on a fresh footing. By a process of squeezing, they are forced off the land, the property is put up to tender, the highest tenderer gets it, perhaps for half the debt owed by the pioneer farmer. That is not right, because perhaps the newcomer is not as good a man as the one forced off.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is the ordinary creditor getting interest?

Hon. J. MILLS: Yes, 10 per cent.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: When did that start?

Hon. J. MILLS: It has always been charged up.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That is something new, surely!

Hon. J. MILLS: Mr. Hamersley complained that the report of the select committee advised that no new accounts be opened. I take it that the new accounts are those of soldiers. Would any member say that the soldiers who have done so much for us are to be starved or turned off, because they have not the necessaries of life? A lot of those men went on their properties after the winter, and so have had to maintain themselves for a whole year before getting any harvest. They have not so much as a chicken on the farm. Would anybody suggest that those men should not be assisted? I am sure the new accounts are those of soldiers. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.35]: I am sorry I cannot agree with Mr. Mills. I am entirely opposed to the Bill. It presents one of the few opportunities for this House taking a stand and saying, "This departmental recklessness shall cease. The Government can carry on freezing works, make half

a million of loss and add it to the capital; the Government can run State trading concerns so long as they remain in office, but they cannot continue this particular recklessness, because this House will not agree to it." Year after year we have been promised the same thing; have been told it will be the last time we shall see this innocent little measure, that it is hoped by next year an amalgamation of the Industries Assistance Board with some other department will be brought about. In effect that is what Mr. Colebatch told us 12 months ago. He said the Government had only just received the report of the select committee and were still considering it. He added, "Pass the Bill, and by the time we have to deal with it again we shall have considered the select committee's report." Yet, 12 months later, here we are still in the same position. The present Minister for Education, when moving the second reading, remarked that an amalgamation of the Industries Assistance Board with the Agricultural Bank had been suggested, but that the Agricultural Bank was one arm of the institution and the Industries Assistance Board another arm.

The Minister for Education: So it is.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It is the latest version of the Biblical dictum that we should not let the right hand know what the left hand is doing. It confirms what I have seen on the North-West coast, namely, four different officers of the Public Service going North on the same steamer on a visit of inspection to one of the ports, although one man could well have done the job. I am certain it is not an uncommon occurrence for an Industries Assistance Board official and an Agricultural Bank official to be on the one train, bound on the same errand. That should not be allowed to continue. The select committee of last year recommended that the Industries Assistance Board should be amalgamated with the Agricultural Bank. That committee consisted of Mr. Angwin—who, I think, had something to do with initiating the board—Mr. Angelo, Mr. Lutey, Mr. Gibson and Mr. Latham, now Deputy Leader of the Country Party. They recommended the amalgamation. The Minister for Education, apparently, is in doubt as to whether the House will stand the Industries Assistance Board any longer, for he says that if the Bill be rejected, the Government can find a way out. If the Government are going to defy Parliament, as one would infer—

The Minister for Education: That is not what I said.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Then the sooner we recognise that we are responsible for the existing chaos, the sooner shall we be prepared to do our duty. The Minister, when moving the second reading, said the loss on the operations of the Industries Assistance Board amounted to about a quarter of a million, with another £200,000 in doubtful accounts. Those are very serious figures. Now Mr. Hamersley suggests a further writing down.

I agree entirely with Mr. Hamersley that if the clients of the board be overloaded with interest and other charges, their position is hopeless. It is manifestly unfair to push them out because of their liability, and bring in somebody else at a valuation, giving the newcomer the advantage of the pioneer's industry. The reason why the writing down is not carried out, is that the loss must then be added to the deficit. The reason why the Industries Assistance Board is carried on is because it covers up hundreds of thousands of pounds in accounts that, if the board were taken over by the Agricultural Bank, the Agricultural Bank would accept only at a valuation, not at the fictitious figures of the Industries Assistance Board. Then the loss would have to be faced and added to the deficit.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Could it not be added to the capital?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes. The Government could do that, but if the Industries Assistance Board be brought under the Agricultural Bank, the trustees of the Bank will not be found adding losses to capital. If the managing trustee had a security showing a loss, he would write down the capital.

Hon. J. Nicholson: He does not want watered stock.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The amount owing to the board at the 30th June was £1,865,000. The Minister for Education, fast becoming accustomed to the handling of big things, said the small amount of £364,000 was the actual amount unsecured. Fancy the small amount of £364,000!

