

fearless manner in which he maintained his principles, surely every member can have nothing but admiration for his memory and feel impelled to emulate as far as possible the good example he set. His close knowledge of the two great primary industries mining and wool, justify the remark that the State can ill-afford to lose a man of his qualifications. By his death this Chamber, from a debating point of view, will be the poorer. I add my tribute to the references made to the passing of Mr. Stewart and support the expression of condolence to his family.

HON. F. W. ALLSOP (North-East) [5.45]: I desire to express my regret at the loss of Mr. Stewart. My friendship with the late gentleman dates back many years; I knew him as a University student in Melbourne 35 years ago. He was then intending to follow a mining career. He became a mining engineer, and visited various parts of the world. During all the time I knew him he was a conscientious, capable, and splendid man, and won the respect and esteem of all who met him.

HON. E. ROSE (South-West) [4.46]: I wish to join with other members in expressing deep regret at the loss of our colleague. His province and mine link, and I had the opportunity of meeting him on many occasions. At all those meetings, as well as when we sat together in this Chamber, I invariably found him a most conscientious, straightforward and honourable man. Not only did he carry out his duties in the House with great ability, but as a farmer in the Wagin district he was always highly respected. He was a man who always tried to do his best, not only for himself but for all concerned, a man who gave advice when asked, and who was always looked upon with the greatest respect. On behalf of my colleagues in the representation of the South-West Province as well as on my own behalf I desire to join in extending to the widow and family of the late Mr. Stewart the sincerest condolences in his death at such an early age.

THE PRESIDENT [4.47]: In putting the motion I wish to say that I, too, join in the expression of sorrow at the loss of a colleague with whom I have been associated for the last 14 years. Mr. Stewart's death

came to us with unexpected suddenness. To me he always seemed to have abundant physical as well as mental vigour. He led an active life, and it is only two or three sittings ago that he was amongst us showing an intelligent interest in the work of the House. The late Mr. Stewart was, as Mr. Hall has pointed out, undoubtedly a useful member, more especially by reason of his extensive knowledge of the mining and agricultural industries, a member whom the House and the country can ill-afford to lose. His family have the consolation of knowing that he has left behind him a reputation for transparent honesty of purpose, together with conscientiousness and patient industry in the discharge of his public duties. To his sorrowing wife and family we extend our heartfelt sympathy.

Question passed, members standing.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Out of respect for the memory of the deceased gentleman, I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question passed.

House adjourned at 4.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 11th August, 1931.

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

QUESTION—RAILWAY PASSES.

Mr. BARNARD (for Mr. J. MacCallum Smith) asked the Minister for Lands: What were the total amounts paid by the State to the Commonwealth Railways on account of Parliamentary and Ministerial passes for the years ended 30th June, 1930 and 1931?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: The total amounts paid were £998 13s. 10d., as follows:—For the year ended 30th June, 1930—£410 6s. 6d.; for the year ended 30th June, 1931—£588 7s. 4d.

QUESTION—CLYDESDALE MARES, IMPORTATION.

Mr. J. I. MANN asked the Minister for Agriculture: Seeing that the Government have purchased a Clydesdale stallion from the Eastern States at an approximate cost of 300 guineas to do service at Muresk, will they now consider the advisability of purchasing ten Clydesdale mares with the view to the local breeding of stallions instead of permitting the constant drift of money out of the State for subsidised stallions?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied: Owing to the present state of the finances, it is impossible to find the amount that would be required to purchase the animals mentioned.

QUESTION—STATUTE OF WESTMINSTER.

Mr. SAMPSON (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands: Has effect been given to the resolution passed by Parliament in respect to the Statute of Westminster, and has the protest contained in that resolution been cabled to the Imperial authorities?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: A cable message has been sent conveying the resolution of this Chamber.

QUESTION—WHEAT, BULK HANDLING.

Hon. A. McCALLUM (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands: In anticipation of a debate on the subject of the bulk handling of wheat, will the Minister for Lands agree to lay upon the Table of the

House all reports of committees and other documents relating to the proposal which the Government now have under consideration?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: I do not know what papers are in existence, but, if the hon. member desires to debate the subject, all papers will be laid upon the Table of the House provided they are released when they are required.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Administrator received and read notifying assent to the State Manufactures Description Bill.

BILLS (5)—RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

- 1, Financial Emergency.
- 2, Constitution Acts Amendment.
- 3, Trustees' Powers.
- 4, Mortgagees' Rights Restriction.
With amendments.
- 5, Trustees' Protection.
Without amendment.

BILL—REDUCTION OF RENTS.

Suspension of Standing Orders.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [4.43]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will enable the Reduction of Rents Bill to reach the second reading stage at this sitting.

It is intended to postpone the second reading stage until later in the sitting. It is hoped to pass through the remaining stages of the Bill to-morrow, after which the House may be adjourned for a fortnight.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House. There is the necessary majority of members present.

Question put and passed.

First Reading.

Introduced by the Attorney General and read a first time.

As to Second Reading.

On motion by the Attorney General, second reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for a later stage of the sitting.

BILL—DRIED FRUITS ACT CONTINUANCE.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands (for the Minister for Agriculture) and read a first time.

RETURN—TRAMWAYS STATISTICS.

On motion by Mr. Raphael, ordered: That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing—1, The capital account debited to Claremont tramways to the 30th June, 1931, together with (a) number of car miles run; (b) number of passengers carried; (c) total earnings; (d) total working expenses (for the year ended 30th June, 1931). 2, The manner in which the £9,550, debited to tramways capital account for the year ended 30th June, 1931, was expended. 3. (a) The reason for an increase in consumption of units per car mile; (b) the action, if any, being taken to rectify the position. 4, The loss on the Westana-road line for year ended 30th June, 1931. 5, The loss on the Mends-street line for year ended 30th June, 1931.

BILL—ABATTOIRS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—FIRE BRIGADES (SINKING FUND).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. N. Keenan—Nedlands) [4.51] in moving the second reading said: All the reasons for accepting the Bill appear in the Preamble, which is necessarily voluminous because it has to set out facts that do not usually appear in Bills. I shall read the Preamble as follows:—

Whereas the Western Australian Fire Brigades Board as then constituted had, prior to the year one thousand nine hundred and thirteen, borrowed by means of four separate loans, moneys amounting in all to the sum of twenty-two thousand pounds, and in the year one thousand nine hundred and ten established a sinking fund account for the redemption of the said sum: And whereas the said Board, in the year one thousand nine hundred and thirteen, raised a further loan of fifty thousand pounds and used portion thereof to repay in full the said sum of twenty-two thousand pounds previously borrowed as aforesaid without having recourse to the said

sinking fund account for such purpose: And whereas as on the thirtieth day of April, one thousand nine hundred and thirty-one the said sinking fund account was in credit in the sum of two thousand five hundred and eighty-seven pounds three shillings and one penny, and the same is no longer required for the purpose for which it was established: And whereas it is now deemed expedient to authorise the said Board as now constituted to close the said sinking fund account and to transfer the said moneys therein to its ordinary revenue account and to provide for the appropriation of the said moneys . . .

Then the preamble indicates that the House enacts the present Bill to give effect accordingly. Clause 3 sets out that authority is given to close the sinking fund account and transfer the money to the revenue account for the purposes of the board. The moneys were received, as is explained in the preamble, in consequence of the fund established to redeem a certain loan, and subsequently it was paid off from the proceeds of another loan. The fund has been accumulating interest and it now stands at £937. That money must remain forever, like Mahomet's coffin, somewhere between Heaven and earth, unless some authority is given to permit of its use. The object is to allow the use of that money for the purposes for which it was raised, namely, to comply with the requirements of the fire brigades in different parts of the metropolitan area. I do not know that it requires any further explanation to make the position clear. The Bill is a short measure that should be accepted by the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier, debate adjourned.

BILL—PEARLING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption of the debate from the 5th August.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

BILL — FREMANTLE (SKINNER-STREET) DISUSED CEMETERY AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th August.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [4.57]: I support the second reading of the Bill and shall not take up the time of the House in debating it. I consider it will be better for all concerned if the cemetery be removed. It has fallen into a state of great disrepair and no objections have been raised by anyone to its removal. The municipal council, the cemetery board and all the churches agree that it will be in the best interests of all concerned that the cemetery shall be removed.

Mr. Marshall: What have the churches to do with it, anyhow?

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Richardson in the Chair: the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Short Title:

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: The words "Skinner-street" have been omitted from the name of the Act, which the Bill will amend. I move and amendment—

That in line 3, after "Fremantle," the words "(Skinner-street)" be inserted.

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

Clauses 2 to 6—agreed to.

Title:

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: The Title also will have to be amended, consequentially on the amendment we have made. I move an amendment to the Title—

That after "Fremantle" on its second appearance in line 3 the words "Skinner-street" be inserted.

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

Bill reported with an amendment, together with an amendment to the Title.

MOTION—SECESSION, REFERENDUM.

Debate resumed from the 5th August, on the following motion by Mr. H. W. Mann (Perth), as amended:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should introduce a Bill to enable a referendum of the electors of Western Australia to be taken on this question:—"Are you in favour of Western Australia withdrawing from the Federation?"

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [5.5]: I desire in very few words to support the motion. The first point I would raise has not previously been raised: I refer to our deficits. For the past 15 years we have had regular deficits in this State. It cannot be said to be all due to bad government, for successive Governments have shown deficits. This proves there is something wrong in the State of Denmark. Again, so long as we remain in the Commonwealth, we have to run the risk of States such as New South Wales taking us down for hundreds of thousands of pounds, thus adding to our liabilities. I think that point might well be considered. Another thing, for many years Western Australia will have to sell her wheat abroad. I can quite see that, shortly, the Eastern States may be almost self-contained in this respect. Even to-day more than a quarter of the wheat grown in Australia is consumed in Australia. The time is fast coming when New South Wales will be able to consume all her own wheat, and I think that within our lifetime Victoria will reach the same position. By that I mean that the Eastern States may frame a policy which would quite suitably deal with their own manufactures and products, whereas we in Western Australia must sell abroad to live at all. Another point is, can we in this State afford two Governments? If we cannot, obviously either unification must come or the States separate. Unification will eventually come to Australia, because with accelerated progress and all kinds of inventions Australia will have to come to one Government, although probably not in our time. So if we cannot afford two Governments, we must make the best of our State Government. Again, before any referendum on secession is taken, the public are entitled to a very clear precis for and against the proposal so that they may see what it really means. I do not mean some high-falutin' politically-inspired pamphlet giving all the details from the point

of view of an advocate, but a cold official document. Perhaps the Federal Treasury Department may be able to provide information showing in a cold practical way what secession will mean. Although I urge the taking of this referendum, I do not say I am fully convinced that secession is the only course for us. But if that official document is provided so that the electors may have information both ways, we shall come to a cool decision on the merits of the case. I should not like to think of this important referendum being taken during a rush campaign, for it might be said afterwards that the referendum was not worth much, because it was stampeded by the Dominion League. Let us have a referendum depending on the cold calculation of the people fully supplied with information showing exactly where they would stand if the referendum were carried.

