

# Legislative Council,

Thursday, 3rd November, 1932.

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

## AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

The PRESIDENT: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of the Treasurer's statement of the public accounts for the financial year ended 30th June, 1932, together with his report, which will be laid on the Table of the House.

## QUESTION—SANDALWOOD.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Chief Secretary: Will he lay on the Table of the House Mr. H. W. Gepp's report on the sandalwood industry?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: No. The report is not the property of the Government of this State, and has only been made available for our guidance on the undertaking that it be treated as a secret and confidential document. With the consent of the Commonwealth Government, a general summary, setting out Mr. Gepp's conclusions and recommendations, has already been published in the Press.

## BILLS (2)—REPORTS.

1. Health Act Amendment.
  2. Western Australian Aged Sailors and Soldiers' Relief Fund.
- Adopted.

## BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX ASSESSMENT.

### Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central) [4.37]: The Government's excuse for the introduction of this unjust form of taxation is that

their deficit must not exceed £765,000 this year, that their existing financial resources will not enable them to accomplish so much, that they must have money, that they must have it quickly, and that they must have it in abundance; otherwise they will get into trouble with the Loan Council. In my opinion such a plea is no justification for heaping a tremendous burden on the poor of this country, for levying on the earnings of the sustenance worker the same rate as will be levied on the wealthiest member of the community. If such arguments were sound, then any process of extracting money adopted by Governments could be justified on the grounds of need and urgency. It is said that the descent to Avernus is easy, and the truth of the saying can be fully exemplified by this Bill. This is not the first measure embodying a similar principle for which the present Government have been responsible, but it is certainly the worst. We first became acquainted with the principle when the Hospital Fund Bill was introduced. In the name of the sick and suffering, the Government taxed every person in the community earning £1 per week and upwards, and taxed everybody at a flat rate. In that instance little objection was taken by the general public until they discovered that the proceeds were to assist in relieving the revenue of the country. It did relieve revenue to a very large extent—to the extent of £100,000 a year. Levying toll on the wages and salaries of the people at the source has proved such an easy way of getting money that the Government have come along for more. This time it is spoken of as an unemployment tax, although not a penny of it will go directly to the relief of unemployment. The flat rate system has proved such an excellent means of shielding the well-to-do from their responsibilities that we may soon expect to see the principle extended in other directions. There is great scope for the Government's activities along similar lines. It would not surprise me in the least if the next move were to introduce an education tax payable at the source, as this Bill provides, gathering everybody into the net. Then what about a police tax or a gaols tax? There are many directions in which a resourceful Ministry, such as we appear to have, could exercise their energy. Exercising their energy along the lines I have indicated, they could make additional inroads on the miser-

able pittance of sustenance workers and charwomen by imposing taxation on the same basis as applies to persons whose incomes run into thousands of pounds a year. The necessity for an unemployment tax was pointed out soon after the present Government took office. It was considered that those people who had most to lose if a financial collapse occurred should contribute on a graduated scale according to the income they enjoyed. But the reply always came from the Government that the country could not be taxed into prosperity. All the time, however, they were devising means to extract money from the people. As a matter of fact the Government have already raised by those means and have otherwise benefited to the extent of a considerable sum of money, and there should be no need for them to stoop as low as they propose to do under this Bill. As I said before, the hospital tax benefited Consolidated Revenue to the amount of £100,000 a year. On top of that there was the entertainments tax which, by statutory authority, was set aside solely for hospitals. By legislation it was diverted to Consolidated Revenue, and Consolidated Revenue benefited last year to the extent of £33,000. The 33½ per cent. rebate on income taxation has been reduced by 33½ per cent. I pointed out at the time the rebate was reduced that every one would have to pay an increase of taxation amounting to 20 per cent. There were some members who doubted my statement, but they have since seen it confirmed by the Taxpayers' Association. If any member works out the sum, he will discover that the increase in that direction was no less than 20 per cent. I am not speaking in opposition to what the Government did in that instance: in fact I think the whole of the rebate should have been removed on that occasion. Besides this, the Stamp Act was amended, duties being raised and in one instance doubled. The totalisator tax was made to bring in more revenue; and in 1930, soon after getting into the saddle, the Government imposed a salaries tax which netted a fair amount. In 1931 there was a cut in wages and salaries which, with what had been taken before, brought sacrifices off from 18 to 22½ per cent. The cut in wages and salaries was virtually taxation, as it represented a reduction of income without regard to the