Hon. A. Lovekin: A year's deficit.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Some £310,000 is still owing to the traders. Mr. Mills says the traders have been debited—presumably in their own books; certainly not in the books of the department—with 10 per cent. interest. The traders themselves may have done that to show their bank managers that they had a tremendous amount of money on their books. But, so far as I can understand, the creditors have been standing out of their money since 1915 and would be quite satisfied to get the principal, or even a portion of it.

Hon. F. E. S. Willmott: Long ago they offered to take 8s. in the £.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yet Mr. Mills, supporting the Bill, tells us the creditors are not only going to get their capital, but with 10 per cent. interest added.

Hon. J. Mills: No, I said they had added 10 per cent.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: But there is this £310,000.

Hon. J. Mills: A great deal of it is interest.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: No.

Hon. J. Mills: Yes, a great deal of it is interest.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Here is another astounding statement by the Minister: "If these two departments were amalgamated, the same number of officers would be required,

and consequently there would be no gain either in efficiency or economy." The select committee said the matter should be dealt with in an entirely different way. Let us come to the illuminating report presented by the Industries Assistance Board and which has been laid on the Table of the House. The report shows that the amount owing to the Treasurer over and above what was owing 12 months ago is half a million sterling. We certainly have not taken on—at least I hope not—any new clients other than returned soldiers. The report sets out the loss on trading, and makes a reference to dealing in jute goods, in which also there appears to have been a loss of £25,000. It also shows that administration expenses have gone up £4,000 as compared with the previous year. The select committee reported that the two branches should be amalgamated and economy effected. In face of that the Government started a decentralisation scheme which has increased the expenditure by £4,000. The report also points out that the earnings of the board for last year fell short of the expenditure by £26,600 and that the bad debts for the half-year which were written off amounted to £33,000. In reference to interest on capital, this item shows an increase of £12,797 over the previous year's figures owing to further drawing from Loan Funds. The average rate of interest charged by the Treasury is 5.47. Under the heading of "Accrued Interest on Advances," we get this statement in the report—

The increase in earnings under this head over the previous year is £16,580, due to the backward movements in clients' accounts. The true earnings will be more capable of assessment when the valuations now in hand are completed. The board will then be in a position to know approximately the value of its bad and insolvent accounts.

This report has been put up to Parliament by two men whom we all respect and admire. Mr. A. R. Richardson is one and Mr. McLarty the other. Things appear to be so bad that these gentlemen presumably consider it in the interests of the country that they should try to force the hands of Parliament. It was with surprise and regret that I heard incidentally this afternoon, through a question asked by Mr. Baxter, that Mr. Richardson had retired from the chairmanship of the board. Under the heading of "Distribution Discount" we get this statement in the report—

This is the statutory deduction of 1½ per cent. from payments to proved creditors out of surplus proceeds of settlers' crops. The total amount paid to creditors for the year was £9,396, as against £21,718 for the previous term. The balance of creditors' claims still ranking against surplus proceeds is £309,167.

I do not wish the House to take anything that I may say as gospel on this subject. Therefore I propose to quote further extracts from

the report so that the position may go right home—

**Stopped Accounts:** The board found it necessary during the year to discontinue assistance to 53 borrowers. In every case where an account was found to be drifting, credit has been rigidly curtailed and the sustenance rate in a large number of instances reduced.

Then comes an important paragraph—

While the system of payment has, on the whole, worked advantageously, it is becoming more evident that the principle of a monthly wage has in too many cases operated to the detriment of settlement by a weakening of the settler's best asset, his own self-reliance.

That document is signed by Mr. Richardson.

**The Minister for Education:** How many have been saved by the Industries Assistance Board?

**Hon. J. J. HOLMES:** Many people have been saved and the profit that they have derived has been their profit. But there are huge losses occurring, and they will continue to occur until Parliament takes a stand against the loss that the general taxpayer will have to make good. Will the Minister understand that?

**The Minister for Education:** I do understand it.

**Hon. J. J. HOLMES:** So long as the system continues, so long will there be men who will go on living in idleness.

**The Minister for Education:** Look at the wealth that has been produced with the assistance of the board.

**Hon. J. J. HOLMES:** The Minister did not put that up on the second reading.

**The Minister for Education:** I did, distinctly.

**Hon. J. J. HOLMES:** I am not permitted to read "Hansard" to the House.

**The Minister for Education:** You have read the part that suits you.

**Hon. J. J. HOLMES:** If Parliament does not take a stand and declare that it will not have its opinions set aside, and that it will not allow the Treasurer to write "Destination unknown" over his door, and continue to run the country into no end of difficulties, we shall regret it later on. If hon. members permit the Industries Assistance Board to continue in the face of the report signed by Mr. Richardson and Mr. McLarty, all I can say is that they will not be doing their duty to the country. My vote will be recorded against the second reading of the Bill, even though I may be the only one to so vote.

