

vision has not been as convenient to taxpayers as was intended, particularly in our present circumstances, with the result that the Commissioner of Taxation has had many applications from taxpayers to be permitted to pay their dues by instalments spread over the year.

In the circumstances it is necessary to alter the law to meet the wishes of taxpayers. It is proposed that payments may be made month by month or periodically to suit the taxpayers, subject to a request to the Commissioner. This convenience has been asked for by many taxpayers. If Parliament agrees to its being given it is anticipated that it will be availed of by a great number of people, particularly salary and wage earners, because very often they are quite unable to pay in two moieties or in a lump sum as was the case up to the deletion of that offending requirement from the recent Taxing Bill.

The arrangement will no doubt be of great assistance to taxpayers because they will have an opportunity to pay over the whole of the year instead of in two moieties, and that will apply to the assessments about to be issued. When the instalment has been fixed, the taxpayer will be subject to a penalty if it is not paid as arranged. If the tax is over-paid in the course of the monthly instalments, the Commissioner will be required to make a refund of the excess amount paid, and if the tax is underpaid the taxpayer will have to make good the deficiency.

Members are aware that there are exemptions and deductions to be taken into account. So far as they can be calculated before the monthly payments are decided upon, they will be calculated, and eventually if there is a small balance either way at the end of the year, it will be adjusted promptly by the Commissioner, or the taxpayer will be asked for the balance as the case may be. So long as the Treasury gets the money month by month, and has the whole of it by the end of the year, it will be quite satisfactory to the Government. Because of that the Government think the convenience of taxpayers should be studied as proposed in the Bill.

It is rather a trial for salary and wage earners to meet the present requests of the Commissioner. Many of them will appreciate the opportunity to pay by monthly

instalments. Perhaps traders will also seek the indulgence, as they may find that their financial dealings will not be disturbed so greatly if the tax is paid in monthly or quarterly instalments. The amendment will be a convenience to the Treasury as well as to the taxpayer, because the money will be coming in steadily over twelve months, instead of being confined to the last few months of the financial year. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Harris, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.7 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 21st November, 1931.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—EDUCATION, SCHOOL READERS.

Supplies from Victoria.

Mr. J. MacCallum SMITH asked the Minister for Education: 1. Is it correct, as reported in the "West Australian," that an

order for 5,000 Standard School Readers has been placed with the Victorian Government? 2, If so, what is to be the cost? 3, Is this the same book which some time ago was ridiculed as containing one small reference only to Western Australia? 4, Why is it that a suitable book cannot be purchased in the State? 5, Will he place a copy of the book on the Table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Yes. 5,000 copies of infant readers have been ordered. 2, About £100. 3, No. 4, None available. 5, Yes, herewith. I wish to correct an erroneous statement that appeared in the Press recently regarding this matter. Leaving out the preliminaries, the statement included the following:—

We do not care whether it is the Minister for Education or the Director of Education, but it is a most unwarrantable and gratuitous slur on our own compilers, authors and printers. There is a series of excellent State school readers in use, which was written by one of the department's inspectors, and it is inexplicable that these should now be scrapped in favour of a Victorian reader. No doubt there is ample ability in the State to compile a reader equal to anything in any country, and, moreover, we have never heard yet that the Government printer or our private firms cannot produce as good books as the Victorian Government Printer.

That statement is quite inaccurate. What has happened is that we have ordered a mere 5,000 infant readers that in the past have been imported from England. That number does not nearly represent the supply needed, but the books will be used in certain schools to cover the requirements for next year. By the following year we hope to have, prepared and produced in Western Australia, our own infant readers.

As to Local Production.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Education: 1, In respect to the issue of a school book, for which an order has been placed in Victoria, was consideration both from the literary and mechanical standpoint given to the production of the book in Western Australia? 2, If not, will such consideration be given in respect of any future requirements?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Yes. 2, Answered by 1.

QUESTION—STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATES ACT PROCLAMATION.

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General: 1, Will he state the reason for the non-proclamation of the Stipendiary Magistrates Bill passed last session? 2, Is it intended to proclaim the Bill as an Act? 3, If so, can he indicate when it is proposed to proclaim it?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, Departmental convenience. 2 and 3, The Act has been proclaimed.

QUESTION—INFLUENZA, OUTBREAK AT MYALUP.

Mr. McLARTY (without notice) asked the Minister for Health: 1, Is he aware that a severe outbreak of influenza has occurred at Myalup where 1,000 men are camped on the Harvey River diversion work? 2, If so, what steps have been taken to deal with the outbreak?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: 1, Yes, I am aware of the outbreak. 2, We have taken the opportunity to meet Mr. McNeil, the Federal Minister for Health, with a view to securing a number of mar-quees from the military authorities. The Commissioner of Health will leave for the camp to-morrow morning to make arrangements for dealing with the outbreak.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Hospital Fund Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Lands.
- 2, Financial Emergency Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Attorney General.

MOTION—STATE FORESTS REVOCATION.

THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS (Hon. J. Scaddan—Maylands [4.40]: I move—

That the proposal for the partial revocation of State Forests Nos. 5, 14, 15, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 30, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38 and 39, laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly by command of His Excellency the Administrator, be carried out.

The object of the motion is to continue a policy that has been adopted wherever, upon closer inspections by the officials of the Forests Department, it is found that certain land within the State forests can be revoked so that it may be made available for

other purposes, such as settlement. We, therefore, ask the authority of Parliament to agree to the revocation of the forests mentioned. They comprise small areas with the exception of one which consists of about 1,540 acres surrounding, but not including, a State forest. That area is to be handed back to the Lands Department as it is unsuitable for forest purposes. At present all the land is held by the Forests Department, but is of no further use for forest purposes. The object is to release the land covered by the motion so that it may revert to the Lands Department. The plans and other particulars have already been laid on the Table of the House.

(Question put and passed.)

BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—TENANTS, PURCHASERS AND MORTGAGORS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. A. L. Davy—West Perth) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: All that the Bill will do will be to continue the operations of the parent Act for a further year. This legislation is not such as commends itself to anyone. It goes far in the way of discrimination, and only the exigencies of the moment would induce any Government to introduce such a measure or to continue its operations. There is this to be remembered that although at first sight the Act seems to place the whole burden of inability to pay rents on to the shoulders of landlords, yet if the whole of the landlords be regarded in the mass, they are really carrying no more burden than if such legislation had not been passed. That is so because people cannot pay their full rents. In those circumstances, the landlords would not be that much short of their rentals, which would not find their way into the pockets of the owners of properties. What the legislation does is to retain the burden on individual landlords longer than would have been the position had there been no such legislation. I do not like it, but it has to continue for another year. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [4.45]: The object of the Bill is to extend the Act for 12 months. I do not wish to see the Act in its present form extended for another 12 months. Twelve months' experience has shown that it is nothing but a farce, because it is misleading the people into believing that something is being done for them when such is not a fact. It is true that the Act gives a certain amount of breathing time to tenants, but that is all. I have taken considerable interest in people who have approached the court at various times, and while the Attorney General will say that the magistrate has a free hand to continue relief to tenants as long as he likes, that is not so in practice.

The Attorney General: You say it is not the practice that the magistrate has a free hand.

Mr. SLEEMAN: According to the Act it would appear that the magistrate had a free hand, but in practice he consistently refuses to grant more than a second period of relief, save in exceptional cases. The Act provides that a tenant may be granted three months' exemption from the payment of rent, but rarely does the magistrate grant three months. He generally reduces the period of relief to two months, and if a second application is made, he gives four or five or six weeks extension. That is the experience in the average case. If a tenant is under the necessity of applying for further relief, it is the practice for the magistrate to say he is unable to do anything more for the tenant. The utterances of the magistrate from the bench have clearly shown that he has not the power that he desires under the Act, and that he is unable to do what he would like to do for tenants. Only a few weeks ago Mr. Moseley said that he often wondered what happened to the people whose applications he refused. He must know what happens to them, and so must the Minister. At 11 o'clock this morning, a man, his wife and three children were thrown out of their home at Palmyra into the street, and some hours afterwards were still on the road waiting to get in somewhere. The Minister should not seek to re-enact a measure to fool the people. He is only bulldozing tenants and throwing dust in their eyes in the hope of pacifying them for the time being. It is a crying shame and a disgrace to the country. The Minister should have proposed some amendments to the Act.

He must know the disabilities under which tenants are suffering, and the least he should have done was to bring down an amending Bill. Yet he simply proposes to extend the duration of the existing Act for 12 months. There is a bad provision in the Act that he could have had amended without trouble to himself or anyone else. I refer to the provision permitting contracting outside the Act. The poor wretch who has been thrown into the street to-day will sign anything in order to get into another house and he could not be blamed for so doing. The Minister knows there are defects in the law and he should bring down an amending measure to try to do something for the unfortunate people concerned. I hope the House will not approve of the Bill. I intend to divide the House on it. The time is coming when there will be a clash and, if the Minister does not do something, he will be responsible for it. I hope it is not too late for him to bring down an amending Bill in order to give the increased protection needed by the people.

HON. A. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) [4.49]: I am disappointed that the Minister has confined the Bill to amending one section of the existing Act. As he has confined it in that way, we are prevented from moving any amendments to other provisions of the Act. When the original Bill was before the House, I raised a point regarding the clause for contracting out of the law, but the Minister insisted upon its inclusion. I predicted that no one would be granted the tenancy of a house unless he signed a document contracting himself out of the Act, and that is what is happening now. Land agents have printed forms, and they will not let a house to any person unless he signs the printed form agreeing not to take action under the Act. Unless the form is signed, a person has no chance of getting a house. Consequently the whole effect of the Act is being nullified. I do not know why the Minister insists upon having that provision continued. He realised that the measure was an experimental one, and he said he wanted twelve months in which to see how it would operate. It was quite plain to me and to other members how the provision I have mentioned would operate, and it has turned out just as anyone who understood the situation anticipated. I cannot under-

stand the Minister's reason for continuing that provision. The effect is that land agents can thwart the law and nullify the Act. Is it not possible at this stage to delay the passage of the Bill, and move an amendment to the title in order to cover at least the provision for exemption? The Act has given relief in some respects, but it has not come up to expectations. Under existing conditions the whole law will become a dead letter. As people are put out of houses, they will be required to sign a form before they secure another tenancy, and it will be only a matter of a little time before everyone will have contracted himself out of the Act. I hope the Minister will reconsider his proposal to confine the Bill to continuing the Act, and will agree to strike out the vital provision I have mentioned.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [4.52]: I feel that we will be misleading the unemployed section of the community if we agree to the Bill. The existing Act has served the purpose for which it was passed. The magistrate has dealt with all the pressing cases and has given relief to tenants, and landlords have been compelled to extend consideration to tenants. Still, the magistrate has stated over and over again that he cannot grant additional consideration. In other words, tenants have practically exhausted the relief they can obtain under the Act. If we continue the Act for another year, we shall be conveying to the unemployed that they may approach the magistrate and renew their applications for relief. Though they may renew their applications, they will be unable to obtain any additional relief under the Act, as it exists. Therefore, I join with other members in saying that the Act should be allowed to lapse rather than that it should be continued for twelve months, seeing that it can be of very little, if any, assistance. We have to realise the psychology of the moment. Bills of this kind are scanned carefully by those for whom they are designed to afford relief. Those people expect something from our legislation, but if they find that we have passed an empty measure, they become irritated. It is worse than doing nothing at all. If the Government admit that they have done all they can to prevent evic-

tions, and have adjusted all that can be adjusted between the landlord and the tenant, they should let the matter rest there and take the responsibility for their action. Parliament should not be asked to take the responsibility of re-enacting something that will be of no value. I object to misleading the people, and Parliament should not be a party to it. If the Act is to be of any value in future, it must be amended. If the Minister cannot see his way clear to amend it, then it should be allowed to lapse. Far better that than to re-enact something that will be of little value. I cannot say that re-enactment of the law would be of no value because other people are falling into distressful circumstances. There was a large accumulation of distressing cases to clean up when the measure was passed, but that work has been completed. Other people are now getting into difficulties, but the number is few as compared with the number who have already had relief and who need additional relief. To continue the Act will not permit of relief being given to those who have already had it. They constitute the vast majority, and if the measure will not help the vast majority, we should not pass it at all.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	4
Noes	32

Majority against	..	28
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AYES.

Mr. Hegney
Mr. Johnson

Mr. Raphael
Mr. Sleeman (Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo
Mr. Barnard
Mr. Collier
Mr. Coverley
Mr. Davy
Mr. Doney
Mr. Ferguson
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Lamond
Mr. Latham
Mr. Lindsay
Mr. H. W. Mann
Mr. J. I. Mann
Mr. McCallum
Mr. McLarty
Mr. Millington

Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Munale
Mr. Pantan
Mr. Parker
Mr. Patrick
Mr. Piesse
Mr. Richardson
Mr. Sampson
Mr. Scaddan
Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Wells
Mr. Wilcock
Mr. Wilson
Mr. North

(Teller.)

Motion (adjournment) thus negatived.

MR. RAPHAEL (Victoria Park) [5.0]: The Attorney General has refused to allow the debate to be adjourned.

