

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You will be lucky if you get it your own way, with your own board, your own scheme, in your own time.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I want the Committee to deal with the question on its merits. I am quite prepared to accept reasonable amendments in order to get a bulk handling measure on the statute-book.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (b), "exclusive" be struck out.

This is the provision that gives a monopoly. Although this is the paragraph prescribing the powers and responsibilities of the trust, actually there is no trust, so I suppose we must deal with an imaginary body.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Well, that is safer than the other one.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: This is only the ghost of a body, yet it is proposed to give it exclusive power. I object to a monopoly being given to it.

The Minister for Railways: There is no one to give it to.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: No, not now.

Mr. Sleeman: On a point of order. Are we in order in discussing the giving of exclusive rights to a trust the proposed creation of which has been defeated? I should like a ruling on the point.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot read the mind of the Minister. I take it he proposes to create a trust at a later stage.

Mr. Sleeman: But, the provision for creating the trust having been defeated, there is no trust in the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: I have it from the Minister that he is prepared to create a trust at a later stage.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Committee has already decided there shall be no trust. How then can the Chairman say the Minister will create a trust at a later stage? The Minister, with all his powers, is not able to create a trust in the face of the Committee's decision that there shall not be any trust. So it is farcical to be dealing with the proposed powers of a trust when the Committee has decided there shall be no trust. The Minister, having regard to

the situation in which he finds himself, ought to report progress.

The CHAIRMAN: I have to proceed with the Bill until such time as progress is reported. The Bill is still before us, and the only action members can take is in the direction of reporting progress.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In order to avoid proceeding with what appears to be a farce, I move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and passed.

House adjourned at 11.28 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 11th December, 1932.

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

MOTION—STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved—

That for the remainder of the session so much of the Standing Orders, including Standing Order 62, be suspended as is necessary to enable Bills to be introduced without notice and to be passed through all stages in one day.

MOTION—ADDITIONAL SITTING DAY.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.34]: I move—

That unless otherwise ordered, the House meet for the despatch of business on Fridays at 4.30 p.m. in addition to the ordinary sitting days.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [4.35]: I do not propose to offer any objection to the motion, but I take the opportunity to suggest that provision should be made not to sit after 10 p.m. We might sit on Mondays also. If the House met at 2.30 p.m. and sat till 10 p.m., from Monday to Friday inclusive if necessary, there would be ample time to pass the legislation and avoid the rush at a later date. It is not fair to ask members to sit into the small hours of the morning trying to finalise Bills of importance. I think a fair number of members would favour starting at 2.30 p.m., which would give an additional two hours sitting in the afternoon. Ministers and members would then have a clear morning to consider the business to be dealt with. For my part, the days of sitting could be extended to six per week, but we ought to finalise legislation before 10 o'clock at night. In the Financial Emergency Bill and in another measure I could mention, slips were made, and it is no wonder that slips occur when we are asked to consider business at such late hours. If we met at 2.30 p.m., there should be an understanding that the House would adjourn at 10 p.m.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.37]: Since I have been a member, I cannot recollect any occasion when the Notice Paper has been so barren at this period of the session. Provided the business comes to this House, a circumstance over which the Minister has no control, I cannot see that there should be the slightest difficulty in finishing the business on the ordinary sitting days, and there should be no necessity to sit after 10 p.m.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Have you noticed that a similar motion is being moved in another place?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am not concerned about that. The Minister has no control over the receipt of business from another place. This House could get through the business by sitting up to 10 p.m. on ordinary days, but I take it the object of moving for the additional day and for the suspen-

sion of the Standing Orders is that members here may await the leisure of another place, whose members become dilatory and do not send the legislation along.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.39]: I quite agree with Mr. Cornell. I am sure that the Minister is quite aware that the business paper at present is small, but additional business will be received at a later stage. The suggestion by Mr. Holmes is sound, and I should like the Minister to consider it. I, too, am prepared to sit six days a week, and would prefer to start at 2.30 instead of 4.30 p.m.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East—in reply) [4.40]: I quite agree with member in objecting to long and tedious sittings at the end of the session. Long sittings do not tend to sound legislation. Members will realise that at the beginning of the session I introduced seven Bills, the object being to keep the work going and avoid the usual rush at the end of the session. The Notice Paper at present is very light. Several Bills are being dealt with by another place and are expected to reach us shortly. If members are prepared to assist me to proceed with the consideration of Bills as they are received from another place, there should be no need to sit after 10 p.m.

Hon. J. Cornell: To date we have no innocents to slaughter.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Although I am moving to sit on Fridays, I do not think it will be necessary to do so. Still, it is as well to make provision. Something may occur, and it may become necessary to sit on that day. During the session I have done my utmost to obviate a last minute rush. I have devoted the week-ends to preparation so that the presentation of business would not be delayed, and I have moved second readings on Thursdays so that members would have the week-end in which to consider them. I hope members will assist me to deal with the business as it is received from another place in order to avoid late sittings and the end-of-the-session rush. Mr. Holmes will remember that some years ago we tried the experiment of sitting earlier in the afternoon, but it made no difference to the hour of adjourning. There was no gain by meeting earlier. After sitting during the evening, there is a lot of

work for a Minister to do in order to prepare for the next sitting, and if the House met at 2.30, he would not have the necessary time to prepare for the day's work. Ministers have matters of administration to attend to, but even by laying them aside, there would not be time to prepare for an earlier sitting in the afternoon.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Will you give the House an assurance that you will not sit after 10 p.m.?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot give that assurance, but I will do my utmost not to carry the business over that hour.

Question put and passed.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2.)

Introduced by the Chief Secretary and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.47] in moving the second reading said: I am presenting this Bill to amend Section 111 of the Mining Act, 1904, in order to make available for treatment, sands and tailings that may be lying on Crown lands or abandoned and forfeited mining leases and tenements. As members know, a motion was recently passed in this House, at the instance of Mr. Harris, recommending that such an amendment should be submitted. There are many dumps of sands and tailings situated on surrendered and abandoned gold mining leases and on Crown lands, in the various gold mining districts of this State, but under Sections 111 and 112 of the Mining Act, licenses can only be granted to treat tailings lying on a mining lease that has been abandoned since 1904, the date when the Act came into operation. No provision was made to enable licenses to be granted in respect of other mining tenements such as machinery areas, tailing areas or water rights, neither was any provision made for tailings that may have been dumped on Crown lands. There are many thousands of tons of sands and

tailings lying on such areas, some of which have been untouched for 30 years or more, and the original owners may be dead, or if not, have abandoned all rights to such dumps. At the present market price of gold, there is no doubt that the retreatment of many of those dumps would prove to be a profitable enterprise. In view of the economic position, it is necessary that every avenue of employment and wealth production should be utilised and in those circumstances, it is unwise to keep such potential avenues of wealth production from being exploited. If the original owners are unable or unwilling to treat them, the Crown should have the right to permit others to do so. Members will notice that the Bill proposes to deal only with leases or tenements that have been surrendered, forfeited, or have expired or been declared void not less than six months prior to the date of this proposed Act, and that any lessee or holder of such leases who may have received an extension of time for the treatment of tailings, etc., will be protected. Every ounce of gold recovered represents actual wealth earned and a certain amount of employment created, and it is this that the State must encourage to help it to climb out of the slough of depression. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Harris, debate adjourned until a later stage of the sitting.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [4.51]: I desire to make it clear at the outset that it is to me a matter for regret that I shall have to say things that are not pleasant, but I feel it my duty to say them. I fully recognise the many and serious difficulties that have confronted the present Government. The crisis through which we, in common with other nations, are passing, is worldwide, and therefore we cannot reasonably expect the Government of the State to be free from difficulties and worries that have confronted other Governments. The people of necessity must share those worries and difficulties with the Government. While making due

allowance for considerations that are within the scope or ken of the Government, it was generally conceded, when the present Government took office, that they would have a number of lean years ahead of them. With men who should have their fingers on the pulse of world affairs and an appreciation of the position confronting them, I consider that action should have been taken at once to meet the crisis. What is more, we were not at that stage without expert advice. At that time we were told we were about to encounter the difficulties that had been experienced by countries overseas, and we were warned of what we might expect. Speedy action was not taken to cope with the position. In my opinion, the vast majority of the people of Western Australia and, for that matter, of Australia itself, were seized with the significance of the situation that was looming ahead and were willing, even then, to make those sacrifices that we were assured would have to be made in order that the problem might be properly and adequately tackled. We are almost tired of hearing it said that the foundation of the State and of the Commonwealth rests entirely upon our primary industries.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And it is true.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: If we, as reasonable, sane-thinking people, could have any doubt on that question,—I fail to see how there could be any doubt—some of us had the privilege of hearing the Rt. Hon. Wm. Morris Hughes stress the fact yesterday. He had returned from Europe after rubbing shoulders with the leading men of the Empire, and he told us that we were entirely dependent upon the success of our primary industries. We must all be agreed on that point, and surely no sacrifice was too great to ask the people of Western Australia to make so that those engaged in our primary industries, particularly those relating to the production of wool and wheat, should at least have been enabled to carry on.

Hon. H. Seddon: Some of them have gone on strike.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I was very pleased that Mr. Miles, particularly in view of his position in the commercial life of the State and of his business experience, took to task certain brokering firms in Western Australia for the part they had not played in the general sacrifice, which we were frequently told all sections of the com-

munity would have to shoulder. Some few weeks ago I referred to one of the prominent wool-broking firms of Australia that had shown a profit on their activities. Certainly the profit was a greatly reduced one, but the firm did show a profit at the expense of men who are carrying on the industry at a loss. That should not be. It should have been the aim and object of the Government to see that men engaged in our primary industries should at least have been assured of a living wage. It can be proved that those men have not been able, during the last few years, to make a living wage as a result of their activities in those industries. It was not until the 1st January, 1931, as I see it, that we started, in a very inadequate manner, to attempt to deal with the position. On that date a hospital tax of 1½d. in the pound was made payable by almost every man and woman in the State in respect of the money he or she earned. We have it from official records that during the first six months that tax was levied—we are aware that during that period the full amount of the tax was not collected owing to various reasons—it yielded £64,831, while for the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1932, the first full year of the tax collection, the amount raised as a result of that levy was £133,884. It will therefore be seen that had a graduated tax been imposed from the commencement of the hospital tax, namely, from the 1st January, 1931, quite a substantial amount could have been raised to render financial assistance to the primary industries, which it is so essential shall be carried on advantageously. A tax on a flat rate of 6d. in the pound would have produced over £500,000 a year. Had that course been adopted, it would have been an indication to the primary producers that we realised the necessity for assisting them in their battle because of the unprecedentedly low prices of their products, and it would have proved to the Federal Government that we were endeavouring to assist ourselves. Thereby we would have strengthened our claims for financial assistance from the Federal authorities. We heard from Mr. Miles last night a good deal about what I, as a much younger member than he, consider one of the most important reports presented to Parliament annually—the report of the Auditor General—and to which I made reference in a speech I made to this Chamber last year. That is one of the most important reports

that is presented to Parliament. If I could have my way I would see that the principal parts of the report were read in both Houses of Parliament every year. Then members would not be able to say that they had not been reminded of the costly mistakes made by the various Governments. We are informed by the Auditor General—and I confess it was news to me until I read it in the report—that no less a sum than £28,000 has been lost to the State by the transfer of the Savings Bank to the Commonwealth. The Auditor General is a highly respected officer, and he would not include a statement such as that in his annual report unless it was absolutely correct. For the sake of the people in Western Australia, I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us that there has been a mistake somewhere, and that our Premier and Treasurer was never guilty of slipping to an extent such as that. This amount of £28,000, represents unclaimed money in the State Savings Bank, and according to the rules of the bank if money remains unclaimed for 10 years it becomes the property of the State. Yet that amount was handed over to the Commonwealth when the bank was transferred. According to our Crown Solicitor the State cannot claim the money. In spite of that I hope the Commonwealth Bank will see its way to return that money which undoubtedly belongs to the people of this State. A perusal of the report brings to light another matter. A highly placed officer in the Railway Department, a gentleman who occupied the position of Chief Traffic Manager, drawing a salary of £1,200 a year, was recently retired on a pension of £800. The Auditor General's report discloses the fact that the pensions paid during the 12 months ended 30th June last amounted to £68,998, and retiring allowances came to £896, a total of £69,894, or practically £70,000. I realise that if one should advocate the discontinuance of the payment of pensions he would render himself liable to be accused of repudiation. But has there not been a lot of repudiation in the last couple of years? I am not one who would inflict hardship on any retired civil servant, but I do not forget that the people who are making it possible for the retired civil servants to draw their pensions are having a very difficult time, and that if we cannot interfere with the amounts that are being paid we should take action in the direction of seeing in the future that those who are likely to draw

pensions contribute something towards a superannuation fund. In good seasons and bad seasons, in periods of good prices and bad prices, in sickness and in health, members of the service are constantly drawing salaries. Therefore it is not too much to ask that they should contribute something towards a fund in which they will eventually participate. At the same time we should see that the people who are straining every effort in the industries in which they are engaged, and who are making it possible for the State to pay those pensions, should themselves receive all the assistance it is possible to give them. Considerable amounts have been expended on the Collie and Harvey schemes, and the Government should be congratulated on finding work for the unemployed, even though that work involved the use of wheelbarrows and shovels. At the same time the greatest care and the fullest inquiry should be made into just what will yield the best and surest return from the money so expended. For instance, the regrading of some of our railway lines would provide employment for a considerable number of men, and would result in substantial reductions in the running costs of our biggest Government department. Professional officers in the various departments have assured me that considerable reductions in working costs could be effected in the direction I have suggested if money were made available to effect the alterations. Again, closer settlement schemes are very badly needed in this State. Surely these could have been brought about at a low cost and with a greater chance of success than the schemes that have been initiated at Collie, Harvey and Nornalup. This brings me to a suggestion made by Mr. Thomson that there should be a standing committee to advise on the expenditure of public money. Any scheme that was put up could be thoroughly examined by that committee. Evidence could be obtained from people qualified to give it. I know that interested people in different local centres would be pleased to give the Government of the day the benefit of their experience. In the past, Governments have not availed themselves of that advice or experience. Even in connection with the unemployment problems of to-day the co-operation of local committees has not been sought as it might have been. Such committees could have rendered the Government great assistance. The Government should go out of their way to en-

courage local committees to take an interest in these matters. Instead of that, local people have been practically told that it was not their job to offer any advice. The time is long overdue for the appointment of a standing committee to investigate our public works. I do not care whether it consists of members of Parliament or not. I would rather it were not composed of members of Parliament. Is there any reasonable-minded man who would say that we have not half a dozen public-spirited men in the State, who would not give the Government in power the benefit of their advice on any scheme brought forward entailing the expenditure of taxpayers' money? Had such a committee been appointed years ago we would not be reading dismal tales from the Auditor-General's report year after year. A number of the industries to which assistance has been rendered are referred to by the Auditor-General in his report. The first is the Avon Butter and Bacon Factory. I speak feelingly about this because of the fiasco that has followed the erection of the butter factory at Geraldton. It is there now as a white elephant; it is absolutely useless. While that failure cannot be laid at the door of the present Government, it brings home to us the urgent need for referring matters such as this to a body of practical men. The manner in which the contract was let is enough to make any public man feel ashamed.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: For whom was it built?