HON. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.9]: All along I have regarded this motion as being so much waste of time. In these difficult times the House might well be engaged on the consideration of more important questions. I say this, not because I believe Western Australia has no grounds for complaint against Federation or, rather, against the operation of the Federal Parliament and Constitution during the past 30 years, but because I am absolutely convinced there is no possibility whatever of Western Australia getting out of Federation: there is no possibility whatever, or not by these means. It is quite obvious to anyone who has given consideration to the question that the only way for Western Australia to get out of Federation would be by going to the Imperial Parliament. Everybody knows that the Parliament would not agree to any request by this Parliament or by the people of Western Australia unless it had the approval also of the people and Parliaments of the Eastern States. There can be no question about that. If the Imperial Parliament were to act in this matter, they would act in other matters also at the request of one State without having taken into consideration the attitude of the Commonwealth Parliament or the Parliaments and people of the other States. It is unthinkable; I am as certain as I am that I stand here on the floor of the House, that the Imperial Parliament would never dream of taking

action as requested by the Dominion League, unless that request was supported by the Federal Parliament and the other partners to the Federation. So, as I say, I regard this motion as being so much waste time.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Not that it is not in a just cause.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not going to argue the cause. In recent months we have been deluged with figures, compiled by different bodies, and arguments in favour of secession. We have had a mass of figures hurled at our unoffending heads by the Dominion League as to the effect Federation has had on Western Australia, and as to what the position would be if we got out of Federation. We have had Western Australia pictured to us as a land flowing with wealth and prosperity, milk and honey. But all those figures as to what would be the result of secession I disregard as entirely suppositious, very many of them built on imagination.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Man never is, but always to be blest.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. It is all supposition. To try to set out a detailed statement as to what the revenue and expenditure of Western Australia as a separate dominion would be, is the wildest kind of speculation. In compiling our Budgets, in estimating our revenue and expenditure in each of the States and the Commonwealth, with all the experience of the operations of the past behind us we are not able to get within millions of pounds of it at the end of the year; yet the Dominion League can tell almost in exact figures down to shillings and pence what the revenue and expenditure of Western Australia will be if only she can get out of Federation. But even if it were desirable that a referendum should be taken—and here I would like the Government to give us some indication of what they intend to do should this motion be passed—it would be not only wicked, but almost criminal to take a referendum on such a question to-day. Two or three years ago the Dominion League—which has been in existence for a good many years—had no following at all in this State. So it went into recess for a year or two. But now, because of the abnormal condition of things in this as in all the other States, the Dominion League are cap-

italising the depression in the interests of their own propaganda. If things were now as they were two or three years ago, no one would take any notice of the agitation. That has been proved by the fact that no one took any notice of the agitation until 12 months ago. But to-day, because everything is upside down, so to speak, and because everyone is suffering disabilities, more or less, so everyone would be willing to vote against the existing order of things in favour of a new order that promised to bring better times.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: That is not what you said in Melbourne.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have already said I am not arguing that there is not a case against Federation as far as Western Australia is concerned; what I am saying is, first of all, that what is proposed is utterly impossible of achievement, and if it were, it would be a wicked thing to take a referendum in the existing state of the public mind. You might ask the people at the same time whether they were in favour of executing the Government and all the members of Parliament. They would all say yes, and there would also probably be a majority in favour of the abolition of all Parliaments. It would not be a difficult matter to get such a majority in view of the state of mind of the people because of the prevailing conditions. The people would vote for any kind of a change, even though it might prove very harmful. Two or three years ago, if a referendum had been taken in Australia, say, on the question of communism, scarcely a vote would have been secured in its favour. But to-day I have no doubt that hundreds of thousands of votes would be recorded in favour of it because the communists have promised the people the millennium. When there are hundreds of thousands of men unemployed, and all their families and dependants are suffering, and someone comes along and promises them a new Heaven and a new earth, if they will only adopt the nostrums put before them, the people would vote for those nostrums. There is a very close relationship between the methods of the Dominion League and the communists in Australia. The communists are capitalising the unemployment that is abroad in the land, and the general hardships accompanying unemployment; they are organising all over Australia and are getting a considerable number of followers. The Dominion League

has adopted a similar policy. This is a time when new leagues are springing up like mushrooms; they are to be the saviours of the country. And so to take a referendum to-day when the people's mind is upset and worried, and when the people would probably vote for anything in the way of a change, would be utterly wrong and would be no reflex of the true judgment of the community in normal times. So, too, when everybody should sink the principles they held hitherto, and when all should pull together, it would be wrong, utterly wrong, to divide the people. This referendum would divide the people, not on party lines as we are divided when elections come along, but there would be cross currents which many people would not anticipate. The people would be divided in a manner that has never happened before with regard to party politics. Whilst we are going through this crisis—and apparently we are going to be in for some time yet—to throw this spanner into the machinery and get the people disputing with each other on the question of secession would be a wicked thing to do, whether the motion be passed or not. No Government should be guilty of throwing an apple of discord of this kind amongst the people during the present position. Any Government doing such an act would be carrying out a deed that would warrant their own downfall and destruction. As a matter of fact, I propose to move an amendment to the motion because, if a referendum is correct with regard to secession, so should we have the voice of the people on other important matters as well. I propose that this question also shall be asked of the people, "Are you in favour of the policy and administration of the Mitchell Government, and the policy the Government are pursuing?" Let us have the voice of the people on that.

Mr. Corboy: The Government should have nothing to be afraid of; they have the banks and the Press behind them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If a referendum is good to ascertain the will of the people on the subject of secession, we might as well have the opinion of the people about other questions at the same time.

Mr. Marshall: We could take the two at the one time; it would be more economical.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The whole thing is a waste of time. I notice that the Dominion League intend to wait upon the Acting Premier, or they propose to ask him to forward

to the Imperial authorities a long series of resolutions carried at their recent convention. There were seven or eight lengthy paragraphs commencing with the word "whereas," and the Government are to be asked to forward the resolutions to London. I hope the Government will do nothing of the kind. Why could not the Dominion League themselves send along those resolutions? They have no right to ask that the Government should send them forward. The way is quite clear for the Dominion League to forward those resolutions to the British Government, or wherever their destination might be. It is neither the duty nor the function of the Government to do that kind of thing any more than it is the duty of the Government to forward resolutions carried by any other section of the community. If the Government were the only channel of communication, then it might be the right thing; but the Government are not the only channel of communication. It is open to the League to forward those resolutions direct. I do not propose to waste the time of the House any further, because I am convinced that what is sought is incapable of achievement. I am not discussing the merits of the matter; what is sought could never be done without consulting the Eastern States or the Commonwealth, and secondly, even if it were possible, such a question should not be put to the people in the disturbed state of mind in which they find themselves to-day. It should be done only when things are normal, when the people are in the position to give a considered opinion. I can imagine the people of Western Australia heaping the whole of the troubles from which the State is suffering on to Federation. But I have no wish to go into that matter; our troubles are not all due to Federation. We ourselves, every one of us, in fact, including past Governments and past Parliaments, must accept a fair share of the responsibility for Western Australia's troubles. We are made to believe now that even the price of wheat and the price of wool as well as all our other troubles are due to Federation. Statements of that kind are being made at farmers' meetings in various parts of the State.

Mr. H. W. Mann: That is not so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: All the troubles from which Western Australia is suffering are blamed on Federation, and that would be the cry if we had propagandists going round the country on a campaign in connection

with this referendum. A picture would be painted of unlimited wealth and prosperity if we could only get out of the Federation, a picture similar to that which was painted at the elections 18 months ago when the cry was—"Wealth, work and prosperity for everybody if we can only get out of Federation!"

Mr. Corboy: And bring about a change of Government in the State.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the motion:—"Are you in favour of the policy and administrative acts of the Mitchell Government?"

The SPEAKER: I draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that the addition of those words will not make sense; the motion will require to be altered at the beginning. The motion reads "That in the opinion of this House the Government should introduce a Bill to enable a referendum of the electors of Western Australia to be taken on this question:—Are you in favour of Western Australia withdrawing from the Federation?" I ask the Leader of the Opposition how he could add his amendment to the motion as it stands?

Mr. Kenneally: We could make it read: "A referendum on secession and other relative matters."

Hon. P. COLLIER: The motion is as you, Mr. Speaker, have read it and alludes to a referendum "on this question." What question?

Mr. SPEAKER: "Are you in favour of Western Australia withdrawing from the Federation?"

Hon. P. COLLIER: The only question before the House is those words to enable a referendum to be taken on "this" question. I ask again, what question? This question. My question is "this" question, just as much as secession is "this question." The word "secession" is not going into the motion.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition could insert the word "and" at the beginning of his amendment, and then the addition to the motion would read "and are you in favour of the policy and administrative acts of the Mitchell Government?"

Hon. P. COLLIER: My amendment will constitute "this" question just as much as does the hon. member's motion. The motion does not say anything about a referendum. When my amendment is carried

there will be something at least definite and specific, because a referendum could be taken, whereas it could not be taken on the hon. member's motion as it stands. What is "this" question? It might be any question.

The Minister for Lands: The question is mentioned in the following sentence.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have accepted the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. G. Latham—York—on amendment) [5.31]: I can hardly believe that the Leader of the Opposition is serious in moving his amendment.

Hon. P. Collier: I am; it is a practical question.

Mr. Corboy: What you are doing does concern us.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then we ought to change our Constitution. I do not know whether it is a motion of want of confidence in the Government.

Hon. P. Collier: I want the people's opinion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member does not desire to test the feeling of the House on the question. I hope the two questions will not be mixed up. They are entirely different.

Hon. P. Collier: One is a practical question.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We go to the people quite often enough without resorting to a referendum of the kind proposed by the Leader of the Opposition. The hon. member, in the early part of his speech, made some very impressive remarks that might well be applied against his amendment. Therefore I consider that he defeats his object by the very arguments he himself advanced.

Mr. Sleeman: Why object to his question going to the people?

Mr. W. H. Mann: You go to the people in 18 months' time.

Hon. P. Collier: I will withdraw my amendment if the motion is withdrawn. We have as much right to submit the one as the other to the people.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Leader of the Opposition has made out a very good case against asking the people to express their feeling towards the present administration.

Hon. P. Collier: I agree it is not the right time to take a vote of the people on anything.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot agree to the amendment. One does not like the idea of committing hara-kiri in that way. I hope the House will not agree to connect the two questions. I cannot see that the addendum proposed by the Leader of the Opposition is at all relevant to the motion.

Hon. P. Collier: Effect could be given to my amendment but not to the motion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not agree.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The Government could resign.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government could resign without adopting that course.

Mr. Corboy: In questioning the relevancy of the amendment, you are questioning the Speaker's ruling.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not at all. I am questioning the right of the Leader of the Opposition to link up the two questions.

Mr. Corboy: The Speaker has ruled that the amendment is quite in order.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not questioning his ruling. If anything could persuade me to oppose the amendment, it was the opening part of the hon. member's speech. He convinced me that it would be inadvisable to submit such a question to the people. To give effect to the amendment would be much more dangerous than to give effect to the motion. The Leader of the Opposition said we could not give effect to the motion.

Hon. A. McCallum: I quite understand your opposition.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am glad the hon. member does.

Mr. Corboy: You will oppose the referendum on secession?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am opposing the amendment for a start. I have already spoken in favour of the motion.

Mr. Sleeman: On what ground do you oppose the amendment?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is so illogical; I cannot find any excuse for supporting it.

Mr. Sleeman: Do you anticipate what the result would be?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : Yes. It would be dangerous to submit a question of the kind to the people at this stage. There is no doubt we shall have to appear before the electors soon enough, and at least we want a reasonable opportunity to place ourselves in a more favourable light than that in which we appear to-day.

Hon. P. Collier : There is nothing impractical about the amendment.

Mr. Corboy : It is too practical; that is your complaint.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : As a matter of fact, it is too dangerous.

The Minister for Railways : Why not make your amendment deal with all Governments in Australia?

Hon. P. Collier : That would make it impractical, because we could not give effect to it. I want only practical things to which we could give effect.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : I feel sure the Leader of the Opposition would not desire the matter mentioned in the amendment to be referred to the people, especially if it meant his stepping into the breach and endeavouring to correct the difficulties that exist at present.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan—on amendment) [5.38] : I was amazed to hear the amendment moved by the Leader of the Opposition. The Standing Orders appear to be silent as to the connection that should exist between an amendment and a substantive motion. There is no relevancy, so far as I can see, between the amendment and the motion. I am not concerned for the moment as to how the people regard the Mitchell-Latham Government.

The Minister for Lands : That could come later.

Mr. SAMPSON : Yes; the people will have an opportunity to express their opinion some months hence. If a referendum were taken to-day, I feel sure that the people, having a knowledge of the difficulties prevailing, would declare that the work of the Mitchell-Latham Government was highly satisfactory.

Hon. P. Collier : Then why not take the vote?

Mr. SAMPSON : The Leader of the Opposition should submit his amendment as a substantive motion, and then it could be considered. I could imagine what the Leader of the Opposition would have said had some

other member moved such an amendment to a motion for a referendum on secession. He would have criticised such action as unprecedented and stupid, and condemned it for its utter uselessness.

Hon. P. Collier : That applies to the motion.

Mr. SAMPSON : The Leader of the Opposition has not submitted the amendment seriously.

Hon. P. Collier : Is the motion intended seriously?

Hon. A. McCallum : It is a most ridiculous motion.

Mr. SAMPSON : The member for South Fremantle knows that the motion is in the best interests of the State.

Hon. A. McCallum : Talk sense!

Mr. SAMPSON : He knows that if we desired to secure secession, we could do so. History gives the story of secession movements in other countries.

Mr. SPEAKER : Order! The hon. member must confine his remarks to the amendment.

Hon. P. Collier : What is the history of it in America?

Mr. Corboy : The Boston tea party.

Mr. SPEAKER : The question is to add certain words to the motion.

Mr. SAMPSON : The Leader of the Opposition advanced certain arguments in submitting the amendment, and I concluded that I had a right to reply to them.

Mr. SPEAKER : I hope the hon. member is not reflecting on the Chair.

Mr. SAMPSON : No.

Mr. SPEAKER : Well, please observe the ruling of the Chair. If you wish to dispute the ruling, there is a proper course to adopt.