The Minister for Lands: The House refused.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Because some of our friends, as usual, are not with us.

The Minister for Lands: I am surprised at any of your friends being with you.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I oppose the Bill. It does not give protection to tenants who are in dire distress. It is merely a gesture of hypocrisy, seeing that the Government know the Act is no longer of any use for those persons it is desired to assist. The magistrate has been very fair in his judgments when applications have been made to him. He realises that the Act was meant to give immediate relief, and he was not prepared any longer to leave everything to the landlord. The Attorney General is fully aware of the position, and that the magistrate, by his decisions, is telling people not to go back to him. He gave some tenants the right to three months' protection, but, when they next went before him, he gave them only 14 days in which to get out of their homes. The Government know that the Act has reached the end of its value to those concerned. Members on this side of the House, who are supposed to represent Labour, also realise this.

Mr. Panton: I am glad you said "supposed."

Mr. RAPHAEL: The Government are prepared to afford any relief to farmers, and by indirect taxation to charge the unemployed against a little of the dole they are drawing. In every instance the farmers are being considered. When it is a matter of giving protection to the workers we, who are here to represent them, are not given the opportunity to consider this Bill nor to do any good for them. I believe when Labour were in office, every possible consideration was given to the wants of farmers, but to-day members who represent the farming community are not prepared to give the same consideration to the labour section of the community. This is one Act which can well be amended in order to cut out all the hypocrisy contained in it. If the Bill cannot be amended, I would rather see it thrown out. I certainly hope the Attorney General will not go on with it. It will not help anybody because the Act has reached the end of its usefulness. It is only hypocrisy on

the part of the Attorney General to bring down the Bill. We are not being given any opportunity to draft amendments. It would only be an act of courtesy on the part of the Government if they allowed the debate to be adjourned so that we could draw up the necessary amendments. When the member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) and I ask for this sort of thing, we are not treated with any respect. Other members can ask for adjournments and get them. If we are not to be allowed to prepare amendments I hope the Bill will be thrown out.

HON. J. C. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [5.7]: I do not want to cast a silent vote on this question. I know the Act has been of considerable assistance to a deserving section of the community. Notwithstanding what has been said it will still continue to be of service in that direction.

The Attorney General: Of course it will.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Despite the fact that some people say we are supposed to represent Labour, I do think the Act has been of great service to a considerable number of people and I would not like to vote against its continuance. The request for a continuation Bill really came from this side of the House.

The Attorney General: The suggestion came from the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: We cannot amend the Bill outside the order of leave, and can only deal with the sections referred to in it. If any member desires to amend the Act as regards the sections dealing with contracting out of it, and he can adduce good and sufficient reasons for the passing of such amendments, I have no doubt the House will agree to them. I cannot see the force of voting the Bill out because it does not go as far as we would like. It goes as far as it can, within the order of leave. The only thing we could amend—

The Attorney General: Is the clause relating to its duration.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Some members want to throw it out altogether. The best course is to allow the Bill to go through. If any part of the Act is not working in a desirable manner, a private member can move for leave to introduce a Bill to amend it.

Mr. Sleeman: What consideration did we get when we tried to alter the position?

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Provision should have been made in the original order of

leave. Those of us who were in the House did not move to amend the order of leave so that it should include Section 24 as well as Section 29 of the Act. We missed our opportunity. The only way to get over the difficulty is for some member to bring down a Bill to amend the Act as he desires. If this Bill is not passed, tenants who get out of work will be left with no protection.

Mr. Sleeman: If it goes out, we will have another Bill down very soon.

Mr. Raphael: And you will soon want a measure for the protection of mortgagors.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Parliament exists to amend legislation in the direction required by the people. Every member has a right to bring forward whatever he likes. It is his duty to do that if he feels strongly about any question. There are some people who are fortunate enough to have retained their employment, but even some of these are losing their positions. If an attempt were made to evict them, the magistrate can, as things are, give them protection for three months, but if the Bill is thrown out they too can be thrown out of their homes. I intend to support this measure. I also assure those members who desire to amend the Act in regard to contracting out of it that I will give them my support.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why have two Bills to do the same job?

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: When leave is given to introduce a Bill to amend certain sections of an Act, we cannot go outside that order of leave.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I know that, but we can still protest against the limitation.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I am protesting. I am prepared to support any Bill to delete the section dealing with contracting out. Under the Standing Orders that cannot be done now. I am not going to show my disapproval of the existing legislation by voting to put out this Bill when I know it is of some service to the community.

Mr. Raphael: Yes, to the mortgagors.

HON. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.15]: Undoubtedly the Act is to some extent being nullified by the action of landlords in causing tenants, or would-be tenants, to sign the agreement which can be signed under Section 24; but I agree entirely with the member for Geraldton (Hon. J. C. Willcock) that the possibilities of relief under the Act

are by no means exhausted. If the Bill is passed, the Act will continue to give relief to numerous persons who will apply under it. I cannot understand any so-called Labour member voting against the Bill. It will be the means of giving relief to people who get out of work week after week.

Mr. Raphael: Have you ever been to the court to find out what sort of a deal such people get?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have read what has occurred in the court, and know of dozens upon dozens of cases in which relief has been given.

Mr. Raphael: There are hundreds of cases where relief has not been given.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Maybe that is so.

Mr. Raphael: I know of a case where a tenant made an application against a member of Parliament, and got six weeks' relief and then was turned out. That member of Parliament is worth £15,000 if he is worth a shilling.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know of that case, but I say that relief has been given in a great many cases. I do not say that it has been given in all cases where it should have been given. However, we cannot go beyond the men administering the laws of the land. I am prepared to assume that the men entrusted with administering our laws either in the local courts or on the Supreme Court bench are fair and impartial. I have not found them otherwise.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Nobody has said anything else.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Victoria Park (Mr. Raphael) has suggested it.

Mr. Raphael: The Act limits the power of the courts.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not to the extent the hon. member has suggested. He says he has been in the court and seen relief refused where it ought to have been given.

Mr. Raphael: I have been there when people entitled to relief have been refused it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Victoria Park contradicts the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson). The member for Victoria Park says that the court is at fault in many cases under the Act.

Mr. Raphael: The trouble is the interpretation which the magistrate puts on the Act.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There it is! According to the member for Victoria Park, the magistrate is at fault. To throw out this Bill will not help anybody. To carry the Bill will mean giving some relief to numerous people, if not to all whom we should like to see relieved. Therefore I suggest, with the member for Geraldton, that the House be given an opportunity to discuss Section 24 of the Act. If a majority in this Chamber are opposed to the deletion of that part of Section 24 which permits of contracting out, we shall have to accept the verdict of the House; but I think hon. members ought to have an opportunity to reconsider the section now that we have had 12 months' experience of the working of the Act. If in the light of that experience the House still thinks that Section 24 should stand as it now is, we shall have to accept the decision; but I consider it would be well to amend the order of leave so as to include Section 24 as well as Section 29. Then we could have a discussion in Committee on the advisableness of deleting portion of Section 24. I do not see that the Attorney General can have much objection to allowing the House to decide with regard to Section 24.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. A. L. Davy—West Perth—in reply) [5.20]: It is absurd to say that this Bill is useless, and unjust to say that it is hypocritical on my part to introduce the measure.

Mr. Sleeman: Nobody said it was useless. It is of a little use.

Mr. Raphael: I said it, any way, and I meant it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The two hon. members on the cross-benches said the Bill was so useless that its introduction was pure hypocrisy on my part.

Mr. Raphael: I meant that, too.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I must ask hon. members to observe the rules of debate.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The statement was made in ignorance of what the Bill deals with.

Mr. Raphael: Mortgagors are of more importance to you than tenants.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member obviously does not know what a mortgagor is. He thinks a mortgagor is a

mortgagee. The mortgagor is the poor man in debt.

Mr. Raphael: I know that.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Why he should be of more importance to me than the tenant, I fail to understand. Another class of persons with whom the Act deals is those who are purchasing their homes on time-payment instalments. Those three classes of persons are all relieved by the Act. It is utterly untrue to say that the Act is no longer of any value. Every week Mr. Moseley is dealing with applications under it.

Mr. Raphael: And nine-tenths of the working people have lost their homes already.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I have given a clear answer, and I very much resent hon. members accusing me of hypocrisy. In doing so, they cast a slight also on the Leader of the Opposition, who himself jogged the memory of the Government about this Bill by asking a question as to whether the Act was going to be re-enacted.

Mr. Raphael: In its present form?

Mr. Sleeman: That is no answer at all.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is an answer. Obviously the intention of the Leader of the Opposition was to see that we did not slip on it.

Hon. P. Collier: Obviously.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The trouble with the member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) is that he is too greedy. He never will temper his requests to this House with any moderation. He always asks for too much.

Mr. Sleeman: Thank God it is greed on behalf of people who deserve consideration!

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: In the end the hon. member gets nothing. If he wishes to do some good for the people whom he desires to help, let him ask for something which there is a chance of this House passing. If he continues to ask for the impossible, I shall have to come to the conclusion that his proposals are based on hypocrisy, that he brings them before the House knowing that they will be defeated. If any hon. member desires to test the feeling of the House on Section 24, he can give notice tomorrow of a Bill for that purpose, and the Standing Orders can be suspended so that the measure may be dealt with before the

session closes. If the member for Fremantle, or any other hon. member, thinks there is a chance of the House agreeing with him, I suggest he give notice accordingly. But if the member for Fremantle gives notice and then introduces into the Bill provisions such as the Bill he lost contained, he will have only himself to thank if he again fails to obtain the relief for which he is anxious.

Mr. Sleeman: That is a dirty, rotten insinuation!

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is nothing dirty about the statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: I must ask the member for Fremantle to refrain from making interjections of that kind.

Mr. Sleeman: The Attorney General might refrain from casting such aspersions.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If such a Bill is introduced by the member for Fremantle, or any other hon. member, the Government will afford him an opportunity to have it discussed. However, I cannot allow such statements as have been made to pass without protest. I do not think the hon. member really believes that I am casting aspersions on his character at all. When he introduced his previous measure, I told the House that I appreciated his sincerity.

Mr. Raphael: It was knocked out at once.

Mr. Sleeman: You did not give it a chance to get anywhere.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The House by a substantial majority defeated the Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: We are discussing the Bill before the Chair, the re-enactment of the principal Act. I shall not allow any further discussion on any previous Bill.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I suggest that this Bill be passed. The Act has to be re-enacted; otherwise it is gone. I suggest that the member for Fremantle or any other hon. member who wishes to do so introduce a measure to amend Section 24.

Mr. Sleeman: And no more?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: And anything else the hon. member likes. I do suggest, however, that the hon. member do not try to put into that Bill something that has already been dealt with by the House. If he puts up a moderate proposition to remedy what he thinks are the

defects of the present Act. I promise on behalf of the Government that ample opportunity will be given to debate the measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Richardson in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 29:

Mr. SLEEMAN: The Attorney General has offered an opportunity for the discussion of other amendments of the principal Act, and therefore I am prepared to refrain from objecting to this clause. I shall try to get another short amending Bill passed.

Mr. RAPHAEL: It was my intention to oppose this Bill entirely. Despite what has been said by the Leader of the Opposition, who should know more than I do about politics, I contend that I have been in closer touch than he with the people who are suffering. I have attended the court which administers the Act, and I certify that there are many landlords who could still have houses occupied by tenants instead of standing empty. I have had two houses occupied by unemployed tenants for thirteen months, and have never made any attempt to turn the tenants out. However, I can look round the Chamber and see hon. members who have emptied out tenants when they were only a short time behind in their payment of rent. We look with disgust upon countries which hoard gold, and yet we have in our midst the spectacle of landlords hoarding up empty houses. I hope the Attorney General is genuine in stating that he will give every consideration to another Bill for the amendment of the principal Act. I want not only his consideration for that Bill, but also his vote. I have had his consideration in the past: in some instances it turned out all right, and in some instances all wrong. I appeal to members opposite who once sat with Labour to vote with us on this specific question.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Attorney General, so much of the Standing Orders suspended as to permit of the Bill passing its remaining stage at the one sitting.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—DEBT CONVERSION AGREEMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 19th November.