Arbitration Court or the Public Service Appeal Board or any other tribunal established for the purpose of considering the claims of employees as well as civil servants. The cut in itself was a direct benefit to Consolidated Revenue to the extent of at least £600,000 annually. But this is not all. The Government, since they have been in office, have had the advantage of the savings in sinking fund charges, under the much-despised Financial Agreement, to the extent of £350,000 a year. This amount did not benefit revenue when the Collier Government were in office, because it was set aside to wipe out unfunded deficits and to go towards meeting losses on group settlement. No secret was made of that fact; it was announced by the Treasurer in 1929, when the Budget was submitted. At that time there was an accumulation of £850,000—due to savings connected with the sinking fund—which was put into a special account pending ratification of the Financial Agreement. In 1929, when the agreement was ratified, that amount of £850,000 was distributed in order to wipe off then existing unfunded deficits, the balance going towards reduction of losses on group settlement. But now this £350,000 is to go into Consolidated Revenue. Moreover, during last year the Government took into revenue profits from the State Insurance Office to the extent of £30,000. I understand they did this with the approval of the manager, who said he could spare the money.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That is that illegal institution?

Hon. J. M. DREW: I think the institution must be legalised by this time, because I have not heard any comment or criticism upon it for the last 2½ years. Anyhow, it seems to have justified itself, because after making all provision to meet any anticipated or unanticipated demands, the manager of the office has been able to hand over to the Treasury no less a sum than £30,000.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I hope he has retained a good reserve.

Hon. J. M. DREW: For this year there is an increase of £200,000 in the disabilities grant. However, to leave this year out and keep to the last two years, if hon. members will go into the matter they will find that the Government have benefited, in one way or another, by over a million pounds,

and certainly should not be in as bad a position as results disclose. Now they want £300,000, and want it quickly; and this Bill appears to them to be the easiest way of getting it. An unemployment tax is one of the first taxation measures which should have been introduced by the Government. It has been recommended by various members of this Chamber, including Mr. Miles. If the Government had imposed such a tax early, they would have had the benefit of it long before this, and the plea of urgency could not have been raised. An unemployment tax was asked for, as I have already said, soon after the present Government took office; asked for by the various road boards and municipalities of the State and by the Trades Hall. Resolutions were carried urging the Government to call an emergency session of Parliament to deal with the question, but nothing was done in that particular direction. An unemployment tax should be introduced; but it should be a graduated tax, and not one at a flat rate as proposed in the Bill. Many people think this is an unemployment tax; I have heard them say so during the last few days; but I think they will soon be undeceived on that point. Anyhow, in view of the large amount of money raised mainly from wages and salary earners, one would have thought there would be no unreasonable restriction placed on those who at present cannot get work and are in want of bread. If the Government are departing from their policy of just and humane treatment of those in distress, then, I fear, I am not prepared to trust them with any further taxing measure. Recent action by the Government tends to show that there is a departure from the former policy, to which few could raise any objection. It is indeed strange that it should be coincident with the introduction of this measure. Apparently a ban has been placed on all applicants for sustenance from the ranks of single men, and as a general policy no further applications from married men are to be entertained. Correspondence to that effect has appeared in a public print, and it should lead even those inclined to support the Bill and those who have decided to support it, to take steps to force the Government in the direction of doing justice to persons who are in want and are ham-

pered by the regulation recently issued. At a meeting of the Geraldton Municipal Council held on the 25th of last month the Government's new policy with regard to unemployment was revealed in a letter from the local sergeant of police. The sergeant enclosed a copy of a circular quoting the latest regulation that had been issued in regard to sustenance relief. The circular is a highly illuminating document when considered in conjunction with the measure now under discussion. It was published in the local paper, together with the remarks made on it by members of the municipal council. It is headed "Sustenance work. Latest regulations. Municipal Council's protest." I shall read the report which appeared in the Geraldton paper of the 26th October—

