

ature than it has been in the past, for when the Industries Assistance Board ceases to guarantee the farmer, the farmer will have to deal with the country store-keeper, who will be able to charge what he likes, unless the Control of Trade Commissioners are there to protect him.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

Mr. Holman in the Chair ; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Continuance of Act until 30th September, 1916 :

Mr. WILLMOTT : The Bill is a re-enactment and therefore it is of no use our objecting to the appointment of three Commissioners. It is useless to argue.

Clause put and passed.

Bill reported without amendment ; the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (2) RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

1, Government Electric Works Act Amendment (without amendment).

2, Roads Act Amendment and Continuation (with amendments).

House adjourned at 6-17 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 28th September, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Harbour and Light Department, report for year ended 30th June, 1915. 2, Water Supply and Sewerage Department, amendment of by-laws. 3, Resolutions adopting model by-laws by (a) South Perth municipal council, and (b) Broad Arrow, (c) Mullewa district, and (d) Dumbleyung roads boards.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read assenting to the following Bills:—

- 1, Enemy Contracts Annulment.
- 2, Bread Act Amendment.
- 3, Newcastle-Bolgart Railway Extension.

QUESTION — POWELLISING AGREEMENT.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, On what date did the agreement between the Minister for Works and the Powellising Company come into operation as regards the payment of royalty for the use of the company's process by the Government? 2, On what date was this agreement laid upon the Table of the Legislative Assembly? 3, What is the total amount of royalty paid under this agreement up to

the 31st August, 1915, and to whom was it paid? 4, What amount (in super. feet) of timber has been treated under this agreement up to 31st August, 1915? 5, Of the timber so treated, how much has been sold; how much has been used for State purposes within the State; and how much is in stock?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, 15th July, 1913. 2, 14th August, 1913. 3, £15,387 15s. 9d. to the Westralian Wood Powell Process, Limited. 4, 24,615,231 super. feet. 5, 24,277,581 super. sold; 9,221,442 super. used for State purposes within the State; 337,650 super. in stock—all at 30th June, 1915. The figures given have been prepared to 30th June, as the statements are only made up quarterly, and the figures for the current quarter will not be available until 30th September.

BILL—WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. J. F. Cullen, Bill recommitted for the purpose of further considering new clause to stand as Clause 52.

In Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair, the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

New Clause (to stand as Clause 52):

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 3, line 1, the words "both Houses" be struck out, and "either House" inserted in lieu.

This amendment was necessitated by a pure mishap. It merely amounted to the correction of a clerical error.

Amendment passed, the clause as amended agreed to.

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Permanent Reserve.

2, Grain and Foodstuff.

Passed.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd September.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [4.45]: In moving the adjournment of the debate, I had no intention of opposing the second reading of the Bill. I propose, however, to move an amendment in the Bill, and as that amendment may be considered to be of a somewhat important character, and may seem vital to some, I think it is the proper course to discuss the amendment now, at the second reading stage. In order to reassure the leader of the House, who may have some fears that the discussion will cause the Bill to lapse, I would like to draw his attention to the continuation Bill passed last session, where he will see that he was in error in informing the House that the Bill expired on the 30th of the present month. No doubt he was confusing it with another piece of legislation which does expire on that date. The Licensing Act Amendment Act as it stands at present is good until the 31st December of the present year, and therefore there is ample time for the discussion of the measure if the House feels so disposed. It will be remembered that some time after the Act was passed a movement was started in Perth known as the Eight to Eight movement, and after a number of public meetings had carried resolutions in favour of the hours of eight to eight being fixed as the trading hours for licensed houses during the period of the war, the Attorney General was interviewed and asked to exercise the powers conferred upon him by the Act to put into effect the desires of the people who had held those meetings, and carried those resolutions. I do not propose to discuss the question of whether or not the Government should have given way to those requests, because I am sensible of the fact that on the introduction of the Bill it was stated in this House, and in another place, that the powers given to the Government then in the matter of closing licensed houses were intended to be

used only in a case of extremity. The amendment I propose to move to this Bill will give members an opportunity of saying whether they think that the hours of opening and closing hotels during the period of war should be fixed by Parliament or by a referendum of the people. My own opinion is that a matter of this kind should be fixed by Parliament. I do not think a referendum of the people is the proper way to decide a matter of urgency which has arisen consequent upon the war. In only one other State of the Commonwealth has action been taken similar to that which the Government propose under another Bill, and I take it I am not out of order in referring to that other Bill, so long as my reference is pertinent to the question I wish to bring before the House. In the State of South Australia several months ago this question of the closing hours of hotels during the time of war was referred to the people, and we know that a Bill is now before the South Australian Parliament which makes provision that the decision arrived at by the electors several months ago shall come into force on the 26th of March of next year. I ask hon. members seriously this question: Can they imagine anything more futile, more childish, than to submit to a referendum of the people a question of emergency, of grave necessity, to decide the closing hours of hotels during war time, and to bring that decision into operation 12 months after the vote has been taken?