HON. A. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) [5.33]: I think the statement of the Premier in denouncing the Lang Plan as repudiation in the very speech in which he moved the second reading of this Bill, was worthy of Gilbert and Sullivan at their best. There is nothing nearly so funny either in the "Gondoliers" or in the "Mikado" as was that statement; because if there is any excuse for the Bill, it is that it repudiates an obligation of the nation. In its essence it is clear repudiation. It was one of those little turns of political propaganda which the Premier invariably tries to get in, accusing his opponents of doing something that he himself is guilty of. So the hon. member declared the Lang policy was repudiation. The Bill comes to us after appeals have been made throughout the nation—appeals backed by the whole force of the Governments of the country, with intense propaganda—to persuade people to convert their bonds. In the Press and from the platform, and by broadcasting were appeals made to persuade people to convert their bonds. But the holders of £16,000,000 worth of stock refused to convert, and now the Bill not only says to them, "We will not pay you your money when it falls due," but says also, "And we will prevent you from going to the courts in order to get redress." In commerce, if a person has an obligation falling due and cannot meet it, he tries to persuade the other party to hold over the obligation, and if he fails in that the courts of the land are open to him. But this Bill is to deprive the bondholders of all their legal

rights. It says to those whose bonds are falling due this month or next month or in the months ahead, "Not only will we not give you your money on that day, but we will not give you back any during the next seven years, and will not return the whole of it to you for 30 years." And in his speech the Premier denounced another party which is standing for repudiation. If the Bill is not repudiation, I do not understand the word. It is plain, unadulterated repudiation, and no man who stands behind the Bill can again denounce repudiation. The Premier and those associated with him in this movement are fathering repudiation. So on the one hand the Premier denounces repudiation, and on the other he is himself committed to it. Why cannot the Premier be straightforward with the people, and tell them what is in his mind, instead of behaving like this. Let us compare this proposal with the Lang Plan. So far as I can understand, the Lang proposition was that there should be no payment of obligations of the State that fell due during the next three years, and that the interest to be paid should be only the same as that which England is paying to America on her war debts; and that terms would have to be arranged similar to those arranged between England and America. But the Bill says the bonds as a whole shall not be paid for another 30 years, or 10 times longer than Mr. Lang proposed. Yet the Premier denounced Mr. Lang as a repudiationist. It seems to me the Premier talks with his tongue in his cheek when he comes here and gives expression to that sentiment. The Bill is out-and-out repudiation, and if it is not that, there is no excuse at all for it. We remember the outcry that arose throughout the nation, and particularly do we recall the headlines that appeared in our local Press when the suggestion was put before the caucus meeting of the Commonwealth Labour Party that Australia should advise all her creditors that she was unable to meet her obligations for the next year. That was denounced as a policy of repudiation—dishonourable and immoral. All the known adjectives were hurled at the men who had enunciated that policy. But now we have here a Bill that goes 30 times farther. It does not propose to pay anybody in a year's time. It refuses to pay anybody at all until 1938, and then it will not be all that is owed, for the balance will be spread over the next 23 years, or 30 years

in all. Where are now those who denounced the Lang suggestion when it was put up? The people who contemned that idea of giving Australia breathing space for 12 months applaud it when it is put forward in America by President Hoover to give the world a breathing space for 12 months in respect of war debts. President Hoover is acclaimed as the leading statesman of our day, as the outstanding intellect of the present generation.

The Premier: That was between Governments, not individuals.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Is the hon. member going to say there is any more call for honour between Governments than there is between Governments and individuals? Are we to treat our citizens with less respect, less honour and less consideration than we should proffer to Governments? Is that the idea in the Premier's mind?

The Premier: The creditors were made an offer.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The idea was proclaimed by President Hoover, no doubt after he had sounded the nations concerned. But it is on the principle that I am speaking. It was the principle that was denounced, but we find that those who denounced it when it came from a Labour source, warmly applaud it when it comes from another source. Personally I think Australia did wonderfully well in the conversion, which was probably the biggest conversion ever made in history. An attempt was made to convert £557,000,000 in one effort, and approximately only 3 per cent. declined, representing something like £16,000,000 out of £557,000,000. That is a wonderful achievement. Personally I did not think there would be anything like so enormous a response to the appeal put out. It is doing the Governments of this country a very great disservice, and doing the future of Australia a great disservice to bring in now a forced conversion for the mere £16,000,000 out of £557,000,000 that was originally desired to be converted.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Did not the Prime Minister say that special consideration would be given in certain circumstances?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I am aware of that. It helps the situation but very little. Of my own experience I know of a great deal of hardship. I do not suppose there is any member who has not had some indi-

cated to him. I know from correspondence and from people who have called on me, people up in years who listened to the patriotic appeal made to them to put their life savings into Government loans. I feel a bit guilty myself, because I went out and helped to persuade people to take that action. The Bill would deny the right of those people to recover their money inside of 30 years. Many cannot live that long. I have in mind a couple well over 60 years of age who have their life savings in these loans, and not only have they to suffer a reduction of interest, but now they are denied the right to control their capital. They put their money in for two or three years; now the Government are going to hold it up for 30 years. It is altogether dishonourable; it is immoral; it is repugnant to me, and it will bring discredit on this nation. I know people who have put money into these loans that are now reduced to below the level of what an old-age pensioner lives on. Those people had a little money, and invested it in Commonwealth loans, but owing to the reduction of interest rates, they will not draw as much as an old-age pensioner is entitled to receive, and on top of that their money is tied up for a long period.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: And some of them now are drawing sustenance.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I have heard of that, too. Every effort should have been made to pay off the 16 millions. I believe there are many people who have refused to convert purely out of greed. They have been inclined to allow their money to be converted for reasons other than that they would be affected very materially; there are some wealthy concerns that have refused to convert, but I also know that there are thousands of people in the Continent who have refused to convert because they are not able to convert, that the present position will bring them in their old age, poverty and want which in the past they made every effort to avoid. By investing in Commonwealth loans they had a right to expect the continuation of the payment of interest that they were led to believe they would receive, and which they hoped would support them in their declining years. Now we are saying that we are going to confiscate the people's money—and it practically amounts to that, because it is impossible to realise on the bonds without losing in the vicinity of £15 or £16 per £100, and even then the mar-

ket could absorb only a limited number. The people would have to make a sacrifice to that extent to get any of their money back. Personally I think a means could have been found to raise money to meet this 16 millions that certain people declined to convert. I am told that the Premiers' Conference did go into the question of paying these people off, but argued that it would be unfair to pay them as others had voluntarily converted. It was also argued at that conference that the banks could not raise the money to pay the 16 millions, and that it was wrong to ask the Commonwealth Parliament to agree that notes should be issued to that extent. I do not know what actually was the deciding factor, but it does appear to me that it would have been just as much security, and it would have been just as sound finance for the Commonwealth to have issued notes with which to pay this amount. What is the security that is behind these loans now? It is the credit of the country. It is the very same security that could be behind Commonwealth or Treasury notes, with this difference, that if Commonwealth notes were issued there would be no interest to pay. But the cry would go out that it would be inflation, and that inflation would do a great deal of harm. I have followed the prophecies for which the professional economists have been responsible as to what would happen in this crisis if certain things were done. Has it not now been found that all the experts have been false prophets indeed? I know that the Premier said that if there was to be inflation, prices would increase immediately, and the cost of living would go up and then the workers would suffer more than anyone else.

The Premier: The Labour people said that.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The hon. member said it. I put this to him: He admits there has been inflation to the tune of at least 20 millions, and whilst that inflation has been going on, prices have fallen! Where now is this committee of experts that attended at the Premiers' Conference and issued a warning about the danger of inflation, those university professors who have been given huge fees to advise the banks? They issued warnings against inflation and declared that the cost of living would go up, that prices would soar, and that it would mean ruin to the nation. It is admitted now that there has been inflation

to the extent of 20 millions at least, and all the while that it has been going on, prices have been falling. All the financial experts have been proved to be absolutely wrong. They also declared that if our currency depreciated, chaos and ruin would follow in our industries. Now their whole efforts consist of trying to prevent the currency getting back to normal. They are pointing out what a benefit it is, particularly to the primary industries, to have this depreciation of our currency and they are trying by artificial means, the pegging of exchange and everything else, to prevent the currency from getting back to normal. The other morning it was announced by a representative of the Commonwealth Government that if the currency got back to normal it would be against the desire and the efforts of the Government, and the same people who drew attention to the disaster that it would mean to the nations if our currency depreciated, are now striving their hardest to prevent it returning to normal. Look at the panic that was caused in England when it was thought that England would have to go off the gold standard. Then the moment England got off the gold standard, her unemployment figures decreased, industries boomed and thousands who had been out of work for a long time were re-engaged. The whole of industry in England has benefited. Does not all this show how false the prophecies have been? It all reminds me of a discussion, about which I was reading the other day, between a Russian expert and an American. They were discussing the value of Russia's currency, and the Russian said, "The value of our currency is our own business and has nothing to do with you."

The Premier: They do not let it get out.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: When it came to a final analysis the American accused the Russian of selling goods overseas at lower than the cost of production, but counting the Russian currency at its real value and not at par the American had to admit that everything Russia sold overseas she sold at a substantial profit, and the Russian again said, "That is our business, not yours." All these theorists, that no one would think of placing in charge of a business, have not, any of them, practical minds. They read books and they follow old and crusted ideas, dating back centuries. They have not an original idea as to how to meet the circumstances at present

facing the world. This is one of the proposals that we find contained in the Bill we are now discussing. What is going to be the result of it? What will be the outcome of this action? Can it be conceived that anyone will lend money again to Australia after this law is passed? Who is going to lend money to the Federal Government? Within the very month of some of the money falling due, the Government ask Parliament to pass a law tying up all this money for 30 years after having previously passed an Act to reduce the interest rate. It is shocking; it is scandalous; it will tie up all this money for another generation. Will the Premier argue that when this Bill is passed the reduced rate of interest will not apply to the money affected by it? Of course it will. It will apply to the 16 millions referred to in the Bill. The lenders will have to accept the reduced rate, the same rate as will be paid the others who voluntarily converted. I know that the Commonwealth Government have declared they will treat deserving and urgent cases with some consideration, that they will make money available from the sinking fund to meet those urgent cases, but they will be very few. Then the humiliation that those people will be subjected to! An applicant will have to declare himself to be absolutely without money and disclose everything to the authorities; he must expose everything to Government officials and go on his knees or crawl on his belly to get back the money he lent to the nation, money that he thought he was lending to assist the country. That is too humiliating for citizens of this country, particularly those who invested in these loans with the idea of providing for their old age, and who now find themselves in straitened circumstances because of the action of the Federal Government. The Labour Party's policy has been denounced, but the time will come when it will be admitted that it was the right policy and the only policy to meet the financial situation. As the years roll by the nation will realise that the policy of the Labour movement would have been the best to adopt not the one that has been forced upon the community in the present circumstances.

The Premier: There were four Labour Premiers at the Conference!

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I feel sick at heart and disgusted with the present position. It is most repugnant. I hate to think that I am a member of a Parliament that

will agree to pass into law such legislation. Posterity will judge those who have been associated with it, and I take this opportunity to make my position clear and register my protest against it. I hope that its real essence will be clearly understood, and from now on that all those associated with the legislation will never again accuse people of advocating repudiation and denying their adherence to the principle themselves. I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [6.1]: It is truly almost unbelievable that already six Parliaments in Australia have passed similar legislation and now we, the seventh and last Parliament to deal with it, are busy with this measure of repudiation. Surely when such a large amount as £550,000,000 was involved and the whole of that vast sum had been successfully converted voluntarily, it was not beyond the capacity or ability of the seven Governments of Australia to have found the comparatively small sum of £16,000,000, in order to satisfy those who refused to convert their holdings. I am inclined to think that sufficient consideration has not been given to the effect that legislation of this description will have, not only in Great Britain, but in every other country of the world. Australia will go down in history as having seven Parliaments that could agree to pass legislation imposing direct, unadulterated repudiation. Where shall we stand in the councils of the nations of the world in future? What consideration or weight will be attached to the bonds or written contracts of the Australian Commonwealth?

Mr. Patrick: The Governments could have attained the same end by way of taxation.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: No.

Mr. Patrick: That was the original proposal.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I refuse to believe that we have reached such depths of financial difficulty that Australia cannot find the comparatively small sum of £16,000,000 in order to overcome this difficulty. It is suggestive of the old story of "spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar." All the praise Australia has received may be set aside. The successful conversion of such an enormous sum as £550,000,000 was largely, if not almost entirely, responsible for the improved condition of Australian stocks in the money market. Upwards of six months ago our stock

was down to £79 or £80 and in the past two or three months, those stocks have recovered 20 points. Never before in the history of our financial relationship with the Old Country has there been such a rise as that which has taken place during the past few months. No one will deny that it has largely been due to the fact that the people of Australia, of their own volition, agreed to accept a lesser rate of interest on such an enormous sum of money. The effect of that action of the people will be destroyed. Can anyone imagine that people will advance money to Australian Governments with any degree of confidence in the future? That large reservoir from which we have drawn loan funds in the past, will be entirely closed to us. No one having the responsibilities of a trusteeship will dream of investing in Australian securities, now that we have openly, by Acts of Parliaments, repudiated Australia's obligations. No effort was made, so far as I am aware, to meet this situation.

The Premier: Every effort was made.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not afterwards.

The Premier: Every effort was made by seven Premiers, of whom four were Labour Premiers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not after the conversion had been finalised.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: In which 97 per cent. of the loans had been converted.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No effort was made subsequently.

The Premier: Of course it was.

The Minister for Lands: You must remember there was not only the necessity to find the £16,000,000, but other funds required by Governments to continue operations.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course, the Premier was present at the Conference and knows what took place.

The Minister for Railways: The trouble was to discriminate between those who could not, and those who would not, convert. There were a great number of wealthy people who could have converted but did not do so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even so, I would prefer to let those that could afford to convert but refused to do so, have the advantage involved rather than to damage the fair fame of Australia by adopting this course.

The Minister for Lands: Some of them even bought stock for that purpose.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There may have been a few.

The Minister for Lands: There were, and they refused to convert.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What was the proportion?