At a meeting of the Municipal Council last night a letter was received from Sergeant Simpson, who forwarded a copy of the latest regulations which had been issued in connection with the giving of sustenance relief, and stating that instructions had been given for the regulations to be complied with. The circular, which had been forwarded through the Commissioner of Police, read as follows:—

"Single men.—The employment which the harvest will provide should absorb all single men in the country. It has therefore been decided that no further applications for sustenance are to be received from single men; this decision to apply to renewals as well as to new cases.

"Married men.—In the case of married men it has been decided as a general policy that no further applications are to be received. Married men already approved for sustenance, and who were working on Government relief work, may make application after their stand-down period has elapsed. All such applications, with your recommendation, to be sent to the Unemployment Relief Office, Marquis-street, West Perth, and if approved, the applicant will be provided with relief work wherever relief work is available. Should there be an application from a married man who has not been in receipt of sustenance, and whose circumstances are exceptional, an application may be received and forwarded to the Unemployment Relief Office for consideration of work."

The brief remarks made by the mayor and councillors indicate the position in Geraldton, and the necessity there for either sustenance or work—

The Mayor (Mr. Lester) said it was ridiculous to suppose that farmers were going to pick up all these single men.

Cr. Hollings observed that the position looked very bad for the married men.

The Mayor: It looks bad for all of them.

Cr. Hollings said it was very bad, seeing that their experience was that it took anything from five weeks upwards to get an application dealt with when it was forwarded to Perth.

Cr. Foster said after the interview they had with the Minister when he was in Geraldton, they thought they were going to have a little more consideration shown to the applications from married men in Geraldton.

The Mayor said he did not think they should hesitate in sending down their objection to the department. Apparently the people handling this matter had very little feeling for those less fortunately placed than themselves. They, in Geraldton, knew that there were many in want of the actual necessities of life. The Minister promised that greater consideration should be given to the cases in Geraldton, in view of the length of time occupied in dealing with applications. He moved that they write expressing their surprise and regret at the notification they had received through the police department.

Cr. Hollings asked how did they expect farmers were going to find money to employ men?

The resolution was carried unanimously, and the mayor said they would get in touch with Mr. Willcock, M.L.A., and Mr. Hall, M.L.C., in regard to the matter.

What a fine commentary that circular is on the Bill before us! The £400,000 a year which it is proposed to raise is to go into the Treasury, and poor farmers, many of them without money to jingle on a tombstone, are to find work for the single men whose supplies are to be stopped without any reservation whatever; and there is to be no relief at all for new cases of distress among married men save when the police consider there are exceptional circumstances attaching to a case. Thereupon such a case will be sent to the "Privy Council" in Perth for review, and no doubt after five or six weeks a reply either one way or the other will come to hand. Meanwhile, starving married men and their starving wives and children may eat grass. It seems to me that the Government are sowing the wind, and that if they continue their present policy they will reap the whirlwind before long. It is quite apparent that the Government not only do not intend to utilise this tax for the purpose of relieving unemployment, but propose further to reduce the deficit by cutting off the food supplies of many persons who are penniless and unable to obtain work. An atmosphere has been generated over a long period that this would be an unemployment tax, and that plan of action has succeeded to the extent