Hon. J. F. Cullen: When we hope the war will be over.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I do not know how long it will be before our present Government put into operation the opinion of the people as expressed by a referendum, if it is taken here; but that is the only example we have to go upon, and we know that in South Australia this emergency question of what we should do during war time was referred to the people and the decision is to be put into operation 12 months after it has been arrived at, at a time when we all hope the war will be over. My opinion is that whatever is necessary to be done in this

matter of closing hotels consequent upon the war should be done quickly, and I say Parliament has no right, no matter what pressure may be brought to bear upon it by this or that interest, to shirk its obligations and responsibilities. When this Bill which we are now discussing first came before Parliament I had not then heard, and I did not then know what had been done or said in another place. I expressed the hope that the Government would not hesitate to use the power given to them under the Bill, because at that time I was fully cognizant of the fact that an enormous amount of money which people could ill-afford to waste was being squandered in public-houses in the City and in the country. I am speaking now of the first few months after war broke out. All know that at that time people were congregated in the City streets and there was more drinking going on than at any normal period. In the country districts we were already beginning to feel the effects of the drought, and men whom the farmers could no longer afford to keep in employment were drifting into the towns with their cheques in their pockets, knowing that a long time might elapse before they could again obtain employment; and in a deplorably large number of cases those men spent the money they had, openly stating that it was their intention to come down to Perth, where the Government would keep them until things got better. It would have been wise had the Government then introduced this Bill, with the statement that they intended to enforce it at once. But they having failed to do that, we are now faced with an entirely different state of circumstances. The excitement that prevailed during the first months of the war has given place to a quiet and sober interest, and I do not suppose that in the City there is anything like so much drinking going on as in normal times. I am sure that in the country there is not nearly so much. But there is no reason why we should not endeavour to conserve the resources of the people by limiting the hours for the sale of intoxicating liquor during the continuance of the war, and my purpose

in moving the amendment is that Parliament should limit those hours. I have said that in the country at present very little drinking is going on. Why? Because there is very little money. But it will not be long before there is an abundant harvest to be reaped. I fear that the farmer himself will not get as big a return out of the coming harvest as we hope, and would like him to get; but whatever his return may be he will have to pay the full scale of wages, and since there is a big crop there will be an enormous wages bill. I think it is the duty of Parliament to take any action which will prevent as far as possible the dissipation of those wages in liquor at a time like the present. By what method are we likely to secure the better result—by a referendum of the people or by a decision of Parliament? If we cannot secure the early closing of hotels by any other means than a referendum of the people, I am going to support that referendum. But it is a wrong method, a method which will bring about improper results, and I do not intend to shirk the responsibility which I hold to be cast upon members of Parliament to decide this issue for themselves. I suppose other members of this House are in the position in which I find myself. Since this Bill came before Parliament I have been bombarded with requests from certain sections of the community in regard to the attitude I shall take up on the Bill. It is one of the most unfortunate features of liquor legislation, that it is but seldom the public gets a hearing. On the one hand we have the temperance party, the prohibitionists, those who believe that the consumption of liquor in any circumstances is wrong and harmful; and on the other hand we have the trade, desiring the fullest opportunity for the carrying on of its business, and it is seldom the public itself gets a hearing. As I have said, I have been bombarded with circulars and letters from the temperance societies and from the trade, but I have not heard a word from the general public. My fear is that if we send this matter to a referendum we shall be casting

the burden of coming to a decision on the shoulders of people who ought to be less capable of arriving at a correct decision than is Parliament. I understand it is intended, if the Referendum Bill is carried, to submit the question at the same time as the Federal referendums are being taken. I do not know whether that is so, but I have heard the statement made that it is the intention of the Government. It may be a wise procedure, because I understand it will save expense; but when we remember that at the Federal referendums there are no fewer than six questions to be submitted, we cannot escape the fear that there will be a confusion of issues and that a great many people will neglect altogether to vote upon this question of the closing of hotels. We have had one experience of the kind already. A Federal referendum was taken in, I think, 1910, and a Local Option Bill was submitted at the same time. A very large percentage of those who voted on the Federal referendum did not trouble to exercise their vote on the Local Option Bill, thereby showing clearly that it was a matter concerning the trade and the prohibitionists, and one in which the public took comparatively little interest. In South Australia, as I have said, a decision was arrived at as a result of a referendum of the people, and by Act of Parliament it is to be brought into force on the 26th March, or 12 months after the decision was arrived at. And there we find extreme dissatisfaction, because certain of the community say that they are being forced into a closing hour which is against their expressed wish. For instance, in the city of Adelaide I believe there was a strong vote in favour of continuing until 11 o'clock, or whatever their present closing hour is, whereas the whole of the State pronounced in favour of 6 o'clock. I do not think there is the slightest doubt that a good deal of difficulty will be experienced in Adelaide in enforcing a closing hour against the wishes of a large majority. Our Government, it seems, propose to get over that difficulty by dividing the State into four constituencies, endeavouring as far as possible to

secure a community of interest in each. It may serve to get over the difficulty which has arisen in South Australia, but to my mind it will create even worse difficulties. Personally I see no excuse for lack of uniformity in the licensing laws in Western Australia, no reason why people living on the goldfields should have their hotels open until 11 o'clock at night while people in the country districts and in the City have their hotels closed at 6 o'clock. If it is intended to restrict the sale of liquor so that there shall be less waste, surely it must be done at times against the wishes of the people; because if we are not going to do it against the wishes of the people, if we are going to say that on the goldfields, where there is no restriction of operations, and where wages are circulating as freely as before, they are to be allowed to trade until 11 o'clock—although I understand that on the goldfields the present hour is not generally recognised, and that people are allowed to carry on their business until 1 o'clock in the morning—if this is an emergency measure, intended to restrict the sale of liquor during war time so as to conserve the resources of the people, it is ridiculous to allow one section of the community, who desire that trade in liquor shall continue until 1 o'clock in the morning, to have that privilege and go on trading till that hour in the morning. If you are going to do any good at all you must restrict the hours generally. I have a letter here from a gentleman who I have no doubt takes a very great interest in the matter, and is sincere in what he says. He writes—

Some of the districts return Liberal and some Labour members. An elector should have similar liberty to fix the hours of closing hotels in that district in which he resides.