The Minister for Lands: I do not know, but there were some of them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It would be interesting to know the number of people in that category and the amount of money they held.

The Premier: The trouble was that they held bearer bonds.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What was the amount involved in the dissent in this State?

The Premier: It amounted to £274,000.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And that amount was spread over 200 odd people. It is easy to average the amount. Undoubtedly the reason why a large number of our people refused to convert was that they could not afford to do so. That is unquestionable. What is the use of saying to a person who has reached 60 years of age that he will get his money back in 30 years' time? A great proportion of the money involved was invested in recent years in short-dated loans, with the idea that during the investor's lifetime the money would revert to him and he could utilise it in other directions.

Mr. Wansbrough: I know of one man who was placed in that position.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Probably every member of the House knows a number of such instances. We have only to cast our minds back to the earlier loan campaign that was led by Mr. Lyons as Federal Treasurer when the Prime Minister, Mr. Scullin, was in the Old Country. On that occasion the object was to secure the conversion of £28,000,000. We remember the publicity that was indulged in. People were urged to invest in gilt-edged securities.

The Minister for Lands: That was a very short-dated loan.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: It was for two years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is why the people invested their money in that conversion loan, and that is where the deception crept in.

Hon. M. F. Troy: That is so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Quite a number of people who do not usually invest in Government stock participated in that loan. Doubtless they did it for patriotic reasons,

but they knew that the loan was for two years.

The Minister for Railways: Can you explain why in seven Parliaments in Australia this proposal is favoured by seven Governments and not favoured by seven Oppositions?

Hon. A. McCallum: That is not correct.

The Minister for Railways: Yes, it is.

Hon. A. McCallum: Of course it is not.

The Minister for Railways: No Opposition has agreed to this proposal.

Hon. A. McCallum: Yes, there is such an instance.

The Minister for Railways: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That surprises me, because I have not heard of any serious opposition to it by any Opposition party.

Hon. A. McCallum: How could such legislation become law if the Opposition in the Senate opposed it?

The Minister for Railways: No Opposition accepted the legislation without advancing the same arguments against it as those we have heard to-day.

Mr. Patrick: The Leader of the Opposition put up the same arguments in the Federal Parliament.

The Minister for Railways: Exactly the same arguments.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The legislation could not have been passed by some Parliaments without the support of the Opposition.

The Minister for Railways: In most Parliaments the legislation was not taken to the vote. Opposition members did not go beyond expressing their views.

The Premier: I do not know that it went to the vote in any one Parliament.

The Minister for Railways: No, the Oppositions made their protest and then let the Bill go through.

The Minister for Lands: At any rate, those who opposed it advanced the same arguments as the Leader of the Opposition is doing now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps it is a remarkable coincidence.

The Minister for Lands: Are they not the only arguments that can be used against this legislation?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know.

The Minister for Lands: You know it is difficult to get any more.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There are several strong arguments against it.

The Minister for Lands: But there are no others.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not yet convinced that some means of meeting the amount involved in the compulsory conversion might not have been found.

The Minister for Railways: The fact that this is the last Parliament to deal with the legislation is evidence that we were not over-anxious about it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Government had the precedent of the action taken by six other Parliaments.

The Minister for Railways: Including the Federal Parliament, with the Labour Government in power.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the Western Australian Parliament should fail to pass the Bill, then the legislation passed by the other six Parliaments would go by the board. If we adopted the course, this Parliament could be the only honest Parliament. We pride ourselves on being a model set of people, always more loyal than other people, always boasting of the better type of people within the State. Yet we are asked to agree to a proposal of this description.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: It may be the easiest way.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At social functions we are never tired of telling others what a fine lot of people we are. That is why I do not attend social functions. I blush to hear all that is poured out about our noble selves for the edification of strangers in our midst. Visitors who come to our shores are always told about what we have done and what we are.

The Premier: There is something Scottish about you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Let us show that in this supreme crisis in the nation's history so far as our honour is concerned, we are worthy of the high praise we have lavished upon ourselves.

The Minister for Lands: You must not reject the Bill without showing where the Governments could get the money.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think I could show them that.

The Minister for Lands: In addition to the other money they must have for other purposes?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think my suggestion would be rejected as other proposals

have been rejected in the past, but which had to be adopted subsequently.

The Premier: Which one?

Mr. Millington: The one merit about this proposal is that it is the easiest way out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes—vote for the Bill, and make them come into line if they refuse. I believe we could have issued notes to meet this extra amount of £16,000,000. That is one way by which the objective could have been achieved. Will anyone assert that the currency of Australia would be seriously affected by the issuing of notes to cover £16,000,000, a mere drop in the ocean of finance?

The Premier: They would go back immediately to the source from where they came.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That would not matter.

Mr. Sampson: And your honour would be saved!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Is it not infinitely better to accept the effect of inflation to that extent upon our currency than to sacrifice our fair name by allowing it to go down in history, to be read by future generations, that all the Parliaments of Australia, by legislative enactment, repudiated their responsibilities?

The Minister for Railways: Well, we shall not be here to read that in the history of the times.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

HON. S. W. MUNSIE (Hannans) [7.30]: I cannot allow the Bill to pass without saying a few words on the second reading. I am rather surprised at the speech made by the Premier in moving the second reading, and I am also a little surprised at the Premier having anything to do with the introduction of such a measure. In my opinion a serious mistake has been made in regard to the conversion of the £550,000,000 of debt. I do not believe that the mistake has been made under this Bill. For at least two years I have publicly advocated—and so have hundreds of other people—that the interest rate should be reduced. If a mistake was made at all, it was made when the Premiers' Conference that originated the Plan first of all agreed that the conversion should be compulsory,

and then went back on compulsion and made it voluntary. The whole conversion should have been made compulsory, and compulsion should not have been confined solely to those bondholders who refused to convert. I have advocated compulsory conversion all along. Many members criticised the Government pretty severely on their Financial Emergency Bill for making the reduction of wages compulsory and at the same time allowing the loan conversion to be voluntary. I believe it is true, though I cannot vouch for it, that a considerable number of bonds that were not voluntarily converted were in the hands of small holders, many of them fairly well advanced in years. Some of them still hold the bonds. A great number who held small parcels, I am informed, sold at a big sacrifice, and two companies have purchased the bulk of them and those bonds have not been converted. Some years ago a Royal Commission was appointed by this House to deal with similar acts, namely, the trafficking in soldiers' gratuity bonds. The Commission did good work, and in most instances compelled the people who had bought the gratuity bonds at a big discount to disgorge the difference and refund it to the soldiers. I think the Federal Government should initiate an inquiry into the statement that bonds have been bought from people at a substantial discount, and have not been voluntarily converted. In my opinion the purchasers fleeced 25 to 35 per cent. from the sellers of the bonds, the percentage representing the discount at which the bonds were sold. When I spoke on the Loan Conversion Bill I said it was a mistake, and that the conversion should have been made compulsory. I added that I was not alarmed because I felt positive that while people were being asked to convert voluntarily, if they did not do so, the big stick would be held over them. Everyone realised that those who did not convert would be compelled to do so, and probably on less advantageous conditions than those who voluntarily converted. This Bill shows that they are not receiving the same consideration as the people who voluntarily converted, and I do not know that they are entitled to equal consideration. The wages of the workers were compulsorily reduced. The Government were not satisfied with the reductions made by the Arbitration Court but provided for further com-

pulsory reductions. Yet bondholders were given an opportunity to convert voluntarily. I shall support the Bill to compel the holders of the £16,000,000 worth of bonds to convert, just as I and other people had to convert. I knew that if I did not convert voluntarily, I would be compelled to do so, and under worse terms, and so I got in out of the wet. There are thousands of people in Australia who took the same view. I was not actuated by patriotic motives. I realised that conversion was an absolute necessity. It will not surprise me if, ere long, the Parliaments of Australia have to introduce measures going much further than compelling the holders of £16,000,000 worth of bonds to convert. There will be greater repudiation than that, not only in Australia, but all over the world, because the people cannot carry the burden of the war debt. It will have to be wiped out. This is only an instalment of what is to come later on. The Premier of this State was the one man above all others at the conference who stuck out for voluntary conversion. He was the only one.

The Attorney General: No, he was not.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Attorney General was not present. He attended the second conference. I say the Premier was the only one.

The Attorney General: You are entirely wrong.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: If I had time to turn up the newspaper files, I could convince the hon. member that I am right.

The Attorney General: You could not.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Premier gave an interview at a place called Forrest, away in the wilderness—

The Minister for Railways: Forrest is on the trans line. Do not call it the wilderness.

Mr. Sleeman: And he gave another interview at Cook.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The interview was published in the Press. It had been suggested that conversion should be made compulsory as regards the Australian portion of our indebtedness and the Premier expressed himself as personally opposed to compulsory conversion. When the Premiers' Conference met on the next occasion and the Premiers' Plan was formulated, the Attorney General was present. The Premier of this State was the only one who stood out against compulsion.

The Attorney General: I say again you are wrong.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: It was resolved to make the conversion compulsory.

The Attorney General: No, it was not.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Then the published reports, and even the report submitted to this House, were untrue.

The Attorney General: The reports did not say so.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Federal Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate intervened and begged that the conversion be made voluntary, and they eventually got their way. That is where the mistake was made. There would not have been half the squeals or any of the trouble from people holding bonds had the Premiers unanimously resolved that Australia could not bear the burden, and that bondholders must convert at a lower rate of interest. Not nearly so much harm would have been done, either. Now many people are compelled to go without the use of their money much longer than would have been the case if the conversion had been made compulsory in the first instance. I do not think that the period of the loan would have been made 50 years; I believe it would have been made 35 years if there had been compulsion from the beginning.

The Minister for Railways: It would not have been very satisfactory to those who converted voluntarily if the other bondholders who refused to convert got the advantage.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: No. I admit there will be hardship, but I believe that the greater portion of the £16,000,000 is held by large holders.

The Minister for Lands: There is a fair amount of trafficking.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE: Yes, and those people who bought bonds at a big discount should be made to disgorge the difference. I hope this Bill will be only the forerunner of others, not measures of repudiation, but measures that will help Australia considerably more than this Bill will do.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [7.43]: Dislike of this Bill is not confined to members of the Opposition. I do not like the Bill I regret very much that it has been necessary to introduce it. It seems a great pity indeed that the Premiers in conference

and their economic experts could not have evolved some other method of dealing with the large holders of the £16,000,000 of unconverted bonds and make it possible to give relief to the small holders, who no doubt will find it difficult to carry on if they have to convert.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: The economic experts are responsible for many of our difficulties to-day. They have never made a prediction that has lasted three months.

Mr. ANGELO: The six States of Australia and the Commonwealth sent Ministers and Under Treasurers and financial experts to the conference to consider the question of the unconverted bonds. I feel certain they have given the matter a great deal of thought, and have tried to consider some way of giving relief to those who need it. It is a pity they have not brought forward some measure better than the one now before us. I cannot suggest any better method, and I do not think anyone this evening has done so. Probably the collection of wisdom from the financial standpoint that met at the Premiers' Conference could not suggest anything better, and therefore with regret I intend to support the second reading.

On motion by Mr. North, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read, notifying that it had agreed to the amendment made by the Assembly.

BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT (No. 4).

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read, notifying that it did not insist upon its amendments Nos. 3, 4, and 13, disagreed to by the Assembly.

BILL—SECESSION REFERENDUM.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 19th November.

HON. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [7.47]: The Premier expressed the hope that the House would be broadminded enough to

raise this Bill above party, and to consider it as a national question. As I intend to treat it in the approved national spirit, I have no alternative but to oppose the Bill. I may suggest, though, that I am firmly of the belief that the measure was conceived in party politics, and that but for party politics we would never have seen it. Had it not been that the last annual conference of the Primary Producers' Association, and the last conference of the Nationalist Party, both carried motions requesting, and more or less demanding, that the Government should introduce this Bill, and so provide for a referendum, I venture to say we should never have had it before us. The Bill is undoubtedly introduced in response to a demand or a request from the conferences of the two political organisations that support the members on the Government side of the House. There is no doubt that its genesis is party politics. The Government did not take seriously the proposal for a referendum, until this more or less imperative demand came from those two political parties. The House is entitled to some indication as to when the referendum will be taken. Is it to be early in the new year, or later on, or in the following year? We ought to know what is in the mind of the Government. At this stage the Government ought to be able to inform the House as to their intentions. It is rather important to know when the vote is to be taken. If it should be taken early next year, or within the next 12 months, the Bill will create dissension amongst the people at a time when unity is absolutely essential. We should not throw this apple of discord amongst the people at a time of financial crisis, and when we are being asked for the utmost co-operation of all parties and all sections of the community. Surely the Government cannot hope to assist in the restoration of confidence, as it were, in the mutual co-operation and goodwill of all sections of the community in getting out of our difficulties, and at the same time have this cause of discord placed before the people. No matter how much it may be claimed that it is a non-party question and should not give rise to party feelings, I say it will give rise to other feelings more important than party feelings. There is a considerable portion of our population who have been inarticulate on this question so far, but who have a deep sense of national pride in the unity of Australia.