Hon. J. M. Drew: A private company.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Yes, but the Government paid for it. According to the Auditor-General the amount outstanding in connection with the Avon factory on the 30th June, was £12,958. The comments against this item are—

Steps are being taken to clear this debit. The factory was taken over some years ago by the Agricultural Bank under a mortgage.

The next industry referred to by the Auditor General is the Calyx and Porcelain Works (Liquidator), the amount of the principal outstanding being £11,727. Next we get the liquidator, the amount being £900, and another person £73, the total being roughly £40,000. The Geraldton Bacon and Butter Factory is next referred to, the principal outstanding being £582, and we are told in the remarks that the Agricultural

Bank is in possession of the factory, the debit in the bank's books being £18,791. There were practically no pigs in that district and hardly any cows, and yet the Government found the money to enable the factory to be erected. A lot of Geraldton money also found its way into this scheme. There is also a considerable amount against the W.A. Manganese Company in which some prominent Parliamentarians were interested. This figure is £115,710, and the interest owing amounts to £23,725, a total of £139,435. The Auditor General comments, "No repayments of principal or interest have been received from this company." I had almost forgotten the Griffin Coal Company. The principal in this case outstanding is £21,559 and the interest £3,126. The Auditor General comments, "With the exception of £19 13s. 9d., no interest or instalments of principal have been received during the year. Altogether the amount outstanding without interest comes to £389,780 and with interest £452,031, not far off half a million. Is it any wonder that the taxpayer is losing faith in the Parliamentary representatives whilst this kind of thing is permitted to go on? Members of this Chamber have always protested against this kind of thing without investigation by some properly constituted body. The Auditor General's report should be read by every member of the Cabinet and by every member of Parliament. It should be published in every newspaper, so that the taxpayers generally would know what the Government were doing with their money.

Hon. J. M. Drew: Members of Parliament read it very carefully.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I am glad to have that confirmation of what I thought myself. Mr. Holmes has been for a quarter of a century associated with Parliament, and possesses a great deal of knowledge that is of value to the House and the country. It is, however, no use his telling us what he said in the past. We want to know what we are going to do to-day. Are we going to have all these Bills brought before us when we really have no say in what is done subsequently with the money? Until we can evolve a better system than the party system, I am afraid it will not be possible to earn very much of the confidence of the people. When a Government goes to the country it should be able to go as a board of directors accounting to the shareholders of a company for their operations in the inter-

vening term. Unless matters are placed on a better footing than they are to-day, and unless party political bias is removed, we shall not be able to appeal to the electors as they should be appealed to. That day will be delayed whilst we have the strongest individual political party in the State refusing to allow its members to associate in a Government with those of another political faith. I believe there are men in the Labour Party who would, for the good of the State, willingly associate themselves with others, from whom they differ on various points. In that way we would have the pooled brains of our best men. The Labour Party, however, lays it down that no alliance shall be entered into with any other party, and we are therefore prevented from following the splendid example that has been set in the mother of Parliaments. The present Imperial Government is carrying on in a manner which surely thrills everyone who belongs to the nation.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: It proves that oil and water will not mix.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: That combination has done wonderful work, and those who make it up have sunk their differences on minor matters for the common weal.

Hon. J. Cornell: Distant fields look greenest.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: We talk about the difficult times through which the Government are passing. Surely the Imperial Government are having a very much more difficult time. We do not know what taxation means compared with the conditions in the Old Country. It is often claimed that the Legislative Council is a non-party House. I consider it my duty fearlessly to criticise Bills that come before us, no matter what Government may be in office. Reference has been made to the economies which could have been effected in connection with the University. It has been suggested that a greater reduction should have been made in the Parliamentary allowances and the salaries of highly paid civil servants. A graduated salaries tax has also been suggested. The long service leave was bitterly attacked when it was brought in by the Labour Government by proclamation, not by Act of Parliament. Did those members who bitterly opposed that long service leave take action against it when the opportunity occurred? Have they been sincere in their opposition?

Hon. G. W. Miles: No.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It is no wonder the electors think this is all a bit of political bias. If the present Government had seen fit to undo by proclamation what the Labour Government did by proclamation, the people would have understood there was some intention to economise. This privilege is costing the State about £70,000 a year. A reduction by half in Ministerial and Parliamentary allowances, the cutting out of the extra allowance of £200 to the Leader of the Opposition and the salary of £300 a year to his secretary, would have been proof to the people that we were in earnest. If this had been done early in the piece, the people would have been used to extra taxation by now. They would have seen that a useful purpose was being served by the financial assistance that would have been rendered to the producers, who will find it impossible to carry on much longer. I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.25]: Unlike some members, I am not going to indulge in heroics for reduction in salaries of members of Parliament or anyone else, nor am I going to say what we ought to have done or what has not been done. In the main I want something extra done. I was glad to hear Mr. Holmes refer to facilities for Esperance. If ever there has been a long-suffering section of people, it is those who are settled in that locality. My observations of the district convince me that an awful blunder was made in the early days when the jetty was built. It was a short-sighted policy to put it where it is, when within 200 yards or so as much deep water as was required could have been obtained. Although times are bad, something should be done to overcome the existing difficulty, and any money spent in that direction would be well spent. Anyone going through the district must feel that before long it will come into its own. I should like to see more money spent there in scientific agricultural research. The settlers are living under great difficulties because there has been insufficient scientific research carried out. Any money spent in this direction would be repaid many times over to the State. There is land which appears to be first-class, but is producing nothing. On a good deal of this land a considerable amount of State capital has been spent, but in the absence of scientific research much of that money has been wasted

as well as the money spent by the settlers in the cultivation of the soil. I should also like to see more money spent on scientific research in the Denmark-Nornalup district. The wasting disease there is taking excessive toll of the cattle. The Government are doing something to ascertain the cause of the trouble, but much more could be done. A little more expenditure in this direction would be money well spent, and would be returned many times over to the Treasury. It is distressing to find a man who has one of the best kept farms in the group settlements, and who knows his work well and has his heart and soul in the job, unable to rear more than four calves in nine years. The assistance of Government experts is required to prevent the recurrence of such a state of affairs. I hope the Government will give earnest consideration to scientific investigations which may result in people outback, not only making a living for themselves, but extending the prosperity of the State. Everything possible should be done to overcome the difficulties with which the man on the land has to contend. I wish also to refer to an anomaly in connection with Government relief work. Many men who are now on relief work and were regarded as permanent employees are not to receive any of the holiday benefits, which generally accrue at Christmas time to workers attached to Government departments. To quote an instance: the whole of the employees on Government works were dismissed when the Government put their relief works into operation, and the very next day those men came along as relief workers. I am referring to the harbour works at Fremantle. Now those men are worked according to their family responsibilities, those with small families getting a smaller amount of relief money: and by various processes adopted, some are working a fortnight on and a fortnight off, while others are working three weeks on and one week off. And because the whole of those men have not worked one month continuously, they are deprived of all holiday benefits to be derived under the various awards. Many of those men have been employed at the Fremantle harbour for the past 20 years, but because the Government have started relief works there they are to be deprived of holiday benefits under the awards covering that industry. That is not fair, and the Government should extend holiday privileges to those

men who to-day are denied them merely because they are termed relief workers. The amount involved is but small, and the concession would make for contentment amongst the men. The same thing applies to all relief works, but I have alluded to the Fremantle harbour works because so many of the men have been employed in the harbour for a number of years past. I trust the Government will give consideration to those men who, I hold, are justly entitled to it. I should like to refer to the condition of the fish market jetty at Fremantle. Some years ago the Government removed the fish market from the end of the jetty and placed it on the main land. To-day the condition of the jetty is positively dangerous to the public. When the old fish market was removed from the jetty no attempt was made to cover up the gap left in the jetty where the market itself had stood, and so that gap remains a positive danger to anybody walking on the jetty. The Government think to get over the difficulty by placing on the jetty a sign warning people that they use the structure at their own risk. But in my view that is not sufficient to safeguard people against accident. The Fremantle Swimming Club uses that portion of the jetty, the only portion that can be used, for their racing, and that attracts a number of people to watch the events. To get a better view of the swimming, the public congregate just at the most dangerous portion of the jetty. I have inspected the place, and I estimate that for a very few pounds the position could be satisfactorily rectified. The Chief Secretary has promised to come down and have a look at it, and I hope that as a result of his visit something will be done. It is entirely wrong that a danger spot such as that should be allowed to exist for so long. The Fisheries Department derive certain monetary benefits from the boats and crates tied up to the jetty. The amount is not very large, but it should render the Government responsible for seeing to it that the jetty is placed in a safe condition. I hope this redress will be granted by the Government in the near future. Now that there are so many men out of work, it would not be a very costly job for the Government to effect the necessary repairs. I realise that at this stage any further remark on the Appropriation Bill would be futile, and so I do not intend to delay the passing of the measure, but will support the second reading.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned until a later stage in the sitting.

BILL—SECESSION REFERENDUM.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [5.38]: in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to afford the people of Western Australia an opportunity to express their opinion on the question of secession. We have given Federation a 30-year trial and it has become apparent to all that it has not proved a blessing to Western Australia. When Federation was first mooted, the people were given to understand that the Federal Government would undertake only certain restricted responsibilities, such as pensions, defence and other things of national importance, and it was asserted that the cost of Federation would not exceed 2s. 6d. per head of the population. It was originally expected that the Commonwealth Government would use only one fourth of the customs duty, but not only have they usurped the whole of the customs revenue but they have entered every field of taxation, direct and indirect. This means that they are sucking away the life blood of the States, with the result that last year the revenue of the Commonwealth was 71½ million pounds, equalling £11 per head of the population.

In view of such an enormous drain on the people, is it any wonder the individual States do not know where to look for revenue? We can safely say that in the first place Federation was based on sentiment, not on reason. At that time the States had their own Governments, quite capable of meeting their needs. Even when, for the sake of an ideal, we joined the Federation, all might still have been well if the superior authority we created had been content to administer the national affairs that it was intended should be their responsibility, such as customs, post and telegraph services, and defence; but they were not content to be limited to those services, and from time to time they have arbitrarily encroached on what really should be State functions. By reason of our weak proportionate representation in the Federal Parliament, these en-

croachments have reacted on this State in such a manner as to become oppressive, and are dangerously menacing the future prosperity and advancement of our State and people. The gradual usurpation of fields of taxation has hampered the States by removing sources of revenue that are legitimate State rights, thus preventing or limiting revenue that should be available for the development of States activities. Tariffs have been imposed that can be of benefit only to manufacturing States. This State is not a manufacturing State, but is a primary producer, and consequently, although we are not receiving any benefit, we are helping to enrich the other States at the expense of our primary producers.

The success of this State depends entirely on the success and prosperity of our primary industries, and the burden of a high customs tariff must seriously retard such success by making it utterly impossible for the State to extend sufficient encouragement to the industries that we require for development. The position of secondary industries in Western Australia since the establishment of Federation has been a hopeless struggle against established secondary industries in the Eastern States. Mass production in those States has enabled the producers so to reduce the cost of production as to enable them to flood our markets with the products of their factories at a price which practically prohibits the successful competitive manufacture of such products locally. There is no denying that this State has long been the dumping ground for many lines of surplus products, disposed of at prices below the cost of production, and as a consequence various industries in Western Australia have been forced out of existence. The findings of the Advisory Committee appointed by the Government in 1925 show clearly that Western Australia is suffering severely through Federation. In his introductory remarks the chairman (Mr. Norbert Keenan, K.C.) said—

The returns which have been put in establish three propositions, firstly, that Western Australia, possessed of her own customs as she was in pre-Federation days, was able to carry on a vigorous policy of development and yet more than pay her way; secondly, that after Federation had been established, so long as Western Australia was in receipt of three-fourths of the customs collected on dutiable goods imported into Western Australia, she was able still to carry out a policy of development and almost pay her way; but,

thirdly, on the per capita allowance arranged in 1909, even with the special grant, also arranged at that time, Western Australia has been wholly unable to make her expenditure and her income anything near balance, even on the basis of reducing the expenditure on her developmental works to the lowest possible figure.

Consequent upon the findings of the Royal Commission appointed by the Commonwealth because of protests from this State, and on which Western Australia had no representatives, the Commonwealth Government were forced to recognise the fact that this State was suffering from its inclusion in the Commonwealth, with the result that they made us a Disabilities Grant of £300,000 per year for five years. The Commission had recommended a grant of £450,000 per annum until such time as the State was given control of its own tariff. One commissioner recorded his opinion as follows:—

In my opinion Western Australia should never have entered Federation; but having done so, there is, I feel convinced, only one complete and satisfactory remedy for her present disabilities, and that is secession.