**Hon. E. H. GRAY (West) [5.55]:** I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. There is no doubt that the board has done a vast amount of good, but the pity is that it did not come into operation about four years earlier.

**Hon. C. F. Baxter:** There was no necessity for that.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If the hon. member looks up the records he will find that there was a necessity for it, because there were many people who would have benefited if it had been in existence.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They were assisted by the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There is one defect and it should be remedied. I refer to the question of safeguarding those people who secure employment with the farmers who are under the Industries Assistance Board. This is more than ever necessary now that there are so many newcomers in the State, most of whom are seeking employment with farmers. We know that a great majority of the farming community are honest men, but unfortunately there are amongst them unscrupulous people, just as we find them amongst other sections of the community. It has come to my knowledge that two young men, both Australians, suffered a loss between them to the extent of £28, by reason of their having worked for a farmer who is under the board. The inspector knew that these young men were working for that farmer, but he took no steps to warn them. When they made a claim for wages due they were unable to get anything, and it was not until then that they found that they could not recover. All that they could do was to get judgment. Beyond that it was not possible to go.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That is what happens with all their creditors.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If this kind of thing is going to happen in the case of wide-awake young Australians, we can imagine how newcomers are going to suffer at the hands of unscrupulous men.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

## BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING.

### *In Committee.*

Hon. J. W. Kirwan in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Short title and commencement of Act.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I move an amendment—

*That the words "twenty-four" be struck out, with a view to the insertion of other words.*

The second reading of this Bill appears to have been carried somewhat in error. I had intended to speak upon it, but having, with Dr. Saw, to attend to a matter of life and death, I was absent from the Chamber when the question was put. I cannot now discuss the principles of the Bill. Those who vote for this amendment will be voting against the Bill.

The Minister for Education: There is no question about that.

Hon. J. Cornell: What words are you thinking of adding, A.D. 2004?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I suggest the year 1934. We have an immense deficit. This Bill proposes to establish a new department, which in the course of time will grow into a concern of some magnitude. By 1934 we may be in a better position to afford the luxury of a new department. My object is to protect the workers, who are crying out against the excessive rentals they have to pay. This Bill would increase rents, because it would impose an extra charge upon the construction of houses. Connected with every little cottage that was going up there would have to be special scaffolding. Before a man could put up a building he would be obliged to give notice to the inspector, get his certificate, and pay the prescribed fees. He would not be able to use for scaffolding purposes the timber destined for the building, but would have to use the prescribed scaffolding which, I am informed, would involve an extra expense of £15 upon the smallest cottage. Of this sum £4 would be expended in the cartage of the poles. When rents are so high I desire to postpone the operation of this Bill so that an opportunity may be given to the worker to build a house at a reasonable figure. The expense of a new department will involve an extra tax upon the people, which they cannot afford. It has been said that the Bill is necessary for the protection of life and limb. If that were so, I should be in favour of it. The Minister put forward certain figures, and referred to the position in Queensland.

The Minister for Education: We have been exceedingly fortunate in this State in the past.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I want to be able to check those figures.

The Minister for Education: It will not take you ten years to do that.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Probably it will. If the experience of Queensland is to be accepted as the experience of Western Australia it will take me more than ten years to find cases to support this Bill. I have been informed by insurance managers and builders that during the last 25 years there have been no cases of compensation for injuries due to faulty scaffolding in this State. The Minister also referred to the number of falls that had occurred in Queensland. One may ask if these were due to faulty scaffolding, to the men using it being the worse for drink, or to carelessness on their part. One or two claims have been paid to men who have through giddiness fallen from scaffolding, and another claim was paid to a bricklayer upon whom a labourer, who had been drinking, had dropped some bricks. The Bill, however, would not prevent that sort of thing. Before we can pass this measure it must be proved that accidents have happened in this State through faulty scaffolding. When the time comes for us to build 50 storey structures such a Bill may be necessary. Under present conditions, we do not require it. If legislation is necessary, we need only make a slight amendment



to the Municipal Corporations Act. That Act contains 42 sections dealing with building, namely Sections 294 to 336. Some of these come very close to the Scaffolding Bill. Section 308 says:—

Whenever any builder or other person shall have erected the first storey of any building abutting on any footpath of any street, or whenever any plastering, painting, or decorating operations are in progress above the first storey of any building, such builder or other person, or the plasterer, painter or decorator, shall cause the adjoining footway to be covered, and kept covered to the satisfaction of the surveyor.