Mr. Marshall: More than these humbugs know about.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Unquestionably there will arise, when the campaign commences, a feeling of antagonism amongst sections of the people who are now amicably disposed the one to the other.

The Minister for Railways: Are we not promised another referendum dealing with a constitutional question?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps we are, but I am not supporting referenda at the moment. This question of secession started a few years ago by the formation of a league. After being in existence for some time, it went into recess. It was not taken seriously anywhere in the State.

Mr. H. W. Mann: I think they were inspired by some of your speeches when you were Premier.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not at all. The hon. member will be careful not to take for gospel all that he reads in the newspapers. He will have had evidence from the Attorney-General of the need for caution in that direction.

Mr. Marshall: He is unwise enough to walk upon any track.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have never supported secession, but I have on many occasions strongly criticised the Federation, and the manner in which Western Australia was being treated under it.

Mr. H. W. Mann: That is what I am referring to.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is quite a different thing from secession. The league made an appeal for funds to support its propaganda. Apart from a single donation of £100 given by an enthusiast, I believe it did not get another £5 throughout the State. No support came from anywhere, and the league went out of business for a year or two. The reason for that was that we were living in fairly prosperous times. People did not treat the matter seriously. During the past 12 months however, when the State, in common with the rest of Australia, has struck a severe depression, this league has come to life again. It has started its propaganda, taking advantage of the people's unsettled state of mind. This was its opportunity, when everyone was suffering from a depression complex, and eagerly looking round for someone to blame. This was the opportunity for the Dominion League to capitalise depression in the in-

terests of secession. It would be a wicked thing to take a vote of the people to-day, or even in the near future. Would anyone say that the people are normal to-day, after having experienced the difficult times they have passed through during the last 12 or 18 months? Are the people in a normal state of mind, and able to weigh the pros and cons of secession? Are they able to give a calm, unprejudiced and impartial judgment upon this matter? Is it not a fact that to-day, because of all our circumstances, the people are willing to blame anything and anybody for all their troubles? Would the Government be willing to take a referendum next year or within a few months on the question of the people's approval of their administration?

The Minister for Lands: You tried that before.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When?

The Minister for Lands: When you moved that amendment.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Would the Government be willing to submit to the judgment of the people as to their work during the past 18 months?

The Minister for Lands: You said no.

Hon. A. McCallum: We will have a clause put into the Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course they would not be willing. The people would vote down any condition of things as they are to-day. They would vote out of existence any form of Government. If we took a vote, not only on the question of seceding from the Federation, but on the question whether Parliament should be abolished and commissioners appointed, they would certainly vote in the affirmative. The people are not in a normal state of mind. This is not the time when they should be asked to give an expression of their views upon so far-reaching and vital a national question as this. I do not propose to support the Bill. It is only humbugging and fooling the people. I should think a considerable number of those who are supporting it are merely playing up to the people's prejudice. They know well that it is impossible of achievement. My first and greatest objection to this is that it is a futile effort, a waste of public funds at a time when we can ill afford it, because no possible result can follow, and many members know that well. Does anybody believe that even if this State gave a 100 per cent. vote for secession,

the Imperial Government would take any notice of it?

The Minister for Railways: It would counter another proposal, all the same.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What other proposal?

The Minister for Railways: Unification.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is another way of doing that besides putting up a referendum. Nobody knows better than the Minister for Mines, and other Ministers as well, that no matter what the result of the referendum may be, it can accomplish nothing. Unless a majority of the States and a majority of the people ask that the union shall be broken, the Imperial Government will not listen to the proposal for a moment. We are going to take this vote to London, present it to the Imperial Parliament, and ask them to give us relief. Does anybody imagine that the Parliament of Great Britain will give effect to that request without the concurrence of the other partners in the union?

Mr. Marshall: And that is assuming that they get a "yes" vote.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am granting that. We are entitled to assume that, for the sake of argument. If there were a 100 per cent. vote in favour of secession, would the Imperial Parliament accede to the request without the consent and the approval of the other partners to the Federation?

Mr. Marshall: Of course not.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They would not consider it for two moments. They would not listen to any individual State asking to break away without the consent of the other States. Nothing can be achieved by the proposed referendum. It stands out clearly that there is an indissoluble union into which we have entered, an indissoluble bond of Federation; and members know that the proposal in this Bill can lead nowhere. Then, is it not humbugging the people to take a referendum and to lead them to believe that if only they vote in the affirmative they can get out of Federation?

Mr. Piesse: It might assist us to get back some of the powers we have lost.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is only one way by which we can get out, and that is the method by which the Southern States of the American Union sought to break away from the Northern States. That method cost four years of civil war. And, after all, that civil war which drenched

the United States with blood for four years, was started on precisely the same issue as this—the right to secede from the Union. It was only during the later portion of the civil war, during the last two years, that the question of freeing the slaves was raised. The Southern States had a grievance, and decided to break away. That was after the Union had been in existence for 80 years. Only by a similar method can this State get out. Will the valiant members of the Dominion League be prepared to enter into mortal combat with the Eastern States? Personally, I would not join the secessionists. I have avoided war so far. Why go fooling the people, marching up and down the country, holding meetings and making speeches? Some of the speeches of which I have read reports in the Press, assert that there will be little difficulty in giving effect to secession, that the body which created our Federation, the Imperial Parliament, can dissolve it. Probably the Imperial Parliament could; but would they dream of doing it unless a majority of the States and a majority of the people asked for it? The first thing the British Government would do would be to forward the request for secession to the Commonwealth Government for their consideration. The Home Government refused to alter the method of appointing State Governors unless and until the whole of the States were in agreement on the subject. There was a time when several States were agreed upon a request for altering the method of appointment of State Governors. The answer received from Home was that as soon as all the States were in agreement the matter would be considered, but not until then. To imagine that because some 400,000 people out of 6,500,000 want to break away from the partnership the British Parliament would pass the necessary legislation is absurd. It would not be so bad if this State comprised something like half the population of the Commonwealth.

The Premier: But we have just as much right to consideration.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As a State, yes; but we cannot get away from our numbers. If 400,000 people say they want to break away from 6,000,000 people—

The Premier: If we have been treated unjustly—

Hon. P. COLLIER: It matters not how unjustly we have been treated. If we were being assassinated, the Imperial Parliament would not interfere. That is an argument against the other States, against the people in control of the Federation; but one cannot imagine the British Parliament entering into the rights and wrongs of our treatment. They would not for a moment investigate whether Western Australia had been treated fairly or otherwise. They would not decide the question.

The Premier: Who says they would?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I say, and the Premier knows perfectly well, that the British Parliament would never attempt to give effect to secession merely because we had grievances. They would say, "Go and compose your grievances; that is a matter for the Australian people."

The Minister for Railways: Could they refuse to take notice of that as a counter-move to another proposal to break the partnership?

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is entirely different. We are proposing to break the partnership without the consent of the rest of Australia. The other proposal, unification, can be carried into effect only if a majority of the States and a majority of the people approve of it.

The Minister for Railways: But we should not be absorbed in a new partnership if we do not want to go into it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have entered into the Federal Constitution, in which there is provision for amendment. I have read a statement by one authority that unification could not be brought about unless all the States agreed—not a majority of the States.

The Minister for Railways: That is not a settled point. That is merely an opinion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There are authoritative opinions in that direction. Prominent authorities in the Commonwealth hold that view. In any case, even if absolute unanimity is not required, if the alteration can be made, as is popularly supposed, by a majority of the States and a majority of the people—

The Minister for Railways: Do you think the Imperial Parliament would be justified in forcing us into a partnership of that sort?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know, but they would be infinitely less justified in doing what a majority of the people in only one State desire.

Mr. Marshall: And one of the smallest States of the Commonwealth.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This whole proposal represents an absolute waste of money, except as regards obtaining an expression of opinion from the people. Whether that is worth while or not, it can have no result. I repeat, this is not the time to get an expression of opinion from the people, when their minds are upset because of financial and other worries. They are not now in a position to express an unbiased opinion. Surely it is not beyond the capacity of the Australian people to reconstruct or remodel the Federal Constitution. The Premier said it had had 30 years' fair trial, and had failed. Thirty years is a fairly long span in the life of an individual, but what is it in the life of a nation?

Mr. Marshall: Nothing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is merely a second of time in the life of a nation. The American Union had existed for 80 years before the civil war arose over a position similar to this. The United States have been able to get along as a united people ever since the civil war. Ours being a new union with a new Constitution there were bound to be flaws in it. The Constitution was drafted by some of the best talent in Australia, but it was bound to disclose weaknesses as the years went on. The fact that it has not worked out in the manner anticipated, and the fact that there have been many changes, are not reasons for scrapping the Constitution, but reasons for reviewing it, altering it, and amending it. No serious attempt has yet been made to amend the Australian Constitution. After our 30 years' experience of its operation adversely to some of the States, the time has arrived when we might set to work to amend it so as to eliminate or alter those sections which are found to be faulty. We should not want to get out and say it is a failure after only 30 years.

Mr. Angelo: Suppose they will not agree to review the Constitution?

Hon. P. COLLIER: We have never seriously asked them to do so.

Mr. Angelo: We did it ten years ago.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Do not forget that during the past 15 years we have had four years of war and many years of aftermath,

and so I have no doubt the results of Federation are quite different to-day from what they would have been had there been no war. The Commonwealth has been loaded up with an enormous debt caused by the war. That in itself has necessitated a heavy burden of taxation which the people feel. But apparently it was unavoidable, it was the result of the war. When the war broke out in 1914 the Commonwealth had no public debt whatever.

Mr. Marshall: And we were pleased to ally ourselves with the other States then.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Commonwealth had no public debt. The £1,100,000,000 of Commonwealth debt has all been incurred since 1914. That has caused heavy taxation in all directions, and so has made Federation unpopular. Any Government or Parliament that proposed taxation on the people would be unpopular; that is a well known fact. Surely we are not bankrupt of political sagacity or the power to rule ourselves, to alter the things that need altering, to amend our Constitutions from time to time as amendment seems to be needed. That is the sensible remedy, not to break away and say we shall have nothing more to do with Federation.

Mr. Angelo: It was after the war that the then Prime Minister introduced a Bill in the Federal Parliament for the holding of a convention, and then went back on it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He was not the only Prime Minister to go back on all sorts of things. The hon. member is supporting a Government that have gone back on many things. What have we been doing to-day but going back on things to which previously we had committed ourselves? During the last three or four months in this House we have been passing Bills and going back on what we have previously put our signatures to.

Mr. Angelo: They have treated us badly. Do you believe in taking it lying down?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, but I do not believe in taking a foolish course that will get us nowhere.

Mr. Angelo: You were Premier for six years, but you did nothing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: What could you have done?

Mr. Angelo: Asked for a convention, and insisted upon it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not so foolish as to say that we should insist upon separation from the rest of Australia. It is of no

use insisting upon having your way if you cannot get it.

Mr. Angelo: Time after time you have said we have been badly treated, yet for six years as Premier you did not ask for a convention.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And I repeat that we have been badly treated; but what result shall we get by taking a course of action leading to the impossible, as the hon. member knows?

Mr. Angelo: I do not know it.

Mr. Marshall: If you do not know that, you know nothing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member knows it all right. One justification for this Bill is to be found in the frequent comment, "Oh, well, we won't be able to secede, we know, but if we get a big vote in favour of secession, it might make the Eastern States people sit up and take notice."

Mr. Sampson: The Dominion League have never taken up that blackmailing attitude.

Mr. Millington: They would put up the State at auction.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is in the hands of the electors of this State. One of the greatest complaints the Dominion League have is the high tariff, the burden of the tariff imposed on this State. But all their members were responsible for the building up of that tariff during the last eight or ten years. The last tariff that was passed by the Bruce-Page Government some years ago increased the duties all along the line and was supported by members of the Dominion League and their representatives in the Federal Parliament. The electors are to blame for the tariff, including the electors of this State. I remember a Federal campaign being fought on the question of the tariff, Sir George Pearce and the others making it a cry at the Federal elections. They were returned, and the Government they supported increased the tariff all along the line.

The Minister for Railways: The most active opposition to the tariff to-day is directed against the duties on whisky and gin.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier put forward, apparently as a reason in support of the Bill, that the ten years of Responsible Government prior to Federation was the most prosperous period in the history of

the State. Of course, the Premier knows that was due, not to the fact that we were not then in Federation, which had not then been consummated, but entirely to the discovery of gold in 1892, the enormous influx of population, and the introduction of millions of pounds worth of capital; all of which had nothing at all to do with the question whether the State was or was not in the Federation.

Mr. Angelo: But we had our own Customs then.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Your troubles will start when you get your own Customs again. Certainly those ten years were prosperous years, but not because we were not in the Federation. As a matter of fact, the years that followed Federation were even more prosperous years.

The Premier: No, no.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But they were. If the Premier uses that argument, I might as well use the argument that the vast development in this State since Federation has been due to our entering into Federation. It would be just as logical as in the argument of the Premier. During the ten years to which the Premier referred, the value of our wheat increased from £81,000 to £163,000. But in the first ten years after Federation the value of our wheat yield went up to £1,130,000, and in the second decade after Federation, from 1910 to 1920, it went to £5,000,000 odd, and last year it reached £6,000,000. I might as well say this is all evidence of the value of Federation to Western Australia. I could quote the same argument in regard to wool.