There is no possible doubt that our representation in the Federal Parliament is totally inadequate. It is even less in practice than was intended by the Constitution. The Senate was designed to protect the States, because each State was to have an equal number of representatives, but this equality is now nullified by the party system, due to the fact that senators now sit at party meetings with members of the other House and discuss and determine important questions. Even if all our members belonged to one party we would have a representation of only eleven members out of a total of one hundred and eleven, whereas New South Wales has 34; Victoria 26; Queensland 16; South Australia 13; and Tasmania 11. Our position is hopeless, as we have no possible chance of correcting this system. The basic system of sound government is equitable Parliamentary representation of all portions of the country. Can our representation be called equitable? This inequality of representation means that we have practically no voice in framing tariff or imposing taxation, nor have we any effective check on the setting up of Commonwealth departments, which have led to so much waste in the way of duplication

and overlapping. This inequality has also practically resulted in placing Western Australia in a position of political and economic slavery, a position which the Commonwealth Government are using slowly but surely to increase still further their power. There is no possible doubt that the present position is unsatisfactory, as it is crippling us in every way, and all attempts to right the injustice have proved fruitless. We have been able to prove, and the Commonwealth Government have been forced to acknowledge, that we are suffering under our disabilities, but the response has been entirely inadequate.

These factors have forced us to a position where there are only two alternatives—unification or secession, I personally do not consider unification will solve the problem, for Western Australia's isolation would again prove to be a handicap, and I am sure that very few of our people would be prepared to sacrifice their Government for the privilege of being governed from a centre 2,500 miles away. The Federal policy is totally opposed to the progress and development of Western Australia. Its tendency is to build up big industrial centres in the Eastern States. After all, Federation is really only a partnership arrangement between the six States, but this fact appears to be overlooked and instead of the weaker and less populous States being treated as partners, they are treated more like mendicants or poor relations to whom it is necessary at times to throw a crust to keep them quiet. As in other partnerships, we should have the right to withdraw if we find that our partners are not willing to carry out the articles of partnerships equitably. If we were in a position to govern ourselves we could regulate our policy for our own ends and for the good of our people, instead of being exploited for the purposes of larger manufacturing States. We would be able to give our primary producing industries the encouragement they require and we could proceed with a vigorous policy of development. The Bill is essentially the same as that presented last year, and proposes to submit two questions to the electors—

(1) for Secession.

(2) for a national convention to consider the Constitution.

The Bill provides for compulsory voting, as a small vote would be very unsatisfactory.

It is essential to have a definite expression of opinion on such an important subject. The cost of the referendum will be very small, as it is proposed to hold it concurrently with the general elections in March. That will obviate much expenditure, as we can utilise the machinery for the general election.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What will it cost?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: About £3,000 or £4,000, probably not that. I would like to stress the fact that voting for the referendum does not commit members to vote in favour of secession. The electors will express their opinion, for which there has been an insistent demand for some considerable time. This demand has not been engineered by any particular political party nor is it the unconsidered outpourings of cranks and faddists, but it is made by representatives of all classes, including many of our most able and influential citizens and thinkers, and it is supported by facts and figures that are not to be denied. If an elector is qualified to select a representative, he is surely competent, and rightfully entitled, to register his decision as to whether or not he will be governed by an authority over 2,000 miles away, an authority, moreover, over whose politics and policies he has no effective or decided control. I feel convinced that we, as representatives of the people and electors of this State, are in duty bound to meet their wishes, and by passing this measure we will give them the right to which they are entitled, of saying whether they desire that Western Australia shall be mistress of her own affairs, or shall remain subject to the Commonwealth. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR EDWARD WITTENOOM (North) [5.53]: I have listened with very great interest to the able speech of the Leader of the House, but it does not seem to me that this is the time to discuss the question of Federation. The Bill is for a referendum to enable the people to say whether they will have Federation or not. I was thinking the hon. member wasted a lot of energy in telling us many things that possibly may not happen.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: He has told us many things that have happened

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: I will tell you a few of them. The only things we have really to consider now are the two

questions the people will be called upon to answer. I suppose I am the only person alive who was in the Government of the State when it was a sovereign State. I was four years in the Government with Sir John Forrest, from 1894 to 1898. At that time we were running everything ourselves, including our own customs. As members will no doubt understand, when I speak of the State as a sovereign State, we did exactly what we liked. We did all the things that members have referred to, but not in such a drastic way.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Did you balance your budget?

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Sir John Forrest would have gone mad had there been a deficit. I think we had a loan of about £6,000,000. We were doing very well and we should always have done well had we stuck to Federation.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Stuck to what?

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Had we remained a sovereign State. Thank you for correcting me. But the people who came from Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia had been seduced, or may I say induced, by the people of Victoria to vote for Federation, so that Victoria could capture our splendid markets. Anybody who has any recollection at all of the business done on the goldfields from 1890 to 1900 will know what splendid markets we had. During that period we also, with our gold, saved Victoria from absolute destruction. I happen to know that because I was Minister for Posts and Telegraphs at the time and I know the enormous amount of money which was transferred by men working here to their families in the Eastern States. Had we kept out of Federation, we would have been able to maintain successfully our position as a sovereign State.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: You would never have found Coolgardie.

Hon. R. G. Moore: Don't take any notice.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: I will not reply in the way I was intending to reply. Gold was found on the Murchison before Coolgardie was heard of. A lady said to me the other day, "Why cannot we go on the same as we did before?" But there is a great difference between those days and the present time. The question we have to decide is whether this referendum shall be submitted to the people or not. I promised to vote for the Bill and

I intend to do so. At the same time, however, I do not think Federation or the Federal Government can be blamed for everything. These are a few of the things I have noted down and they may be interesting to members. Perhaps we have a little to blame ourselves for. One is the Peel estate. I wonder what that has cost. It had nothing to do with the Federal Government. Then there are the group settlements; they had nothing whatever to do with the Federal Government and I think they cost us £7,000,000. Then we have the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board, which we were told by Mr. Thomson have cost us about £16,000,000. I do not think the Federal Government had anything to do with them, or with speculating in wheat. I believe 75 per cent. of our farmers have received advances from the Agricultural Bank, as the Premier said the other day. I do not think there was any necessity for the Labour Government to expend money on the erection of the new markets. That was an expenditure with which the Federal Government had nothing to do.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: They show a profit.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: That surprises me, because many of the stalls are empty. Then we owe £80,000,000. Even four per cent. on that is a consideration. Money had to be found from somewhere. Then we have the State trading concerns. I notice that the ascertained loss on them to date is £1,029,000, and hardly any one of them has been a success. Those trading concerns are doing harm by preventing competition amongst private enterprise, and it would be to the advantage of the State if they were sold for next to nothing. The selling of them would leave the way open for private competition. I am not going to discuss the Bill at further length. My object in speaking was to indicate my intention to support the Bill for a referendum.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central) [6.1]: I expressed my views on a similar measure presented last year, and I do not intend on this occasion to repeat everything I then said. At that time I pointed out that the procedure proposed to be adopted under the measure then before the House—and my remarks apply equally to the present measure—was unconstitutional and could not achieve the results expected by those who were responsible for placing the Bill before

us. I believe the course contemplated is that if there is a majority for secession, a petition will be forwarded to the Imperial authorities asking them to sever the bond that unites Western Australia with the Federation. What the Imperial authorities will do in accordance with constitutional practice is this: they will send the petition to the Commonwealth Government, who are now the advisers to the King. I do not think there is a single secessionist in this House who doubts what the advice of the Commonwealth Government will be. It certainly will not be in favour of the petitioners. The British Government, in my opinion, will not deal with the matter at all, except in the manner I have indicated. Nor, if the Home authorities were left to themselves, would they be sympathetic in the slightest degree. I am thoroughly acquainted with what occurred when the Bill was before the people in 1900. All the influence of the British Government was exerted in the direction of urging the people of Western Australia to accept the Bill. For a long time the late Lord Forrest, then Sir John Forrest, and Sir Winthrop Hackett were anti-Federalists, but when they were given to understand that, unless Western Australia accepted the Bill, the Eastern goldfields would be separated from this State, those two distinguished men veered round and supported Federation. There is no doubt that Western Australia has suffered through entering the Federation before secondary industries had been established to any extent within the State. Even those who opposed Federation at the time, myself included, never realised that the Constitution would later be interpreted to the disadvantage of the State. It is a disadvantage that was never anticipated by anyone in Western Australia when the Bill was before the people. The constitutional way, and the only way for States to get out of the union—that is, States dissatisfied with the Federation—is for them to take steps backward just as they took steps forward in 1900. It would be necessary in the first instance for the Commonwealth Government—nobody but the Commonwealth Government could do it—to initiate legislation providing for a referendum, and when the referendum was taken, there must be a majority of the States and a majority of the people of Australia in favour of a State securing secession. There is no escaping that point. The most futile method is that proposed in the Bill.

That was shown clearly by the professor of law at the Melbourne University. Last month he explained the proper course in regard to the measure now before us. The following telegram appeared in the "Daily News" of the 25th November:—

The Bill before the Western Australian Parliament providing for the holding of a referendum in that State on the question of secession from the Commonwealth can only result in an expression of opinion by Western Australians on the matter and can have no legal force without the consent of the other States. This was made clear to-day by the Professor of Law at the Melbourne University (Prof. K. H. Bailey). He pointed out that the Commonwealth Constitution, to which Western Australia was a signatory, made it clear in section 128 that a move such as secession was governed by the provisions of the Constitution affecting alterations. These said that an alteration could only be effective after the Bill had passed through the Commonwealth Parliament and had been approved in a popular referendum. This would mean a majority of four States to two. Western Australia was granted Responsible Government in 1890 and entered the Commonwealth in 1900, so that she had had only ten years' experience as an independent self-governing colony, remarked Prof. Bailey.

It is not necessary to have a professor of law to investigate the question in order to reach an intelligent decision.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It was made quite clear at the time we federated.

Hon. J. M. DREW: Yes, from a score of platforms in this State, and the principal arguments used against Federation then are those now being used by secessionists. The result of the referendum in 1900 was a majority of 25,000 in favour of federating. Three or four years ago, when the Financial Agreement Bill was before Parliament, we realised the nature of that measure. It was submitted to the people of Western Australia, as well as of the other States, and again there was a majority of 25,000 in favour of it. Under the Financial Agreement we have made a contract with the Commonwealth Government extending over 58 years. That contract was made in 1928. We are now asked to consider a Bill to sever the bond we entered into 32 years ago and also to tear up the Financial Agreement which was made with the authority of the people four years ago.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And our Ministers go to Melbourne asking for more money.

Hon. J. M. DREW: Many people resent the encroachments of the Commonwealth Government on State rights, but realising the futility of this Bill, realising that it cannot possibly achieve the object, those people will vote "No," although they are secessionists at heart and wish to see secession achieved by constitutional means. Knowing the futility of the Bill, they realise that its only effect can be to bring the State into ridicule, and they will vote "No." In the end much damage will be done to those who support secession, because a large number of people who are dissatisfied with the Federal administration will vote "No" on the ground that they could not put their names to this Bill. If that is so, and there is a large majority against secession, the Federal Government will be fortified in the attitude they have previously adopted, and our last position will be worse than the first. Fortunately there is an alternative in the second question to be submitted to the electors. That question is of some practical utility. A Convention to review the Constitution is a long time overdue. From a State standpoint the Constitution has never been amended, and there would be no need to amend it if a common-sense construction were placed upon the various sections, a construction that was placed upon them when the Bill was submitted for the approval of the people. If a Convention were now to make the Act read as people 32 years ago were led to believe it read, there would not be so much dissatisfaction in this State with regard to Federation. Not much expense will be involved in taking the vote. It will be taken on the day of the general election. I am pleased that provision has been made for compulsory voting. Except for the provision for a referendum on the question of a Convention, the Bill, in my opinion, can have no useful result whatever. I do not know what the Government intend to do in the matter of publishing literature and furnishing the people with arguments pro and con. Surely it is not intended to put an issue like this before the electors without giving them some lead and furnishing them with all the arguments advanced in favour of secession by representatives of those advocating secession, as well as the views of those who find

themselves not in a position to give support to the Bill.

HON. SIR CHARLES NATHAN (Metropolitan-Suburban) [6.13]: There are many angles from which this problem is at present being approached, and I have no doubt that before the referendum is taken—if it is to be taken—it will be canvassed from many more angles, adding perplexities and multiplying problems which the sponsor of the Bill—the Treasurer of the State—has not foreseen, and which, I venture to suggest, he will regret having fathered, however, unconsciously. It is not my purpose to-night to attempt to traverse the almost illimitable range of legal, national, sentimental and sociological factors involved in this unfortunate measure. I intend to confine my attention to the fact that, coming as it does from the hands of the Treasurer of this State, the Bill is singularly without justification from the Treasury's viewpoint. So far from bringing financial relief to this State, secession will, if it becomes an accomplished fact, place upon the shoulders of the handful of people in Western Australia, national responsibilities which they are quite unfitted to bear, and which will gravely accentuate their problems in every direction.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: Primary producers, manufacturers and taxpayers generally, are being invited to believe that in secession they will find their millenium and the reconciliation of those conflicting interests which are now disturbing the Commonwealth. May I just briefly review the varying and extraordinarily conflicting claims that have been advanced in support of secession, and then, perhaps, with the indulgence of hon. members, I may be better able to examine their accuracy and weigh the soundness or otherwise of the reasoning on which these arguments are based.

Primary producers are being invited to look to secession as a relief from excessive tariff taxation which they rightly believe is one of the most serious contributing factors responsible for the high cost of production in this State and in Australia. The attention of Western Australian manufacturers is focussed on the invasion of what they look

upon as their legitimate field of trade, to the tune of millions of pounds a year—a field, which, if they could retain it, would enable them to extend their factories, enormously increase their output and provide employment for thousands more. And what a vista is opened up to the general taxpayer—

Reduced cost of Governmental administration.