It is necessary only to add words making this section apply to scaffolding. Section 331 says—

Any person who uses or permits to be used any roof of a building, or any platform, balcony or structure not so safely constructed or secured, or who neglects to comply with the provisions of this section in respect thereof shall be liable to a penalty.

Section 333 says—

Any builder, owner, or other person feeling aggrieved by any refusal to sanction, or any notice or order of the council under this part of this Act, may appeal therefrom to the Supreme Court or the Local Court.

This Bill also contains provisions regarding the right of appeal. The whole object of the Government could be achieved by amending the Municipal Corporations Act, without establishing a new department and placing this new irritation upon the people at a time when they are already overloaded.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I regret exceedingly that hon. members had not an opportunity to discuss the Bill at the second reading stage. They should clearly understand that I was not responsible for that. They themselves were responsible. Hon. members are required to watch the proceedings and if they neglect to avail themselves of the opportunities presented, it is not my fault. Mr. Lovekin has taken the only way out of the difficulty and, instead of moving the Chairman out of the Chair, has moved an amendment to make the Bill operate as from 1934. That amendment has given the hon. member the opportunity to make a second reading speech and other hon. members will have the same opportunity.

Hon. A. Lovekin: I spoke to the amendment!

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I admit that, but the discussion under such an amendment can be so wide that the Chairman cannot rule an hon. member out of order. Mr. Lovekin said that the Bill would set up a new department. I indicated, in moving the second reading, that no new department

would be created, and that the fees chargeable would cover all incidental expenses. I also mentioned that this might possibly entail a little extra cost in connection with building operations but that the additional impost would be infinitesimal, so far as large buildings were concerned.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Then what does Clause 4 mean?

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** The fees have to cover the cost of inspectors and everything else necessary to see that the provisions of the Bill are adequately carried out. This need not worry hon. members, for we have no idea of increasing the deficit by putting on a lot of inspectors. The extra cost will not be felt by those erecting large buildings.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Then it is the small man you will hit!

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** It will not hit the small man either. The inspection fees, which will be fixed by regulation, will be very light and will not interfere with the cost of building. The amendment is such that the vote taken upon it will be a test regarding the Bill itself. Rents will not be increased, as suggested, because of the passing of such a Bill. As to the suggestion that this means extra taxation, every hon. member will agree that the life and safety of men engaged in building operations are of greater concern than any taxation to be imposed.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Have you any figures relating to accidents?

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I have some. Mr. Lovekin said that if lives were to be saved by the passing of the Bill, he would be the first man to vote for it and I am sure that is so. How is he to decide whether or not the lives of workmen will be saved? Accidents may happen to-morrow where high buildings are being erected, because no inspection of scaffolding is carried out. Because we have had immunity from accidents in the past, is no guarantee that we will have immunity in the future.

Hon. A. Lovekin: There has been no accident for the last 25 years.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I do not care if that be so; such an accident may happen to-morrow. They have happened in other parts of the world.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: They may happen if the Bill be passed too.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I do not deny it, but if we pass the Bill, we can at least say that we have provided for inspectors to guard against the likelihood of such accidents occurring.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Why not legislate for a catastrophe such as that which occurred in Japan?

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** That has nothing to do with it.

Hon. J. Cornell: The hon. member will want us to legislate for where he is going to next!

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** The terrible Japanese catastrophe was not due to negligence or carelessness on the part of builders, and I did not expect such a remark from Mr. Lovekin.

Hon. A. Lovekin: One is as remote as the other.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** The Bill may save life. Reference was made to accidents. I have already quoted Queensland statistics to show that the falls there numbered 29. I did not say they were falls from scaffolds, for I did not know. In Wisconsin an analysis of 21,374 cases of accidents revealed the fact that falls from scaffolds and buildings ranked fifth in the classification of 60 causes of the accidents.

Hon. J. A. Greig: Those did not refer to falls "off" scaffolds.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I do not see that it matters very much whether they were falls "from" or falls "off" scaffolds. The hon. member suggested that the Municipal Corporations Act might be amended. While that may be so, there is no justification for him saying that such an amendment would be sufficiently stringent to protect life and limb. He also said that cottages would be brought within the scope of the measure. The fact is that cottages will not be brought under the amendment at all and, further, the Bill will operate only in any part of the State where it is proclaimed. The Government will not unduly harass building operations in any part of the State. It will not apply to the country districts unless we find there are many large buildings being erected, making such application necessary.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Does that mean that the Bill is not necessary?