The Premier: You might use that argument, but it would not convince anyone.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is just as convincing as is the Premier's argument. But still it would not convince because, like the flowers that bloom in the spring, it has nothing to do with the case, any more than has the argument adduced by the Premier.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Yours has the virtue of being based on definite figures, whereas the Premier's was only guesswork.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. I could turn to wool. In the last ten years before Federation our woolclip increased in value by only £9,000, from £261,000 to £270,000. During the first ten years after Federation it increased from £270,000 to £1,000,000,

and in the next ten years it went to £2,000,000.

Mr. Angelo: Can you tell us the extent of our national debt?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Our national debt was incurred by ourselves, not by Federation. Federation was not responsible for it, but this Parliament was.

Mr. Angelo: The Federal Government left us all the expensive departments.

Hon. P. COLLIER: As a matter of fact I have heard on a hundred platforms many members of this House declaring that Western Australia was the most prosperous State in the Commonwealth. This has been talked at functions and public meetings everywhere and every day. During the past 18 months, all the States, including Western Australia, have experienced the depression. If Western Australia were suffering for the benefit of the Eastern States, as we are told, if they are octopi sucking the lifeblood from us, how is it that those States are infinitely worse off than we are? We are told that Federation has benefited only the two big States, Victoria and New South Wales.

Mr. H. W. Mann: And Queensland.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, to some extent Queensland. We are told the tariff has built up secondary industries and given an enormous impetus to trade in New South Wales and Victoria. But those two big States are suffering from the depression and are finding their difficulties greater than are ours. If it were a fact that those States are growing prosperous at the expense of this State, we should see evidence of their prosperity: they ought to be better off than we are, but actually they are infinitely worse off.

Mr. H. W. Mann: How much of our loan money has gone to the Eastern States through the tariff?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It has gone, not to the Eastern States, but to the Federal Treasury, and we have had our share of it. The hon. member seemingly does not understand that all the Customs revenue goes into the Federal Treasury and we get our share of it according to population. It does not go to the Eastern States. Certainly industries have been built up in Melbourne and Sydney, but those two States, Victoria and New South Wales, are worse off to-day than we are. Despite this cry for secession, which we have heard only during the last 12 months or so, I say this State has been more prosperous under Federation than ever before.

I cannot understand the mental outlook of those who believe that the people of the Eastern States are deliberately and maliciously treating us badly, that they are treating us as though we were a foreign race altogether. There are sections of people who like to thrust out their chests on every occasion and say, "We are a finer type than are the people of the Eastern States; we are much better than they are because we are more loyal, and even more loyal than Englishmen themselves; in fact we are a better type altogether." There are just as good people, men and women, in the Eastern States as there are in Western Australia. This claim for superiority on the part of Western Australians is very undignified.

The Premier: I have never heard it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier has heard it on many occasions at functions he has attended.

Mr. Panton: He has said it himself at those functions.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Has he not heard it at functions at the Town Hall at which he has been present? The attitude seems to be that as soon as a person comes to this State he is a better individual.

Hon. A. McCallum: There is no virtue in having been born here.

The Premier: No one has ever claimed that there was.

Hon. A. McCallum: Anyhow you had nothing to do with your being born here.

Mr. Marshall: No, the Premier is here by compulsion; we are here by adoption. We had the choice but the Premier had none, and he cannot get out of it. Some of us are here by accident.

The Premier: It was a bad accident that brought you into the world.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There is a very pertinent paragraph in a Sydney paper which arrived here only yesterday, and I think it is worth quoting.

Mr. H. W. Mann: It was written by a Western Australian.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It does not matter by whom it was written, because it deals with statistics. Anyway, I know who the hon. member has in mind. This is what it says—

When Western Australia entered the Federation it had 4.76 per cent. of the total population of the Commonwealth, and at the end of 1929 it had 6.50 per cent. of the total population of the Commonwealth.

Those figures are really startling in view of the supposed oppressive effect of Federation.

The population of Perth is more than five times greater than it was in 1901. No other capital has much more than doubled its population.

The population of Western Australia has increased five times in the last 30 years! I have taken the trouble to look up the figures of the increase in the population of the other States and I find that Melbourne and Sydney have only doubled their population in 30 years. We have increased ours fivefold.

The Premier: They have in their cities nearly three times the number of people we have in the whole State.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Premier knows the difference between the total increase and the proportionate increase. There is no relation at all. The paragraph goes on—

Western Australian State taxation is only £4 8s. 7d. per inhabitant per annum—

That is the huge burden we have on our shoulders!

—as compared with £6 2s. 3d. in New South Wales, £5 3s. in Queensland, £6 0s. 2d. in South Australia, and £5 2s. 4d. in Tasmania.

So our State taxation per head of population is the lightest of the six States. This is the result of 30 years of that monster, Federation!

The Minister for Railways: What about Federal taxation?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Federal taxation is the same all over the Commonwealth. We are the lightest taxed State of all. The paragraph goes on to say—

The railway earnings are higher than those of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania. The average factory wage is higher than that of Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania, and about £12 a year per worker above Australia's average. The percentage of unemployed, according to the latest returns, is less than that in New South Wales, South Australia, and Tasmania.

Then the article concludes by saying—

Yet the Perth secessionists say their State has been blighted by Federation and ruined by the tariff.

What are we going to do when we start this new dominion? Shall we be on an equality with Canada with its 9,000,000 people, with the Irish Free State with its

3½ millions, with the Dominion of South Africa with its 7,000,000? Shall we swing into line with our 400,000? When we start as a new dominion, we shall have to begin with new departments; we shall have to take over the post office and set up a defence department, start a navy and an army. We shall go to the next war as Western Australian dominion soldiers. We shall pay war pensions, old age and invalid pensions, and all the other obligations now carried by the Commonwealth Government. All this is to be done when we get going. Then we shall have to take over our proportion of Australian's debt.

Mr. Sampson: And they can have our proportion of Canberra.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Reams of figures have been quoted to show the effect of separation. Even balance sheets have been worked out—all utterly worthless. The greatest genius living to-day could not with any degree of accuracy work out a statement of the position we would be in if we separated. So all these partisan figures—not official figures—as to the benefits to be derived by the State are absolutely worthless.

Mr. Sampson: Whoever prepared the statement you read just now is opposed to secession.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Whoever he is, he is not more biassed than are some of the members of the Dominion League. Moreover, he has not expressed any opinion at all; he has just given figures—no comment whatever.

The Minister for Railways: He did not tell you what the jealousy between New South Wales and Victoria regarding the establishment of Canberra cost Australia. The Federal Government with some of our money have been assisting the Murray River settlement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I know. Will the Minister for Railways understand that I am not defending the manner in which Federation has worked out. I admit it has worked hardships on this State. I have expressed the opinion on many occasions that it has worked detrimentally to Western Australia, but I say that it is impossible to find a way out.

Mr. Angelo: What do you suggest?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No matter how it has operated against us, we shall have to con-

tinue to endure it. This Bill will not get us out of it.

Mr. Angelo: Can you suggest an alternative plan?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and I am going to move an amendment in Committee that will give the electors the right to vote for an alternative plan, not a single bald question. There should be no objection to giving the people of this State the opportunity to express another opinion if they do not favour the separation of the State from the Commonwealth.

Mr. Angelo: To get constructive criticism from your side is quite a new thing.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know that the hon. member has ever illuminated the House with very much constructive criticism.

Mr. Angelo: Twelve years ago I urged that another Convention should be held.

Hon. P. COLLIER: And because the hon. member did not get satisfaction, he now wants a referendum in the hope of being able to break away altogether. The hon. member's constructive criticism has cost this State many thousands of pounds.

Mr. Angelo: No.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He has never brought forward one scheme that has not been an utter failure.

Mr. Marshall: Peanuts!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order.

Mr. Marshall: There was the Primary Producers' Bank.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They made him a director of the Primary Producers' Bank, and no wonder it went to the wall.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That bank went smash.

Mr. Angelo: You know the cause of that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That bank might have survived had it not extended its operations to Western Australia.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) has brought this on himself.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Talk about constructive criticism!

Mr. Angelo: That is what we want.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the Leader of the Opposition resume his seat? I must ask hon. members for the last time to observe the rules of debate. Interjections across the floor of the House have been too fre-

quent during the last hour, and they must cease.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I can only come to the conclusion that there is a purpose behind this, and it is to attribute all the troubles of the State to Federation and the Federal Parliament in order to divert people's thoughts from their own shortcomings.

Hon. M. F. Troy: And their unfulfilled promises.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is what is behind all this. In order that those who support this movement may divert attention from the shortcomings of their own party, they shout long and loudly against Federation and pursue Federation all the time. By adopting that course, they are hopeful that the people will forget the shortcomings of the present party in power. It is so easy to blame the other fellow. When an individual knows that his party is in the wrong, that is the time to blame someone else, and keep screaming louder and more often against the other fellow. That is behind this cry for secession. All the troubles of the State, even the price of wheat and wool, are said to be due to Federation. Rather than that, we ourselves are responsible in a large measure for much of the difficulty with which we are confronted. When the campaign commences, I can imagine what the orators in support of secession will say in the country districts, particularly where there is no Press and where their remarks and statistics will not be checked. My word, Federation will get slatheram whack from them! Federation will be responsible for everything.

Mr. Coverley: They will get Junction River justice.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Federation will be blamed for every conceivable ill.

Mr. Angelo: And you have blamed them yourself.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have admitted that, over and over again.

Mr. Angelo: And you are too honest to go back on your statement.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have admitted that Federation has been harmful in some ways, but why fool the people by suggesting that they can get out of their difficulties by this

means? The hon. member knows that it cannot be, and yet we are asked to squander public funds for no purpose whatever. If we could accomplish something by means of a vote, it would be a different matter. I oppose the Bill, and during the Committee stage I shall move an amendment.

Mr. Marshall: Hear, hear! A statesmanlike speech compared with others we have heard.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. MILLINGTON (Mount Hawthorn) [8.50]: The debate in this House on the question of a referendum on secession has been raised to a higher level than the people of the State have been accustomed to during recent months. It appears to me that an attempt is being made to ask the people of Western Australia to answer a question respecting which they have not had the opportunity to obtain full and reliable information. Referenda that have been held in Australia have always been conducted in conformity with the practice of informing the people themselves on the issues, thus placing the people in the position of a jury to decide matters of national importance. To achieve that end, the cases for and against have been placed before the people, if not from unbiassed sources, certainly in a form that could plainly be understood. Apart from my objection to secession itself, I contend that the people will be asked in the near future, if the Bill be agreed to, to decide a momentous question affecting the national life of the State and involving far-reaching financial issues. They will be asked to decide that question without being adequately informed. It is an important issue and I suggest that not many people in the State and not many members of this House have had an opportunity to size up the position from a financial point of view. Before the people are asked to decide this question, they should appreciate what it means. At present a certain amount of misleading propaganda is being indulged in. The financial position is being stated not on recent figures but on those applying some years ago. If the financial position is to be a consideration, it should clearly be stated to the people before this major question is submitted to them. We should have an official statement

issued, not one from biased sources. The Under Treasurer should be called upon to give evidence before a committee or a commission to indicate what effect secession will have upon the financial position of the State. That would enable people to realise what their obligations would be. At present it seems to me that even if the question were agreed to in the affirmative and we were granted secession, it will simply mean that the very people from whom we are seeking to secede, will be those we shall have to call upon for favourable terms. It is certain that Western Australia could not shoulder its obligations without the assistance of the other States and of the Commonwealth. If we were granted secession, there would still be the Commonwealth of Australia. From that point of view, some further information is necessary before the Government foist this question upon the people for decision. Those who advocate secession have certainly not taken into consideration the lessons presented by history. In the past, nations that sought to conquer other peoples, first endeavoured to disintegrate those with whom they were about to fight. Now, when we are confronted with troubles, it is contended that we should break up the Australian nation, and so benefit ourselves. That has not been the experience of nations in bygone years. Let us consider some of the instances that history affords. Take the German nation. When it was composed of small principalities and states, those small entities were easy prey for contending forces, and so those small principalities and states were beaten to the ground. Although the British Empire was contending against that nation a few years back, we must admit that, as a result of the lessons gained in earlier years, the German principalities and states became consolidated, until they developed into one of the strongest nations known to modern history. As a result, Germany was able to take her place, not as a dozen or 20 separate principalities and states, but as a compact nation. Then there has been reference to the United States of America. Had that country still been divided into small states and not united—it appears to be the view of the secessionists that there is advantage in disunity—she would not hold her present position in the world. It is because the United States of America are united that the nation is a world force. Then consider the position in Australia. If

we were allowed to secede we would have difficulties associated with our small population scattered over an enormous area. We know the difficulties that confronted nations suffering from similar limitations in times gone by. It is certainly no way to overcome our difficulties by separating ourselves from our own people. If our difficulties were geographical or arose because of the various races that occupied the several parts of the Australian continent, there might be something in the claims of the secessionists, but that is not the position. There is no country in the world that lends itself to unity more than the continent of Australia. In the main we have been educated alike and have developed common ideals, in accordance with accepted practices common throughout Australia. On the other hand, in other countries of the world there are difficulties and disadvantages that make for disintegration and disintegration. There are such difficulties as those associated with racial characteristics, varying climatic conditions and distinct languages. All those forces make for severance, whereas in Australia everything makes for a united people. If Western Australia were given the right to secede it would mean that our people would not participate in the common policy applicable to the rest of Australia. Let us assume that Queensland sought and secured secession. That State has a tropical climate, and depends upon tropical culture. An agitation might arise there that would secure the scrapping of the White Australia policy. What would be the position of Australia then? We have no control over the policy of Queensland, and in the interests of the sugar industry and other tropical activities, Queensland might secure the advantages, as they might deem them, of indentured coloured labour. If that were achieved, it would be disastrous from the point of view of Australia as a whole. Our interests would be adversely affected in this State. Suppose New South Wales secured secession and became the Dominion of New South Wales.