Mr. SAMPSON : I regret that any words of mine should imply disrespect to the Chair. Nothing was further from my thoughts. The Leader of the Opposition has referred to the price of wheat, and has endeavoured to ridicule the national movement for secession.

Mr. Millington : Anti-national.

Mr. SAMPSON : The price of wheat would be greatly affected by the motion.

Mr. SPEAKER : The hon. member is getting outside the scope of the amendment.

Mr. SAMPSON : I regret my inability at this juncture to reply to the arguments of the Leader of the Opposition regarding secession. At a later stage, when the amendment has been defeated, I shall have an opportunity to do so.

Mr. Hegney: You should show cause why a referendum on secession should be taken.

Mr. SAMPSON: The amendment limits the scope of discussion. Beyond expressing surprise that the amendment should have been moved, one can say little more. Whether the public would express themselves favourable to the Mitchell-Latham Government is a question quite foreign to the motion. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will ask the permission of the House to withdraw his amendment. That will give us an opportunity to discuss secession in all seriousness, and without having the position clouded by matter that is foreign to it.

Mr. Corboy: Give us some serious matter to discuss, then.

HON. A. McCALLUM (South Fremantle --on amendment) [5.46]: So far as I can learn, the reason given for the taking of a referendum is that Federation has not come up to expectations.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have already stopped the member for Swan from going beyond the amendment.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The people in favour of the proposal argue that there is a record of 25 years of broken promises and disappointments. I would point out that we have had 30 years of Federation, and I venture to say that over the entire period not as many promises have been broken as the Government of Western Australia have broken in less than 18 months. Not a policy that Federation stood for has been defaulted that has not a dozen times over been defaulted by the State Government during the last 18 months. It is desired to hear from the people that they think Federation is detrimental to this State. We are just as satisfied as members opposite are with respect to the people's answer to that question, that they would also say, if given the opportunity, that the State Government were detrimental to Western Australia. Not a promise the Mitchell Government made to the people but has been broken.

The Minister for Lands: Are you not satisfied with the present Government?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The Minister knows that, if the people had the opportunity, they would express themselves overwhelmingly in favour of putting out the Government. Members opposite know that, and for that reason they do not desire the amendment to be carried. As the Minister

for Lands says, it is too dangerous. If the amendment is carried and that matter is taken to the people, the answer can be given effect to, but if the motion is carried and goes to the people, nothing can come of it.

Mr. Corboy: One is harmless and the other is dangerous.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: No argument can be adduced that is in favour of the motion which does not apply equally to the amendment. If the people are prepared to vote that Federation is detrimental, there is no doubt about their voting that the Government are detrimental to the State. If it is maintained that the history of Federation for the last 30 years is strewn with the wreckage of broken promises, so can it be maintained that the regime of the State Government for the last 18 months has been equally beset with broken promises and policies that have not been carried out; and the State Government have not lasted as many months as Federation has lasted years. Why cannot both questions be submitted to the people? If it is thought advisable to spend State money on the one question, why should it not be spent on the other?

Mr. Corboy: One can be given effect to but the other cannot.

The Minister for Railways: Would you be in favour of giving effect to the substance of the amendment if it were carried in the affirmative?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: If the initiative and referendum had been the law of the land, there is no doubt as to what would have happened long ago to many of the Bills which have been brought down by the Mitchell Government. Petitions would have been sent in, the Bills would have been submitted to the people by referendum, and by an overwhelming majority would have been defeated. As things are, they have been forced through Parliament in defiance of the wishes of the people.

The Minister for Railways: Would you apply that principle to the Scullin Government, the Hill Government, the Lang Government?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: We cannot have a referendum to do with those Governments, but we can take a referendum regarding the Government of this State. Ours would be like a voice crying in the wilderness if we tried to do anything with respect to other Governments. People may maintain that Federation has proved a failure, that

it has not lived up to its ideals and principles, that it has in fact collapsed, but no man in this country will argue that there has been any more default on the part of the Commonwealth than there has been on the part of the present State Government. under any of these headings. All the promises that were held out as to what Federation would achieve were no more glowing than the promises of achievement held out by members opposite at the last elections. They know that if the people were given the opportunity they would reject 90 per cent. of the legislation that has recently found its way into the statute-book. Our citizens know it is opposed to their interests. The amendment conveys a practical idea, something upon which the public can express an opinion, something that can be given effect to by this Parliament. If the motion itself is carried, all that will happen will be that the people will express their opinion, and that will be the end of it. It is only possible to find out what the people think, and no result can come from such an expression of opinion. If the Government intend to spend £4,000 or £5,000 on a referendum on the main question, why not have the two questions mixed so that some result can be achieved from the expenditure?

Hon. P. Collier: It would be worth while spending the money then.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: It is of no use spending £4,000 or £5,000 if no result can be obtained from the outlay.

The Minister for Railways: Who suggests there would be any result?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Surely it is not suggested by members opposite that they have no hope of getting any result from the expenditure of the money?

The Minister for Railways: I was referring to the amendment.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: If the people answer in the affirmative on the amendment, their wishes can be given effect to, but Parliament can certainly not carry out their wishes if the motion itself receives their approval. If we are going to spend the money, let us spend it on something that will achieve some good.

Mr. H. W. Mann: I do not think you would like to come over here.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: The hon. member can speak neither for us nor for the people. We want the public to speak. We would

like to hear their pronouncement upon the promises of the hon. member. He said the Arbitration Court and its awards would not be interfered with by any legislation. We had his definite promise, and that of other members opposite, but we find that they vote for Bills that have the effect of seriously interfering with the court and its awards, and these measures are put upon the statute-book.

Mr. H. W. Mann: What has that to do with the matter?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: It has a lot to do with it. We want the vote of the people to find out what they think about it. If the initiative and referendum principle had been in operation, those Bills would never have reached the statute-book. The amendment is the only practicable part of the motion. If the House is going to vote for the expenditure of public money on the holding of a referendum, let us see that the public has something to vote for, and something that can be carried into effect. Let us do something with the money.

MR. BROWN (Pingelly—on amendment) [5.55]: I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition should have moved such an amendment. He himself said it was a waste of time to discuss the question of a referendum to the people on the proposal to secede from the Commonwealth. This amendment is a waste of time. It is absurd that it should have been brought forward. Suppose the people declared they had no faith in the Mitchell Government, does the Leader of the Opposition expect that members of Cabinet would resign?

Hon. P. Collier: Of course they would.

Mr. BROWN: Perhaps that is the only method the hon. member can think of whereby the people can be induced to say they do not believe in the Mitchell Government.

Hon. P. Collier: Surely the Government would not defy the people.

Mr. BROWN: I honestly believe this is one of the finest Governments Western Australia has ever had. I can only come to the conclusion that the Opposition are losing no opportunity to do something to put a sprag in the wheel of the Government. This is an opportunity to waste the time of the House, and to do a little, by way of propaganda. One has only to have regard for the measures which have already been passed this session for the

welfare of the State to realise the value of the Government. I defy the Opposition to say they would have carried those measures into law.

Mr. Sleeman: To which are you referring?

Mr. BROWN: I will tell the hon. member. I am certain the Opposition would never have brought them down.

Hon. P. Collier: You are out of order.

Mr. BROWN: We know that the Collier Government were asked to bring down certain measures for the good of the State and to make certain reductions in charges, but they refused to do so. The Mitchell Government have done it.

Hon. P. Collier: You cannot discuss those measures now.

Mr. BROWN: I refer to the freight on superphosphates and wheat, to water supplies, to drainage and irrigation, survey fees, poison lands, the bonus on wheat carting, superphosphate supplies, sustenance to farmers, unemployment relief, and many other things.

Mr. Sleeman: And have they brought work and prosperity for all?

Hon. J. Cunningham: Did you read that list of the Primary Producers' Association?

Mr. BROWN: The Mitchell Government came into office when the whole world was passing through the greatest financial crisis ever known.

Mr. Sleeman: Now you are apologising for them.

Mr. BROWN: Oply to find that the Collier Government had spent every penny and that there was nothing left in the Treasury. But look at the wonderful results that have been achieved! It would be out of place to belabour this question; no one knows better than the Leader of the Opposition that the amendment will not be carried. It is only wasting the time of the House to discuss it.

Hon. P. Collier: I must ask the hon. member to withdraw the statement that I am wasting the time of the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition takes exception to the remark that he is wasting the time of the House.

Mr. BROWN: I will withdraw the statement. If we could look into the future, and learn what was likely to take place in 20 or 30 years' time, I believe we would find parents teaching their children to say

in their prayers, "God bless the Mitchell Government." There is no doubt the Bills they have brought down will prove most valuable safeguards for the people who are losing their homes, and will give them a little respite. I am satisfied that when matters are clearly explained to the people they will agree that no Government could do more than the present Government have done and are doing.

HON. J. CUNNINGHAM (Kalgoorlie—on amendment) [6.1]: I support the amendment. It seems to me, however, that the amendment could also be amended.

Hon. P. Collier: I am not wedded to the wording of the amendment.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The Leader of the Opposition, in his amendment, refers to the policy and administrative acts of the present Government. A heavy responsibility is upon the Government to enunciate what is their policy to-day. I am unable to discover a policy on the other side of the Chamber. During the general election, the present Government, then the Opposition, had a policy. It was proclaimed at Northam by the present Premier, that work would be found for everybody. Since then there has been plenty of unemployment, but work for very few. Thus the Government have jettisoned their policy and are carrying on without one, at all events so far as work for all is concerned. The amendment might be amended so as to ask the people of this State whether they are in favour of the present Government's want of any policy. That is the issue. Any Government lauded as the present Government have been by the member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown) should be able to place before the country a policy. Unfortunately that is not the case. The amendment represents a great improvement on the motion. On the one hand, a referendum on the question of secession would be of no use whatever for Western Australia; on the other hand, a referendum asking for an expression of public opinion on the acts, or want of acts, of the present Government would afford the electorate an opportunity of declaring that the present Opposition should have a chance of pulling the State off the rocks of bankruptcy and providing a policy for Western Australia.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	22
				—
Majority against	..	..		7
				—

AYES.	
Mr. Collier	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Troy
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Willcock
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Withers
Mr. Millington	Mr. Corboy
Mr. Munsie	(Teller.)

NOES.	
Mr. Angelo	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Barnard	Mr. Parker
Mr. Brown	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Davy	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Doney	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Latham	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Thorn
Mr. H. W. Mann	Mr. Wells
Mr. J. I. Mann	Mr. North
	(Teller.)

PAIRS.	
AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Johnson	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Lutey	Mr. Ferguson
Miss Holman	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Wilson	Mr. J. H. Smith

Amendment thus negatived.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. A. L. Davy—West Perth) [6.10]: I find it not in accordance with my conscience to cast a silent vote on this motion. I have never approved of the proposition to hold a referendum on the subject of secession at the present time. To a certain extent for the reasons given by the Leader of the Opposition, it appears to me that even supposing the proposed referendum should be carried by 100 per cent. of the people of Western Australia, the Imperial Parliament would be extremely unlikely to take any action. We have to remember that the whole trend of thought in the Imperial Parliament is towards giving greater and greater independence to the Dominions which make up the Empire. At present the Imperial Parliament looks as if it were about to carry into effect the so-called Statute of Westminster, which will of course make the Dominions *qua* Dominions entirely autonomous. If one part of a Dominion petitions the Imperial Parliament to interfere with the domestic policy of that Dominion, I am completely convinced that the Imperial Parliament will want to know, before taking any action,

what the rest of that Dominion has to say about the matter.