that it has disarmed criticism. In fact, the proposal was commended in many quarters because it was felt that the weight of the tax would be in proportion to the strength of the taxpayer. That illusion has been dispelled, and not only has the past policy of considerate relief for the unemployed been altered, but methods have been adopted which threaten the homes of the poor with hunger in a severe form. Will a measure like this, which attacks the meagre earnings of the sustenance worker, and of the washerwoman, a measure which should assist in providing food for the hungry, be likely to commend itself to the favourable consideration of the House? The plea of emergency, as a justification for launching a Bill of this character does not appeal to me in the slightest. The vicious principle of the end justifying the means is strongly exemplified in this measure. The Bill also convinces me that it is in effect a confession of the incompetent administration of the Government. The Government, as I have already said, have raised a considerable sum of money by taxation and their revenue has benefited immensely from other sources, but with the exception of removing the 13½ per cent. rebate on income tax, there has been no attempt to amend the ordinary Income Tax Act with a view to providing more taxation. Even our ordinary income-tax legislation should have been amended as far back as 1930 in order to bring in more revenue. The whole of the 33-1/3 per cent. rebate, as I have already said, could have been removed. That rebate was granted at a time of great prosperity, and an extra tax on income from property could have been imposed. People could not stand it, some members might be tempted to say, but if they were not earning an income they would not be called upon to pay. That is the reply. A genuine unemployment tax having some of the elements of justice—and there are no elements of justice in this Bill—ought to have been placed on the Statute-book as soon as it was realised that the Government were going to the bad financially. But no; the Government imposed a levy on wages and salaries, whilst the levy on persons with large incomes was only 4½ per cent. more than it was on the personal earnings, yielding barely enough to keep body and soul together. There was the levy on the workers of the community, and I refer especially

to Government workers, because the Government benefited in proportion to the amount deducted from the wages and salaries of their employees. This was virtually a tax because the Government went over the heads of the Arbitration Court and the Public Service Appeal Board, so that there has been taxation from the very inception, and the ordinary Income Tax Act has not been touched at all except in regard to the removal of the 13 $\frac{1}{3}$  per cent. rebate. Now with the clock striking 11 the Government loists the flag of distress and comes along with the proposal which we have before us a proposal which, as I have pointed out, is unjust in every feature. Why are they doing this? Because they have discovered that they should have discovered long ago, that the Loan Council ultimately would not permit them to increase the deficit to the extent by which it has been increasing during the last two years. The cry of urgency, in these circumstances, will not touch my heart, will not receive any sympathy from me. I will not be a party to this iniquitous legislation. I intend to oppose the Bill and I shall vote against the second reading.

**HON. T. MOORE** (Central) [5.7]: I would have preferred some other member to speak before me, but apparently there is nobody over-anxious to father the Bill.

The Chief Secretary: It has been fathered.

**Hon. T. MOORE:** Only by the Minister. At all events, I intend to oppose the Bill and I hope that the majority of members will also oppose it. I honestly say that if the fair-minded take a fair view of what this proposal really means, I do not see how they can vote for it and conscientiously go about the country declaring that they are fair-minded people. The remarks made by Mr. Drew regarding what the Bill would really mean to those who are down-and-out, should be quite sufficient without any words of mine to make those, who are now inclined to vote for the Bill, vote against it. In the first place we were told that this was a matter of urgency and it had to be rushed along. But the Ministry refused to meet Parliament and put off the opening of the session as long as it possibly could. If this taxation had been necessary, they had ample time in