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** So far as the workmen on the General Post Office and other large buildings are concerned, they should have been protected by scaffolding legislation. I do not think any hon. member, if he consults his conscience, can vote against the Bill. It will be one of the great regrets of my life if any hon. member votes for the amendment.

Hon. J. Cornell: That sort of stuff will run off them very easily!

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** It is a fair argument that will appeal to most members.

Hon. J. Cornell: Well, wait and see.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** I have a pamphlet illustrating the protection afforded workers in England by the provision of scaffolding. It would do hon. members good if they looked through the pamphlet and saw what was regarded as necessary to protect life and limb on buildings erected in England.

Hon. J. Cornell: The pyramids, I am told, were erected without scaffolding.

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** The hon. member should know that the pyramids were built on an incline plane, which makes all the difference. The greater the height of scaffolding, the greater the protection

needed. The amendment is practically a sudden death motion—

Hon. E. H. Harris: What? Is ten years sudden death!

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:** And I feel sure very few members will support it.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I support the amendment.

The Minister for Education: I am surprised.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Minister will be even more surprised before he has led the House much longer, surprised that he ever had the temerity to accept the leadership. I am bound to support the amendment as a test vote. I admit that the chief function of government is to protect the lives and property of the people, but for the Minister to say he is surprised that there should be opposition to the Bill savours of straining at the gnat and swallowing the camel. Day after day we hear from goldfields members of lives being jeopardised and men brought to the brink of the grave, but the Minister overlooks that. He is more concerned about the passing of scaffolding legislation, the absence of which has not resulted in the loss of a single life. It is the duty of the Government not to waste time over prospective legislation, but to deal with the dangers that exist, and no greater danger exists than that arising from miners' phthisis. The suggestion that the Municipal Corporations Act might be amended to make the municipalities responsible for scaffolding inspection has much to recommend it. If the Government appoint an army of inspectors and let them loose all over the State—

The Minister for Education: The measure will not apply all over the State.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It will. I for one am not prepared to permit the Government to cut the State into sections, dealing with one section in one way and another section in another way. Presumably the strongest party in another place would get their portion of the State exempted, while people in the cities and elsewhere were penalised. The Minister for Works, who introduced the Bill in another place, has for a long time been trying to usurp the functions of the City of Perth. Members know what has been going on. He tried to foist the Causeway on to the city council and is said to have robbed them of a lot of traffic fees. His introducing of this Bill may be another attempt to get square with them. I shall not be a party to penalising one section of the community and exempting another, unless some very good reason be shown. I can imagine a man a thousand miles north, having had the roof blown off his shearing shed in the middle of the shearing season, waiting for an inspector to come along to pronounce judgment upon the knots tied in the scaffolding. Is it by such means the Government propose to develop industry and cheapen production? It is useless for the Minister to quote what is being done in Wisconsin. It reminds me of one of the letters of a self-made merchant to his son. The son was put on the road travel-

ling for the firm, and he wrote informing his father what somebody else was doing. The father replied, "I do not want to know what he is doing; I want to know what you are doing." The Minister is content to tiddly-wink about with a Scaffolding Bill while neglecting to protect thousands of lives in another direction. The Minister for Agriculture said the season had been so good that a grass fire lighted as Esperance would run through to Wyndham. If we light this fire and let an army of inspectors loose on the community, it will be almost as disastrous as the grass fire indicated by the Minister for Agriculture. The inspectors would be causing trouble here, there, and everywhere. The Minister seemed to think that the one thing wrong with present day scaffolding was that no one knew how to tie knots. If the inspectors required under this measure follow the example of the administration, they will tie the Government into a knot somewhat similar to the knot in which the Government have tied the waterworks, the finances, and the Industries Assistance Board.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Members by passing the second reading have affirmed the principle of the Bill.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You know how it was passed.