Mr. W. H. Mann: We shall be getting on the road if we get so far.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think so. Our answer, if we were asked that question, would have to be, "We do not know what the rest of our Dominion says on the subject. We have not asked the rest of the Dominion what its desire is. There is no means of ascertaining at the present time what the rest of the citizens of this Dominion think about the subject." That is my main objection to the proposed proceeding. I believe that almost the whole of this House is greatly dissatisfied with the relationship between the Commonwealth and the State of Western Australia. I do not believe there is one member of this Chamber who is satisfied that that relationship shall continue indefinitely in the form in which it has existed up to now. I believe it is our unanimous opinion that we shall not progress as a State if we continue as a part of the Commonwealth under the Federal powers as they stand at present. In the course of the debate during the past few weeks the Leader of the Opposition has indicated clearly what is his view of the basis of the prosperity of Western Australia. He has stated in no uncertain terms that unless the primary producers of Western Australia can thrive, none of us can thrive, and that the direction of legislation and administration in this State must be such as will ensure the success of the farmer the wool-grower, the miner and the timber-getter. It is also, I think, clearly agreed that the policy of the Commonwealth as a whole, whichever Government may have been in power, has had far too much eye for the advancement of the protected industries, the secondary industries situated mainly in Victoria and New South Wales and far too little regard for the prosperity of the farmer and the wool-grower, the timber-getter and the miner. Only recently we have had a most marked example of how the Commonwealth Parliament is always inclined more towards the supposed good of the manufacturer of boots in Victoria, than towards the prosperity of the gold producer in Western Australia. Some time ago the Federal Parliament was persuaded to grant a bounty on gold—in my opinion an unsound proposition, but nevertheless no more unsound than the bounty given to sugar or the protection given to the manufacture of

boots. When we came to the necessity for economies, the Commonwealth Government attacked first, and to a much greater degree, the bounty given to the gold industry of Western Australia. Surely, if the unanimous opinion of the three parties in Western Australia could be co-ordinated into concrete form, and if we could reach some common ground upon which we could found a demand for the amendment of the Federal Constitution and the alteration of the relationship between the Commonwealth and the States, we would have some chance of success if we went to the Commonwealth and the citizens of the other States.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not propose to detain the House much longer. I feel that some good might be achieved in the interests of Western Australia if we could arrive at a formula that would receive the backing of all parties in the State Parliament. It seems to me that the first thing to work for is a Federal convention to review the Constitution.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: With Mr. Lang as chairman?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I cannot imagine why the hon. member should suggest Mr. Lang as chairman.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: He is our partner at present.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Perhaps he may be the hon. member's ally in this instance. His conduct certainly has been—

Mr. Kenneally: Such as to suggest it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: —remarkably liable to disintegrate the Commonwealth. If Mr. Lang persists long enough in his course and is given rope enough, he will smash up the Commonwealth, quite apart from any efforts of the gentlemen who are backing this movement in Western Australia.

Mr. H. W. Mann: the Commonwealth have given Mr. Lang £500,000, and refused Western Australia £150,000.

Hon. P. Collier: The Commonwealth did not do that; the Loan Council agreed to that.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think that was a great mistake. The idea of endeavouring to arrive at the slightest compromise with Mr. Lang, or of taking the slightest notice whatever of his promises,

suggests itself to me as somewhat like bargaining with a very hungry tiger that is emerging from the jungle. However, that is beside the question. My own view is that if we could arrive at common ground upon which all the parties in Parliament in this State could agree, we could certainly force a Federal convention. If we could go to such a convention with common grounds to advocate, I believe we would have an infinitely better chance of securing reforms than I, in common with other hon. members, consider absolutely essential to restore prosperity to Western Australia. I believe that under those conditions we would have an excellent chance of success. I do not impugn the motives or the mental capacity of hon. members who support the motion. I find myself, with the greatest possible reluctance, divided in opinion from so many members who belong to the same party as I do. I have always asserted quite clearly that the motion cannot possibly accomplish any good at all.

Mr. Marshall: And it can possibly do much harm.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: More especially is it unlikely to accomplish any good if it is put into operation at the wrong moment.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Why should it be the wrong moment?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There are many reasons, and some were given plainly by the Leader of the Opposition. It seems to me that when the Governments of the States and the Commonwealth of Australia are meeting together to deal with present difficulties, and when they are faced with imminent default, it is wrong to ask the people of Western Australia to decide by way of referendum whether or not they shall continue within the Federation.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Were we not forced into Federation by the goldfields people when public opinion was inflamed?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There was no question of being forced into it.

Hon. P. Collier: At any rate, the goldfields people were equally citizens of Western Australia.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: As a small boy I took part in the campaign. I remember walking round the streets in Fremantle. In my coat I had a badge on which appeared the map of Australia with the words inscribed thereon: "United we stand,

divided we fall." It was not merely a question of the attitude of the goldfields people.

Hon. P. Collier: But surely the goldfields people are included in "we," just as much as the people down here. They are equally citizens of the State.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Of course they are.

Mr. H. W. Mann: The goldfields people demanded separation.

Mr. Richardson: They wanted it then.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is interesting to note that while the goldfields people may have been a very material factor in arriving at the decision in favour of Federation—

Mr. Sleeman: There were a lot of other electors who voted "yes" too.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is so, but while the attitude of the goldfields people was a very material factor, the principal reason why they were anxious to enter the Federation was that they considered, rightly or wrongly, that they were suffering from the protectionist policy of the State of Western Australia.

Mr. Withers: That is so.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Nowadays, in the opinion of many, the principal reason why the people of Western Australia as a whole are suffering is the protectionist policy of the Commonwealth of Australia. It is that phase that is causing a great number of people of Western Australia to favour secession at the present time.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think you are quite right about the goldfields. There was a strong protectionist element there in the early days of Federation.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was because of the effect of protection on their requirements.

The Minister for Mines: I think it was largely a question of sentiment. So many of the goldfields people had comparatively recently arrived from Victoria.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think that was the explanation, but I do not wish to be drawn into a discussion of the pros and cons of secession. I want to discuss the question whether it is advisable to hold a referendum at the present time. I recognise that 100 per cent. of the members of Parliament desire to see the relationship between the Commonwealth and Western Australia improved to the advantage of Western Australia. What will result from

the referendum? Personally I am convinced that a referendum, however successful it may prove from the point of view of the secessionists, will have no effect whatever in securing the objective of those who father it. I mean secession itself. I can see, on the other hand, possibilities ahead if the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Country Party and their respective followers could meet on absolutely common ground, for I believe they could then succeed in demanding another Federal convention. The delegation to any such convention should not be restricted in the representation of this State to persons elected by a block vote throughout the State. If that method were resorted to, there would be a great risk that the representation would be purely partisan. On the other hand, I think the representation should be by persons appointed by Parliament. Such a delegation could proceed with the advocacy of a common platform—doubtless a certain amount of compromise would be necessary—and by that means something might be accomplished.

Mr. Richardson: There would be a bigger chance if we carried the referendum.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think so.

Mr. Richardson: Well, I do.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the referendum were carried by a large majority in favour of secession, what would be the next move?

Mr. Doney: The convention of which you have already spoken.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Certainly not! The next move would have to be the sending Home of a delegation to approach the Imperial authorities.

Mr. Richardson: Suppose that failed, and you had the convention?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: But does not the hon. member appreciate the fact that months or years would have to pass in the meantime? Surely we require something to be done quickly. Can we logically carry a referendum in favour of secession and at the same time send delegates to England to make representations to the Imperial authorities? Incidentally, so far as I have been able to gather during the course of the debate, the referendum will have to be put to the people by the Government only, and it will be opposed, at least officially, by the party represented by members of the Opposition.

Mr. Richardson: I should not say so.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It has been apparent throughout the debate! Officially, the Labour Party is opposed to it.

Mr. Kenneally: And the opposition is by no means confined to the Labour Party.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: By no means. I myself oppose it. I do not think the most sanguine supporters of the proposal think that 90 per cent. of the people would be in favour of it.

Hon. P. Collier: Or even 60 per cent.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I cannot visualise 70 per cent. of the people being in favour of the question, but let us suppose that 80 per cent. of them voted in favour of secession. If we were to make representations in the Old Country, it is obvious that we would have to await the decision. It is quite possible that the authorities would take some considerable time to consider the position, and in the meantime would we be able to press for a Federal convention to review the Constitution?

Hon. P. Collier: Of course not.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is what I should say, too. The only result a referendum would accomplish would be to hold up the movement because we could not logically, or consistently, take any steps towards securing a Federal convention to secure an alteration of the relationship between the Commonwealth and the States. That is the phase that I wish to see pressed on.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Would you like to comment on the report of the Royal Commission that investigated the disabilities of Western Australia under Federation?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, I would not; I entirely agree with what they said.

Hon. P. Collier: And moreover we are not arguing about that phase.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Leader of the Opposition agrees with me that we are suffering from serious disabilities.

Hon. P. Collier: Of course, that is so.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think they are disabilities that can properly be compensated by the payment of a sum of money to Western Australia. That is no good to this State.

Hon. P. Collier: At any rate, we are not arguing about the question of disabilities; that has nothing to do with the issue.

Mr. Richardson: But how would you get over that difficulty?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I have suggested common action by all parties to secure a Federal convention. If such a move were made, I am convinced we would secure the holding of a convention, because we would have the support of two States, if not four States.

Hon. P. Collier: Perhaps nearly all the States would be in favour of it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: South Australia, Tasmania, and possibly Victoria, because there is a steady growth of opinion in that State that all is not right in the relationship between the States and the Commonwealth—and probably also Queensland; although Queensland, because she has so much to gain from the continuance of the fiscal policy of Australia, is very likely to accept the burdens for the benefits she gets. But I am sure we could get very strong support for the immediate holding of a new Federal convention. Then if Western Australia could go with a 100 per cent. solid demand for certain reforms, I believe we could achieve a wonderful result.

Mr. Sampson: We have not got very far in that direction previously.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have never made a serious attempt.

Mr. Sampson: Time after time have we asked for special consideration.

Hon. P. Collier: That is not a convention.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No. We asked that the Disabilities Commission be appointed, and it was appointed, and what we got from it was a sum of money, which was no good to us. But we accepted that sum of money. However there has been no concerted solid demand for a Federal convention; as far as I am aware, no Parliament of Australia has put forward a serious, strenuous demand for another Federal convention. That method has not been tried, and the failure to try it is one of the added reasons, if any were necessary, why the Imperial Parliament will refuse to listen to any demand for secession, any interference with the domestic arrangements of the Commonwealth of Australia which we might purport. Surely the very least the Imperial Parliament is likely to insist upon is that we shall have exhausted right to the bitter end every constitutional means of achieving in Australia what we are asking of the Imperial Parliament.

Hon. P. Collier: And our answer must be that we have not tried.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, we have not tried. No Parliament in Australia has expressed a request for a Federal convention.

Mr. Hegney: There has been only one Federal convention, has there not?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I believe so. Before we go to the Imperial Parliament we must be able to say we have exhausted all possible means of alleviating our troubles. With all due respect to those who are pressing for this referendum, I think that when the Imperial Parliament asks, "What did you do before you came to us?" they will have to say—

Mr. Sampson: "We have suffered for years."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: They will have to say, "We have not done a thing, except get a commission to investigate our disabilities, and we have accepted one of their recommendations, namely, a sum of money." As I said before, it is not with any pleasure that I find myself speaking in this strain, in disagreement with a number of members who are on this side of the House with me; but I feel it is wrong in a public man to express in other places strong views on the subject and fail to express them when a vote is taken in this House. Therefore I felt it my duty to make the few remarks I have made to-night.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [7.50]: I listened carefully to the Leader of the Opposition, and as he proceeded I realised that his speech was to end in the moving of an amendment. I thought I could divine the nature of the amendment, but unfortunately he did not touch on the real subject at all, but simply dragged a red herring across the trail. What I expected the Leader of the Opposition to move was an amendment to the effect that before we took the referendum another attempt should be made to hold a convention. I was emboldened to that view by certain remarks made by the hon. member 18 months ago. On that occasion, during the Address-in-reply, I urged the Government to take immediate steps to move for another convention, to move for the fulfilment of the promise given by the framers of the Constitution that after 20 years of Federal life another convention, on the same representation as the convention that framed the Constitution, should be held

to rectify any anomalies that might have appeared during that 20 years. It will be remembered that was the recommendation of the framers of the convention. The remarks then made by the Leader of the Opposition were as follows:—

That is the sensible way to proceed. Then if we cannot get a new Constitution that will be satisfactory, we can go for secession. I hold strongly that that is the way in which we should proceed, that we should have another convention.

Hon. P. Collier: I hold it to-day.

Mr. ANGELO: Yes, I am aware of that. Realising the outstanding ability of the Leader of the Opposition, I certainly thought that instead of taking a side-track he would give this House this valuable suggestion again, and probably would have moved an amendment to the effect that before we went on with the secession referendum we should make one last attempt to secure another convention.

Hon. P. Collier: Do you think anybody would listen at such a time as this? That is why I say this motion is nothing but a waste of time.

Mr. ANGELO: I certainly would have listened had you spoken on those lines.

Hon. P. Collier: Do you think I would have converted anybody?

Mr. ANGELO: You might have converted me. The Leader of the Opposition went on to say that this was not the time to ask for a referendum, that owing to the financial position no one was in the right frame of mind to give an answer to this important question. In my opinion this is the right time. When do the shareholders of a company get together to try to reconstruct the company, to reorganise their constitution? It is only when they find that things have gone wrong, that they have not been told fully by the directors how their business is proceeding.

Hon. P. Collier: People would vote for any change to-day, any change at all.

Mr. ANGELO: People are just beginning to wake up to what the Federal rule has meant.