which to introduce the necessary legislation. It was mooted in the leading paper of the State months ago that there was a proposal to increase the hospital tax from 1½d. to 6d. Fully six months ago we read of that so that all that time the proposal has been in the minds of the Ministry and it has been deferred until now, when, on the plea of emergency, and that it is too late to get sufficient revenue in by amending the income tax in the ordinary way, we are asked to agree to the passing of the Bill. I cannot see any reason for the Bill not having been submitted at a much earlier date. That is what I want the Minister to tell the House. Were they not far-seeing enough to know that this money was required? Why, it was broadcast by the "West Australian" that such a tax was necessary if we were to keep within the bounds set by the Loan Council in regard to expenditure and reduction of the deficit. Months ago the Premier made a statement that he was going to keep within the stipulated figure, and he should have set out at a much earlier date to collect additional revenue. Now he tells us that it is a matter of urgency and because there is not the time to get in revenue in the ordinary way, he is adopting this extraordinary way and is going to collect taxation from the man who is down and out. The Minister has some idea that there is a bright hope about today, that the future promises to be brighter. I maintain that the introduction of this kind of taxation will not brighten the future; it will have the effect of taking into revenue between £300,000 and £400,000 not from the people who have it but from the people who can ill-afford to lose it. Will that make things any brighter? It will work the wrong way altogether. What we want to do is to deal with this matter in some other way than by tinkering with it. What we really do want in this State more than anything else is a statesman.

**Hon. G. W. Miles:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. T. MOORE:** We are only botching things instead of giving them a thorough overhaul, and there is no suggestion that this tax will make conditions better. If we look at the state of the finances fairly and squarely, we must admit they are in a shocking condition, and we will not get

out of our troubles by imposing further taxation in this way. In any case we cannot tax ourselves back to prosperity. We shall have exactly the same set of conditions next session and also in the session after that if we are going to tinker with the subject as it is proposed we should do now. We who are in this House are supposed to represent the people who have a stake in the country. Quite a lot of people have a stake in the country. I want members to know that from that aspect they should to take a full view of this measure. The strange thing about the position is that no one here has suggested that we should do anything to meet a set of circumstances that we have never had before. We are merely going along now with the same set of conditions and with no one suggesting an alteration. The Minister has said that we must get this money to enable the State to keep within the deficit set by the Loan Council. We have an outside body now telling us what we have to do. This State does not any longer rule: we lost control a long time ago when the Loan Council was established. Now the Loan Council sets up demands, which have the backing of the bankers.

Hon. J. Cornell: But their demands are not in this form.

Hon. T. MOORE: I am not finding fault with any particular Government. The Loan Council has said that we must raise money by taxation and the Government propose this form of tax. What we really want is to find exactly how we can get that section of the people in this country who are in a position to buy, to purchase what the other section is producing. What an awful state of affairs we have fallen into. The country is teeming with commodities. There is over-production by one section of the community, and that section is not able to carry on at a profit because another section of the community has no purchasing power. Taxation will not get us out of that difficulty. We want people to be able to buy the things we are producing. Let us see what we have on hand. We are trying to hold up things with the idea of getting a better price for them. Take the Milk Bill that is now before another place. If the people of this city were drinking as much milk as they should, and were in a position to buy milk for their little children who are

now going without it, and people throughout the country were buying more milk, there would then be no reason for the milk Bill by which it is proposed to control the sale of that commodity. We have a huge surplus of meat, because there are so many people who are eating less meat than heretofore through the lack of means with which to purchase it. Sheep are being sold at cheaper and cheaper rates. There is very little in them for the growers, and many are in trouble on that score alone. The wheatgrower is surrounded by difficult problems. He has to sell his product overseas at a price over which he has no control. It would not take a very clever statesman to set up a system whereby he could figure out a rule so that the people who need clothes and boots, and are now going about in rags and badly shod, might get sufficient means to enable them to purchase the clothes we are manufacturing and the boots we are making in this State, and which the manufacturers so greatly desire to sell.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: When that statesman started to do something, he would be turned out of Parliament.