Hon. J. CORNELL: No, I was absent; I do not know how it started but I have a fairly good idea how it is going to end. Is the Bill necessary? Ten years ago certain workmen asked for the introduction of scaffolding legislation. It has been a long while coming. If the Bill be passed, it will not be obligatory on the Government to proclaim it. I agree with Mr. Holmes that scaffolding legislation should not be proclaimed until the Miners Phthisis Act is proclaimed. If there is one reason for proclaiming a Scaffolding Act, there are a thousand reasons for proclaiming the Miners Phthisis Act. If the people on the earth could see what is happening under the earth—in the mines—greater attention would be given to miners' diseases. I support the Bill, because I consider the time has arrived when we should have legislation for the inspection of scaffolding. There is no valid reason for believing that because accidents have not happened, accidents will not happen. Accidents are far more liable to occur to men working on high buildings than to men walking along the street. The absence of accidents so far constitutes a joint tribute to the men who have directed building operations here and to the men who have been employed on the works. If this Bill passes, we shall probably have more building inspectors in Perth than there are mines inspectors on the East Coolgardie Goldfields, who have to do as much as 25 miles of underground work weekly. That, however, does not affect the principle of the Bill. We should not abandon a good principle for fear of faulty administration. Rather should we deal with administrators who are in fault. Mr. Lovekin argued that the passing of the measure would necessarily mean higher cost of building. He said also

that the measure would prevent the use of scaffolding timber in the building itself.

The Minister for Education: It would not prevent that in the case of one-storey buildings.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Bill does not say that. Presumably it would be a matter of regulation. What can be done by way of regulation under the Mines Regulation Act for the safety of life and limb is extremely limited, seeing that most of the work of regulating it is done by Act of Parliament. Since 1906 our mines have gone about 2,000 feet deeper, but their regulation remains what it was then. I can understand contractors and others affected by this Bill bringing pressure to bear for the rejection of the measure, seeing that they do not know where they will stand under it. Why not set up general rules for the building trade in the same way as has been done for mining? If the rules for the building trade were statutory, and therefore not subject to alteration except by Parliament, probably there would not be the same opposition to the Bill. Mr. Lovekin and Mr. Holmes have contended that the cost of administering this measure will add £15 to the cost of a cottage. The Minister, while admitting that the fees would be passed on by the owner to the tenant, said they would not be large. If they are not large, the cost of administering the measure can come from only one source: the Consolidated Revenue. The cost of inspection under the Mines Regulation and Coal Mines Regulation Acts is met out of Consolidated Revenue, just in the same way as the cost of the police force. The present Bill should clearly state the charges for inspection, so that the people who are to stand the powder and shot may know exactly where they will be, whether they will have to pay fees large enough to cover the entire cost of administering the measure. There is no charge for inspection under the Acts relating to gold mining and coal mining.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The charges should be provided for in the Bill.

Hon. J. CORNELL: There is no essential difference between a worker going 100 feet high on a scaffold and a miner going 100 feet down below. I notice some queer anomalies in this Bill as compared with the Mines Regulation Act. The Bill defines a serious injury as one which keeps a worker away from his work for seven days or more. Under the Mines Regulation Act a serious injury was defined in 1906 as one which kept the worker away from his work for 14 days or more. For the life of me I fail to see the reason for this distinction. There is another difference. Under the Mines Regulation Act a serious injury and a fatal injury are placed in separate categories. The fatal injury involves a coroner's inquest. Under this Bill the Minister may appoint a board to inquire into the circumstances of either a serious accident or a fatal accident. Why such a departure? Why should not the coroner alone inquire into fatal accidents under this measure also? Let me remark that as regards the

miner working 3,000 feet deep in the bowels of the earth, we never do anything to relieve him of the disabilities under which he has suffered for years in this respect. Mr. Lovekin said that if the Bill were thrown out, a slight amendment of the Municipal Corporations Act would admit of that measure doing all that is required. In my view that is not so. None of the sections quoted by Mr. Lovekin seem to me to apply. The only way in which the Municipal Corporations Act can be made applicable is by amending the Act so as to provide for the framing of by-laws and regulations dealing with scaffolding. I will oppose the amendment, believing as I do that men working on scaffolding should be properly protected against accident to life and limb.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I will support the amendment for the reason that the Bill may prove to be the cause of serious accidents in the building trade. The Minister has informed us the inspectors' fees will not be very great. If he had told us the fees would be something like £6 per week, we should have seen from that the inspection was to be efficient. Clearly the inspector, to be of any use at all, should be in attendance on the building day after day. To-day the men working on the scaffolding are the men responsible for its erection, and so naturally they see to it that the scaffolding is safe. If the responsibility is to be put on an inspector, the workmen will become lax and leave all precautions to the inspector. For the Bill to be carried out properly, half a dozen inspectors would be required on each fairly large building. There is no necessity for the Bill. Legislation to prevent accidents on the river would be more fully warranted than is the Bill. Moreover, the Bill will pile up building costs.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I am in sympathy with the protection of life and limb, but since discussing this question with builders and others I am coming to think the Bill is not required. The city surveyor and his officers are constantly on buildings to see that they are well and faithfully constructed. If an amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act gave the city surveyor and his staff power to supervise scaffolding, it would do away with the necessity contemplated in the Bill for establishing still another department. When the Dairy Bill was before us the Leader of the House told us it would not involve any expense. Recently, however, we have seen the regulations, from which we gather that the Minister's prediction will not be borne out. It is clear that we are to have quite a little army of inspectors to supervise the dairying industry, and it is clear that the Bill now before us contemplates the appointment of an army of scaffolding inspectors. The building trade is notorious for its alternations of slack and busy times. All these inspectors, of course, will have to be carried over the lean period at the cost of the State. Indeed, since the inspection fees are to be but nominal, it is clear that the cost of the inspectors will have to be borne by