This gentleman, in asking for my support for the Bill as it stands, is under the apprehension that different Legislative Assembly districts are going to decide the closing hours for themselves. I understand if we refer it to the people that the decision is to be given in four divisions, and that places so widely separated as Bunbury and Geraldton will actually vote

together. It is not a matter of the people deciding the closing hours in the district in which they reside. It looks to me as if the Bill has been drafted in order that the early closing of hotels may be brought about in those districts where there is a good deal of poverty and hardship and very little excessive drinking, and in order that there may be no restriction whatever in those districts where there is still plenty of money and excessive drinking. I say without fear and without the slightest hesitation if there is one place in Western Australia where efforts should be made to decrease the drinking habits of the people that place is the goldfields. There are few places in the world where wages are so high as or higher than they are on our Western Australian goldfields. I, for one, say there is no place where men deserve such high wages as they get there. The conditions under which they live and the risks they take in their occupation entitle them to the highest wages that the industry in which they are employed can possibly give. But it is, to my mind, a lamentable thing to set side by side with those high wages so much squalor in the matter of living as there is on the goldfields at the present time. Personally, I attribute that chiefly to the fact that these goldfields are supporting an enormous number of hotels in proportion to the population, and in number quite disproportionate to that existing in any other part of the State. Further, they are keeping them open until one o'clock in the morning. If, for the purpose of economising during war time, it is desirable to limit the number of hours during which hotels may be kept open, we are not going to do this effectively unless we limit the hours on the goldfields, as well as in any other part of the State. If Parliament shirks its responsibility in this matter of fixing the closing hours and sends it to a referendum of the people, we shall get in some cases ridiculous decisions which cannot be carried into effect, and in other cases we shall get no reduction of the hours at all. It is proposed to give the people the option of saying that hotels which shall close at 6 o'clock in the even-

ing shall be absolutely closed at that time and that no one, even a traveller, or a resident of any of the hotels shall be entitled to have a drink after that hour, or any other hour that is fixed. In my opinion, if a man who is living in an hotel cannot get a glass of beer with his dinner, it is an absolutely childish and stupid proposal.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: Do you object to a man having a drink when he comes off from his work?

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I am not objecting to that. I say that any legislation which imposes a restriction on a man living in an hotel from having a glass of beer with his dinner is childish and stupid and that any attempt to force that position is going to bring about objectionable acts very much more serious than those in existence at the present time. If, instead of Parliament fixing the closing hours under the Bill we are discussing, and we pass the proposal to submit a referendum to the people, the miners on the goldfields will be prohibited altogether from getting a drink when they are leaving their work, because the latest hour appointed for the closing of hotels under the Bill is not one o'clock in the morning, such as enjoyed at the present time on the goldfields, but it is 11 o'clock, and the Act provides that this being fixed the closing must be absolute and complete. It is this proposal of the Government, and not my proposal, which would prohibit these men from getting a drink when they come off from their work in the early morning. I understand that in another place it was suggested that it was a democratic provision to say that a man must drink water for his dinner if the majority so decided. Some people have a queer idea of democracy. I think a man should be allowed to drink what he likes and to do what he likes within the law. If Parliament is willing to take upon its own shoulders the responsibility of deciding the hours during which intoxicating liquors shall be sold during the war, the proper place to do that is in this Bill. I propose in Committee to insert an amend-

ment to that clause of the existing Act, which gives the Governor-in-Council the power to proclaim any hour that he may see fit for the opening or closing of hotels, and power to close them altogether if any emergency arises which he believes necessitates such a course. The amendment I propose will not in any way interfere with those powers. I suggest that the Governor-in-Council shall still have power to close hotels wherever he likes in cases of emergency, but I propose an amendment that during the continuance of this Act the opening hour shall not be earlier than an hour stated by Parliament and the closing hour shall not be later than an hour stated by Parliament. It will then be for Parliament to decide at what hour the hotels shall be opened and closed.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: What about the other Bill?

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I do not believe in it. My reason for taking up that attitude now is that in a matter of emergency this legislation should be decided by Parliament. If we are going to fix the hours—and I hope hon. members will support me in this—we have guides before us. We have the 8 to 8 movement, which received much support in Perth some months ago. We also have the legislation which was carried in Victoria, the only State in the whole of the Commonwealth which has up to the present time done anything to check the sale of liquor during war time. In Victoria the hours, I understand, fixed were from 9 to 9.30. We may enter into the question of hours, therefore, with these two things to go upon, the 8 to 8 movement here, and the 9 to 9.30 decision of the Victorian Parliament. Personally, I am not wedded to any particular hour, but I think the 9 to 9.30 provision is a very reasonable one, and one which would be acceptable to the people, and would carry out the desires of Parliament to limit the consumption of liquor during the time of war. I am of opinion that the proposal to close hotels from 6 o'clock in the evening to 6 o'clock in the morning may do a great deal of harm. The opening at 6 o'clock in the morning is

harmful and unnecessary. Many a man would "straighten up" if he could not get a drink before 9 o'clock in the morning, and would go to his breakfast and his work. We are not going to put down drunkenness by opening hotels from 6 o'clock in the morning till 6 o'clock in the evening. If we send a referendum to the people as the Government suggest, 6 o'clock will still remain as the opening hour, no matter what hour is decided on for the closing. I think it is an important reform to prevent the opening of hotels at an unreasonably early hour in the morning. On the other hand, I believe most of the excessive drinking takes place in the last hour or so before the closing time. I am firmly of opinion that by reducing the hours at both ends of the day throughout the State a great deal of good may be done. Consequently, it is my intention, when the Bill reaches Committee, to submit the amendment leaving to the Government all the powers they have under the existing Bill to act in cases of emergency, and also making a proviso that during the continuance of this Bill the opening hour shall not be earlier than 9 o'clock in the morning and the closing hour shall not be later than 9.30.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Make it from nine to nine.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH: I suggest these hours and will leave the matter to the House. All I wish the House to discuss is as to whether, in an emergency matter of this kind, we should take the responsibility of fixing the hours or whether we should send the matter by referendum to the people when we are likely to get different results in different parts of the State, when there will be a difficulty in carrying out the decisions and when in some cases it will mean no reform at all.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [5.10]: The hon. member has made a very practicable proposal, and I hope the Government will look at it carefully, and if possible adopt it. The Bill we are now asked to continue was not