A prosperous farming community, able to meet its interest obligations on money borrowed from the State, to finance its operations.

A manufacturing industry—ever extending—

all helping to lighten the load of direct taxation which at present falls so heavily on his shoulders. Believing, as many of them are led to believe, that this is a true statement of the position, is it any wonder, Mr. President, if many thousands of people in this State—harassed by liabilities they cannot meet, thousands of others out of employment, many in actual want—cast their vote to end a condition of affairs for which they are being led to believe Federation is primarily responsible. Holding, as I do, the strongest conviction that secession would in its result throw obligations on the people of this State which they are unable to carry and rob them of the assistance they are entitled to claim from their fellow Australians in the development, for their mutual benefit, of a territory of nearly a million square miles—approximately one third of this great Continent—I would be a coward indeed if I sat silent and allowed the Bill to pass without raising my voice in protest against a measure for which there is so little justification. Both in my business affairs and in my short political life, I have always endeavoured to apply such critical faculties as I possess to any proposals I have had to consider, to avoid making loose statements, and, to the best of my ability, to weigh carefully, and, I hope judicially, both sides of any question on which I have been called to make a decision. We have had painted in vivid colours the disastrous effect of Federation on Western Australia. May we now look on the other side of the picture? Probably the most definite reason that has been advanced by those in favour of secession is the statement contained in the report of the committee of Government officials, appointed by the Treasurer to prepare a further case on the disabilities of Western

Australia—a statement prepared, mark you, not in support of secession, but in support of a claim for a more generous disabilities grant. Clause 28, page 16, of this report reads as follows:—

Table 12, prepared by the Government Statistician, shows that the duties which would have been collected on those interstate imports for the year 1928-29 amount to £2,313,065. If Western Australia had been free to impose its own customs duties and had paid for all the services performed by the Commonwealth on its behalf, including the proportion of the war services and interest on war loans, we would have benefited by no less a sum than £1,561,065.

Assuming these calculations are approximately correct—as I believe them to be—how in the name of common sense can they be used as an argument in favour of secession? In clear and unmistakable language they show that if the people of Western Australia collected a further £2,313,065 in customs duties, from themselves, by taxing themselves on the goods they bought from the Eastern States, the Public Treasury or State revenue, would increase by £1,561,065. Possibly; but why pay £2,313,065 in increased duties in order to benefit the Treasury by £1,561,065, thereby entailing an actual loss to the people of Western Australia of £752,000! The adjustment of the Irishman's blanket by cutting a piece off one end and sewing it on to the other, was almost an economy compared with this proposed method of enriching Western Australia.

Farmers will also note that the report of the Disabilities Committee makes no suggestion of any reduction in customs duties on goods imported from overseas. On the contrary, the whole financial case of the secessionists, which the Treasurer has—perhaps thoughtfully—negeected to elaborate, depends upon the continuance of this revenue, with the addition, as I have just explained, of £2,313,065 worth of additional revenue—duties on goods imported from the Eastern States of Australia, and now admitted free. In arriving, in fact, at this estimate of additional revenue, to be raised by the people of Western Australia for the Treasury, by taxing themselves on Eastern States goods, the Disabilities Commission, in Clause 27, page 16, of their report, state—

In order to ascertain what would have been collected on goods imported from other States we have assumed that these importations bore the same rate of duty as was im-

posed by the Commonwealth on similar importations from overseas.

So, there need be no doubt or misunderstanding. The financial figures of benefits, upon which secessionists broadly, rely, depend not only upon the preservation of the existing customs revenue now collected by the Commonwealth, but by the addition of £2,313,065 to be paid by the people of Western Australia on Eastern States imports, in order to benefit the Treasury to the extent of £1,561,065—an actual loss of £752,000 to the State as a whole. I am emphasising these figures because they serve to illustrate the remarkable reasoning of the secessionists and furnish further reasons why all other figures and calculations from that source should be most carefully examined. These hypothetical balance sheets are always dangerous, and when they are used to determine a grave national issue, particularly so. Not, I wish to emphasise, that the Treasurer himself supplies any such figures. He has cheerfully passed over the whole issue, accepting, in a surprisingly happy and irresponsible mood, the hopeful, imaginary "profit and loss" accounts furnished by secession enthusiasts. The farmer having been promised "relief" by payment of his share of the additional £2,313,065 worth of revenue duty on Eastern States goods, the taxpayer is asked to believe that he too will reap substantial benefits from this new functioning of government. Cut of his own midst will emerge politicians, unlike any other politicians, who will be to him as brothers, thirsting to give him relief, and promising, at the hands of 400,000 souls, a cheap and effective development of a State nearly as large as Europe, the responsibility of which should be a charge on the whole of the people of Australia.

As a preliminary instalment of relief, the taxpayer, who is also a consumer, will pay his share of the £2,313,065 additional taxation on Eastern States imports. After that, he is assured, he will get the benefit of the difference that the Commonwealth now collects from Western Australia, and the amount which the Commonwealth now spends in this State. What is that difference? It is a difference of over £700,000 in favour of Western Australia. In other words, taking the approximate proportion of the revenue and expenditure of the Commonwealth from the Consolidated Revenue Fund for and on behalf of Western Aus-

tralia for 1931-32, the Commonwealth spent £709,000 more in this State than it took out of it. May I just run over these figures in approximate detail:—

The total revenue credited to Western Australia by the Commonwealth for the year 1931-32 was £3,701,000 including—

£980,000 in		Income Tax ...		(actual and proportion o Central office assessment on population basis)
£106,000	„	Land Tax	...	„ „ „
£12,000	„	Entertainment Tax	...	„ „ „
£39,000	„	Estate Duties	...	„ „ „
£487,000	„	Sales Tax	...	„ „ „
£1,835,000	„	Customs and Excise	on population basis	„ „ „
and		£232,000 of other revenue Also on population basis		
		£3,701,000		

By way of further explanation of the last item, of £232,000, it is interesting to note that this includes a proportion, on a population basis, of the profits from the note issue; interest collected on war service homes; the profits derived from coinage, from marine, and various other sources. It is also as well to point out that the proportion credited to Western Australia for customs and excise, is calculated on a population basis, and would therefore include dutiable goods, no matter at which port they may have been entered and on products chargeable with excise duty, no matter in which State they were produced.

Against these total collections, amounting to £3,701,000, the Commonwealth expended, in and on behalf of Western Australia, during the financial year 1931-1932, a sum of £4,410,000 from Consolidated Revenue, or an amount greater than the collections by £709,000. How many, if any, of these items of expenditure this State could eliminate in the event of secession and reliance upon the genius of a State Treasurer, I will leave hon. members to discern, as I briefly enumerate them. The Commonwealth expenditure of £4,410,000 included—

- (a) An actual contribution towards interest on State debts of ... £474,000

As our secession friends are not, I hope, repudiationists, we can assume this expenditure will continue.

- (b) An actual contribution towards sinking fund on State debts of ... £119,000

We must give our secession friends credit for the spirit to preserve the State's credit and sound reputation for providing sinking funds for its loans.

- (c) Special Grant, 1931-32 ... £300,000

Of course under secession, the State would not be under any obligation to make a special grant to itself, and this item of expenditure could be converted into a bank overdraft.

- (d) An actual grant for roads of ... £348,000

We would still want roads.

- (e) An actual payment in invalid and old age pensions of ... £678,000

Secession, it is to be hoped, would not shorten the lives of our old folk, and the sick would be still with us.

- (f) An actual payment in war pensions of ... £731,000

Under secession, we would presumably continue as financially loyal to disabled soldiers and dependants as the people of the Commonwealth.

- (g) An actual payment in maternity allowances of ... £28,000

Secessionists, it is to be presumed, saddling 400,000 people with the development of nearly a million square miles of territory, would encourage rather than discourage the birth-rate.

- (h) Gold bounty ... £73,000

We could, possibly, justify our recent demands upon the Commonwealth by inviting our taxpayers to pay an increased bounty on gold production.

- (i) Interest on transferred properties (excluding Post Office) ... £15,000

- (j) } Actual Departmental expenditure (including proportion of central office expenditure on a population basis) ... £711,000

- (k) } Territories of the Commonwealth ... £49,000

These services include, also on a population basis, Western Australia's proportion of expenditure on Governor-General and Commonwealth Parliament (£30,000); of the Prime Minister's Department; Salaries and administration of Commonwealth Treasury; of Customs, of Health; of Defence (£224,000).

- (l) Unemployment Relief, 1931-32 ... £16,000

On Commonwealth works in this State.

- (m) War interest and sinking fund, etc., after deducting interest repaid by States on loans for Soldier Settlement (on a population basis) ... £829,000

The War, under Secession, would still have to be paid for.

(n) Proportion of loss on Commonwealth Railways	£52,000
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It is unlikely that the Commonwealth would continue to supply this State (under secession) with a continental railway service, unless we shared the cost and the loss).

£4,423,000

Against this, however, is—

(o) A profit on Post Office, on a population basis of	£13,000
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If the facilities now offered in this State were an exclusive charge upon the State Government, the loss would probably be substantial.

£4,410,000

Thus, the difference between the Commonwealth collections, of £3,701,000 and the Commonwealth expenditure of £4,410,000, is £709,000 in favour of Western Australia; so that, instead of this State making a gain by secession, it would make a direct loss of £709,000 and herein I direct members attention to the interesting and singular fact that the figures arrived at from this statement of Commonwealth revenue and expenditure, showing the loss of £709,000 which would accrue to this State from secession, bear a striking—and I suggest, reliable—comparison to the loss arrived at by the State Disabilities Committee when it showed that by adding further taxation to ourselves, by way of £2,313,065 collected from ourselves in duties on Eastern goods, we could benefit the State revenue by £1,561,065, and thus lose £752,000. It is rather a blinding conclusion to be reached by two such entirely different methods, but I have no doubt that the taxpayer, like the farmer, will awaken to the "relief" that is in store for him, and choose, wisely, between the devil he knows and the devil whose acquaintance he is invited to make. There still remains the other partner of promised blessings in this unholy alliance of secession—the Western Australian manufacturer. The Western Australian farmer looks to secession for relief from high costs imposed by tariff duties. The Treasury, which will be weighed down in the event of secession by new and heavy financial obligations, may, it is true, be able to some extent to graduate a State tariff according to State

requirements, but will certainly not be able to do with less total tariff plus an equal duty on importations from the Eastern States. The taxpayer looks to secession for relief from the intolerable burden of Federal and State taxation—and the Western Australian manufacturer looks to protection against Eastern States goods for a new lease of prosperity, if not of life. These are incompatible hopes which cannot all be realised. Government necessity might operate beneficially to the Western Australian manufacturer, but if it did, it would of necessity act detrimentally to the farmer and the taxpayer generally. The practical results of secession would be a gamble in which some interests now championing secession would be bound to lose. Possibly the manufacturer, believing that the State would need to extend its tariff, is convinced that the practical results would favour him. He thinks he knows of "a better 'ole" and is taking the secession road to it.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: He is in one at present.

Hon. SIR CHARLES NATHAN: I do not want to say anything further about the manufacturer; he may in some respects have contributed to it. Secessionists, in examining the figures I have quoted, will probably emphasise the saving which might be made—in the Gold Bounty and in departmental expenditure; but even if they succeed in convincing the people that the whole of these items can be wiped out, which would be manifestly absurd, there would still be no financial advantage to gain by secession, such as is now claimed. On the other hand, may I point out that the figures quoted apply only to the year 1931-32. This year, the disabilities grant has been increased by a further £200,000; and the Commonwealth Grant from consolidated revenue this year to Western Australia for the relief of necessitous farmers is £450,000.

Now, having confined myself to the financial aspect of this question, which is the issue upon which the secessionists rely, I will say one other word in conclusion to the Government. It is a word of warning. Financially, I have shown, there is no justification for this Bill. Morally, it is wrong. When all the world is seeking to get together, and men everywhere are seeking a common meeting ground for the solution of

their troubles, the Government have seen fit to offer this dangerous and provocative focussing point of mental disturbance to our people. The best legal authorities in the Commonwealth have clearly demonstrated that it has no constitutional basis. The sponsors of this Bill have argued that at least "an expression of opinion" from the people can do no harm. That is dangerous reasoning. No Government is entitled to ask of its people a constitutional expression of opinion without being certain, beyond all reasonable doubt, that there is a constitutional avenue for giving effect to that expression of opinion. With this Bill the Government is playing with human forces that it does not understand, and that must lead, at least, to futile bitterness and unrest at a time when the outstanding need of the nation is constructive co-operation, singleness of purpose and faith in one another. I leave it at that. I will vote against the Bill.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [7.55]: After listening to the diatribe indulged in by Sir Charles Nathan, I desire to express my opinion of his exposition of the case against secession. That the hon. gentleman spent a considerable amount of time in very carefully compiling his speech goes without saying.