Consolidated Revenue all the year round. In view of this, I am surprised at the Government bringing down the Bill. The building trades resent the Bill, denying the necessity for it. Every builder has a capable foreman and a capable scaffolding man. On these men the builder relies to preserve him from the risk of accidents to any of the workmen.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Bill shifts the responsibility on to the inspector.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: To-day there are very few scaffolding accidents, but when we get all these inspectors I make no doubt the accidents will greatly increase in number. I am glad to know that cottage building will be exempt.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Not so, according to the Bill. Scaffoldings must be provided 8ft. from the horizontal base.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The Minister quoted what had happened in Queensland. I do not think we should go outside the State for evidence to prove that there is need for legislation of this kind. I agree that protection should be given, but nowadays building operations are entirely changed; all work is carried out from the interior. Scaffolding in the front of a building is required only when the exterior is being dressed. The remedy that is sought to introduce by means of the Bill can be effected by an amendment of the Municipalities Act.

Hon. E. ROSE: We do not require this legislation in the agricultural areas, and therefore I intend to vote for the amendment. The Bill will increase primary producers' costs. If a farmer wishes to build a shed or a silo he must construct scaffolding. Even if he erects a cottage he must construct scaffolding in accordance with this suggested legislation, and inspectors will have to travel from the city to see that the work is properly done. We have had experience of the cost of sending inspectors under the Machinery Act to inspect the plants owned by farmers. Surely it ought to be possible to bring about the desired result by a simple amendment of the Municipalities Act. The Bill will mean the creation of another department. We can do without that at the present time. I am assured that every care is taken to preserve life.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am more than surprised at the opposition being shown to the Bill. I assure members that this legislation will not increase the cost of building in the country. The Government will see to that.

Hon. E. Rose: But the present Government will not always be in power.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That may be so, but I repeat, that it is not intended to apply the legislation to country districts. The builders and contractors naturally do not want the Bill and that is why we find their views being reflected in this Chamber. Personally speaking, if I were sitting on the other side of the House, I would give the Bill my hearty support, because I truly believe in the meas-

ure. It looks as if hon. members were going to oppose everything in the Bill without reason. They declare that the Bill will be likely to cause accidents. The very object is to protect human life. If there are half a dozen or more buildings going up, the scaffolding around those buildings must remain up for weeks and it will easily be possible for one inspector to examine the lot. I have never heard such arrant nonsense as has been talked by members to-night. It might be possible to amend the Municipalities Act as has been suggested, but such an amendment would not be satisfactory. The Government have adopted the only way by which they can protect life in connection with building operations. I am astonished at Mr. Rose, of all people, declaring that he intends to vote against the Bill. If the Bill is rejected, the action will do more to injure the prestige of this Chamber than anything that has been done since I have been a member. Mr. Hamersley appears to be against the Government on everything.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Can you quote one accident that has occurred through defective scaffolding?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The hon. member wants to wait until the horse is stolen before he locks the door. He knows that the Bill will not be proclaimed in the country unless it is absolutely necessary to do so. If it is going to cost money to protect the lives of our citizens it is our duty to incur the expenditure.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: But their lives are not in danger.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The fees will be charged against the people who are building, and there will be no charge against the Consolidated Revenue.

Hon. J. Cornell: You are making things worse.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The cost will not be great.

Hon. V. Hamersley: It is another taxation measure.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The cost will be spread over the large amount of building that will be going on.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Do you assure us that the Bill will be applied only to the metropolis and not the country?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I said in all probability it would apply to places where high buildings were in course of erection, namely, in the metropolis.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It will apply from Wyndham to Eucla.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Not unless it is so proclaimed.

Hon. V. Hamersley: When the Government are short of revenue they will apply it everywhere.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The Government can be trusted to do what

is fair and right. Mr. Lovekin's attitude on this Bill passes my understanding.