brought in as a temperance or thrift Bill, it was brought in as an instrument of good order. As explained by Ministers in both Houses, the idea of the Bill was to clothe the Government with ample powers to deal with any threatened interference with the public peace. That was the distinct object of the Bill. I think that the Government were justified in saying to those who approached them in deputations and asked them to use the measure as an instrument of thrift and temperance, that it would be a strain of power. Hon. members will easily understand that the public administration must be above the suspicion of straining its powers, especially when it can apply to Parliament for additional powers if need be. I think the Government were quite right in saying to the temperance people, "We cannot do what you want under cover of the emergency Act of Parliament." Where I think the Government made a mistake was when the temperance people said, "We have carried out a crusade throughout the country on the lines of 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. trading. Now we ask you to bring in a Bill to give effect to what has been very clearly accepted throughout the country." I think the Government on the assembling of Parliament would have done wisely to have taken the responsibility, shared of course by Parliament, of definitely fixing such times of opening and closing as would bring about increased temperance, and increased thrift in the community during this time of war stress. The proposal of the hon. member is that, now we are asked to continue the emergency Bill, we can make it an instrument of thrift and temperance, as well as an instrument whereby the Government can protect the public peace. I think it is a good idea. I have already given notice of certain amendments in the other Bill which the Government have brought down. Whilst I will try to get at least one of these amendments into the Bill now before the House, I do think that the proposal which the Government have substituted will mean long

delays and very general dissatisfaction. I do not think any local optionist can object to the Government proposal of dividing the State into four districts on the lines of community of interest, but at the same time the result will probably be such a disappointment to the temperance workers that they would wish that they had never made such a suggestion to the Government. It is morally certain if the hon. member's proposal is not accepted and a referendum is relied upon, the City and the goldfields will vote 11 o'clock. There is no doubt about that, and the country districts and the pastoral districts where there is very little need for legislative reform will vote for a much earlier hour. A fact that should delight the responsible people of the State is that the country districts have already taken this matter into their own hands. I live in a town of fair size and importance and in which there are three admirably conducted hotels. They are just what country hotels ought to be. The position is that to-day there is no one hanging about those hotels and nobody spends any evenings there, and the consumption of liquor has gone down by at least half. The people themselves have brought about this reform. If the Government idea is carried out the result will be that the country districts will vote probably 6 o'clock, where there is very little need for a change and the City and the goldfields will probably vote 11 o'clock, but quite apart from that I hold that Parliament should face its duty. The crusade carried out recently, fairly shows to hon. members what the general feeling of the people is. They were in favour of 8 to 8. On those lines they carried a campaign right through the country, and it met with general support. Why should not Parliament take the responsibility of fixing the hour and save the enormous expense of a referendum?

Members: Hear, hear.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I hold that Parliament will be neglecting an important part of its duty if it does not fix the hours. I am not particularly concerned whether those hours are 8 to 8 or 9 to 9.

I think either would be workable, but I agree with Mr. Colebatch that it will be an abuse of Parliamentary power to say to a man "You shall not have in the dinner hour what you have been accustomed to have, and that it shall be a crime for you to take what you have been accustomed to take at that time." The proposal, of course, would carry us beyond that hour. I am persuaded that although it will not make as great a difference in the actual money spent by dealing with the opening hour as against the closing hour, it will have a greater effect on the temperance of the people. I think the most disastrous thing is the early drinking, that is to say, drinking before working hours, and I do not consider that any hotel-keeper will object to the alteration of the opening hours from 6 to 8 o'clock, or even 9 o'clock. I wish to support the hon. member's proposal with all my heart. No blame can be attached to the Government for not using the Act which they introduced, but there is no reason why Parliament having made that Act should not now develop it into an instrument to bring about temperance as well as to protect the good order of the country. I shall support the hon. member and I hope the sense of Parliament will be with him. There will then be no need for the other Bill which has been passed by the Legislative Assembly; the same object will be accomplished in a much better and a much cheaper way.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [5.22]: I am at one with Mr. Colebatch in the proposition he has put before this House, that is in regard to the matter of the proposition, but I cannot altogether agree with the manner in which he proposes to carry it out. The Act, the continuation of which we are now considering, was introduced for a specific purpose. It was introduced, I understand, for the purpose of giving the Government power in case those foreign elements of our population in some parts of Western Australia became heated by racial feeling, and still more heated by alcohol, should fall out and

produce a riot. It was deemed necessary in cases of that sort to give the Governor-in-Council power to prevent those men from getting liquor and bringing about their own destruction. That this object has been kept in view, witness the answer which was given to the deputation which waited on the Government with regard to the opening of hotels from S to S. The Government said "This measure under which you ask us to make the reduction of hours was introduced for a specific purpose. It was introduced to prevent racial riots. We consider that the opening of hotels where these racial riots took place might be a predisposing cause, and the measure was introduced for that purpose only." To-day the Bill is introduced for exactly the same purpose as when that answer was given. While I am prepared to support Mr. Colebatch in regard to the deletion of the referendum, I think the amendment he suggests can be made in the other Bill and not in this one, and this Bill should be allowed to stand for the purpose of which it was originally placed on the statute-book. I have other remarks to make but I will defer making them until I have an opportunity of speaking on the second measure. At the same time, I will ask Mr. Colebatch to take into consideration in view of the absolutely special nature of the measure we are now asked to continue, and whether it would not be better to postpone the introduction of his amendments until the other Bill comes forward, a Bill which is more in the nature of a general licensing Bill than this one. As I have said, this measure is for an absolutely specific purpose. I do not think the continuance of the Act which is on the statute-book is a matter of such vital importance as it was when it was first introduced, because a large number of those gentlemen who were supposed to be on the verge of racial riots have now found a better resting place at Rottnest than ever they had before. Still, if the Government think it should continue to have this power, we should give it to them. If Mr. Colebatch will agree to make his amend-