Mr. Kenneally: It is a pity they don't wake up to the hon. member.

Mr. ANGELO: They always do wake up to me. They have wakened up to such an extent that on five occasions they have returned me to Parliament. I have never been defeated, which is more than the hon. member can claim.

Mr. Hegney: What about secession from the North?

Mr. ANGELO: We in the far North find the disabilities of having the State Administration domiciled in the extreme south of the State, just as the people generally of Western Australia find the hardship of having the Federal Administration domiciled on the eastern side of the continent. That is why we are suffering, and why this cry for secession has arisen. People do not worry about things when they are going on all right. We have had promises from various Federal Ministers that Australia was to become a great country. It is only at a time like this, when the collapse comes, that people realise we have not had the treatment we should have had. It is only now that we are beginning to realise what the Federal rule means to Western Australia, when disclosures are being made as to the treatment we have received in comparison with the Eastern States in the way of bonuses and bounties and monopolies. It is only now that one can realise how rotten a time we have had. We hear talk of unification. Is it not time we did something to block that? I doubt whether any member of the House wants unification, yet it is on the platform of one party, although I think not many of the members of that party actually believe in it. Then we hear talk of unification in finance, and it is suggested by the Premier in South Australia that the Loan Council should carry out the future policy of Australia, as it is now dictating the financial policy.

Mr. Hegney: The banks are doing that now.

Mr. ANGELO: We are beginning to feel it; now that we cannot get any more of those little doles passed out to us we realise we have been badly treated in the past, and that we are not getting a fair deal now. And the farther we go the worse we shall get.

The Minister for Works: Where do we get those little doles you speak of?

Mr. ANGELO: We have had one or two through the Federal Disabilities Commission; we have been allowed some £300,000 per annum. But we do not want that; we want fair treatment, as one of the members of a partnership. The Leader of the Opposition asked what was the good of proceeding in this way, and declared it

would not get us anywhere. Is not that a policy of despair?

Hon. P. Collier: No, it is a policy of fact.

Mr. ANGELO: Does not history tell us that the brightest victories of Great Britain were achieved when the prospects were most gloomy?

Hon. P. Collier: And some of the greatest defeats in history were over things such as this.

Mr. ANGELO: If we are defeated we shall not be any worse off than we are now. We must be prepared to fight the battle.

Hon. P. Collier: Civil war!

Mr. ANGELO: If we were to notify the Federal Government that after a certain date we would no longer be a member of the Federation, they would not take the slightest trouble to keep us. I have heard Federal members say, "Let them go." Very good, let us go. Both the Leader of the Opposition and the Attorney General seem to be quite satisfied that Western Australia has not been fairly dealt with by the Federal Government.

Mr. Wansbrough: And they suggested the proper course to take.

Mr. ANGELO: I am about to refer to that. The Attorney General said that no Government had ever asked for a convention. I should like to remind the House that 11 or 12 years ago Mr. (afterwards Sir) Henry Lefroy, who was then Premier of the State, had a suggestion made to him that as 20 years of Federal life were drawing to a close, it would be a good opportunity to remind the Prime Minister that a convention had practically been promised us by the framers of the Constitution. As some time would elapse before the necessary legislation could be passed and the delegates elected—the delegates would not necessarily have been members of Parliament—it was time steps were taken to prepare for the convention. An answer came that the Prime Minister was grateful for the reminder and that steps would be taken to convene a convention. That is altogether different from what the Attorney General said. Steps were taken by the Government of Western Australia to urge the holding of a convention 10 or 11 years ago.

The Minister for Railways: Nearly 15 years ago.

Mr. ANGELO: It was 18 months previous to the 20 years of Federal life elapsing. As soon as that promise was given to the Premier, a motion was passed by this Parliament for the appointment of a joint select committee of both Houses to prepare Western Australia's case for the convention. Members realised that it would be of no use sending delegates to a convention unless they knew what they were going for, and it was suggested that the select committee should prepare a brief, in the same way that a solicitor prepares a brief, for the delegates to use when they attended the conference. The select committee met. As finance was the major feature of the inquiry, Sir James Mitchell, who had followed Sir Henry Lefroy as Premier, made the services of Mr. Owen available to prepare the financial portion of the report. That occupied some time. South Australia and Tasmania were much interested in what we were doing and asked what steps we were taking. They were advised of our action, and it was suggested that if they took similar steps, a preliminary conference of the three small States might be held so that each could back the other when the convention took place. The Prime Minister, Mr. Hughes, meantime had introduced his Bill for the summoning of a convention, and I believe the measure even got to the introduction of the second reading, but when the people in the Eastern States saw what Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania were doing, the Prime Minister announced that there would be no convention, but that a special constitutional session of the Federal Parliament would be called to amend the Constitution and rectify any anomalies. Why was that done? Had a convention been held, there would have been six delegates from each State; under the other proposal, Western Australia would have had representation by five members against 70. What hope had we of getting satisfactory amendments of the Constitution under those conditions? Perhaps the Attorney General has forgotten those circumstances, but that is what occurred. He cannot maintain that no Government has asked for a convention. I have heard of other Premiers having asked for a convention. I am not sure that the Leader of the Opposition, when Premier, did not also suggest it. However, the fact remains that a Bill to authorise a convention was introduced into the Federal Parliament

and then squashed, no doubt at the dictates of members representing Victoria and New South Wales. This is not the only State that is talking secession. Quite recently I have heard of people in Queensland advocating secession; I have heard of the Premier of South Australia talking secession, and I have heard of the Tasmanians desiring secession. The people of Tasmania will never get over that proposal to tie their State to Victoria. They are out for secession. Even in Victoria there is talk of secession. I travelled from Albury to Melbourne with six or seven Victorians and I was surprised to hear them talking secession.

Hon. P. Collier: You will find a few such everywhere.

Mr. ANGELO: They were business men.

Hon. P. Collier: They are not almighty men.

Mr. ANGELO: I said to them, "What have you to growl about?" The reply was, "Ever since the Federal capital has been shifted to Canberra, we cannot get anywhere."

Hon. P. Collier: That is the man-in-the-train kind of talk.

Mr. ANGELO: Whenever we have sought to obtain redress, what have the Federal Government given us? They gave us a Disabilities Commission.

Hon. P. Collier: That is what we asked for.

Mr. ANGELO: We did not ask for it. We asked for a convention, and they gave us a commission. What was the use of a commission? Such a body could not rectify the anomalies. Before it is possible to remove our disabilities, it is necessary to curtail the undue advantages enjoyed by other partners of the Commonwealth. That can be accomplished only by the holding of a convention. Before we can be given anything, something must be taken from the other States that have derived undue advantage from Federation.

Hon. P. Collier: That could be done by amending the Constitution.

Mr. ANGELO: Yes. Time after time I have advocated the holding of another convention. I moved the motion in this House and I suggested to Mr. Lefroy that he should write to the Prime Minister. I have been a firm advocate of the holding of a convention, but I have come to the conclusion that we shall never get it. So long as those thickly

populated centres of Sydney and Newcastle can return 22 members to the House of Representatives, we shall never get a convention.

Hon. P. Collier: We will have a thousand times better chance of getting a convention than of getting secession.

Mr. Kenneally: Of course we will.

Mr. ANGELO: My honest opinion is that we shall have a jolly good chance of getting a convention if we pass this motion.

Hon. P. Collier: A convention?

Mr. ANGELO: Yes. I do not wish to be misunderstood. I have no desire to see Western Australia break away from Federation if it can possibly be avoided, but after 14 years of Parliamentary life and 14 years of observing how unfairly the larger States treat us, I have come to the conclusion that we have not a chance of getting our disabilities rectified in a constitutional way. Therefore I am out to get secession, and I want to ascertain whether we advocates of secession have Western Australia behind us. That is why I am supporting the motion.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	..	22

Majority against .. 7

AYES.

Mr. Collier	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Withers
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Millington	

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Barnard	Mr. Parker
Mr. Brown	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Davy	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Doney	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Latham	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Thorn
Mr. H. W. Mann	Mr. Wells
Mr. J. I. Mann	Mr. North

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Johnson	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Luley	Mr. Ferguson
Miss Holman	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Pantou	Mr. J. H. Smith

Motion (adjournment) thus negatived.

MR. KENNEALLY (East Perth) [8.15]: The Attorney General gave notice of a Bill dealing with rents, and desired to go on with it to-night.

Mr. Withers: It is more important than this matter.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I moved the adjournment of the debate so that we might go on with a measure that we hope may prove beneficial to the workers of the community, rather than waste time upon a motion like this.

Mr. Sampson: Take a vote now.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The motion, even if it is carried, will take us nowhere. The member for Gascoyne (Mr. Angelo) said the Leader of the Opposition had been trying to draw a red herring across the track. It appears to me that the red herring, so far as any beneficial legislation from the Government is concerned, is the red herring of secession. No good will be derived by the State if a referendum is taken. It will only be inclined to set people at each other's throats in a way that will do a great deal of harm. What is the object in view? Do members think that after Australia has passed the threshold of nationhood any State will agree deliberately to go back across the threshold? The other night we were discussing a matter which dealt with our ambitions towards the Commonwealth of Nations. What is the mover of this motion asking us to do now? He wants a referendum of the people taken so that they may say, after 30 years of progress towards nationhood, they are no longer going to remain a portion of the young nation of Australia. Does he think the people want the nation to dwindle back into a number of small States or colonies?

Hon. P. Collier: Or that they think we are not fit to govern ourselves.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Does he imagine the people think we are not fit for the mantle of nationhood, to which we aspired some 30 years ago? There is no chance that any members of the Australian nation will deliberately sever the ties with which Federation has now bound together the various States of the Commonwealth. History proves that many danger posts have to be called to mind by those who would support a motion of this kind. Their claim is that Federation has been too expensive either as to the volume of the sacrifices that have been made or the money that has been

spent. I ask them to remember what was said by two famous American statesmen. Their assertions apply now with the same force as they did when they were made. There are members opposite who, like Franklin, think we paid too much for our whistle. That, at any rate, is the cry of those who favour secession, that it has proved an expensive failure. I do not subscribe to that idea. No country can pay too much for nationhood, and no State of this Commonwealth can pay too much for the right of nationhood. I refuse to subscribe to the idea that any State of the Commonwealth, more particularly this glorious one of ours, is unfit for a place in the Commonwealth Nation.

The Minister for Railways: How do you fix the boundaries of the nation?

Mr. KENNEALLY: I suggest that the Minister takes a week off and ascertains how it is done.

Mr. H. W. Mann: He asked you a reasonable question.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The other statement I referred to is that of Lincoln, who declared that the union must be preserved. In this period of Australia's history the cry of Lincoln should go throughout the country. Once the flag of secession is waved in this or any other State the cry should go forth that the union must be preserved. I feel certain it would be responded to, not only in Eastern Australia, but by an overwhelming majority of the people of this State.

Hon. P. Collier: It was the very question of secession which caused the Civil War in America.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Yes. History should teach the people not to tread the path that others have trodden to their own detriment. We know what serious trouble the people of America went through to retain the union, and do not want that sort of thing to occur in Australia. If our people are properly appealed to they will be just as anxious to retain the union in Australia as the Americans are to retain theirs. Without drawing the long bow, I suggest that the experiences of the last war are not so far removed from the memory of the people for them to be able to look lightly upon the possibility that a disunited Australia may prove more serious for them than was that great conflict.

The Minister for Railways: That is not drawing the long bow; it is altogether absurd.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Naturally, the Minister for Railways would be an authority upon anything absurd. No wonder he steps into the breach.

The Minister for Railways: Why go back to the American Civil War? There have been secessions since then within the British Empire.

Mr. Sampson: What about Ireland?

Hon. P. Collier: Ireland, after 800 years of war!

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Minister for Railways says there has been secession within the British Empire.

The Minister for Railways: South Africa is talking about it now.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If as an Australian nation, we spoke of cutting the painter, that would meet with sturdy opposition from the Minister for Railways, as it did on a previous occasion. I recollect a meeting at His Majesty's Theatre on that question, when he addressed the gathering.

The Minister for Railways: I stick to that, but it does not prevent us from governing ourselves within Australia.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The Minister can wax very fervent about not cutting the painter from the British Empire, but when it comes to Western Australia cutting the painter from the Commonwealth, he can deal very lightly with the question.

The Minister for Railways: There is no comparison between the two cases.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Oh no. To the Minister and those who support him, the question of loyalty to the Empire comes before loyalty to the Australian people.

Mr. Parker: Are they not one and the same thing?

The Minister for Railways: Are the British Parliament governing us by their laws from day to day?

Mr. KENNEALLY: We do not want them to do so. We want to make our own laws within Australia to govern our own people.