Hon. A. Lovekin: It is probable there will be a new Government before the Bill becomes an Act.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: There is not much fear of that. Members should not try to destroy a Bill that has such a laudable object as the protection of life. The Municipal Corporations Act cannot be amended this year.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Why not?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It is not likely to be amended this year. I shall be very disappointed if there are in this Chamber members so reactionary as to vote against this Bill simply because it will cost a little money. The Legislative Council is held high in the esteem of the people, and we do not want to do anything that will lower its standing. The Government have not lost sight of the miners' phthisis question. Many things have yet to be done with the Federal authorities before the Act can be proclaimed, but the Government are doing these things and the Act will be proclaimed with as little delay as possible.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If this amendment is carried it will provide the Labour Party with plenty of ammunition to fire at the Government during the forthcoming election. The unions connected with the building industry are in favour of the Bill. The workers should receive more consideration than the contractors.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Why did not your party bring forward this Bill when it was in office?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I was not a member of the Government. Our buildings are becoming higher, and we should do something to safeguard the lives of those engaged upon them. The expense involved by this Bill should not be great. For the good contractor there will be no further expense.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Such a man does not want to be interfered with in his work.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If the amendment is carried it will injure the prestige of the House. Evidently the contractors are afraid that these restrictions will injure them. They forget the maxim, "safety first." I trust, for the good name of the Council, the amendment will not be carried.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Unless the Bill is amended it will undoubtedly harass those engaged in building operations. I cannot support the amendment, but will be prepared to see the date altered to 1925. That should give the Government time to bring in a measure that would adequately protect the lives and limbs of those engaged in the trade. Some figures given recently in the Arbitration Court concerning deaths and accidents to workers in Australia are interesting. I will quote from the Labour reports of the Commonwealth Statistician's Department under the heading of building and scaffolding. The figures cover

the four years 1919 to 1922. According to these statistics there were 25 fatal accidents, and 68 accidents to men who were incapacitated for fourteen days. This is an average of six fatal accidents and 16 other accidents for each of the four years. The total number of persons killed in all occupations was 513, and injured 9,526, from which it will be seen that the proportion in the case of building and scaffolding is very small. Hon. members will see that the percentage of fatal or other accidents experienced on buildings was fairly light. I do not draw attention to that fact to justify the rejection of the Bill, but mention it because, judging by the frantic appeal made by the Minister in favour of the measure, one would think he would have to go to a scaffold himself if the Bill were not passed. I shall not vote for the amendment moved by Mr. Lovekin. The Government, however, might give some undertaking as to what they are prepared to do, either by way of an amendment or by bringing forward some other Bill that will meet with the desire of hon. members—

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Next year.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move—

*That progress be reported and leave asked to sit again at the next sitting of the House.*

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I move an amendment—

The Minister for Education: There can be no amendment to that motion!

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can vote against the motion.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The Minister moved to report progress and for leave to sit again at the next sitting of the House. Is it competent to move to amend the motion by striking out "the next sitting of the House" and inserting some other words. The motion to report progress is not one of those that must be put from the Chair without debate. Standing Order 123 says—

A question having been proposed may be amended—1, By leaving out certain words only. 2, By inserting or adding certain words. 3, By leaving out certain words in order to insert or add other words.

So far as I know the only motions to be put without amendment or debate are those relating to the previous question and the Chairman leaving the Chair. It is competent to amend any other motion.

The CHAIRMAN: What is your amendment?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I want to strike out "the next sitting of the House" and insert "the 5th March."

Hon. V. Hamersley: No, don't do that.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: No, let it go.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I will withdraw the amendment.

Motion put and passed.

## ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [9.5]: I move—

*That the House at its rising adjourn till the 30th October.*

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Before adjourning, will the Minister tell us whether he will give members an opportunity to place amendments they desire to move to the Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment Bill on the Notice Paper, so that other members may know what we propose to do.

The Minister for Education: The matter is entirely in the hands of the President.

The PRESIDENT: I am in accord with the suggestion by Mr. Lovekin. Any amendments he desires to have placed on the Notice Paper will be so inserted.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 9.7 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Tuesday, 16th October, 1923.*

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

### QUESTION—EMPIRE EXHIBITION, PERSONNEL.

Mr. TEESDALE asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Is it a fact that all the officials for the Australian section of the Empire Exhibition are to be appointed by the Melbourne executive? 2, Have the local executive no authority to appoint their own officials to give information regarding our raw products and industries?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No. 2, The State executive with the approval of the State Government have authority to appoint officers to represent the exhibitors from the State and supply information with regard to our raw products and industries generally.