ments in the second measure he will be well advised, particularly from the point of view of symmetry of legislation, and the present Act would be preserved for the object for which it alone exists. I quite uphold the action of the Government in dealing with the proposition made by the S to S advocates, and yet we have Mr. Colebatch wishing to introduce in this measure a feature which the Government wished, and I think rightly, to keep out. I hope the hon. member will allow this measure to go through and submit the amendments he foreshadowed when the other measure is before us.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [5.27]: I agree with Mr. Kingsmill. I think the debate will conclusively prove that the object of the Bill now before us was a specific one. I am not wedded to another Bill which is about to come up for discussion, but I certainly think the question of hours should stand in a Bill by itself. I hope Mr. Colebatch will not persist in the line of action he has taken.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—CONTROL OF TRADE IN WAR TIME CONTINUANCE.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.30]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable this Bill to pass all its stages at the present sitting.

It is necessary that this Bill should receive assent before the 30th of this month and I wish the second reading to be proceeded with at once. If the Commission are attacked I shall propose that the debate be adjourned and the second reading, therefore, will not be completed until I am supplied with material to reply to any attacks. I am not in touch with the Commission and therefore I must be furnished with material to reply to any

charges which are made against the Commission.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [5.31]: I do not intend to oppose the suspension of the Standing Orders, although it is my intention to oppose the second reading of the Bill. Whilst consenting to the suspension of the Standing Orders, I wish to say that I consider the Government have treated this House most discourteously in bringing down at the last moment a Bill in regard to which they knew there was a good deal of difference of opinion and likely to be a good deal of controversy. I can find no justification for that action. It appears to be nothing less than studied discourtesy. There is no reason why both branches of the Legislature should not have ample opportunity to discuss all measures placed before them. The Government knew very well from the expressions of opinion that this Bill would be opposed. They knew that there were differences of opinion in regard to it and it was, therefore, the duty of the Government to give ample opportunity for discussing the measure. I am prepared to agree to the suspension of the Standing Orders, but I am not prepared to do it without expressing my sense of dissatisfaction at the discourteous manner in which the Government have treated this House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [5.33]: In reply, I wish to state that on Thursday last I told the hon. member that the Bill was coming down on that day and that I wished to suspend the Standing Orders in order to move the second reading. The hon. member announced his intention to oppose it and I then stated my intention not to take the Bill on that day.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: But you did not get it down that day.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. gentleman has had ample opportunity to consider the measure. The Bill has been before another place and there is no new matter in it. The original measure was discussed here this year and that has not been amended. Hon. members are in a position either to support

or to condemn the Bill. It would be quite a different matter if a number of amendments had been made in another place, as members would then require ample time to thoroughly consider them.

Hon. A. G. Jenkins: You ought to agree to an adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed.

The PRESIDENT: I declare that the motion has been passed by an absolute majority of the members of the House.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.35] in moving the second reading said: I do not wish the debate to terminate to-day, but I wish all members who are in a position to speak to do so, in order that I might be able to reply to-morrow. It may not be absolutely necessary to reply to-morrow because, if we get the measure through on Thursday and secure the Governor's consent without delay, that will serve our purpose. The Royal Commission appointed under the Control of Trade in War Time Act has been successful in controlling trade and at the same time disturbing it to the least possible degree. This end has been achieved by conferences with the various classes of traders concerned and amicable arrangements arrived at which have, in the majority of cases, enabled the Commission to avoid having to proclaim maximum selling rates. In a few instances, however, in order to properly safeguard the interests of the consuming public, it has been considered necessary to gazette maximum selling prices, but in all their actions the Commissioners have been actuated with the desire to give a fair deal as between the merchant and the general public. The Commission, in fixing prices to be charged for the different commodities, have given due consideration to increased costs which the importer or producer have been able to prove were unavoidable. In dealing with flour, considerable difficulty has been experienced and it has been found necessary to practically follow this continuously owing to the different interests involved in consequence of wheat having been imported not only by the Govern-

ment but by private millers, and also the available surplus of Western Australian wheat left over after seeding having exceeded the most sanguine expectations. This large surplus was quite unexpected and has, as a consequence, necessitated very careful consideration to avoid as far as possible the serious loss that would ensue if the carry-over at the end of the year assumed large proportions. The Commission have, whenever it was considered necessary, visited various parts of the State in order to become personally acquainted with the conditions under which trade is carried on and also to ascertain at first hand any hardships or special circumstances peculiar to the district visited.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Who are the commissioners to-day?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Simpson, Mr. Bath, and Mr. Rae. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. H. P. COLEBATCH (East) [5.37]: When this measure was introduced at the commencement of the war, I think in the first week of August, 1914, the reasons why Parliament should make provision for the appointment of such a commission were exhaustively explained by the Premier in another place. In the course of his explanation he made use of these words: "I believe it will not be necessary to put the Bill into operation." At another stage of his remarks he said the Bill was intended to apply during such time as the seas might be closed against commerce. He suggested that the seas might be closed against commerce consequent on the war and that it was highly possible there might be some commodities necessary to the daily life of the people which would be rushed up to an exorbitant price, thus enabling some people to make unfair profits and generally to bring about trouble to the consuming population. We have just dealt with another Bill which was passed on the definite statement of the Minister that it would be applied in certain circumstances, and we have all been ready to find excuses for the Government for