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: Are you speaking on secession or dealing with Sir Charles Nathan?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I would remind the hon. member that while he was speaking I remained perfectly quiet, and I expect him to do likewise while I am on my feet. I have not been speaking for one minute before he begins to interject. I ask him to follow the example set by one who is his junior. The hon. member started off by talking about the judicial view that he took. With a few exceptions I do not think I have ever listened to a statement that can be considered as less judicial than that made by him. He did not give us one fact or one statement to show that we have the right to expect relief from the disabilities under which the State is undoubtedly suffering. That there are many of us who are convinced that Western Australia is seriously affected by being a member of the Federation, but who, nevertheless, are averse to taking the extreme step of separating from the union,

goes without saying. I do not want to be told by Sir Charles Nathan, capable as he might be of summing-up the position, just what our disabilities are. I prefer to rely upon the report of an independent commission—I refer to the report that was presented some years ago by the Royal Commission appointed by a Federal Government to inquire into the disabilities suffered by Western Australia under Federation. Not one member of that commission was a Western Australian, and members have only to read the report of that commission to find if not in favour of the extreme step, at least to recognise that the report of that independent commission admitted that Western Australia was suffering from serious disabilities. But listening to the carefully prepared speech of Sir Charles Nathan we are as though we had been blinded with sparks. The hon. member made an appeal to the House to endeavour to follow him through a maze of figures that he had carefully prepared. I was unable to do so, and I did not see any other member with pencil and paper making a note of the voluminous figures he read out to the Chamber. They may be all perfectly correct, but like the flowers that bloom in the spring, I do not know that they had much to do with the case. We are suffering severely, and we do not want Sir Charles Nathan to tell us that we are not. Every man and woman in the State knows that we are suffering, and the fact is admitted even by those who are not in favour of taking the extreme step. All that we ask is that action be taken to ease the burden that has been heaped on us by those disabilities. The various State Governments have never taken up the matter with the central Government as it should have been taken up, and, as has been properly put up to this House by the Chief Secretary, it is admitted that the instrument of the partnership was a noble one. Those who were responsible for it endeavoured to make provision for all sorts of circumstances and exigencies that might arise, but after 32 years of practical experience it has been found that, in order that justice may be meted out to the people of the States, certain alteration should be made. We did not hear one word from Sir Charles Nathan about that. There is an alternative in this Bill that was not provided for last

year. That is what we have to complain about, and the justification for that, not the heat exhibited by the hon. member. We claim to be suffering from certain disabilities. Will those who are not in favour of separation help us to try to get the disabilities removed by asking for and voting for a convention to go into the question of Federation, and remodel the Constitution which was so well prepared 32 years ago. Like Mr. Drew, I voted against Federation, and it may be supposed that I am still against it. I admire Mr. Drew. Although he voted against Federation, today he is not in favour of this Bill. I do not want to have to vote for separation, but as a native-born Western Australian, and one who endeavours to deal fairly with other people, and expects other people also to be fair in their dealings, I think we have a right to expect better treatment as a member of the partnership. Sir Charles Nathan did not once refer to any of the hardships we were suffering as a result of Federation. He did not refer to one of the acts which, without justification, the Federal Government had committed. It was provided in the beginning of Federation that not more than one-fourth of the Customs revenue was to be devoted to Federal purposes. The statesmen who drew up the Constitution knew with their practical experience of State activities that the States would require the money for the development of the territory within their control. Sir Charles Nathan did not once recognise that we had anything to complain about, but suggested we should go on our knees and thank God that we were a member of the partnership. I dare say he spent a lot of time in putting up all his figures.

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: Thank you.

Hon. H. Seddon: Perhaps they hurt.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I am prepared to recognise the beneficent acts of the Federal Government, such as the disabilities grants that were paid from time to time. We might be very hard up if we had to battle along on our own.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Only for a while.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Until we got into our stride. The fact that we do suffer from disabilities has been admitted by a Commission composed entirely of Eastern States gentlemen, who went carefully and thor-

oughly into the position. There is nothing more to be said about the matter. They did not advise us to separate but advised that we should be given control of our own Customs for 25 years. Despite the report of that Commission, we find a member of this Chamber deluging us with figures in favour of continuing the present arrangement. I have not spent any time in preparing a mass of figures to give to the House, as the hon. member has. I rely entirely upon the report of the Royal Commission. I should like also to refer to a legal man of our own, whose intellect is I think comparable with that of Sir Charles Nathan. That gentleman prepared a statement setting forth the disabilities of Western Australia under Federation. Can it be lightly brushed aside as the hon. member seems to think? That legal gentleman was on solid ground and presented solid facts.

Hon. E. H. Harris: He put up figures to support his case.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: This Bill should be passed, and the people given an opportunity to express themselves on the two questions embodied in it.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [8.7]: I intend to support the Bill as a matter of principle. I believe in a referendum. Any representative section of people has a right to ask Parliament for a referendum on any matter of public importance. It is then the duty of Parliament to point out what that means and what it may cost. If, then, the people still want it—and they had it in the case of the liquor traffic—it is the duty of Parliament to give it to them. That is all the Bill provides for, and that is why I am supporting it. The question is debateable. I can hardly agree with Mr. Hall's condemnation of Sir Charles Nathan's figures. Indeed, Sir Charles Nathan is to be congratulated on his presentation of the case. I do not say I agree with his figures or his statement, but I believe he thinks they are correct. If the Bill is passed, a great deal of controversy will arise, but before the vote is taken no doubt the public will be fairly well enlightened upon all points. I do not think anyone can cavil very much at this Bill. It proposes to get an expression of opinion from the people on the two questions involved, regarding their partnership in the Federation.

HON. R. G. MOORE (North-East) [8.9]: I support the Bill for the reasons advanced by Mr. Mann. Mr. Drew said it was not constitutional. I disagree with that view. We are only asking the people for an expression of opinion on secession. The hon. member said if we passed the Bill we would be held up to ridicule, seeing that it was unconstitutional. The Bill is not a secession Bill; it only provides for a referendum to the people on the subject. There can be nothing unconstitutional in asking the questions set out and allowing the people to say whether they want secession or not. If the majority desire secession, we can then take constitutional means to bring it about. If we ask the Federal Government to take a referendum throughout Australia to find out whether we can secede, and if the other States are agreeable to allow us to secede, and we then find from our own people that they do not want secession, we might indeed be held up to ridicule.

Hon. H. Seddon: What if they do not want it?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: That would be the end of it. There can be no harm in putting these questions to the people. I am not in favour of secession, but I am going to vote for the Bill so that the questions may be answered. The matter has engaged the thoughts of many people for a long time. Some are honestly convinced that secession is the best thing for Western Australia, while others just as honestly take the contrary view. I am saying nothing about the merits of the case. If I did I might be called over the coals as Sir Charles Nathan was for putting up a lot of figures and making statements which a certain member could not follow. I do not think a member can be held responsible for the inability of another member to follow everything that a fellow member puts up. I support the Bill.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [8.13]: It seems to those who are opposing the passage of this Bill that the debate savours of flogging a dead horse. There are members in this Chamber who have already committed themselves, for the most part unwittingly and without thought, to a referendum being taken on this issue. That being so, the second reading of the Bill is assured, and there is not much to be gained in opposing its passage. But a few who mentally are of the same type as those who favour a single tax or syndicalism, have

got it into their heads that secession is a good thing, and that a referendum should be taken to ascertain the opinion of the electors. Fancy an intelligent person wasting his time and energy in trying to convince Mr. Hall that the Bill should not be carried! On the general question of secession it may be said that Australia, for better or worse, entered into an indissoluble union. The history of federations and confederations since days immemorial conclusively proves that those who have calmly and dispassionately entered such unions have never broken away, that federations and confederations have been broken only by conquering nations, not by peaceful means. The greatest tribute than can be paid to Germany is that through all their trials and travails their disaster and defeat, the German peoples have kept their confederation, Prussianism notwithstanding; because a dismemberment of the German Confederation would mean the total dismemberment of the German peoples. As I say, history shows that federations honestly and sincerely entered into will endure, and that their component parts cannot vote themselves out. I will not enter into any long dissertation as to what the Imperial Parliament might do if in Western Australia a majority vote were cast for secession. Suffice it to say I stand four square behind Australia's greatest constitutional authority, Sir Edward Mitchell, who says the Australian Federation is a union one and indissoluble, and must remain. That being so, would even Mr. Hall, in his highest flights of imagination, conjure up in his mind that the Imperial Parliament is going to interfere and dismember the Australian Federation, merely for a pettifogging domestic squabble? Great Britain learned its lesson with its dismemberment of the British Empire by the loss of Amercia. Never since then has a British Parliament been a contributing party to the dismemberment of any component part of the British Empire. Those are my general views on secession, and on what might happen if a vote were cast in favour of it. I would be an anti-secessionist if I thought there was even a remote possibility of achieving secession. To secede from the Commonwealth would be for the State an irreparable and regrettable step. The part Australia played in the war is alone a clear and ample demonstration of the combined might of a United Australia. If Australia had not been united under the Federal bond, could she have played the dis-

tinguished part in the war that she did play? Again, could Western Australia, as a separate entity, have played the part that she too played in that great struggle? Of course not! If any member who is in doubt about secession wants recourse to a reliable source, I refer him to America's great son, Abraham Lincoln. What did Lincoln do? All that he fought for from the date of his inauguration as President of the United States to the date of his assassination was to preserve the American union. Time was on Lincoln's side, and time has proved that he took the right course; and by the course he took, the furrow he ploughed, he preserved the American union. There are in our midst little individuals who, on the question of the price of sugar or of Fiji bananas would say, "Let us get out of the union." We cannot do without the union, but the union could very well do without that type of individual. So much for the general question. It has been said it is intended this referendum, on the ground of expense alone, shall be taken simultaneously with the general elections to the Assembly next year. That is one of the subterfuges by which the Bill had such an easy passage through another place. Last session one of the most strenuous points urged against the passage of this Bill was that in these times it was maniacal to talk of spending £5,000 or £6,000 on the taking of a referendum. Now it is said the referendum will cost very little, because it will be taken on the day of polling for the general election to the Assembly. That is at once a threat and a promise. There is nothing in the Bill to say the referendum shall be taken on that day.

Hon. E. H. Harris: When we get into Committee there will be.

Hon. J. CORNELL: There is nothing in the Bill to say it shall be done. If we agree to the Bill as printed, it is quite possible the referendum will not be taken on the day of the general election; it might even be taken before that day, but there is a possibility of its not being taken on election day. It is possible that another Government will come back at that general election, and if the referendum has not been taken up to that time, it may not be taken at all. If the history of Australian Governments of the last few years is any indication of the future, it is almost certain that a new Government will come back at the next general elections. If not, it will be a miracle, because there have been numerous elections

recently and only one State Government, the McPhee Government in Tasmania, has come back.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You are pessimistic, are you not?

Hon. J. CORNELL: No, I am speaking from facts. For that reason alone, if the present Government are so anxious to have the referendum, I presume they will not risk the chance of some other Government preventing the referendum from being taken, and so they will take it before or at the next elections. I hope the Committee will make it "at," in order to place it beyond doubt. The Bill, with the exception of its compulsory voting proposition, is identical with a Bill that came to this place last session. But if it is intended that the referendum shall be taken simultaneously with the Assembly's elections, I submit the Bill needs amending. What should be done is to have half the verbiage of the Bill struck out and a simple clause or two inserted making the provisions of the Electoral Act apply automatically to the Bill. Instead of that, the old provisions are allowed to remain in the Bill. Unless the Electoral Act is amended, and the poll is taken simultaneously with the general elections, we will have this anomaly so far as the referendum is concerned: an elector enrolled for Kimberley may turn up on the day of the election at a polling place in Perth and say, "I am on the roll for Kimberley, I want to vote on this referendum." The Bill, as it stands, says that the presiding officer may ask him to sign a declaration stating he is on the roll and may give him a ballot paper, when he can vote. That vote, I presume, will be counted in the Perth district, unless each presiding officer in the State is supplied with 50 copies of the rolls of the State and ascertains before the elector gets his ballot paper whether he is on the roll.

The Chief Secretary: Have you read the Bill?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes.

The Chief Secretary: You have missed a lot.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I have missed nothing. I am not going to take directions from the Minister on electoral matters.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Could that not be amended in Committee?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Whilst an elector from Wyndham can, on making a declaration, vote at a Perth polling booth, the Bill

does not provide, as the Federal Act does, that the vote shall be returned to Wyndham and be counted for that district.

Hon. E. H. Harris: When it arrives there, it will be too late for it to be counted.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It has to be counted in Perth.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: Why should that be necessary?

Hon. J. CORNELL: If the election takes place on the same day, the Wyndham voter cannot vote for the Assembly at a Perth polling booth.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Not for the Assembly elections.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Under the Bill he can vote by post for the referendum, but his vote is returned to the Chief Electoral Officer. He votes by post for the Assembly elections on the same day. Another place says the vote is to be taken simultaneously with the State elections, but I am pointing out the anomalies that will occur if the Electoral Act is not amended so as to provide that an elector for a State election can vote as he would vote for a Federal election on form Q, that is, at any polling place within the State, if he makes a declaration. The vote is returned to the district for which he is enrolled. The Bill should be amended to provide that an elector may vote on polling day for the referendum at any place in Western Australia, contingently upon his making a declaration. Make it obligatory on him to make a declaration; do not leave it to the discretion of the presiding officer. After his vote is taken, let it be sent by the presiding officer who takes it to the returning officer for the district for which the voter claims to be enrolled. That is the provision in the Federal Act. If he is not enrolled for that district, his vote is disallowed. As the Bill stands, probably quite a large number of votes will be recorded for the referendum by voters who are not eligible. The only safeguard is the one I have mentioned, unless each presiding officer in the State is supplied with 50 copies of the electoral rolls. In that case he could ascertain whether a man from another district desiring to vote is on the roll for that district. If he is not on the roll, the presiding officer need not take a declaration, because the man cannot vote. The position is that two events will happen on the same day and two separate sets of machinery will be required to deal with them. There is another point I desire to make, and it is very pertinent.

The voting on this question will be taken as an aggregate vote, that is to say, as a vote on both questions. I am not so much concerned about the question of the convention as I am about the question of secession. Votes should be recorded for and against on each question. Then I presume the votes will be pooled under this Bill and the result announced. This State is divided by the Electoral Districts Act into four definite areas, namely, the metropolitan, the agricultural, the mining and pastoral, and the north. Why cannot the vote be so taken and counted that we can in each of those separate areas ascertain the voting for and against? Simple machinery can be worked out to show the voting for and against in the metropolitan area and the voting for and against in the agricultural area.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Why?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I will tell you in a minute.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I will take a lot of convincing.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I will not try to convince the hon. member, I know it is utterly impossible. Then the voting for and against in the mining and pastoral area and the voting for and against in the North could be ascertained. That is an easy matter. Voting for Federal elections, whether for the Senate or House of Representatives, is taken in five separate divisions of the State and the result is made known in each division. Why cannot this vote be counted within the areas defined by the Electoral Districts Act and the voting for and against made known in those areas? Now I come to what is at the back of my mind. I am satisfied that the mining and pastoral area, and probably the north, will vote ten to one against secession. That will be a clear indication they have no desire to secede. By a ten to one majority they will show they prefer to remain in the Federation. Why should there not be a provision in the Bill that they may remain in the Federation, having emphatically declared themselves? The other part of the State can go out on its own.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That will settle secession.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes, and the hon. member will have a chance of voting on it.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The people of the North will be able to express their opinion.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Then we will have the decided opinion of the electors in the

various parts of the State. There is great disparity of opinion among them in many respects. I claim that so far as the mining and pastoral area and the North are concerned, they ought to stand on their own.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: Does the North want to secede?