The Minister for Railways: And within Western Australia to govern ourselves.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Within Western Australia we want to make such laws as are necessary to govern our own people within this portion of the Australian nation. We can do that independently of intervention from other people. The member for Gas-

coyne, in reply to an interjection dealing with the North, said, "Yes, it was because the North was not satisfied with the centralised form of Government down here that they were inclined to favour secession, even secession from those who are now governing it."

Mr. Angelo: We are not so badly off if governed from Perth as we would be if governed from Canberra.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If we are to have Western Australia seceding from the Commonwealth and the North seceding from the rest of Western Australia, we shall soon get into a glorious position. Ultimately we may see Fremantle seceding from Perth.

Hon. A. McCallum: Or East Perth having a row with the Lord Mayor and seceding from the city of Perth.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Ultimately we shall have a nation comprised of little entities, each having its separate ideals, and keeping the Australian people further from each other than before. Even if it were possible to give effect to this motion, it would be detrimental to the people of this State, apart from the people of the Commonwealth as a whole.

Mr. Sampson: You know that is not true.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Let us deal with the possibilities of the situation. Is it possible to give effect to the motion if carried? There are one or two side aspects which should receive attention. Those who do not favour the expenditure of money on a referendum which must be ineffective even if carried are entitled to ask why the Minister in charge of unemployment cannot get a little of the money available for a referendum to find work for the unemployed. Would not that be a better channel for its expenditure?

Mr. Angelo: All the money spent on a referendum would be spent amongst the people.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The hon. member is familiar with elections, and knows that that is not so.

Mr. Corboy: Not 10 per cent. would be spent in that way.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If the State has money available for spending on a useless referendum, there are people in dire need of that money at present. Even if the referendum were taken, I would not like to bet too much money on those who favour secession. The Australian people, in their hearts, do not desire secession.

Mr. Sampson: There are reports to the contrary from all over the country.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I could obtain reports to the opposite effect in the same way as those reports are being obtained. Some time ago we were directly invited to try to infuse life into the secession movement. The right time to infuse life into that movement will be when the Little Australians go too far.

Hon. P. Collier: The Lilliputian Australians.

Mr. KENNEALLY: Yes: people who try to belittle the Australian nation.

Mr. Marshall: As regards practising economy, let us practise it here. Think of the millions lost on the Peel Estate!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for East Perth has the floor, not the member for Murchison.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The motion represents a proposal that is highly serious to the people of this State and of Australia. The mover and his supporters would get a great surprise if a referendum were taken. They would find that, after all, the people of Western Australia, though rightly complaining of certain treatment from the Federation, would turn down any proposition to secede from the Australian nation.

Mr. Angelo: Give it a fly!

Mr. KENNEALLY: No. I do not wish to make the hon. member look too ridiculous. If the referendum were carried in the affirmative what would be our position? Would the supporters of secession then go to the Commonwealth and ask for release, or would they, as indicated by some members opposite, take the matter direct to London?

Hon. P. Collier: In the latter case they would get the boot there.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If they appealed to London, they would be put in their place, and quickly too.

Mr. Sampson: How do you know all this about what would happen?

Mr. KENNEALLY: The British Parliament, at the request of the Australian people, granted them a Constitution making them a nation. The British statement said, "This is the will of the Australian people and we will not interfere with it." Have the British statesmen deteriorated in the meantime? If a small portion, from the population aspect, of the Commonwealth

voted in favour of secession, should we go direct to London and say, "When we unitedly asked you to grant us a national Constitution, we did not mean what we said"? What would the British statesmen reply?

Hon. P. Collier: They would say, "What does Australia think about it?"

Mr. KENNEALLY: Yes; and it would be necessary for the King to take the advice of his Australian Ministers—not of his Western Australian Ministers or even of his British Ministers, but of the Ministers of the Commonwealth. Would the Commonwealth Ministers, charged with safeguarding the national interests, then say, "We will agree to the severance of one portion of this united continent which was formed into a nation 31 years ago"? Members opposite know that would not be done.

The Minister for Railways: A nation under certain conditions.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The member for Maylands is entitled to his opinion, with which, however, I do not agree. I do agree that Western Australia has certain grievances which should be rectified, but they can be rectified within the limits of the Commonwealth Constitution.

Hon. P. Collier: Would British Ministers set themselves up as judges of our grievances?

Mr. KENNEALLY: They could not do it. If they attempted it, the Australian people would be the first to say to them, "You shall not do that." No Australian worthy of the name but would support such a stand.

The Minister for Railways: Our ground for complaint is that under the Federal Constitution we made a compact for the Federation of the Australian States, and that an attempt is being made to use that Constitution to get something entirely different.

Hon. P. Collier: Who is to be the judge of that?

Mr. KENNEALLY: If the member for Maylands had a protest to make in that connection—

Mr. H. W. Mann: The Minister for Railways.

The Minister for Railways: I do not mind.

Mr. KENNEALLY: It is a petty point, and the interjection is worthy of the hon. member who made it. The real point is that if the Minister has a grievance in that

respect, his obvious course is to let that grievance be dealt with by the Australian people, and not by Britain.

The Minister for Railways: On the very ground that you are suggesting, what is the use of going to the British Parliament and asking it to take notice of our grievances?

Mr. KENNEALLY: That interjection brings me to the question I was leading up to, a question mentioned by two or three previous speakers. Firstly, there are certain means by which Federation was brought about. We had a convention, as hon. members know, in 1890, and another in 1899. Then there was the amendment of the proposed Constitution by which Sir George Reid insisted upon the Federal capital being located within New South Wales. There was a further convention on that point.

Mr. H. W. Mann: And then there was a referendum. You have forgotten that.

Mr. KENNEALLY: When that referendum was taken, it was a referendum of the Australian people. There would, naturally, be support for the present motion if it asked for a referendum of the Commonwealth regarding certain reforms that are needed in the Commonwealth Constitution. The motion, as it stands, is a proposal to break down our Commonwealth piecemeal; and it naturally excites the resentment of those who have Australian interests at heart, who want the Australian people to govern the Australian people. If we have grievances—and I do not deny that we have—there is a method by which we can remedy them. That method consists in an endeavour to get the Commonwealth to place suggested amendments before the Australian people. If a majority in their favour is obtained, a majority of voters and of States, they will be adopted. Then, what is wrong with reverting to the convention idea? When the original draft of the Australian Constitution did not suit the Australian people, there was no proposal to take a referendum of any individual State. There was a convention, and the results of that convention's deliberations were put to the Australian people, who accepted them. What is wrong with asking for another convention and endeavouring to secure alterations in the Commonwealth Constitution, which would thereupon be referred to a ballot of the Australian people?

The Minister for Railways: But that is not what you suggest.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I consider that we in Australia can settle our own affairs.

The Minister for Railways: You have not suggested that by what you have already said.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I suggest that we Australians can settle Australian affairs, and that that is one of the means by which it can be done.

The Minister for Railways: That is side-tracking. You are suggesting another convention to draft another Constitution or to amend the existing one.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If the Minister has done me the honour to read the evidence I gave before the Commonwealth Constitution Alteration Commission, he will know that I went further. I then recommended that what I now suggest should be done. It would take supermen to draft a Constitution which would not require amendment as the years went by.

The Minister for Railways: The Constitution has been amended.

Mr. KENNEALLY: But not by conventions. As a fact, there never has been a convention held since the one which drafted the original Constitution. An attempt has not been made by this State to get another convention.

The Minister for Railways: Yes.

Mr. KENNEALLY: No. The movement did not originate from this State.

Hon. P. Collier: Who asked for it?

Mr. Angelo: I remember its being asked for by the Lefroy Government.

Mr. KENNEALLY: If we go the right way about it, we can secure any necessary amendments to the present Constitution. I see no reason why we should assume that that course is impracticable. The only occasion on which an attempt was made to get a convention, we were successful in getting it, and the Australian people adopted its decisions. Why should it be assumed that what was successful before must prove unsuccessful now? Have the Australian people become less qualified to state on paper what are the conditions that will suit the whole nation? Why should we assume that, until we have tested the position and failed? On the only occasion we attempted to do anything of the sort, we were successful in securing the object we had in view. I believe that with the passage of years, many flaws have manifested themselves in the Commonwealth

Constitution. If a convention were called that was truly representative of the whole of the Commonwealth, I am of opinion that many alterations of the Constitution would be mutually agreed upon. It is true that many alterations might be suggested and rejected, although a large section of the community might be of opinion that they should have been agreed to. At the same time, I believe that public opinion in Australia would be in agreement regarding many possible alterations. It would be beneficial to Australia as a whole if another convention were held, and some stocktaking indulged in. I would favour—as was suggested by many thinkers and speakers in earlier times, even to the extent of making provision for it in the Constitution itself—conventions being held at intervals of 10, 15 or 25 years, for the purpose of national stocktaking. Such conventions should be properly representative of the Australian people, as was the position regarding the earlier conventions. If that were done, it would be to the advantage of the nation.

Mr. Angelo: There would have to be the same basis of representation as at the other conventions, and not on a population basis *pro rata*.

Mr. Hegney: But we might have a large population in years to come.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I think the ideal representation would be such as obtained in connection with the early conventions.

The Minister for Railways: The Senate is elected on the basis of equal representation of the States, but that House has not been able to rectify the position.

Mr. KENNEALLY: The convention delegations were elected on the same basis, but with different numbers. The decisions of any convention would not become law unless agreed to by the Australian people.

Mr. Patrick: And by the two Federal Houses of Parliament.

Hon. P. Collier: The last word is with the Australian people.

The Minister for Railways: No question can be submitted to a referendum except with the approval of the two Federal Houses of Parliament.

Mr. KENNEALLY: That is admitted. If the Federal Parliament approves of the convention—

The Minister for Railways: That will be no more difficult than securing secession itself, and both are impossible.

Mr. KENNEALLY: One Federal Government agreed to hold a constitutional session of the Federal Houses of Parliament, but events so shaped themselves that it was impossible for that to be proceeded with. Such a method of dealing with the matters which Western Australia desires rectified would not be satisfactory. If any convention is held, the representation of the States must be on an equal basis. On a convention being agreed to by the Federal Parliament, I can conceive of no Government in power, irrespective of their political brand, refusing to place the decisions of any such convention before the people.

The Minister for Railways: It does not necessarily follow that a Government may have a majority in Parliament.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I differ.

The Minister for Railways: The present Government have a majority in the House of Representatives, but not in the Senate.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I appreciate the Minister's point. At the same time, I cannot conceive of the Federal Parliament refusing to allow the results of a convention to go before the people.

The Minister for Railways: It might be with that question as it has been with a Redistribution of Seats Bill. Parliament agreed to the appointment of a commission to adjust boundaries, and both Houses refused to pass the Bill.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I do not see how the Minister can compare a redistribution of seats matter with the amendment of the Federal Constitution. I hope the House will not carry the motion, and thus create a monument to its own shortsightedness. It must be recognised that the motion will get us nowhere. This is no time when Western Australians should be at each other's throats. There is enough to engage the attention of the people throughout the State during the present stressful times, without calling upon them to consider the pros and cons of secession. There is plenty of work for Ministers to carry out in the easement of conditions, without introducing an element that will make those conditions more difficult. If there is money to be spent, it can be utilised more advantageously in the interests of the people than by defraying the costs of a referendum on secession. From every point of view, such a referendum is inadvisable at the present juncture. From the standpoint of the nation itself, we should do no-

thing that will cause satisfaction among the Australian people. We should amend our grievances within our own Australian borders and within the limits of the Constitution. If the referendum were to be held, in my opinion, the people would show by their vote that they realised they were welded into one indissoluble Commonwealth, and were content to remain in that condition. In spite of the imagination of some who support secession, I am sure that, when put to the test, the people will show that nationhood comes before any petty grievances that need rectification. They will say that they went into the Federation with their eyes open, and that it is too late to ask them to join the band of little Australians who are working to the detriment of the Australian nation.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [8.54]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. SLEEMAN: I did not intend to speak to-night on the motion which, as the member for East Perth (Mr. Kenneally) has pointed out, is so much waste of time, seeing that more important legislation remains to be dealt with.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Why not go to the vote?

Mr. SLEEMAN: I do not intend to cast a silent vote. The object of the present session, we were told, was to deal with questions affecting unemployment and finance. Now we are wasting more time. The Leader of the Opposition pointed out that this was no time to hold such a referendum, and that view was endorsed by the Deputy Premier.

The Minister for Lands: I said the Leader of the Opposition had convinced me.