not applying it. This was an Act which it was said would be applied in certain circumstances. Those circumstances have never arisen but the measure has been applied in entirely different circumstances. There is no justification existing for this proposed legislation that will not continue for all time. If we are justified at the present time in having a commission to control trade and fix prices, then the commission should always exist. There is practically no interference at the present juncture with trade and commerce in consequence of the war, nor has any action taken by the commission been dictated by an interference of trade and commerce consequent on the war. I do not intend to discuss exhaustively this fixing of prices but I would like hon. members to look at the position from one or two points of view. I noticed the other day that an English magazine supported the action taken by Australian Governments in appointing these price fixing commissions, and drew attention to the big profits made by different tradespeople at Home, which profits it was contended might have been avoided had similar legislation been in existence there. One case quoted related to a firm who happened to have a very large quantity of New Zealand cheese on hand at the time the war broke out. The price went up and they made a very big profit. Another case was that of a milling company who happened to have a large quantity of flour on hand and the price of flour went up and they made a big profit. The contention was that these people should not have made those profits. I do not know who it was intended should have made the profit, whether they thought the State should have made the profit, but the point is that whereas one trader had a good deal of New Zealand cheese on hand and got the advantage of a rise in price, and whereas another trader had a good deal of flour on hand and got the advantage of a rise in price, there was another trader who, following his ordinary occupation, bought pearls, and another who bought silk, and these trad-

ers found that their commodities had gone down in price owing to the war. Is it to be suggested that the Government should step in with a commission, and take away the profit of a private individual who happens to have something which has gone up in price, and that nothing should be done to compensate a private individual who has something which has gone down in price for the same reason that the other went up in price? In our case we have the two people rolled into one; we have one individual who has goods which might have advanced slightly in consequence of the war, and that same man has on the same shelves goods which have gone down in price, because of the war. The commission at the outset fixed prices or regulated the prices of groceries, for instance. This action might have made groceries cheaper to the consumer but I know of many an instance where grocers were deprived of a legitimate profit on certain articles, while at the same time they had on their shelves thousands of pounds worth of other articles which had greatly depreciated in value because of the war, and no one suggested that they should receive compensation for that. I cannot see any justice in the commission fixing prices. There is also this dangerous feature, that the law of supply and demand operates so that when supplies get short prices get high and the people economise, and therefore a particular article is made to go further than it otherwise would. But if we attempt by artificial means to keep the price down we lose the economy and the community, in the long run, are the losers. The commission have interfered in a way which it was promised that they would not interfere. They have been fixing the price of wheat. That, it is said, was done in the interests of the consumer and of the farmer who had to buy seed wheat from the Government. Unfortunately, the farmer who bought seed wheat from the Government does not know to-day what he has to pay for it, so it is impossible to say whether the Government have done any good to this particular section of the community by fixing the price of seed wheat lower

than it should have been fixed. The Colonial Secretary has referred to the losses which will result from the importation of flour. I do not intend to say a word against the commissioners as individuals because the thing they were appointed to do was a thing they could not have done without inflicting injustice. If they did not do an injustice here, they would have done it there. I am prepared to believe they did their work as well as it was possible for anyone to do such work. And I do not intend to discuss the question of the importation of wheat or the making of contracts for the gristing of the wheat into flour, because neither of these things were done under the authority of the Act. This Control of Trade in War Time Act gave the Commission no power to buy wheat or make contracts with millers to grist that wheat into flour, therefore, whilst I disagree with the actions of the Commissioners in these matters I will not discuss it now because the Bill has nothing to do with those dealings. The Commissioners were acting as the agents of the Government, and they could have done all the things they did in regard to those purchases without the Bill. But I will refer to the over-importation of wheat in order to illustrate this point. If you try artificially to fix the price of wheat you create a difficulty. No doubt one reason the Government imported more wheat than was required is that when the Commission fixed an unfairly low price they prevented the wheat from coming into market. The Commission were going round making farmers sell wheat at 4s. 6d. and the farmers felt that they were being robbed, and when a man feels that he is being robbed he will endeavour to protect himself even if he offends against the law in doing it. An enormous quantity of wheat was prevented from coming to market because the price was fixed below a fair price, and in consequence of that the Government imported more wheat than was required. Later on the Government increased the price of wheat to 7s. 4d. a bushel, still keeping it well below the market price and allowing a very unfair cost against the owner of the

wheat to cover railage, agency charges, and the like so that the farmer was only getting about 6s. 9d. for his wheat. We do not know what the farmer is paying for his seed wheat; he does not know himself, he is wondering what he has to pay. I would like to make an extreme statement now to draw the Colonial Secretary out and to get a statement from him that the farmers will not be overcharged for their seed wheat, but I will make this statement, that I am sure the farmers will not get the seed wheat one penny cheaper than they would have done had the farmer who sold it received a fair price. We shall be told that by fixing the price of wheat the interest of the consumers was studied. For months past the price of wheat in Victoria has been 8s. a bushel, and any farmer who had wheat after seeding got 8s. a bushel for it. In Western Australia farmers having wheat to sell after seeding, and having wheat to sell before seeding, only got 6s. 9d. a bushel for it. Our farmers are being charged, by the action of the Commission to the extent of 1s. 3d. per bushel. No doubt the defence will be offered that the action of the Commission was in the interests of the consumer, but whilst wheat was 8s. a bushel in Victoria and only 6s. 9d. in Western Australia, flour has been selling at £17 a ton in Melbourne and £19 a ton in Perth. There is no other State in the Commonwealth where the farmer has been compelled to take so low a price for his wheat; there is no other State in the Commonwealth where the consumer has had to pay so high a price for his flour, and I venture to add that there is no other State in the Commonwealth where the Government have lost so much on the deal. That is practically the work of this Commission. They may have gone round amongst the storekeepers and told a man that he must charge a 1s. less a dozen for certain jams, although he was losing more money on other articles which he was selling, but so far as their larger operations are concerned the result of the Commission has been that the farmer has got less for his wheat, the consumer has been paying