Hon. E. H. Harris: We want to secede from them, if we can.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We will assume, for argument's sake that there is a very large majority of secessionists in the agricultural and metropolitan areas, but in the aggregate they would not carry the day unless they swung in a few secessionists in the mining and pastoral areas and the north. They want to swing them in to get their way.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You have a few anti's down here.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We can ignore them. I hope the House, when in Committee, will make the Bill ship-shape in this direction.

The Chief Secretary interjected.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am afraid the Minister knows very little about the electoral system. This is the position which will arise under the Bill; a referendum will be taken at the same time as the elections. We will assume, however, that there is not a State election and that the referendum and the elections take place on separate days. Practically the same machinery will be used, with the exception that I have mentioned. The postal votes will all be sent to the Chief Electoral Officer, who deals with postal votes. If on opening those postal votes he finds they are all informal, that settles the matter. The absentee voter who votes at a polling booth outside the district for which he is enrolled has his ballot paper sent to the district for which he is enrolled and it is counted for that district. Then what happens under our electoral system will happen as far as the referendum is concerned. All votes will be counted within their respective districts, and the respective districts are set out in the Act. The electoral districts of the North are Roebourne, Wyndham, Pilbara and Gascoyne. Those votes will be pooled and the result shown. The mining and pastoral areas are Murchison, Mt. Magnet—

Hon. E. H. Harris: Not Mt. Magnet now.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Murchison, Leonora, Brown Hill-Ivanhoe, Kalgoorlie, Hannans, Boulder, Kanowna and Yilgarn-Coolgardie. They comprise the mining and pastoral areas. Votes will be counted in that district. Then the votes of the electoral districts in the agricultural area are counted in that district, and the votes of the metropolitan area are counted in that district. The same thing is done under the Federal system.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Then you would have a true reflex of the opinion of the people.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We would have a reflex of the opinion in fairly well defined areas that are marked by widely varying conditions. The four individual opinions could be recognised. Then the lot could be pooled, and the aggregate obtained. The same thing happens when the Commonwealth take a referendum. It is provided that the votes in each State shall be counted in that State. Subsequently the whole lot are pooled, and if a majority of the States vote for the question, and if the aggregate vote is for the question, the Constitution is amended, but not otherwise. For members to say that what I am advocating is ridiculous merely shows their ignorance of electoral matters.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: You are the only one who knows!

Hon. J. CORNELL: The matter is easy to work out and should be worked out. It would be interesting to know the result of the referendum within the districts represented by various members. Under the Bill it will be quite possible for the aggregate to be shown and not the individual results. I hope that in Committee the course I am advocating will be given effect to. Mr. R. G. Moore said he desired the question to be submitted to the electors for their consideration and deliberation. Other members, including Mr. Mann, have said the same thing. Mr. Moore went so far as to say he was not a secessionist; he would vote against secession. Mr. Mann has been too long a member to commit himself. What will be the position when the vote is taken? Suppose a substantial majority of electors decided in favour of secession, the duty of Parliament would be, if possible, to give effect to the result of the referendum; that is to say, to work for secession until it was accomplished or

until it was established that secession was incapable of consummation. I am opposing secession because I consider it incapable of consummation except by war. If a majority of the electors favoured secession, my position would be clear. I would say, "You have voted for secession. I opposed the proposal to give you a vote for secession on the ground that you had been misled, and that it was not possible to obtain secession. Get it if you can, but do not ask me to help you." Those who stand four square for secession will have a plain duty and obligation, namely not to delude the people any longer into trying to get secession consummated. I know that for the supporters of secession, that will be a long journey. I wish them God speed and a pleasant journey, but I think they will receive a sailor's farewell subsequently.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, debate adjourned.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Bills of Sale Act Amendment.
- 2, Land and Income Tax Assessment Amendment (No. 1).
- 3, Land and Income Tax Assessment Act Amendment (No. 2).

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—RESERVES.

Report of Committee.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [8.58]: I move—

That the report of the Committee be adopted.

When dealing with the Bill last evening, some members doubted whether the first and second schedules applied. Clause 7 was struck out, but neither schedule was related to that clause. The first schedule applies to Clause 6, and the second schedule to Clause 8. Consequently it is necessary to retain both schedules.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Do they refer to the widening of the road?

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: The second schedule refers to the widening of the road, and the first schedule refers to the piece of land near King's Park-road.

Question put and passed.

BILL—NARROGIN HOSPITAL.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [9.0] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to enable certain road boards to become parties to an agreement to subscribe a portion of the money required to erect a hospital at Narrogin, by making periodical contributions towards the payment of principal and interest in respect of the loan proposed to be raised by the Narrogin Municipal Council for this purpose. The hospital will be of direct benefit to the people residing in the districts as set out in the schedule to the Bill. In the Hospitals Act of 1927, Section 27 deals with the powers of local governing authorities to provide funds towards the erection of public hospitals. In Narrogin for some years now, there has been a move amongst the local authorities, led by the municipal council, to provide a new hospital, and this scheme has now been finalised. Under the scheme a hospital, costing about £10,000, is to be built, for which the Public Health Department will find £5,000, the second moiety being provided for over a period of years, by the local authorities consisting of the Narrogin Council and five road boards. Under the Hospitals Act of 1927 there are two methods by which local authorities can provide their money: (a) by way of loan, raised under the provisions of the Local Government Act; (b) by annual payments out of revenue. So far as the road boards mentioned in the schedule of this Bill are concerned, in each case—except, possibly, Narrogin—the amount that each will find is too small to make the subject of the loan proposed, with all the machinery provided under the Local Government Act. These road boards are perfectly willing to pay an aggregate small sum per annum out of their revenue, but under the proviso to Section 27 of the Hospitals Act of 1927, any such agreement is limited for a period of five years, and this is no good when it comes to making an agreement to deal with the capital expenditure as proposed. The Narrogin Council will raise a loan to make up the local moiety of £5,000, and the proposal is that the road boards shall pay their quota by annual instalments, entering into an agreement with the council accordingly. The whole object of this Bill is in this particular case to nullify the pro-

posals which limits such agreements to five years. Obviously, the Narrogin Council cannot take unto itself a loan obligation for a period of twenty years, or possibly twenty-five, when after five years some of the road boards, being then composed of different membership, may repudiate the present understanding. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Remaining Stages.

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

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—MINE WORKERS' RELIEF.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [9.5]:

The Bill meets the oft-repeated request by goldfields members in this House for the revision and consolidation of legislation dealing with the relief of men suffering from dust. I consider the Government are to be congratulated upon having tackled a task that absolutely bristled with difficulties and involved many interests. The legislative powers under which the health and care of men on the mines are administered are contained in three Acts, and three funds are concerned. The Mines Regulation Act controls the conditions under which the men work from the standpoint of health and safety, and also determines the standard of health required of an employee who seeks to work in the gold mining industry for the first time. No one can now be admitted to that industry unless he can stand up to a very stringent examination regarding his lungs and his health, from the standpoint of the particular diseases included in the Third Schedule to the Workers' Compensation Act. One of the conditions that applies in connection with that examination is that if a man has formerly been employed in the industry and for some reason has left it for a period exceeding two years, he has to be examined as if he were a fresh applicant for work in the industry. Consequently, we find many men are not allowed

to again take up such work. That condition has been imposed because any person whose lungs have been affected by dust is prone to become a liability under the Workers' Compensation Act, and therefore he is excluded. That condition has worked very adversely with regard to a number of men who, at an earlier stage, took advantage of the warnings given them under the terms of the Miners' Phthisis Act, which provided that any man suffering from tuberculosis had to be taken out of the mine and compensated by the Government. The Act also provides that if a man's lungs are found to be affected by dust—whether slightly or acutely, he has to be notified—he is advised for his own sake to leave the industry. If he takes that advice, he finds that after being away from the industry for 12 months, he is deprived from receiving any compensation, although in a very short period he may become seriously disabled so that he cannot earn his living at all.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Is the period 12 months or two years?

Hon. H. SEDDON: It is 12 months between examinations.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: But you referred to two years, and then mentioned 12 months.

Hon. H. SEDDON: No, the conditions are different. I will explain. If a man is away from the industry for two years, he is prevented from going back again to the industry. If a man is away from the industry for 12 months, he robs himself of any chance of sustaining a claim for compensation for injuries due to dusting. Many men who took the advice tendered them under the Miners' Phthisis Act, left the industry only to find that they had deprived themselves of any chance to secure compensation. In consequence, men realised that the only chance they had of providing for their dependants was to remain in the industry until they became so seriously disabled that they had to be taken out of the mines, thereby depriving themselves of any chance of saving their health and of prolonging their lives. Those are two disabilities that the Bill seeks to remedy. One difficulty that arises in connection with all such legislation is the procuring of precise information with regard to the probable life of a man so affected. We know that when a man is suffering from T.B. or T.B. plus silicosis, his expectation of life is probably very short. If a man is suffering from advanced silicosis, his span of life is materially

shortened, but we have no data to indicate what period we may expect such a man to live. If a man whose lungs are only slightly dusted can get away elsewhere where the conditions are favourable, he may live for a considerable period. But here again there is an absence of definite data and consequently the Government and the House will find difficulty in determining just exactly what financial obligations will be incurred under this measure. I pointed out previously that the Miners' Phthisis Act, prohibited men who are suffering from T.B. from working underground, and the reason for that prohibition is that such men are regarded as a danger to their fellow workmen, whose lungs are damaged by dust and are more susceptible to disease. When such men are prohibited from working in the mine, they are compensated. The Government have undertaken that responsibility, and the Bill for compensation payments has steadily increased. To the end of June, 1932, the payments under that heading amounted to no less than £250,000, and the amount expended last year for compensation alone was £69,000. The Workers' Compensation Act embodies a schedule of diseases for which compensation is payable. If a man is suffering from any of those diseases, and can establish a claim under Section 7 of the Workers' Compensation Act that the injury to his health was due to his occupation, he can secure compensation. The difficulty in connection with the Workers' Compensation Act is that it is very hard indeed for the man to establish his claim unless he has been discharged by the employer and his inefficiency can be directly attributed to the condition of his lungs. The result is that, although the liability has been assessed and the employers have contributed 4½ per cent. to a workers' compensation insurance fund to provide for the men, the number of claims against the fund have been comparatively small. There is an accumulated surplus in the fund, which must be regarded as a reserve against contingent claims, because if we examine the condition of the men as disclosed by the latest examination, there is a liability against the fund that would speedily wipe it out altogether if the total liability were admitted. The total income from premiums under the Workers' Compensation Act dis-

closed on page 53 of the Auditor-General's report is £213,000, and the total sum paid in claims to the 30th June is computed at £45,000, leaving as I say a considerable balance to the credit of the fund. Some of the claims are still operating because the conditions provide that payment shall be distributed in weekly amounts of £3 10s., thus extending over a period of 4½ years. Consequently there are still many claims in force not entirely completed. That is the second method of compensation. The third method is under the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. That fund was instituted before either of the other two Acts were placed on the Statute-book. It provides for a system of contribution from the men, from the employers and from the Government. The men contribute 9d. per week, and a similar amount is paid by the employer and by the Government, making a total of 2s. 3d. per week to constitute the revenue from which compensation has to be paid. The scale of compensation under that fund is very much smaller than the scale applying to men who have been removed under the Miners' Phthisis Act. The scale of compensation under the fund is for married couples.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That does not apply to silicosis or tuberculosis.