Mr. SLEEMAN: If the amendment had been passed, and later put to the people, it would have been carried by a much larger majority than that by which the question of secession is likely to be adopted. The people of this State should not be put to the trouble and expense involved in the holding of a referendum on such an unimportant matter at the present juncture. To-day we have the Premier of this State sitting with the Premiers of the other States and the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, discussing in solemn conclave existing difficulties, with a view of arriving at a common understanding. They have agreed that they will stand to-

gether in order to give effect to the Plan that they consider is in the interests of Australia as a whole. But before the Plan is properly launched, we find the Government of Western Australia fathering this proposal to desert the ship. It is the work of a traitor.

Mr. Angelo: But the ship is already launched, indeed, she has barnacles on her.

Mr. SLEEMAN: She would have barnacles on her if the hon. member had anything to do with her. A little time ago the hon. member was advocating secession for the North.

Mr. Angelo: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I myself have heard him advocating secession for the North. If there was a proposal to secede from the Empire, the hon. member would support it. I agree with the member for East Perth, who said the time is not fitting for the expenditure of thousands of pounds in the taking of a referendum. I can tell the Government of a much better way of spending it. In my electorate there are thousands of women and children who have not the wherewithal to obtain proper nourishment, and who during the last few days must have been pretty cold. The money which this referendum would cost would be better expended in providing food and clothing for destitute women and children.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: The money won't be thrown away.

Mr. SLEEMAN: But for the petty little kudos the "Sunday Times" has got out of it, the movement for secession would not have gone as far as it has. It is all very well for the "Sunday Times" to tickle the ears of ill-informed people with such a cry. The proprietor of that paper can glory in what it has achieved up to the present, but he will not get up in this Chamber and express his views about secession.

Hon. P. Collier: We shall have to be behind the "West Australian" for once.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The Attorney General was on the right track when he advocated a movement for a new Federal convention.

Mr. H. W. Mann: I am glad you agree with him for once.

Mr. SLEEMAN: There are certain things about which we always agree, the Attorney General and I. When he opposed the placing of the onus of proof on an accused person, I cordially agreed with him. But we are now faced with the biggest crisis that has ever confronted Australia, and we must

stick to each other until this Plan has proved successful in rehabilitating Australia.

The Minister for Works: Why accuse the Federal Government? In the past you have accused this Government.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I am not accusing the Federal Government now; I am accusing this Government in that, while pledging themselves to support the other Governments, they are lending support to a movement which it is hoped will end in separation. The member for Avon, a strong secessionist, denounced the Prime Minister for having asked the people to grow more wheat. Yet the very same morning it was reported in the papers that the Premier of this State had wired to the Prime Minister saying the same thing. What was wrong in Mr. Scullin was not wrong in Sir James Mitchell. The member for Avon also complained of the price of farming implements in this State, and blamed Federation for that. If those who are pressing for secession would help build up the industries in this State, instead of assisting the industries of the Eastern States, it would be much better for Western Australia.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Do you support the tariff?

Mr. SLEEMAN: To an extent the tariff has gone further than it should have gone. But the attitude of the member for Avon in complaining of the cost of implements is not consistent, for the Government he is supporting are closing down the State Implement Works and practically proposing to send the money previously earned by those works to the Eastern States in order to maintain industry over there. We should be loyal to our own industries. I hope this motion will not be carried, and that we shall stick loyally to the Federation until Australia is out of the wood, when perhaps we can successfully demand a new Federal convention, out of which some good for Western Australia might well come.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [9.6]: If the motion be carried, and shares at the hands of the Government the fate that has overtaken other successful motions, it will not get us anywhere. The member for Katanning, earlier in the session, succeeded in having carried a motion that certain royalties on kangaroo skins should not be charged, and the member for Fremantle was successful in having another motion carried. Yet neither of those resolutions has been

given effect to. The motion before us is for the introduction of a Bill. I take it that when that Bill is introduced we shall discuss all over again the question of secession, which has been discussed all through the debate on this motion. Even if, as has been said, the people of Western Australia are carrying resolutions supporting the proposed referendum, it is clear that had there been a counter-effort many resolutions against the referendum would have been carried. Is it any wonder that these resolutions in support of secession have been carried, when we know that the people have heard but one side of the question? So strong has been the effort of the secessionists, that they have induced meetings to carry further resolutions declaring that they will not support members of Parliament who oppose the referendum. All will agree that Western Australia has suffered great disabilities under Federation, but that is no reason why we should withdraw from Federation. The proper way of getting over those difficulties has been pointed out by several members this evening, and certainly it is not by means of secession. In this morning's paper was a very attractive article by a writer who seems to have given a good deal of study to the question of secession, but all through he was drawing more on his imagination than on the facts; one had only to read his questionnaire and the answers he himself supplied to realise that he was merely telling us what he supposed was likely to happen if we succeeded in getting secession. If the referendum is taken, and if it be carried, whether by a bare majority or by a larger number, it will get us nowhere, for it is absolutely the wrong method to adopt. I will oppose the motion.

MR. MILLINGTON (Mt. Hawthorn) [9.12]: I do not feel disposed to say much on this question, which is merely as to whether a referendum should be taken on secession, a subject which has been widely discussed, but almost solely by enthusiastic partisans, people who have dealt with a very complex and highly technical question on purely partisan lines. There has been propaganda, not with the object of determining just what disabilities this State suffers from as the result of Federation, but first of all to conjure up all the ills from which this State suffers, and then dogmatically to declare that they are entirely

due to the fact that we federated. The proposal now is that the people be asked a certain question. I want to know if the people have been sufficiently informed as to how their vote will affect the State, whether they are prepared to answer the question, whether they have heard evidence from both sides. I should like to know what attitude the Government propose to take up, what question they propose to put to the people. Are they going to propound a scheme? Will they inform the people as to the financial effect if the referendum be carried? As with other repudiationists, the Government probably will make a lot of noise, tell the Commonwealth that Western Australia is going to pull out, and then, like other repudiationists, go cap in hand asking the Commonwealth to finance Western Australia. Is it for a moment thought that Western Australia could meet her own financial obligations to the Old Country? Of course not. Therefore we shall have to ask the Commonwealth for time in which to pay our debts, to request the Commonwealth to grant us terms. We would have to ask for easy time-payment terms to get out of the agreement.

Mr. Kenneally: Or else we would have to ask to be allowed to sneak back.

Mr. MILLINGTON: Although irresponsible people prattle a lot about repudiating the agreement between the six States of the Commonwealth, the Government have some responsibility. If the question is put to the people, the Government will have the responsibility of placing before the electors the questions that are to be answered so that the people will be under no delusion as to what they are voting on. It is all very well to talk about voting to sever our connection with the Commonwealth. The information supplied is of a one-sided nature. Even the mover of the motion will admit that. Supporters of the movement have set up a fictitious case, especially as regards finance. It is all theoretical.

Mr. H. W. Mann: I do not think fictitious is the correct word.

Mr. MILLINGTON: It is fictitious. Associated with the secession movement are free traders, and they are associated with it because they object to the fiscal policy of the Commonwealth. They argue that if Western Australia had the right to determine whether it would have free trade or a measure of protection, it could compete with the Eastern States, and its primary pro-

duction would be in a better position to compete in the world's markets. But the very people who advocate free trade then go on to show the amount of revenue the State would derive from its tariff. Those are the ridiculous people who are associated with the movement. They are free traders, but an enormous amount of revenue is to be derived from a tariff, a tariff that would be imposed on the borderline. Does the hon. member desire that? Of course he does not. Varying views are held by those people, more or less irresponsible, who have associated themselves with the secession movement. First of all there are the high protectionists who would impose an even higher tariff than that which exists to-day. Confusion is also caused by the adherence to the movement of free traders. They advocate free trade in order to assist the primary industries. That is the sort of tale they tell to the farmers, and consequently we have representative farmers enthusing over secession because it is a free trade proposal. At the same time, revenue is to be mysteriously derived from a tariff, not only against overseas importations, but against importations from the Eastern States. We are to build up a wall against the Eastern States. Before the people are asked to vote on a question inferring that all the ills that the State suffers can be overcome by seceding, information will have to be supplied as to how the finances will be reorganised on a satisfactory basis. How is Western Australia to accept its financial responsibilities? Presumably we are to set up as repudiationists of the solemn agreements we have made with the Commonwealth. I do not know that agreements could be entered into in a more solemn manner, the States being equally responsible, and the breakaway State could not expect to be favourably received by the others. It has not been so in the history of other countries. Repudiation of this kind is one thing that is unpardonable. The Minister for Railways asked, "What should define the boundaries of a nation?" That is a difficult question in many countries, but it is not difficult in Australia. There are not the factors here that are found in other parts of the world. On a continent not the size of Australia, there may be found people of various nationalities speaking various languages. In Australia, however, we have people of the same race speaking the same language and working

under very similar conditions. Can anyone conceive any reason why they should not be one people? The member for Perth will have a lot of explaining to do both inside and outside Parliament. Like others who are supporting the movement, the hon. member has no conception where it will lead. If Western Australia is going to be guided on a question of paramount importance by a lot of partisans, she will deserve all she gets. The hon. member will have plenty of platforms from which to speak, many of them provided free by people who do not know what to do with their spare cash, and, as in the past, there will be any amount of advertising. If Federation were responsible for all the ills attributed to it by the repudiationists, who call themselves not secessionists but by a new name, as if they were nation-builders instead of nation-wreckers, it would not be a question to be decided by referendum. I am not a war-like individual, but I say it would be a question to be decided by resort to arms. Although any of us can, without difficulty, refer to the disabilities for which Federation has been partly responsible, it is unfair, cowardly and unwarranted to attempt to place all our disabilities at the door of the Commonwealth. We will not overcome our difficulties in that way. We will not overcome them by misrepresenting the case. I should like to ask secessionists what they propose to do. Assume that the Eastern States do not object to Western Australia's seceding, and that all the necessary formula is complied with and Western Australia becomes a separate Dominion, how much better off would Western Australia be? Is it believed for a moment that secession would overcome our difficulties? It is easy to suggest wrecking and disintegration, but when secessionists were confronted with the responsibility of re-building, all the ills to which we would be subject would be blamed on to them and they would soon find themselves in the same street as those who to-day maintain that separation from the Commonwealth is unthinkable. There is one thing the secessionist need not fear; he will never have to do any building, because he knows that the very proposal he is making is futile.

Mr. Kenneally: That is why he puts it up.

Mr. MILLINGTON: If Parliament solemnly declares that a referendum should be taken and if the Government go to the expense of authorising a referendum, will not the people be entitled to consider that their

votes will have a definite effect? Of course they will. Then the people will find that they have been play-acting—voting on a question on which they have no authority to vote and on which their opposition counts for nothing. The whole thing is misleading, and it will be a confidence trick on the part of the Government if they ask the people to incur the expense and trouble associated with the campaign and the voting, only to find that they have no power to determine the question. One might just as well ask me what should take place in a court where I have no authority whatever. The taking of a referendum will simply mislead and fool the people. Whatever the result of the vote might be, there will be a responsibility on the Government if they place themselves in such a ridiculous position, and if they fool the people by asking them to vote on a question on which they have no jurisdiction and whichever way the vote goes must prove ineffective and futile. That is why I object to the motion. I have no objection to referring certain questions to the people, but there are many questions that democrats consider should not be referred to the people. If some of the measures recently passed by this House had been referred to the people, they would have been vetoed. What would be the fate of taxation measures if they were referred to the people? Suppose we took a vote on the question of income tax, how would the Treasurer fare? People who glibly say that the electors should have a vote on all questions had better beware of what they are advocating, because responsible Government would be impossible under such conditions. For certain things Parliament and the Government have to take the responsibility and stand or fall by their action. On the question of secession, I say unreservedly the people of this State have not been sufficiently and properly informed. A one-sided case, an admittedly partisan case, has been submitted to them. There has been an effort to find someone to blame, and plausible statements and faked figures have been placed before them. The case presented is fictitious and unreliable, like an unaudited statement, and no one of standing would vouch for it. Fanciful figures of revenue and expenditure have been quoted. What do they know of revenue and expenditure? Even our trained Treasurer is over £1,000,000 out in his revenue

and expenditure estimates for the past year. Why should we take notice of inexperienced amateurs, on the one side setting up this as the revenue and that as the expenditure, and saying that Western Australia under secession will be so much better off than under Federation? What a ridiculous and farcical proposition it is. People are to be asked to vote upon evidence which would not stand five minutes in any responsible court. If the Government want to spend the money, they should set up a commission to examine these fictitious statements and ridiculous propositions that have been put up by secessionists. If they will do this, they will save the people from false doctrines and from being misled. I know of a hard-shelled freetrader who is also a secessionist, and has made calculations of the revenue to be derived from the tariff.

Mr. Marshall: That man is inconsistent enough.