more for his bread, and the Government have lost more by their deal than any other State in the Commonwealth. I do not intend to say more in regard to the matter at the present time. I have nothing to say against the personnel of the Commission. The whole theory of price-fixing is wrong. The law of supply and demand not only fixes prices but regulates the consumption in a way which will work out for the good of the community. It will bring about economy where the supply is short, and if no price had been fixed in the State, not only would the farmer have got more for his wheat, and the consumer certainly would not have paid more for his bread, and instead of importing a quantity of wheat on which the Government will lose money, the importation would have been just such as were required to meet the emergencies. I believe there was need for importation, I think the Government would have acted wisely if they had imported earlier than they did or induced others to import. If they had fixed a fair price all the wheat available would have come to market and they would have known where they were. Unless the Minister can give us some reason for the re-enactment of this measure than that it has made the farmers' wheat cheaper than it should have been and has made the consumers' bread dearer, and that the Government have lost more money than any other State in the Commonwealth, then I shall oppose the measure.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [5.53]: I have been trying to find some reason for continuing this Act and I cannot think of any unless it is that the Government in the kindness of their heart do not like to throw the members of this Commission on the cold world. Their whole effect on the trade and industry of the country has been pernicious from the start to the finish. They have been disturbers of trade, and as for their protestations about saving the consumer, in 99 cases out of 100 their attempts had no more effect than the alighting of a fly in this room, for their latest effort is a fair sample of all they did.

They fixed a price for chaff. Chaff went up because every farmer in the country was determined to put in every acre of crop he could, and the horses had to be fed, and in most districts the drought had left no natural food. But after the rains came the grass grew, and in process of time the seeding was finished, and just when the horses were being turned out in the abundance of grass ending the demand for chaff, this precious Commission solemnly sat and declared that the price of chaff must come down—the hollowest farce ever perpetrated in this country. The thing was so ridiculous that even the boys on the farms laughed. The only reason I can see is the one I have suggested. There is no threatened interference with commerce, and commerce is the adjuster of all trade movements. Artificial remedies are useless, commerce is the adjuster. Let the people alone and they will work out their own salvation, but appoint a Commission like these men and they make an immensity of mischief and nobody knows where he is. Not one of the buyers of wheat knows, as the hon. Mr. Colebatch has said, what he has to pay. How would it be if the Government got up a banquet to Mr. Bath and Mr. Rae—Mr. Simpson has work to fall back on—and presented each one with a teapot and said, “Go to some honest industry.” It is not so long ago that Mr. Bath retired, with a good deal of ostentation from the Government, to go to his farm. I predicted that before a month had passed he would be back in some Government billet, and if ever there was a farcical appointment it was that of Mr. Bath to control trade in war time. As to Mr. Rae, he means well but he has one of those restless brains that can never have peace or let anyone else have peace. The whole Commission is an incubus on the industry of the country, and I hope the House will throw out the Bill; there is no need for it, there is no demand for it.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: And there is no excuse for it.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: There is no expected disturbance of commerce; all that is passed. The enemy has been held for

six months and shortly he will get his finishing blow. Why should the country bear an incubus of this description; wipe it out straight.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.57]: I rise to oppose the second reading of this Bill, and if I had not thought out any arguments myself, the speech delivered by Mr. Colebatch was sufficient in itself to justify anyone in rising to oppose the second reading. The extravagant statement that the price of wheat has not yet been fixed came as a shock to myself, as I believe it did to a number of members of this House. We know the Commission for the control of trade fixed the buying price but did not fix the selling price. I was under the impression that this Commission was brought into existence as much on account of the drought as on account of the war. I was under the impression at the time that the Commission were going to control the prices of foodstuffs and that the drought had more to do with the control of prices than perhaps the war had, and as subsequent events proved it had more effect on the prices than the war actually did. My difficulty to-day, especially from the producing standpoint, is not the question of keeping down prices but how they are going to be kept up, especially foodstuffs which are produced in this country, and upon which the agricultural industry principally depends for its existence. Under normal conditions this State could not afford to throw away £4,000 or £5,000 in order to keep a Commission such as this going. But under the stringent financial conditions existing to-day there is no justification whatever for the continuance of the Commission and the expenditure of a huge sum of money to enable them to proceed with their labours after the fashion in which they have discharged them. The present position is that there are more traders than there is trade. Trade is diminishing throughout the country, owing to the scarcity of money and other things contingent thereon, while the same number of traders continue in existence. One has only to travel through the country to realise the huge number of trade representatives

passing through every town and every hamlet in the endeavour to sell their wares in competition with other representatives, whereby a fair deal is ensured for all parties concerned. Certainly there is a sufficiency of trade representatives catering for the diminished business, and that fact in itself assures protection for the consumer. We have also to remember that in commerce especially everything is controlled by the law of supply and demand. When supplies are limited, prices will go up. When supplies are plentiful, prices will come down irrespective of the continuance or discontinuance of the Commission. If supply is likely to be limited, and the Commission fix a price that is not payable to the importer, he does not import at all, with the result that the scarcity is made even more intense, and that there is only one logical result, namely, a rise in prices. Commissions of this kind which have been set up throughout Australia have done more harm than anything else as regards providing the general public with their requirements. So long as the present Government or any other Government continue to dabble in affairs which are justly the business of the merchants, we can expect nothing but that trade will be demoralised. Let us take the question of butter, for instance. Let hon. members consider the price the public had to pay for butter as the result of the action of one of the Commonwealth commissions. The Commonwealth commission decided that 1s. 7d. per lb., I think, should be the price of butter in New South Wales—no more, no less.