Hon. H. SEDDON: It formerly did. Under the fund married couples receive 25s. plus 5s. for each child under 14, the maximum being £2 5s. Single men receive 25s. per week. Widows under 40 and without children receive 20s. per week for three months after the husband's death and then 10s. per week for three months. Widows under 40 with one child receive 30s. per week for six months after the husband's death and then 7s. 6d. per week for the child until it attains the age of 14. Widows under 40 with two or more children receive 15s. a week and 5s. for each child until it is 14. Widows between 40 and 50 years of age receive 20s. per week for three months after the husband's death and then 15s. per week for three months and then 10s. per week until remarriage or death. An extra 5s. per week is allowed for each child to the age of 14. Widows between 50 and 60 receive 20s. per week until remarriage or death and an extra 5s. per week is allowed for each child until the age of 14. Widows of 60

and upwards receive 10s. per week and assistance rendered in applying for an old age pension. An extra 5s. per week is allowed for each child to the age of 14 years.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That scale continues under the Bill, and can be made greater.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is so. On the other hand payments made under the Miners' Phthisis Act are in accordance with the wages ruling in the district with an allowance of 8s. 6d. for each child to the age of 16. That is a much more liberal scale. The widow receives compensation after her husband's death amounting to £2 a week. I have quoted these figures to show what operates under the three Acts. On account of the anomalies, we find that a majority of the men who see that there is no opportunity of recovering their health will not leave the industry, and they remain there because they can secure better benefits for their dependants, until they get T.B., or until they are turned out of the industry. Under the Bill there are considerable alterations, and at the same time there is much consolidation. The responsibility undoubtedly is shifted very largely to the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. Our past experience of that fund was that owing to the decline in the industry and the consequent reduction in the contributions it was found that the revenue was not sufficient to meet the charges on account of the number of beneficiaries. The rate was increased from 6d. to 9d. so as to overcome the difficulty. It was found that that was not sufficient, and the Government had to go to the rescue of the fund and contributed £11,000 to enable payments to be continued. During recent years, owing to the existence of the Miners' Phthisis Act, and the Workers' Compensation Act, the number of claims under the Mine Workers' Relief Fund diminished considerably, and the result was that the trustees of the fund were able to meet their obligations and pay back a considerable amount of the money lent by the Government. It appears to me, however, that there is a possibility of that state of affairs recurring, and it is likely that the Government may again have to go to the assistance of the fund to enable it to function on the same scale as in the past. Under the Bill the advanced silicotic man, the man who will be able to get compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act, provided he can prove his claim, will have considerable advantage, in that his claim

will be proved for him by one of the clauses of the Bill. Once a medical officer has certified that the man is in a state of advanced silicosis, that man can at once lodge a claim by registering under the Bill, and the board will certify and prove his claim. He can then make a claim on the Workers' Compensation Fund. Those conditions apply to a man suffering from silicosis plus tuberculosis. The original intention of Parliament was that the Workers' Compensation Fund should carry a fair share of the load in regard to the dusted men. There is also a further advantage that is secured to the man whose lungs are only slightly dusted. Under present conditions that man remains in the industry until he is seriously affected. Under the Bill provision is made whereby, having been advised that he is slightly dusted he will register, and he may then leave the industry, and so long as he keeps that registration good, he can maintain his right to claim compensation when he becomes seriously affected by the action of dust on the lungs, or when tuberculosis supervenes. It is necessary however that he should be a subscriber to the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, because under the conditions of the Bill after the compensation of £750 has been exhausted he falls back on the Mine Workers' Relief Fund and receives compensation on the scale provided under the Bill. There is a further benefit and it is one that we have long sought. Under the existing legislation there were no provision whereby prospectors—the men who may be regarded as the founders of the mining industry—could receive protection. Many have given their health and many their lives as the result of working in the industry. A great number of prospectors are expert miners and while they are out in the bush prospecting new areas—that is their real avocation—they may come to the end of their resources and return to the mines to get employment. Then they possibly work for a few months and go out again prospecting. Under the Mines Regulation Act they can no longer do that. They are prevented from getting employment in the mines and they have no claim for compensation. They cannot come under the Miners' Phthisis Act because they are not working in a mine under the mining Act. Consequently those men are under a serious disability. Under the provisions of the Bill they can come up for examination, and if they are found to be free from silicosis they can become sub-

scribers to the fund and in that way become entitled to payment should they receive any injury. The Bill goes further. If a man is slightly dusted and can establish the fact that he has worked for five years in the aggregate, he can then be admitted as a subscriber and subsequently receive disablement compensation. There is a further provision to which the Minister for Mines referred when introducing the Bill in another place. A special certificate can be issued to a man who may be dusted. This certificate will enable him to work in a mine, but it embodies an indemnity whereby he will not be able to claim should his health become seriously affected. The certificate, however, will permit him to work for a period in the mine and thus derive the benefit of his skill and his knowledge of mining. The conditions governing that special certificate have not been made clear. The Minister said they would be framed and tabled after the Bill had passed both Houses. If it could be so arranged, it would be of advantage to the House if the conditions could be explained before the passing of the Bill. There have been a number of instances in the last few years of men formerly employed in the industry and who have gone back to Kalgoorlie on a promise of work by their former employers. Those men were unable to get employment because they had been away from the industry too long. The special certificate will enable them to get employment, but it will not enable them to establish a claim under any of the conditions governing the funds. I wish now to deal with the T.B. men and their dependants. For those men who are now receiving compensation from the Government, the existing conditions are to continue, but any man who, after the passing of the Act, is found to be suffering from T.B. will become a charge upon the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. He will be entitled to receive £750 at the rate of £3 10s. per week until he has exhausted it, when he comes on to the scale provided under the Mine Workers' Relief Fund direct.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Do you say that that fund may have to be supplemented by the Government?

Hon. H. SEDDON: It appears there is a probability of that.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It should be supplemented by the mine owners out of the premium on gold.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The mining companies are paying very large amounts towards the assistance given to these men. They will have to face a serious claim from the men who are proved to be silicotic in the advanced stage, and from the men who are found to be silicotic, plus T.B. The companies will continue to contribute as they are contributing now. Last year they contributed £45,500 under the Workers' Compensation Act alone. They are, therefore, bearing a fair share of the expense of compensating these men. The men who are suffering from T.B. alone, and are prohibited from working in the industry after the passing of the Bill, will become a charge on the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. One-third of the cost will be borne by the company, one-third by the men, and the other third by the Government.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is all borne by the Government to-day.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes, but under this new legislation the Government will bear one-third of the cost, possibly a little more. The men who are found to be suffering from advanced silicosis will become a charge on the workers' compensation fund, and those who are suffering from silicosis and T.B. will become a charge on the same fund. That is quite distinct from the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. To give an indication of how that would work, I have taken out last year's figures dealing with the examinations, and have applied them to the working of the Act. This will give members an idea of what will occur. In the year 1931 there were 3,012 men examined. Of these 2,530, or 84 per cent., were found to be in normal health; 346 were found to be in the early silicotic stage (their lungs being slightly damaged), or 11 per cent.; 53 men were found to be in the advanced silicotic stage, their lungs being seriously damaged; 57 were found to be suffering from advanced silicosis and in addition, T.B.; and 25 were found to be suffering from T.B. only. I have allotted each group to the various funds liable under this Bill. On the 1931 figures, the 53 men with advanced silicosis and the 57 with silicosis plus T.B. will constitute claims which can be made immediately a charge upon the Workers' Compensation Fund. That would involve an amount equal to £82,052, roughly about half the amount which now stands to the credit of the Workers' Compensation Fund alone. In addition there exist 346

men who are in the early silicotic stage, and who will under the Act, provided they get themselves on the register, constitute a possible liability some time later on. That charge may be deferred for a number of years, but still these men will constitute a liability. This was recognised by the Government Actuary in deciding the rate of contribution to the fund, because he realised the possibility of an accumulation on the fund through men being in the early silicotic stage. The 25 men who were found to be suffering from T.B. will come under the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. Their immediate claims would come to 25 times £750, amounting to £18,750. That will be spread over four years. If that rate of disease continues, and there is every indication that it will keep within the vicinity of these figures, there will be a serious charge on the Mine Workers' Relief Fund from T.B. men alone. In addition the Mine Workers' Relief Fund has to carry existing beneficiaries, and will have to carry the men who have exhausted their £750. It will thus be seen that the fund will have to carry a heavy burden which, in my opinion, will absorb all the credit it has, and probably involve the Government in certain responsibilities. I hope this has made the position clear in regard to the two funds.

Hon. J. Cornell: After a man has had his £750 he goes on to the fund.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes, until he dies. It is the uncertainty in regard to the lives of these men that makes me think there will be a considerable load on the fund. This load will be borne by the three parties I have mentioned. It will lighten the burden on the Government to a certain extent, but I think it will nevertheless impose a pretty heavy obligation upon them.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What would happen if the fund were exhausted? Where would the money required come from?

Hon. H. SEDDON: It would have to come from the State, as in the past. The only benefit the State is getting is that it is being relieved of a considerable part of the heavy burden it is carrying now. Last year it amounted to £69,000. This is only one phase of the compensation that is borne by the State. Early silicotic men become a liability. Prospectors may also become a charge on the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. In this case there are only two contributories

to the fund, the prospector and the Government. There is no employer in that case.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is it a case of fifty-fifty?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes. There are other factors which will tend to relieve the Government to a certain extent. There is the cleaning up which has taken place during the last few years. There has been a considerable improvement in the health standard of mine employees. I quoted figures a little while ago, showing the number of men who in 1931 were classified under the various headings. By way of illustration, and to make a contrast, I will now quote the figures for the first year of examination and those arrived at in 1931. In 1926, 4,067 men were examined, as against 3,012 in 1931. The number of men found to be normal in 1926 was 3,257, comprising 80 per cent. of the total number of men examined. In 1931 there were 2,530 normal persons, comprising 84 per cent. of the total number examined. There has been an improvement there.

Hon. J. Cornell: A very small one.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes, but still an improvement. With regard to the silicotic men, in 1926, 655 were found to be affected, comprising 16 per cent. of the total. In 1931, 399 men were found to be affected, amounting to 13 per cent. With regard to the silicotic, plus T.B. cases, there were 143 in 1926 and these became a charge on the Government, and in 1931 there were 57, and these will become a charge on the Workers' Compensation Fund. The percentages respectively were 3.5 and 2 per cent. With regard to the men who were T.B. only, 12 were found to be suffering in 1926 and 25 in 1931.

Hon. J. Cornell: Which shows a lamentable weakness somewhere.

Hon. H. SEDDON: There is an increase. The explanation of the department is that with the improved equipment they were able to read the chest photographs more clearly than before. This is the reason given why more men were found at a subsequent examination to be suffering from T.B. than was the case before. A considerable number of men have been taken out of the industry, and to that extent there has been a cleaning up. Others have left it, and this has helped to improve the position. Many have lost their jobs, and have been prevented from receiving the com-

pensation they might otherwise have had. They have been removed from the men who remain in employment, and have helped to create a higher standard of health. All this has had an effect upon reducing the liability for compensation. I would refer to the report made by Dr. Nelson, who as a result of his examinations has made available some interesting data. He pointed out that dust was very materially associated with the number of years that men have been working in the industry. He quoted two sets of figures. The first deals with the men who did not work underground. These men, as far as silicosis was concerned, were not affected to anything like the same extent as those who did work underground. The percentages were—from 0 to 10 years, 4 per cent. were found to be suffering from silicosis; from 11 to 20 years 1.7 per cent.; from 21 to 30 years 7.2 per cent.; from 31 to 40 years 5 per cent.; from 40 to 50 years 16 per cent. In the case of the men who have worked underground, in the first year no less than 7 per cent. were found to be suffering from dust. For the first five years 12.8 per cent. suffered from it; from 6 to 10 years 21 per cent.; from 11 to 15 years 28 per cent.; from 16 to 20 years 44 per cent.; from 21 to 25 years 51 per cent.; from 26 to 30 years 67 per cent., these being the ages and the percentages of men affected by dust. Although we are rapidly achieving a better position in regard to general health on the mines, and we hope that condition will be established for the future, until we have had experience of the clean-up that has taken place in regard to the new men who are being introduced, we cannot say whether there is any possibility of those men in turn becoming affected with dust after being in the mines for a considerable time.

Hon. J. Cornell: South Africa has had experience of that.

Hon. H. SEDDON: We have not enough data to say that the mines are cleaned up, and that there is no possibility of the men becoming dusted as time goes on. That, of course will materially affect the position in regard to the fund. I am placing these facts before members in order that they may know the real position. The Bill will be of material advantage to the men, but it presents many anomalies. Financially it is fairer than the existing Act, because

it places on the mining companies their share of responsibility under the Workers' Compensation Act, and also it provides that a man shall not be abandoned after receiving the compensation due to him under that Act, but shall be carried on. The question is how the position will turn out in the future. I do not know whether there is sufficient data available to enable the statistician to compute what the expectation of life will be in the various stages of disease. I have been able to get certain information from doctors, who say that a man suffering from early silicosis may carry on for 20 years before being seriously affected by dust. On the other hand, if he be working in unfavourable conditions, his span may not be nearly so long. As to the man in an advanced stage of silicosis, his expectation of life is comparatively short, while the man affected by tuberculosis has not very much longer to live. I cannot see how the scale of benefits under the fund can be increased without involving a heavy charge on the Government, or a large increase in the contributions from the men and the companies and the Government. I have tried to place the position before members because it is necessary they should realise what is involved in the Bill. I will support it, for I regard it as a long-needed improvement in the methods of dealing with the men. It overcomes serious anomalies and hardships that have been inflicted on men who have spent their lives in the industry. It represents improved legislation, but I want to make it clear that to enable us to give the scale of benefits established in the Miners' Phthisis Act, there will have to be very much increased contributions to the relief fund. Whether that is contemplated by the Government, I do not know. They have left the matter open, and it will be within the powers of the board, if they think it desirable, to increase the scale of compensation. When the Miners' Phthisis Act was amended some years ago, my colleagues and I drew attention to the fact that the scale of relief provided would be inadequate in certain cases. On the other hand, the financial obligations to be imposed are so great that I say any amendment of the scale should be determined by the men who contribute to the fund and may become victims of disease. The fixing

of the compensation should be left to them. I will support the Bill.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East)