Hon. T. MOORE: I do not know that that would be the case. No one is prepared to take the lead. That is what is wrong with Parliament. There are too many outside influences which prevent members from taking the stand they ought to take at the present juncture. If we go on like this, where shall we fetch up? Members know that the number of unemployed in the world is ever growing. The position has got out of hand in many countries. We see how the land lies in our overseas sales. We know what trouble is being experienced in Great Britain to-day through the unemployed. It seems that the wheatgrower will have to be content with a price that is below what it costs to produce the wheat. We are going to supply wheat to the other side of the world at a price which represents a loss to the man who produced it. That will not continue long. Something will have to burst. Farmers cannot go on producing wheat at a loss. We have to take the broad view. We are likely to be in this sort of trouble for a long time. Some people say they see a glimmering of light. If we thought this trouble was only a temporary one, we could tinker with it and fix up things for the time being; but we are not going to get out of our difficulties in this

way. History tells us that a hundred years ago the same set of conditions existed in the British Empire, which took from 1815 to 1850 to overcome. The Old Country passed through a shocking period, and I believe we are going through it again. We were a long time heading into this position. Individuals got into debt owing to the credit system, and nations followed suit. We are overloaded with an interest bill, and the edifice is about to fall down upon us all. Whilst the interest bill in the State has been reduced, no statesman has yet attempted seriously to bring about a reduction in interest on money due to the Old Country. Half our revenue, we are told, is going overseas. Cannot we get some statesman to go to the Old Country and tell the people who have lent us the money the position we are in? If they have a heart, they will listen to us.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Do you not think they know the position?

Hon. T. MOORE: They have already done what we have done here.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: What did Mr. Bruce do there?

Hon. T. MOORE: I believe if a plain statement of our position was made to our creditors, we would get relief.

Hon. J. Nicholson: How are you to bring that about?

Hon. T. MOORE: We may be too proud to ask, but the position is that we are not really paying the interest now or if we are paying it, we are doing so at the expense of unfortunate people in this State who are already down and out. We know the position the producer is in. We know also that thousands of workers are looking for employment all over the place. Nothing is so appalling as to have a number of men out of work. That is one of the worst features of the situation. Many years ago the philosopher, Carlyle, said, "Blessed is he who has found his labour; let him ask no other blessing, for in idleness alone is there perpetual despair." All around us to-day we see perpetual despair in the homes of the people, and yet we stand here ready to impose another tax upon them. We will never get out of our difficulties by that means. We are only playing with the question. It is iniquitous to talk of imposing a tax of this sort. Fancy taking money from a man who is getting £1 a week, or £2 a week, if he is married! The children of married

men on sustenance to-day are not getting the food they need, and yet we propose to take something more from them. We have to meet those people in our daily lives. What shall we say to them? How shall we feel when we pass a man we know has a family to keep, and we remember that we have taken another pint of milk a week from his children? I know I shall feel very uneasy about it. We propose to take from the man who has not enough with which to provide the needs of his family, and we propose to take that at the same rate as we propose to take it in the case of a man who is affluent. The reason given to us is that this has to be done in a hurry. We are in a hurry because of the oversight of Governments, overseas Governments as well. We should not be a party to this proposal. It is proposed during the next eight months to raise by this means £300,000. I am sure members agree that this will not make things any better in Western Australia. There is room for thousands and thousands of people here. There is plenty of food for them, plenty of manufactures with which to provide for thousands of people. We have everything we wish for, but the statesmen must bring together the producer and the consumer so that those things which we produce may be consumed. If members can persuade themselves that we are going to improve things by passing this Bill, I fail to understand their reasoning. It is not going to help us out of our difficulties. The sooner we put a stop to this taxation the better. We shall then bring forward a proposal which really will help to put this country right again.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: What about those people who have incomes but have never paid income tax?

Hon. T. MOORE: Let us get hold of them.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: This will get hold of them.

Hon. T. MOORE: Not at all. What about the poor who are on the breadline?

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: The tax is comparatively small in their case.

Hon. T. MOORE: And the children of the poor are to go comparatively hungry while the man who is affluent, and who has always had sufficient for his needs, is to be called upon to pay out of all that he has only at the same rate as the poor man.

There is no equality of sacrifice in this Bill such as was preached in the Premiers' Plan.

Hon. H. Seddon: What is your alternative?