Hon. P. Collier: With full rights to do as they liked.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Yes; they might have control of their whole policy and particularly—I hope the secessionists will not be nervous—their financial policy. We can easily understand what might happen if New South Wales as a Dominion set up its avowed policy of repudiation. But for the

Commonwealth going to the assistance of New South Wales, that State would have adopted the policy of repudiation. It would simply have refused to pay. I realise that I am not making the impression that I should by mentioning repudiation because of the Bill that was under discussion earlier in the sitting for the compulsory loan conversion. The enormity of the repudiation policy does not seem to be so pronounced as it was a few months ago, and I am not quite sure that the Lang policy of repudiation is not gaining ground. In the event of New South Wales becoming a separate Dominion, that might be its policy, and it would be damaging to the credit of Australia because the prominence received by a Dominion of that size and population might lead people overseas to confound its policy with the general policy of Australia. Under Federation there is the safeguard of the Commonwealth protecting those things we consider of vital importance to Australia and to its reputation. But once Australia lost control and the States were in a position to dictate their individual policies, there would be no recognised Australian policy. There would be half a dozen policies conflicting and perhaps damaging to the neighbouring States or Dominions. From whatever standpoint we examine the question, secession has nothing to commend it from an Australian point of view. It is what appears to secessionists to be an easy way out, but though there may be certain advantages, it is time the disadvantages and the dangers that would accrue from secession were also stated to the people, and particularly is this desirable before they are called upon to vote. Before a vote is taken a full and unbiassed statement should be made of the finances and the various services rendered by the Commonwealth. I have seen no adequate statement of the policy of defence if Western Australia seceded. I presume that any nation contemplating an attack on Australia would be pleased to think that the States had seceded from the Federation and that, instead of attacking the Commonwealth, they had six separate States to tackle.

The Minister for Works: No would be satisfied with the British Navy.

Mr. MILLINGTON: There is a lot of peace propaganda at present. I used to try to discuss peace when the war was on, but I find a great many peace propagandists to-day who tabooed the subject in those

times. The nation has to face the responsibility for defending itself. Those who coolly suggest that we should cut away from the Commonwealth after 30 years of experience, after an experience of war and all the organisation it entailed, should state what adequate proposals they have for the defence of Western Australia. The defence problem in Western Australia is greater than in any other State on account of the length of coast line to be defended. If Australia had to be defended the most vulnerable part, I should say, would be this State with its enormous coast line and sparse population. Even to a layman, it appears to be the most difficult part of the continent to defend. Yet our small population would have to undertake its defence. During a time of war, the whole force of a nation has to be projected on to the weakest point. If we seceded and got into trouble, we would have to call upon the Eastern States to defend the Dominion that had cut away from them, the Dominion that wished to have nothing to do with them, the Dominion that had considered the Federation a menace. The Eastern States would be called upon to do the work they are doing now.

Mr. Sampson: You would not get very far if you had to call on the Eastern States.

Mr. MILLINGTON: There is a considerable amount of misrepresentation in stating that it is a case of secession versus unification. That is not the question the people are to be asked to decide. They are to be asked to decide whether the Federation as it exists shall continue or whether we shall secede, not from a unified Australia, but from a Federated Australia. No amount of misrepresentation will alter that. It is not a vote to decide whether the people favour secession or unification. Yet the bogey of unification is continually dragged across the trail and is gaining a good deal of favour. If we put up the proposal unification versus secession, I venture to say many people who favour Federation would prefer secession. But that is not the question. However much misrepresentation there may be, the question would be whether the people favoured the present system of Federation or secession for Western Australia.

The Premier: We will have to face the question of unification, you know.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The proposal to secede is one to break up Australia and

divide it, and that is against all modern practice.

The Premier: Modern practice!

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Yes, and ancient practice, too.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Yes, particularly is it against modern practice.

The Premier: What about Ireland?

Mr. MILLINGTON: During the war the smaller States were comparatively helpless, and even amongst the greatest nations of the world there were treaties and amalgamations. In the war it was not a question of one nation against another. It was a question of amalgamations.

Mr. Parker: What happened after the war? Those amalgamations were broken up.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Mighty as Great Britain appeared to be as a naval power, she soon discovered that alone she was comparatively helpless. Whatever nations might have been in times past, it became necessary for them to amalgamate either under pre-existing treaties or under treaties made during the war. In the realms of industry and finance, although in times past there was a good deal of control by individuals and by smaller companies and corporations, in modern times the practice has been amalgamation. Throughout the world it has been necessary for industrial and financial organisations to grow bigger or burst. Taking a line from history and having regard to modern conditions instead of division being the order of the day, it is amalgamation. The necessity is to grow bigger. It is claimed that we will get out of our difficulties by secession. How much notice could we excite in the financial world or in the industrial world as a separate dominion? It is claimed that we suffer unjust competition from the Eastern States, they having established their businesses and being situated in the financial centre of Australia, and that we are handicapped accordingly.

Mr. Sampson: Have not you said time after time that goods were dumped in Western Australia?

Mr. MILLINGTON: That is true.

Mr. Sampson: That is a violation of the section of the Constitution stipulating that dumping shall not be permitted.

The Premier: The tariff enables the Eastern States to dump.

Mr. MILLINGTON: If the Constitution were violated, we would have redress.

Dumping has taken place because the people of Western Australia have been prepared to purchase the goods dumped here, to the disadvantage of our own industries. If Western Australia secedes, it will have no influence on what is a common practice in modern industry and commerce. Dumping is a common practice. It is one of the methods by which industry is conducted. Big factories, after supplying the local demand, dump their surplus into other countries. That occurs the world over. Even if we seceded, that difficulty would not be overcome. It is a question we shall have to tackle, and it seems to me that regardless of any legal protection, the real remedy is for our people to realise the importance of nurturing local industries and building them up, instead of taking advantage of the goods dumped into the State. That is one direction in which we could attempt to get further protection by legislation. If ever there was a time when it was inopportune to suggest secession it is the present. This is a time of trouble. One of the earliest lessons we were taught was to stick to a mate. I have never heard it suggested that if the mate got into trouble, made a fool of himself, or even got into gaol, one should desert him.

Mr. Wells: Suppose he got you into trouble.

Mr. MILLINGTON: We should not desert him. It is an understood thing that one should stick to his mate. In Australia where the States have been living in amity for a number of years during times of prosperity, we should not desert them now that we are faced with the greatest economic difficulty that has ever confronted Australia. Just at this time, when there is need to maintain that good relationship, when there is greater need for mutual help than ever in Australia, we are suggesting scrapping that relationship and deserting our mates, and no matter what becomes of them, in some mysterious way we are going to benefit from the severance of that relationship. In pursuance of this pernicious doctrine of breaking away from the rest of Australia in a time of direst need, when the people have exhausted all comparative terms in the endeavour to show the stress in which Australia finds herself, this bogey of secession is raised. The time is most inopportune, and the most unjustifiable time for

raising it that could be taken. If it were suggested in our times of prosperity, when industry and trade were buoyant, the matter could be discussed quite academically and probably with some justification. It was discussed during that time, and an attempt was made to obtain some recompense for the disabilities from which this State was suffering. I do not think we received the full recompense we should have had for our disabilities, but the matter was put up from a State point of view, and a certain amount of sympathy was extended from the Commonwealth and the Eastern States. They could have turned us down. We had no legal power to demand such redress as was given to us. The fact remains that the Eastern States, when the case was properly stated—I believe the same thing would occur again in similar circumstances—granted Western Australia a certain amount of redress. Because we did not get as much as we wanted, that is no reason why the policy, which was partially successful, should not be continued. I would suggest to the Premier that, having accepted on behalf of his Government and his supporters on that side of the House, the responsibility of placing the case before the people and asking them to vote on it, he should take steps to collate and publish information the people are entitled to get. If a jury were asked to decide a case, they would refuse to do so until they had heard the evidence. They would expect everything to be explained, investigated, and analysed. So far this has not been done. The Government appear to have rushed in at a time when this question was exciting a certain amount of public interest. There certainly has been no attempt properly to analyse the position, or to show what the effect will be if the vote is carried in the affirmative. The Government have an obligation more pressing than placing the question before the people. The responsibility rests upon them to publish reliable information upon the question. The people of this State have not the slightest idea what will be the effect of secession in respect to our financial position. The Premier knows no attempt has been made to set out the manner in which we can undo the Financial Agreement, and the other obligations that are common to Australia. Left to ourselves we could not meet those finan-

cial obligations if we cut ourselves adrift from the rest of Australia.

The Premier: We would be very much better off without the Financial Agreement.

Mr. MILLINGTON: The Premier would have to make arrangements to take over all those obligations that rightly fall upon Western Australia.

The Premier: Not under the Financial Agreement.

Mr. MILLINGTON: He would have to go to the very people from whom he was seceding, and ask them for favours. He would not be in a position to pay up himself. These secessionists are boisterous about cutting adrift from the Commonwealth and giving a lot of cheek to the Eastern States, but, if we are called upon to wipe out all our financial obligations, we cannot do so. Even the money that will be expended in the taking of the referendum will be borrowed per medium of the Loan Council. It cannot come out of revenue. Everything that is spent from Loan fund is advanced through the Loan Council. First of all we borrow money, take the poll, and then inform the Eastern States that we have decided to secede. If the result of the poll were in the affirmative, we would have to go to the Eastern States to ask as a favour for something we now receive as a right. The Government have been involved hurriedly in this question. There cannot be any great desire from the mass of the people that this vote should be taken. Outside of a few partisans indulging in a certain amount of publicity, the people themselves are not concerned; in fact, they are indifferent. The Government have taken note of a certain demand for a referendum. When the people really want a thing, they make a noise about it. There has been more noise about other things than there has been about secession during recent months. As mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, there will certainly be a suspicion that the question is being raised at this time in order to side-track the real issues that face the State.

The Premier: What are you going to say about unification?

Mr. MILLINGTON: We cannot discuss that under this Bill. The people will not be asked to decide whether they agree to a

unified system in Australia or anything else of the kind. They are merely to be asked whether they will secede from the Federation as it exists, or remain in it.

The Premier: What are you going to say in respect to unification?

Mr. Marshall: Wait until that comes up.

The Premier: You are pledged to it.

Mr. Marshall: You were not pledged to this, but you are being forced into it. The spring onion crowd forced you into it.

Mr. MILLINGTON: When that question comes up, its merits or demerits can be argued. The question now is whether the people want to secede from a federation, which has met with the approval of the people of Australia, and has been a workable federation for the last 30 years.

The Premier: What has?

Mr. MILLINGTON: We are not discussing some supposititious form of unified control, but federation versus secession. We are discussing whether we are to remain part of the federation, or whether it will be of advantage for us to secede and cut adrift from it. Federation has operated under very severe tests and trials for 30 years. There appears to be an idea that 30 years is a great length of time in the history of nations, whereas it is the briefest period. Even now, Federation is only in the experimental stage.

The Premier: And yet you want unification.

Mr. MILLINGTON: We are continually suggesting amendments to the method by which the States are linked together. In every form of federation in the world there are difficulties in separate States, and in certain portions of the Empire and the Dominions. We have difficulties in Western Australia. There are districts which consider they do not get a fair deal. The whole countryside generally thinks it is suffering from disabilities as distinct from, say, the metropolitan area. The people who go to the North-West are dissatisfied, because they have not the conditions of modern civilisation such as are enjoyed in Perth. Those people do not suggest cutting the State into various parts, and thus having separate control in each part. Because throughout Australia, it is suggested that some have been advantaged and others disadvantaged, one does not propose to overcome the difficulty by secession. This would merely mean leaving the problem to be solved by other por-

tions of Australia which still make up the Federation of the Commonwealth.

The Premier: What would you consider a fair trial, 60 years?

Mr. MILLINGTON: After 60 years or 100 years there would still be difficulties. It is not an easy thing for States to agree on all points, or for the different parts of a nation always to agree, but they do not get over their difficulties by the means suggested in this Bill. We are not going to meet our position by cutting our throats.

The Premier: There is no talk of cutting our throats. We are very much alive, surely.

Mr. MILLINGTON: This Bill is set up as a means of overcoming our difficulties. All the difficulties that face this State are laid at the door of Federation.