[9.50]: The Bill is of the utmost importance to those engaged in the mining industry, and, having regard to the short time at our disposal at the end of the session, I consulted with my colleague, Mr. Seddon, who has, I think, covered all the salient features of the Bill. So there is very little left for me to add. I corroborate all that Mr. Seddon has said in relation to the fund as it has operated in the past, and as we consider it will operate in the future. The Mine Workers' Relief Fund was instituted by the late Hon. Jabez Dodd. Following on that, the Minister for Mines, Mr. Scaddan, introduced the first measure to deal with the subject when he brought down the Miners' Phthisis Bill in 1923. The Bill before us, as pointed out by Mr. Seddon, relates to the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, absorbs the work of the Miners' Phthisis Act and repeals that Act, which was an important item in the history of the mining industry. The Bill embodies the activities of the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, a development we have advocated for a number of years. To workers on the wages list in the mining industry it is of the utmost importance that we have regard to those miners whose health has been shattered by the dread disease known as miner's complaint and who, in those days, did not have the redress available at present for the disabilities they suffered and for their widows and orphans. The Bill, as Mr. Seddon did not point out, makes it obligatory on everybody in the industry below ground to subscribe to the relief fund. Formerly it was chiefly a condition of employment on the bigger mines, but many of the smaller mines and the men engaged in them did not subscribe. Some of the employees did, but it was optional. The prospectors have never previously been provided for. They have been the backbone of the industry, but since they were not working for employers they could not subscribe. The existing Act provides that a person of no initiative, who relies entirely on some employer, shall be provided for, but the man who goes out and takes a risk is not provided for, and so, when he falls by the way-side, there is no compensation for him or for his widow. The Bill provides for the inclusion of the prospector if he is personally engaged in the industry and can prove

to the satisfaction of the board that he is free from certain diseases but suffering from silicosis in the early stages, and has been prospecting for an aggregate of five years. With the consent of the board, he may subscribe to the fund. But there is in the Bill no definition of "prospector." There are prospectors relying entirely on their own resources, and others who are prospecting for backers. The system is that two or three men subscribe a fund, and a prospector representing them goes out on half wages. If he finds anything of value, he gets a share of it. We have in the Bill no definition of "prospector," except that he is personally engaged in prospecting. It might be desirable to have a proper definition inserted. When the prospector is accepted and pays into the fund, the Government also pay their share. In the case of an ordinary miner, the employee pays into the fund in the proportion of one-third, his employer pays another third, and the Government also pay a third. Where there is no employer there can be only two subscribers, but the prospector is to get the same rate of remuneration as he would if there were three subscribers. In Clause 57, provision is made that the board shall furnish to the Minister a statement of the total amount of contributions received from all the persons contributing to the fund for a period of three months, and the Treasurer on behalf of the Minister shall as soon as possible thereafter pay into the fund an amount equivalent to the sum of such contributions as part of the contribution payable by the Treasurer. That sounds all right, but in Clause 23 we find that the Treasurer, on behalf of the Minister, shall pay into the fund an amount equal to the total sum of the contributions of the employers. I may be wrong in my interpretation of that, but it is as well to draw attention to it now. Clause 23 says the Treasurer shall pay in an equal amount with the employers, and since the prospector has no employer, it looks as if he could not force the Government to subscribe. It should be so clearly worded as to leave no ambiguity. The brightest feature of the Bill is that it corrects the anomaly that men who are affected and are advised by circular sent from the department to leave the industry are held in bondage; because if they leave the industry before being in it 12 months, they lose all right to compensation, and so, instead of leaving, they remain in the industry until they fall down on the

job. Only then, when carried away, are they entitled to compensation. I give the Minister credit for introducing the Bill, which provides that workers who have left the industry and who subsequently break down as a result of having worked in it, can get compensation, provided they continue paying their contributions to the fund. It will lengthen the lives of a large number of men who are engaged in the industry, because at present they are forced to remain in it in order to get compensation. Mr. Seddon has practically dealt with all the important features of the Bill, and so I leave the matter to members. So far as I understand the Bill, and with my knowledge of the industry, I consider the measure should commend itself to all who have at heart the interests of the men working in the gold-mining industry.

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

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2.)

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [10.2]: The Bill is very short: it contains only two clauses. I appreciate the Government's expedition in drafting a measure to give effect to a motion which was carried by the House on the 16th November. That motion, in effect, said that an immediate amendment of the Act was desirable in order to make available for re-treatment the huge tonnages of tailings lying on Crown lands and abandoned and forfeited mining leases throughout the State. At present I think we might describe all those dumps as untouchable. There is no method by which a person can make application for them under the Act, and the necessary provision should be made. The passing of the Bill is not only likely to lessen considerably the worry, time and expense involved in the treatment of the tailings, but it will create an avenue for the investment of capital and for the employment of workers. That will be good for the workers of the State and, as the Minister has pointed out, the production of gold will benefit the State. Since this matter was ventilated by me in the House, I have received many letters of

commendation and also suggestions for provisions to be embodied in the Bill from men engaged in the mining industry. I am pleased to note the Minister has, in my opinion, made provision for the matters submitted by me. In line 15, page 2, of the Bill we read—

... the said tailings or other mining material shall, on the commencement of this subsection, be deemed to have become and shall remain the absolute property of the Crown, free from all encumbrances.

That is very comprehensive. In my opinion, the Bill is perfectly clear up to that point. We are amending Section 111 of the Act. The next section of the Act, 112, governs the granting of licenses to treat tailings. To make myself clear to hon. members, may I quote subsections 1 and 2 of Section 112 of the Mining Act—

(1.) Such license—

that is, a license to treat tailings--

—or licenses shall confer upon the licensee the right to remove such tailings or other mining material from, or to treat the same upon, the land on which such tailings or other mining material are or is situated.

(2.) Notwithstanding the granting of any such license the Governor may grant gold-mining or mineral leases of the land on which such tailings or other mining material are situated as effectually as if such license had not been granted, subject only to the rights of the licensee under any such license.

What are the rights of the licensee? He has the right to treat the tailings and to extract whatsoever he can from them. Now let us consider the position of the person who pegs the ground and makes application for a lease. With the limited time at my disposal this evening, I have not been able to assure myself of the position of a man who secures a license to treat the tailings on the surface and the position of a man who pegs the ground and applies for a lease or license to mine. A question arises: What are the rights of a person who follows another person or a company or a syndicate, which perhaps had taken up a 24-acre lease, put a battery on it and crushed a large quantity of ore, leaving a big dump of tailings? The person or company abandons the mine. The next applicant perhaps is not interested at all in the tailings. He may be merely a fossicker, a man looking for gold. Almost invariably the fossicker pegs out the same area of ground, because the pegs are already there. He then lodges an application with

the warden for a prospecting area, for which he pays the nominal sum of 10s. until such time as he may find gold. He has all the rights to the ground. It is his prerogative to work it, but, as the Mining Act stands now, he practically ties up the ground. As I say, he has no intention of treating the tailings, probably because of lack of knowledge or lack of financial resources. His object is merely to fossick for gold. If there is a shaft in that ground, he has the right to use it; he perhaps would not have taken the ground up were it not for the shaft. If there is a water supply on the mine, the person who is granted the license to treat the tailings may require to avail himself of it. Usually, he would. He will want the right to go down the shaft. I mention these points because of the regulations made under the Act. I have not got them with me. I will give two illustrations in order that I may be assured that the interests of both those men will be safeguarded. They will be working on the same ground but in quite distinct occupations. We do not want their rights to clash and thus cause friction later. A syndicate or a party may perhaps repeg four or five leases which were formerly a group of mines. They make application for the leases and their application is granted. They then make further application to the warden to concentrate labour on one or two particular leases. It may so happen that those leases are the ones on which the tailings are dumped. They may want room for expansion, but the Government may be about to grant someone the right to treat the tailings. Those two parties may get into conflict. I shall be glad if the Chief Secretary will make inquiries into those two points. One other point, and I will conclude. As there are so many huge dumps of tailings scattered about all over the goldfields, I think it should be obligatory on the person who makes application and secures a license to treat a dump to take out a tailings license for a tailings area. He can then have the surface rights for the tailings area, while the other person who is about to work the mine can peg out a claim as a prospector. Furthermore, I consider that no exemptions should be granted for a tailings area, unless for a reasonable time to permit a man to erect a treatment plant or to re-erect a plant. That is a matter which might be met by application to the warden. It may necessitate a small regulation being framed. The

Government have to keep complete records, and only a nominal fee would be required, but the registration would be there and, when the area was abandoned, it would be free for any other person to take up. I feel confident that the action of the Government in amending the Act will be appreciated by the whole of the investors, prospectors and others interested in extracting gold and finding employment for themselves and for their fellow men. I support the second reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon C. F. Baxter—East—in reply) [10.16]: I appreciate the support given the Bill by Mr. Harris. He has put two questions which appeal to me as being practically identical, regarding a person taking up a mining lease, which entitles him to everything below the surface. Such a lease would not entitle him to the tailings on the surface. There could be a separate lease for a person to treat the tailings dump. There may be a difficulty regarding the shaft. Before the Committee stage is reached, I will make inquiries on the point raised by the hon. member. My opinion is that the person with a mining lease would have to control the water, and I cannot see how the man on the tailings dump could have access to it. Control of the shaft could not be divided. I will put that query to the department and give a reply to-morrow. The question of exemption, too, will also be referred to the department.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East—in reply) [10.19]: Mr. Drew asserted that Parliament was not taken into the confidence of the Government in regard to the Collie River irrigation scheme. When last year's estimates were before the House, various irrigation schemes in the South West, including the Collie River scheme, were fully explained, and to that extent at least, Parliament was taken into the confidence of the Government. This

scheme is estimated to cost £330,000 and so far as can be judged at present, that estimate is not likely to be exceeded. Drainage alone will cost £64,000. The drains are being constructed to carry away the surplus water during the winter time, and the conservation of water (including the channels which will supply it to the various holdings) is, of course, designed to increase production. Out of the £330,000, £293,000 will be paid in wages to the men directly employed on the works, and £37,000 will be required for materials, all of which will be obtained within the State. Although the water stored will be sufficient only to irrigate 11,000 acres, the acreage embraced within the irrigation and drainage district is 34,000. The rate of 10s. per irrigable acre to be charged has attached to it a proviso that, for the first three years, no one landowner will be required to pay rates in excess of 33 acres. This is a lower rate than is charged in any other State in the Commonwealth or in New Zealand.

A man owning 100 acres of land would pay—

	£	s.	d.
In Bacchus Marsh	67	10	0
In Maffra	32	5	0
In Collic	21	10	0

In New South Wales the charge levied for all irrigable land is £1 per annum, plus 14s. per annum for areas in productive bearing. In South Australia—the Hay River scheme—the price is £1 10s. per irrigable acre, and for fruit lands £3 per annum with a right to four waterings. If settlers who have been accustomed to dry farming during the summer months and are endeavouring to cope with water-logged country during the winter months would study the conditions within the Harvey Irrigation District, they would realise that a tremendous benefit can be derived on holdings which are properly drained and which can be irrigated. It must be understood that this scheme provides only for main drains; the settlers themselves must construct subsidiary drains.

With regard to the hon. member's remark about barrows instead of machines being employed on the Harvey River diversion, it is an established fact that the machines referred to could not be economically employed in the big excavations through sand. It is wrong to say that only barrows were used. Trucks running on light lines were also used. The engineers are satisfied that the work cost no more than it would

have done if the machines had been employed. Now that heavy country has been encountered and the drag-line excavators can be economically used, they are being used. One is in use now and very shortly two others will be employed. It is estimated that approximately 120,000 acres of land—some of which is Crown land, and other portions which cannot be economically worked now—will very substantially benefit when this cut is completed.

The position in regard to the deduction of 2 dwts. 8 grs. for tailings treatment is that under normal conditions, on a 75 per cent. extraction with gold at £4 per ounce, it is equal to the original charge of 7s. per ton. Under present conditions it means that the department receives the premiums on the gold extracted from 2 dwts. 8 grs. Basing the present year's figures on those of 1931, the loss which the department make on the crushing of 100 tons of ore has to be made up in the profit derived from the treatment of 64 tons of tailings.

The policy of the department concerning reservations has been to grant them only where it was considered that the properties required large capital to re-open, or where they were so isolated as to be practically unworkable by prospectors. The areas reserved comprise mainly low grade deposits, and the policy of reserving them has been justified within recent weeks. News has been received to the effect that holders have been successful in interesting large companies in reserves at Wiluna, Cue and Nullagine, and work is to be commenced at an early date. The Agent General (Mr. Angwin), within the last few days, cabled the Government recommending the extension of a number of reserves held, in view of satisfactory negotiations now taking place in London.

Mr. Miles referred, amongst other things, to the Calyx Porcelain Company. The company was formed in 1923, and was given an advance of £13,500, on a pound for pound basis. Security was taken over the whole of the assets. In 1925 the company got into financial difficulties, and, at the instance of the creditors, a liquidator was appointed by the court. As it was desired not to close the works, but to give the liquidator an opportunity to dispose of them as a going concern, further advances were made by the Government from time to time to enable him to carry on the business. Those advances amounted to £11,000.

Last year the Government took over the works from the liquidator, and in order to effect a sale, granted an option to Mr. Vincent, and agreed to make a small advance to complete a contract for insulators existing at the time the works were taken over, and to put the works in order, such advance to be recouped in the exercise of the option. The fact that neither the liquidator nor the option holder was a public accountant is a technical objection only, and has no real bearing on the matter. The liquidator is responsible to the court for the correctness of his accounts, and the Auditor General has been asked to see, on behalf of the Government, that the option holders' accounts have been correctly kept.

In reference to the State Savings Bank transfer, the fact that deposits were transferred with the bank was due to the wording of our Act. By this it was directed that deposits not operated on for seven years should be carried to "Depositors' Unclaimed Fund." A list of the balances was then to be published in the "Government Gazette" annually for ten years before any deposit could be transferred to revenue. Although claimed by the State before transfer, the fact that until the expiration of the period specified, they still remained deposits, operated against our claim. However, if eventually unclaimed, they will form part of the bank's profit, and the State will be entitled to its share.

In regard to the Golden Eagle nugget, the disposal of the proceeds was governed by the terms of the Financial Agreement. On the passing of that Act the existing procedure was changed. It must not be forgotten that the repayment of all loan expenditure is now covered by the sinking fund.

Mr. Hall referred to an amount of £69,000 paid for pensions. Those amounts were paid under the Act of 1904. As they were statutory obligations, the Government had no option to meeting the claims. Apart from that, those amounts were reduced under the Financial Emergency Act. The amount is large because there have been a good many retirements. Men of 60 years and over have been retired, and consequently they were entitled to fairly substantial pensions. It was felt by the Government that it would be far better, when retirements were necessary, to retire men well on in years rather than younger men. I think every

member will agree with that policy. I thank members for the support given the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 14th December, 1932.

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

QUESTION—MUNICIPAL AND TRAMWAY BOARD ELECTIONS.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that serious allegations of improper practices have been made against certain authorities and Justices in connection with the taking of absentee votes at the recent Municipal and Tramway Board elections in the North Fremantle and Fremantle districts? 2, In view of the serious nature of the charges will he have an inquiry made? 3, If the charges are substantiated, will he take steps to see that the people concerned are not permitted to repeat the offence?