Hon. T. MOORE: Throw out this tax. Let us get together and put up a different proposal. Half of our revenue is going overseas in payment of interest.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Are you talking repudiation?

Hon. T. MOORE: It is not repudiation, if through the difficulties we have got into we cannot pay. Can a man be said to have repudiated his liabilities if he cannot meet his obligations?

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: If you were at the other end of the world and wanted the money, what would you call it?

Hon. T. MOORE: Our producers are sending their goods away to pay our interest bill, and are getting a price that is less than the cost of production. That is not good business; and it is neither fair nor right. It cannot go on. We are bankrupt in that respect. Let members take a stand and say we have finished with tinkering with the business, that we want something more statesmanlike than this. Let us throw out this Bill and get down to tin tacks. We can then put up something that is more likely to give us results. This Bill will do nothing for us. I oppose it.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.28]: Never in my recollection of the doings of this House have I seen it placed in such a false position. Its hands, so to speak, are tied. All we can do is to increase the exemption clauses contained in the Bill. We are bound within the four corners of the Constitution. We may lighten the burden, but we cannot increase it. We can increase the exemptions but cannot decrease them. We can decrease the amount of tax, but cannot increase it. That being so, the Council is placed in a false position. That is due to the proposal having emanated from a House elected on an adult suffrage. The measure provides for exemptions in the case of single men in receipt of under £53 a year. If they receive less than that, they pay no tax. If they get more than that, they pay the same rate of tax as the man who receives £5,000 a year. The man who is married or has dependants, and is in re-

ceipt of £104 a year, pays the same rate of tax as the man who draws £5,000 a year. If the Bill be passed in its present form, the man in receipt of £53 a year will pay a tax of £1 3s. 8d., and the man who is married or has dependants will pay £2 7s. 4d. I do not care to introduce the personal element, but if my salary remains as it is at present, the tax I shall pay will amount to £12. Who is in the better position to pay that tax? The man who is in receipt of £53 a year, or myself? Undoubtedly I am in the better position. My family can fend for themselves, but there are many families not in that position. The principle underlying the Bill is altogether wrong. Such a measure should not find a place on the statute-book of the State. To meet the condition of emergency, we could leave the exemptions as they are and provide for a graduated tax along the lines adopted in the other States so that men in receipt of the higher salaries will pay a greater share than those who are in receipt of small salaries. I go about the country with my eyes open, and I assert there are people in Western Australia who are doing better to-day than they were before the depression. I will not be one to say that the man who goes short of bread shall be assessed at the same rate of tax as the man who is living in luxury, merely because it is a time of emergency. I have dealt with the essence of the Bill. It is useless saying we should have made provision earlier. The fact remains that that provision was not made, and an attempt is being made to overcome the difficulty now. Some justice should be displayed regarding the taxpayers generally. Western Australia is the last State in the Commonwealth to move in this direction. Other States took action long ago. In other States, men in receipt of salaries equal to those paid to members of this Chamber are paying taxation at the rate of 1s. in the pound. If the Legislative Council remains true to its traditions, it will do its utmost in the interests of justice. It has risen to the occasion before, and I believe will ease the situation this time. Let us provide money to meet the emergency but in a way that is more equitable than is suggested by the Bill. I shall not detain the House any longer. Being a House of review, limited by the Constitution regarding taxation, members are



placed more or less, in a false position. It stands to the everlasting credit of this Chamber that since the advent of income tax legislation, every increase in the exemptions has been made by this House. I hope that it will rise to the occasion again and increase the exemptions. If that is done, the Government will take notice and will probably withdraw the Bill and introduce another providing for taxation on a graduated scale.