The Premier: It is so.

Mr. MILLINGTON: If we could overcome our difficulties by seceding, I should be an ardent secessionist. I do not think the people of the State should be told that. They should be told they have to work their way out of their own difficulties. If we are at a disadvantage with the Eastern States because their industries were developed at an earlier stage than ours, and because they have a greater population than we have, then we have to set about it to overcome the situation as best we can with the means at our disposal. Have we not to tell the people of Western Australia that it is part of their job in developing the State? Although I do not boast Western Australia as superior to the other States, I do think we are from every point of view on an equality with them. Western Australia certainly has all the advantages needed for the building-up of a prosperous and successful country. Since we are at least equal to the inhabitants of the Eastern States, shall we say that the fact of industries having been developed earlier in those States than here represents an insuperable difficulty? Should we not rather say that we will remain part of the Australian Federation and that it shall be our job to overcome our difficulties? If we face our problem from that aspect, we shall be doing our duty as Western Australians. We shall not do it by running away from the job. It is a matter of diagnosing the disease from which Western Australia suffers. A good many quack nostrums are now being advocated. We have to be extremely

careful not to give the wrong medicine to people who are in a state of depression. The right medicine is to tell them to stand up to their job. We are not entitled to whine to the Eastern States to help us out of our difficulties. Many of them we can overcome ourselves. The building up of our secondary industries, as well as the development of our primary industries, is the task to which we should devote ourselves, instead of attempting to fool the people by leading them to believe we can get rid of our difficulties by cutting away from our natural allies, the people of the Eastern States. The Premier is acting as a repudiationist in attempting to break a solemn agreement made by the people of Western Australia. If ever unification comes about, it will be because the Australian people desire it and vote for it. Those who have to apologise are those who seek to break up Australian Federation. Western Australia is the first to make the attempt, and those responsible will have to be classified as people willing to break an agreement when they think that is the easiest way out. Probably the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) is the only member who can do justice to that aspect. The secessionists want a real good talking to in real Australian language.

The Premier: The member for Murchison is not here.

Mr. MILLINGTON: If the Bill is enacted and the referendum taken, the Premier will find that instead of the question being decided on its merits there will be violent partisans on either side, with little real knowledge of the problem. The Western Australian people are not sufficiently informed on the question which the Government propose they should be called upon to decide. Therefore I shall vote against the Bill.

On motion by Hon. A. McCallum, debate adjourned.

MOTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK CLIENTS.

To inquire by Royal Commission—Amendment moved.

Debate resumed from the 19th November on the following motion by Mr. Barnard:—

That, in the opinion of this House, a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire

into the disabilities of Agricultural Bank clients, particularly group settlers, in the South-West.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [9.36]: I support the motion. Sufficient reasons have been advanced for making an inquiry as proposed. I do not altogether blame the officials of the Agricultural Bank, who are not responsible for all the grievances any more than the settlers are. A fair share of blame attaches to either side. An inquiry cannot do harm, and must do good. I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the motion:—"and ex-group settlers domiciled throughout the State who desire repatriation owing to circumstances having compelled them to leave group settlements."

No matter the town one visits in Western Australia, it is largely filled with ex-group settlers. Among those ex-group settlers are some Australians, but the great majority of them come from another part of the world. Either the wrong kind of migrant has been brought out for settlement, or there is something radically wrong with the group settlement system. I believe that in Fremantle there are more ex-group settlers than the number of actual group settlers represented by any member in this Chamber. They have been piling up in Fremantle from the group settlements for the last 10 years, week by week. Apparently good men have been put on bad blocks, and bad men on good blocks. Good men have also been put off their blocks, and are now in the cities and towns. Again, there are men now on blocks who will never make good. If it is true that good men have been put off their blocks and driven to join the army of unemployed in the cities, steps should be taken to ascertain whether they cannot be got back on the land. Failing that, we should return them to the country whence they came, so that they may no longer be an expense to Western Australia. Similarly as regards unsuitable men on the groups; they also should be repatriated. I repeat, the inquiry can do no harm and must do much good. I commend my amendment to hon. members.

MR. SPEAKER: I have a recollection, with which perhaps hon. members will agree, that the words which the amendment proposes to add to the motion have already been discussed here during this session. If that is so, I certainly cannot accept the amend-

ment. Am I right, Mr. Sleeman, in saying that those words were discussed in this House some months ago?

MR. SLEEMAN: No, I do not think that is right, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Not as regards group settlers: as regards migrants generally.

MR. SPEAKER: Very well.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY, SETTLERS' DISABILITIES.

Royal Commission's Report.

Order read for the resumption of the debate, from the 18th November, on the following motion by Mr. J. I. Mann:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should give earnest consideration to the report of the Royal Commission on the disabilities of agricultural settlers with a view to providing immediate relief to distressed primary producers.

Question put and passed.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 6).

Second Reading.

MR. H. W. MANN (Perth) [9.45], in moving the second reading, said: This short Bill has been brought down with a view to bringing into line with other financial emergency measures the matter of provisional certificates granted by the Licensing Court. The procuring of a license for a district may be done in two ways, namely, by transfer of a license from one district to another, or by way of provisional certificate procuring a new license. To procure a new license an applicant makes application to the Licensing Court, the court fixes an area, and the applicant must secure the signatures of a majority of the electors in that area before he can again approach the court. Having secured those signatures and presented the petition to the Licensing Court, the applicant then goes before the court for a hearing. If the court is of opinion that the new license is in the best interests of the

district, a provisional certificate is issued to the applicant, and a period is fixed within which the hotel premises must be built. During 1930 and early in 1931 a number of applicants applied for provisional certificates. Their cases came before the court, and provisional certificates were granted. Those applications were made at a time before the real stringent period of the depression was reached, and in each instance the applicant had made suitable arrangements for the financing of the construction of the hotel. But a period intervened before the certificates were granted. Then when the applicants came to proceed with the buildings, they found that the financial arrangements they had made had broken down. So, not through any wrongdoing on the part of the applicant, not due to speculation or to a rash application, their plans came to nought. The cost of purchasing the land and the additional expense in connection with the application in most instances exceeded £1,000. Then the court fixed a premium of £2,000 on each hotel. If those gentlemen are unable to proceed with the construction of their hotels, each will lose from £3,500 to £4,000. For the past year we have been accepting legislation giving relief to tenants and mortgagees and almost every section of the community. Only last week the Attorney General introduced a Bill to arrange for relief to shareholders and preference shareholders in companies. So it is with confidence I introduce this Bill and ask the House to extend relief to these applicants for one year. The Bill is to amend Section 62 of the Act, wherein the period is confined to one year for the construction of a hotel. In several instances the period fixed by the court for these applicants I am considering has expired, but the Bill makes provision that the period shall be extended until December, 1932, when all our emergency measures will expire. It might be suggested that these were speculative applications. That is not so. They were made by men with a full knowledge of the trade, men who have been in the trade for upwards of a quarter of a century, and have held good public positions. They were prepared to put their life savings into the construction of those hotels. It is only owing to the depression that they have been unable to proceed. I may be

asked whether those people will be in a position to build those hotels between now and December of 1932. They are hopeful that they will.

Mr. Wansbrough: And you will come back and ask for a further extension if they cannot.

Mr. H. W. MANN: I hope that will not be necessary, that the general financial position will be so much improved that all the emergency measures will not be any longer required, and that the financial institutions will be again prepared to advance money on reasonable security. If that happens, those hotels will certainly be built.

The Minister for Railways: But why not have an open field? If you give those men special rights you close those rights against everybody else.

Mr. H. W. MANN: The Bill merely extends the time to December, 1932.

The Minister for Railways: Which means that until that time no one else can apply for licenses in those districts.

Mr. H. W. MANN: Well that is only reasonable.

The Minister for Railways: Those people applied for the licenses when they knew the depression was on us.

Mr. H. W. MANN: One might as well say that a person who got relief in 1930 was not entitled to that relief because he knew the depression was coming.

Mr. Marshall: You are baulking all competition for another 12 months.

Mr. H. W. MANN: The Licensing Court excluded competition for a year.

Mr. Marshall: And now you want to baulk it for another year.

Mr. H. W. MANN: I am entitled to ask for this relief because of the other financial emergency measures that have been passed. Every reasonable precaution was taken that the buildings should be constructed, and but for the financial stringency they would have been constructed.

The Minister for Railways: Suppose the position is not altered in the 12 months, will you ask for another extension?

Mr. H. W. MANN: If I did it would make your suggestion reasonable; but it is not reasonable at present.

The Minister for Railways: Yes, it is. These people have already had 12 months.

Hon. H. W. MANN: And during that time the depression has been at its worst, and hundreds of men have been out of work.

Mr. Marshall: Your Bill will not find employment for five men.

Mr. H. W. MANN: If those buildings are constructed it will mean an expenditure of £50,000. I understand that two of the applicants will be able to proceed with the construction of their buildings within a very short time. I am amazed at opposition being shown to the Bill.

Mr. Wansbrough: You do not suggest that a request for information constitutes opposition to the Bill?

Mr. H. W. MANN: No, certainly not.

The Minister for Railways: They still have the right to apply at any future date. Why try to exclude all others?

Mr. H. W. MANN: Why should we attempt to exclude any other individual? These people proceeded according to the Act with their applications, and the bench found that a license in each case was necessary. The applicants were prepared to go on, but financial stringency prevented their doing so.

The Minister for Railways: There is nothing to prevent them applying when we get over our financial stringency.

Mr. H. W. MANN: That argument might just as reasonably be applied in connection with granting relief to tenants. In the case of lessees of buildings we gave them relief to the extent of 22½ per cent., but in this case the applicants will lose £2,000 each. I have every confidence that the Bill will find a place on the statute book. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. PANTON (Leederville) [10.3]: In opposing the Bill I have no axe to grind and no vendetta against anyone. I have already stated that I have an objection to tinkering with the Licensing Act which I look upon as one of the best pieces of legislation on our statute book. It was framed after the liquor trade had been investigated by a select committee and a Royal Commission which travelled throughout the State.

Mr. Marshall: And the Bill took six weeks to go through this House.

Mr. PANTON: My objection is to continually tinkering with the Act. Regarding the three gentlemen in question, I know only one of them, and I have nothing against him. But there are many who have had to

suffer similarly in the State during the past 12 or 18 months, and no one has come along to ask for retrospective legislation to assist them out of their difficulties. If this Bill be carried I see no reasonable objection to any member on the Government side of the House saying that Mr. Smith, a reputable resident of Katanning, or Mr. Jones, of Kondinin, are unable to pay the Industries Assistance Board and therefore we should assist them by Act of Parliament.

Mr. Wansbrough: And they would be justified in asking for assistance.

Mr. PANTON: Of course.

The Minister for Agriculture: The I.A.B. would not refuse them an extension of time for their payments.

Mr. PANTON: The I.A.B. will push them out.

Mr. H. W. Mann: It is the function of the I.A.B. to give relief.

Mr. PANTON: The member for Perth knows just as well as I do that there are scores of people in the city to-day, who were in fairly comfortable circumstances 18 months ago, and who entered into obligations regarding the purchase of homes, put up their £600 or £800 which amounts are a great deal more to them than the £2,000 would be to the people about whom the hon. member speaks so glibly. Now those people who purchased their homes are unable to complete the payments. What are we going to do for them?

Mr. H. W. Mann: We passed a Bill to give them relief.

Mr. PANTON: Nothing of the sort; they have lost their homes and have not obtained any relief. If the member for Perth is prepared to put up a motion that the Government should be requested to refund the payments made by the three gentlemen in question I will support it.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Why do you not go all the way?

Mr. PANTON: Because I do not believe in altering the Act to suit these people.

Mr. H. W. Mann: We altered it for the member for Guildford the other night and in this case to suit one man.

Mr. PANTON: The circumstances were entirely different in that case. The position as was explained had been going on for 15 years and the object was to keep out a middleman.

Mr. H. W. Mann: I did not suggest it was not necessary.

Mr. PANTON: It is absurd to suggest that every time two or three individuals get into trouble Parliament is to be asked to alter existing legislation to help them out of their difficulties. The hon. member has told us that one applicant paid £920 for a block of land at Mount Hawthorn. I understand that a block alongside that was purchased for £120 and that if it had not been for the fact that it was known the other block was wanted for a hotel, it also could have been bought for £120. But so anxious was the intending purchaser to secure it and get on with the job that he was prepared to pay £920. There is no reason why the people concerned should not again apply for their licenses when the financial position is improved. I object to amending the Act to make it retrospective, and I hope the House will not set up a precedent by passing the Bill.

On motion by Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

ROYAL COMMISSION—LAND AND HOMES LIMITED.

The Premier laid on the Table the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the transactions of the Land and Homes Ltd.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [10.12]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 7.30 p.m. to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.13 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 25th November, 1931.

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

QUESTION—SECESSION REFERENDUM, COST.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON (for Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom) asked the Chief Secretary: In the event of a Bill being carried authorising the taking of a referendum on secession, what will be the estimated cost of the referendum?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: Approximately £5,000.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to the Hon. A. Lovekin (Metropolitan) on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—LAND AGENTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—FORESTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Third Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.36]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.