Mr. MILLINGTON: People talk of Western Australia becoming a free country as a result of secession. One would think that Western Australia had been conquered by the Eastern States. We entered Federation with our eyes open. We should be sports enough to stand by the agreement, particularly in view of what we heard recently about repudiation. It seems this is the result of the repudiation talk. Members stand up in this House and solemnly move that we should break away from the most solemn undertaking that one State could make with another, both financially and fraternally.

Mr. Angelo: There is a lot of the fraternal about it.

Mr. MILLINGTON: They want all this wiped out in a moment.

Hon. P. Collier: It is like a child crying for more butter on his bread.

Mr. MILLINGTON: I want to be satisfied that the advice comes from a reliable source. To my mind, those who put up all these statements are most unreliable.

Mr. Angelo: Have not the Eastern States repudiated their agreements?

Hon. P. Collier: One would think they were a lot of foreigners.

Mr. Sampson: The manner in which they treat us suggests they are as bad as foreigners.

Mr. MILLINGTON: We shall be known as the whiners, the moaners, the State of disabilities. We may well be asked what else we produce besides disabilities, and he told to devote a little more time to develop-

ing the possibilities of Western Australia. Although in the Eastern States industries were started before ours, if we are sufficiently determined we can soon make up the leeway. In respect to our primary products, we already have the advantage over the Eastern States. I refuse to believe we are a second rate State or people, or that we cannot hold our own as part of the Federation. There may be some deep-laid scheme behind this movement. If a referendum is floated at the next general election, those members who are secessionists will say, "We stand for Western Australia, Western Australia for Western Australians, and all the others stand as Federationists." I can imagine that with the aid of propaganda quite a lot of advantage could be gained by that sort of thing. I hope there is no suggestion of turning the referendum to political advantage.

Hon. P. Collier: They say they are going to oppose everyone who is not a secessionist.

Mr. MILLINGTON: People, especially public men in Australia, have in these times to be very careful what pronouncement they make, and what they say with respect to our association one with another. It is wrong in a time like this to stir up anything in the nature of strife, anything that will tend to weaken confidence or a proper fraternal feeling between the States of Australia and the people of Australia. We pride ourselves on having sprung from British stock, the greatest race the world has even known. What would be said of any section of the British nation if in a time of trouble it counselled desertion from that nation? If ever there was a time when the people of Australia should stand together against disintegration, it is now. It would be disastrous to break up the Federation in these times. Although in prosperous days it is conceivable that such a proposal as this might be brought forward, it is a particularly mean attitude to take up now in view of the difficulties in which Australia finds herself. I do not know what the impression on the other side of the world would be if it was thought that Australia, which is supposed to be facing its difficulties as a nation, were suffering from internal strife and grave dissatisfaction existed within the Commonwealth as to the manner in which our own affairs were being conducted. What would be thought if one State was endeavouring to pull away from

the other States? That would not help to re-establish confidence in Australia, but would have an entirely different effect. It is most inopportune to start a pettifoggish squabble amongst ourselves when we are trying to impress others with the fact that Australia is perfectly sound, and industrially and from the point of view of production as well off as ever in its history. Western Australia is not in a position to face her liabilities to the other States. She could not meet her obligations. Before the people answer the question that may be put to them, I would like them to satisfy themselves that they can pull out of the agreement decently, and in an honourable manner, and in such a way that they will retain their self-respect. If Western Australia determines to withdraw from the Commonwealth, at least let those who are recommending the scheme show that she can draw out without in any way injuring Australia as a whole, and that she can do so while maintaining her self-respect and holding up her head not only among the States of Australia but also among the Dominions of which we form a part. From every point of view, therefore, it is undesirable that the Government of this State should solemnly, in accordance with the motion, ask the people of Western Australia whether they desire to secede, before the full consequence of their vote can be determined. If the Government do this, theirs will be the responsibility to draft the questions and to satisfy the people that if they carry the referendum, they can do so while maintaining their reputation. I do not think it can be done. I believe that the Government, when they have examined the proposal, will refuse to take the responsibility of asking the people to vote on a question over which they have no jurisdiction. The vote would be futile and ineffective. For these reasons I oppose the motion.

MR. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [9.48]:
I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion negatived.

Question put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	21
Noes	..	..	..	14
				—
Majority for	..			7
				—

AYES.

Mr. Angelo
Mr. Barnard
Mr. Brown
Mr. Doney
Mr. Griffiths
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Latham
Mr. Lindsay
Mr. H. W. Mann
Mr. J. I. Mann
Mr. McLarty

Mr. Parker
Mr. Patrick
Mr. Piesse
Mr. Richardson
Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Sampson
Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Wells
Mr. North

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Collier
Mr. Cunningham
Mr. Davy
Mr. Hegney
Mr. Kenneally
Mr. Marshall
Mr. McCallum
Mr. Millington

Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Troy
Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Withers
Mr. Corboy

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.
Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Ferguson
Mr. Teedale
Mr. J. H. Smith

NOES.
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Lutey
Miss Holman
Mr. Pantou

Question thus passed.

BILL—REDUCTION OF RENTS.

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. A. L. Davy—West Perth) [10.53] in moving the second reading said: This Bill represents an incidental part of the Plan agreed upon by the Premiers' Conference. The member for Geraldton (Hon. J. C. Willcock) moved an amendment to the Financial Emergency Bill covering the question of rents.

Mr. Corboy: We should not do anything of this sort now that we are cutting away from the Federation.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I thought we had changed the subject.

Hon. P. Collier: We will not pull out of the Plan right away.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think we should. The member for Geraldton moved an addition to the Financial Emergency Bill covering rents, and I promised the House to bring down a measure which would to a certain extent cover rents. I am conscious that this Bill does not go as far as the member for Geraldton would desire. On two occasions he has introduced what was called a Fair Rents Bill, and on each of those occasions I have opposed it because, in my opinion, such a measure would have an effect the very reverse of that which he desired it to achieve. I believe that so-called fair rents legislation has the effect, in the long run, of putting up

rents, and not of keeping them down. If such legislation is effective at all, it makes the employment of capital in the building or purchase of houses less profitable than the employment of capital in other directions, with the result that it accentuates the shortage of houses which exists during prosperous times in a growing community such as Western Australia, and therefore increases the competition for the small number of houses available, thus forcing up the market value of houses to be rented.

Mr. Corboy: We can solve that problem by putting the surplus people at Canning Bridge, as we are doing now.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: When those measures have been introduced in the past, I have always suggested that the best way of reducing rents was to reduce the cost of building houses. Last year I brought down two measures which were designed to enable houses to be built of wood. I am still of opinion that if those measures had been passed, a reduction of rents might have been achieved, quite apart from the reduction which has undoubtedly occurred owing to the inability of the people to pay the rents which have been charged in the past. This Bill does not purport for a moment to establish a fair rents court. It merely carries out the general scheme of things decided upon at the Premiers' Conference, and proposes to reduce, in spite of contracts, the rents of buildings which are subject to current leases, in just the same way as we have proposed, in the last division of the Financial Emergency Bill, forcibly to bring down the rate of interest in spite of current agreements. It was never intended, as I understand the Plan, to try to keep interest down. It was proposed to reduce interest under private contract by 22½ per cent., but it was not suggested that we should endeavour forcibly to keep interest down on that lower scale.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: You are keeping interest on bonds down for a period of about 30 years.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is true as regards existing bonds and current contracts. But when it was suggested that interest should be kept down forcibly, it was, I think, universally agreed that such a thing was most undesirable. It was thought that the general Plan would cause a reduction in the market price of interest, and that all we should endeavour to do was to ensure that no one, because he had a

current contract at a higher rate than the market rate, should profit by it after the concerted reduction. So in the case of rents. The question of rents was discussed in a limited degree, and it was not suggested that any fair rents measure should be part of the Plan. It was urged, however, that although rents in the main had come down, yet there were numerous cases where current contracts were keeping rents up above their true market value. Accordingly this measure proposes only to interfere with current contracts for the payment of rent, so that persons who have the ill-fortune to be under long leases, or leases which are still current, at a rent far higher than they could be compelled to pay if the matter was open and free, should be given the same relief as persons who have to pay interest would be given under other provisions of the Financial Emergency Bill.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: That shows the wisdom of the Labour Party in proposing to tax interest on bonds over a limited number of years.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not follow the analogy.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: The bondholder is affected for 30 years, whereas the rent is affected in accordance with the terms of the lease.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I have argued that we were convinced that the alternative method of taxing interest and rents specially would merely have the result of keeping interest and rents up. The Plan was designed in the end as part of the scheme to relieve the payers of interest and rents. To inflict a tax on interest or rents cannot have a tendency other than to keep both up.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: The Federal Government have imposed ridiculous taxes in the form of primage duties and sales taxes that are hampering business.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That may be, but because ridiculous taxes have been imposed, I can see no reason why we should add to the ridiculous number of imposts.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Those taxes have increased the cost of living, the cost of production, and the cost of everything else.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Perhaps the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) will join with me in a scheme to effect a reduction in the tariff of 20 per cent.

Hon. P. Collier: The sales tax is having an influence in increasing the cost of living and the cost of production.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I may be prepared to agree with the hon. member, but that would not justify us in increasing the burden upon primary production in another direction. The Bill may well be said to be analogous in the realm of rent to the measure already passed by this House regarding the reduction of interest. It will apply only to contracts that are current for a term long enough to make their currency of importance. It will not touch rents payable under terms of less than one month. There is really nothing more to be said in explanation of the Bill.

Mr. Corboy: It does not touch house rents.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Except where the tenancy is longer than a period of one month. The machinery provided is that by this measure all rents preserved under leases or tenancy agreements that have a currency of longer than one month, will be automatically reduced by 22½ per cent. Leave will be given to the lessor to apply to the commissioner, who will be a judge of the Supreme Court, to prove to him that some special circumstances exist, because of which he should be exempt from the provisions of this legislation.

Mr. Sleeman: That will apply to a small percentage only of the payers of rent.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It will affect the vast majority of business people.

Mr. Sleeman: Yes, but not private people.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The general opinion is that there has already been a substantial reduction in the rents of private houses.

Mr. Kenneally: But that does not apply to all.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not say that it does, but in the main the general trend has been substantially downwards, and it must continue. Such a trend cannot be avoided in times like the present.

Mr. Sleeman: Would not that apply to business premises as well?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It has applied in that direction already, but there is a large number of long leases under which the rentals payable have not been reduced. The difficulty arises where a greedy landlord has a long lease and has refused relief to his tenant. In due course that tenant may become bankrupt and be absolutely unable

to continue paying the high rental. The result is that when the premises are vacated and the value of the lease, when on the market, is lessened, a substantial reduction of rent is enjoyed by the incoming tenant.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: There have been many such instances.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Undoubtedly. On the other hand, there have been a great number of sensible landlords who have realised the position, and have voluntarily granted a reduction to existing tenants rather than see them fail to carry on, and some perfect strangers take over the premises and secure the benefit of the reduction in rental. The Bill is designed so that the sacrifice imposed upon the bondholders and interest receivers under private mortgages shall be extended to the receivers of rent under current leases.

Hon. A. McCallum: But only current leases.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. Obviously, if we were to deal with weekly tenancies, something more than a mere reduction would be required. It would be necessary to have a rent restriction measure, and to set up a court that would fix rents. As I indicated before, I am firmly convinced that such a court would have the opposite effect of that which it was designed to secure. A fair rents court could result in nothing but harm.

Hon. A. McCallum: What about the renewals of current leases?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is no possible chance of any landlord letting his premises again at the old rental under existing circumstances.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: But people in established premises would find it most awkward if they had to move.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It will not be awkward for them to move, because they can find empty premises quite close to those they now occupy.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: It might cost £500 or £600 to move.

Mr. Sampson: And there is goodwill attached to certain localities for certain firms.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: I have been told that it would cost one firm £3,000 to move their premises.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: But you are dealing with big firms.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: I am referring to Musgroves.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I understood they had bought the premises they occupy.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: I was told that it would cost them £3,000 if they had to move.

The Chief Secretary: But they bought at the height of the land boom.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: That is what the firm advised me it would cost to move from one building to another.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am afraid I am not desperately concerned about special legislation to protect thriving companies such as that mentioned.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: So thriving that their shares have dropped from £1 to 5s.1 They bought two premises at top prices.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That may be, but the Bill will undoubtedly provide a measure of relief to a large number of people who are paying rents under leases that cannot be renewed at anything like the present rent reserved. That is all the Bill aims at. I notice that hon. members who have had but a few minutes to study the Bill, have apparently been able to gain a good grasp of its provisions.

Mr. Marshall: Do you know what is contained in Clause 7?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. C. Willcock, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.10 p.m.