On motion by Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.**

*In Committee.*

Resumed from the 13th October: Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair, the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on Clause 10, to which Mr. Harris had indicated his intention to move an amendment by inserting after "in" in the first line, the words "this or," so that the introductory line would read, "Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this or the principal Act," etc.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Since the Bill was last before the Committee I interviewed the Minister for Mines; and he intimated that he intended to considerably alter the Bill. In the circumstances I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Much difficulty has been experienced in framing amendments to the Bill, and the Government deeply appreciate the assistance rendered to the Mines Department by Mr. Harris. When the Minister for Mines examined the clause and the amendments he was not satisfied, and if the Committee are agreeable I shall amend the clause considerably. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (a) be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 of paragraph (b) after "winding engine" the words "or any other

winding engine lawfully used for raising or lowering men" be inserted.

This amendment will extend the issuing of certificates to those men who are operating winding engines by means of electricity.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as further amended, agreed to.

Clause 11—Persons driving electric winding engines at the commencement of this Act prohibited from acting until granted an electric winding engine driver's certificate:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause 1, after "Act," the words "in respect whereof an electric winding engine-driver's certificate is required under the principal Act as amended by this Act" be inserted.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: At both Collie and Wiluna men are employed on electric winding engines, which they have driven without being the possessors of certificates. The Arbitration Court decided that those men came within the scope of the Inspection of Machinery Act, and should hold certificates for the engines they are driving. The amendment is necessary to enable those men to receive certificates and retain their positions. Subsequently any man who undertakes to drive a winding engine will have to secure a certificate.

Amendment put and passed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause 1, after "other," the word "similar" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

## **BILL—MARRIAGE ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.46]: I have looked into this Bill introduced by Mr. Nicholson, and although I cannot quite see eye to eye with him in this provision that a man may marry the daughter of his wife's brother and that sort of thing, still

as the Bill provides that no persons of blood relationship shall be allowed to marry, I offer no objection to its passage.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

### *In Committee.*

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

*House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Thursday, 3rd November, 1932.*

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

### ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1932-33.

#### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the previous day. Mr. Richardson in the Chair.

*Vote—Attorney General, £65,561:*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [4.33]: I move—

That this vote be postponed.

**HON. P. COLLIER** (Boulder) [4.34]: I am sorry the Attorney General is not present this afternoon, but I cannot allow this motion to be passed without expressing my objection to a statement made by him last evening. He is reported to have said that the President of the Arbitration Court had

made ridiculous remarks. The President of that court occupies a position equal to that of a judge of the Supreme Court. It is not permissible for any member of this House to criticise a member of the Supreme Court bench. Most of all, I say, it is unbecoming in the head of the Crown Law Department, the Attorney General, to make a remark that would bring contempt upon, or belittle, a member of the Supreme Court bench. I could imagine the man in the street, the kerbstone critic, making a remark of the kind the Attorney General is reported to have made, but it is unthinkable that the Attorney General should offer criticism of this kind concerning the President of the Arbitration Court. I hesitate to raise the question in the absence of the Attorney General, and I am sorry he is not present. It ill-becomes him to make remarks concerning the holder of a position that is equivalent to that of a judge of the Supreme Court, and which savours of belittling the occupant of that position. It is all very well for our self-satisfied young gentleman to talk in this way, but if the remark had been made by someone on the Esplanade or in the street, the police would have taken action. I regret very much that the Attorney General should so far have forgotten himself as to have given expression to the opinion that any man occupying the position of President of the Arbitration Court had made a ridiculous statement.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York—in reply) [4.38]: I was present during the debate last evening, but did not hear the remark attributed to the Attorney General. He cannot, of course, be held responsible for any mistake that may have been made by the Press. At all events, members will have an opportunity of taking up the matter on the return of the Attorney General on Tuesday next, when no doubt a full explanation will be made to the House. I agree it is right that this Chamber should maintain the dignity of our courts. We have no right to say anything that would bring ridicule on our judges in the eyes of the public. If we here do not maintain the dignity of our judges, we cannot expect anyone else to do so. I can only say that the Attorney General must have been mis-reported. I do not remember that he made the remark attributed to him, but I feel sure he will take