Member: It was the State of New South Wales decided that.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: A deputation from the dairying industry waited on the Government and proved conclusively that butter could not be produced at less than 1s. 9d. per lb. The Government replied, "One shilling and seven pence is the price we have fixed, and that is the price you are going to get." The result was that the dairy farmers sold their cows or turned them out, and that New South Wales was practically left without butter. Then the New South Wales Government proceeded to import

thousands and thousands of cases of butter from America, at a cost of tens of thousands of pounds. The New South Wales Government prevented butter from being sold in that State at 1s. 9d. and went to America to buy something called butter to be sold at about 2s. 3d. per lb. The result is that New South Wales to-day is landed with tens of thousands of pounds worth of butter, while no customer is prepared to pay the price the Government ask. Further, we have an instance of the Commonwealth Government, assisted by the State Governments, dabbling in the freight market, for which dabbling the producers will have to pay. The Commonwealth Government and the producers of Western Australia combined in order to squeeze freights down. The producers agreed that they would not compete with one another in the matter of freight for wheat for export. What did the ship owners do? The only logical thing they could do. They combined to fight the producers. Individual ship owners three or four months ago were prepared to accept 60s. per ton. They are now in a combine that wants 90s. per ton, and the result is that the producers have to pay the higher rate. If we in Australia, led by the Commonwealth and supported by the producers, set out to combine not to pay more than a given sum, and not to enter into competition with one another, the only logical result is that the shipping companies combine and say, "We will not quote the individual; we will quote this combine, and that only at a higher price." I mention this in order to illustrate what is likely to happen from interference of men who do not understand the business—men who ought to be running the country, and running it properly, and leaving the merchant to do his part of the business. I claim that if the question of supplies had been left alone, the merchants would be competing against one another and the public would be getting a fair deal. But the merchants found themselves in this position. Immediately they completed their arrangements to get bed-rock quotations for goods from all parts of the world, and immediately they had

arranged freight, insurance, and so forth, there was a possibility that on the arrival of the goods in Western Australia the Government were likely to step in, saying, "There is a chance of profit here, and so we will take these goods over." The result was that the merchants, as Mr. Colebatch has said, dealt in tins of jam and such like articles and left the larger items to be catered for by the Government. I understand that one wheat merchant did arrange for a shipment of wheat.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch: It went to the bottom.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes; but I understand his charter particularly contained a provision that when the vessel arrived in Western Australia he could divert it to any other port he chose. That fact in itself shows that the merchant, when he started out to provide Western Australia with wheat and flour, was in fear that when he got the cargo here, after all his labour and trouble and expense, the Government might step in and take the cargo from him. That was the reason for his inserting that proviso. He wished to be able to divert the cargo to some other place, where he would receive fairer treatment. Thus the Government by their interference have put the merchants on the horns of a dilemma. The merchants think that in the circumstances it is better to leave the business alone. What did the Government do in connection with their imports of bran, pollard, maize, and so forth? I have been trying to find out in this House, and hon. members of another place have been trying to find out; but no information at all can be obtained on the subject. I asked six simple questions regarding the importation of huge quantities of bran, pollard, and maize. I got what purported to be replies, but were not replies, to my questions. I may not be quite correct in some of my statements while dealing with this subject, but for this I shall not be to blame. I can only tell the House what I honestly believe to be the truth, and if some of my statements are slightly incorrect the fault will be entirely with the leader of the House, because I have

asked for information on the subject and have not been able to obtain it. So far as I can ascertain, ships were chartered to bring huge quantities of bran, maize, and pollard to the port of Fremantle. I know nothing about importations of wheat. I am told—and I make the statement with all due diffidence, but believing it to be true—that the loss on the transactions in bran, maize, and pollard represents something between £40,000 and £60,000. Let hon. members analyse the manner in which the business has been done, and they will not feel surprised at such a result. Had the Colonial Secretary replied to my questions as he might have done, we would have had definite information; but so far as I can judge the loss amounts to between £40,000 and £60,000. That is the result of the handling of the produce because it was handled by the Government or one of their boards, instead of being handled by the merchants of this State, who know their business. I think we all admit that the Government do not know their business, but the most unfortunate part of it is that they do not know enough to know that they do not know. So they blunder on and make huge losses. I am told on the best of authority—and I have informed the Colonial Secretary that he can have the information if he so desires it—that a settler ordered 10 bags of maize from one of the Government boards, and was sent a truck of bran; whereupon he wrote to say that he did not want bran, but wanted 10 bags of maize. The board wrote back asking the settler whether he could sell the bran. He replied "Yes, if you fix a reasonable price." The board fixed a price, and the settler sold the bran, distributed it, and then sent along a schedule showing the purchasers and amounts due by them. He naturally expected the Government to collect the money from the buyers, but what happened next was that the board sent to the individual who originally ordered the 10 bags of maize a cheque for the whole amount of the bran. That is the way the Government conduct their business.

The Colonial Secretary: Can the hon. member furnish the name?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: As I told the Minister weeks ago, I will give the information and put him on the track. I am told further, also on the best authority, that the maize, pollard, and bran imported by the Government has been distributed all over the country to merchants and farmers, and that about the only thing the Government have in order to prove delivery is the receipt at the point of distribution; or that was all they had until about a fortnight ago. The accounts which have been opened number anything from 3,000 to 5,000, and yet not a ledger has been opened. Hence the difficulty in arriving at the true position of affairs. Can any hon. member with a knowledge of business imagine the distribution of produce from one end of the country to the other with no account, no ledger, and no record other than the receipt notes at the point of dispatch?

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: When the House adjourned I was dealing with the result of the Government's usurping the functions of legitimate traders in undertaking to do, through these boards, what business people should have been left to do themselves. In connection with the importation of food stuffs I referred to, there are two or three other matters I would like to mention when dealing with the possibilities of loss. The whole question of importation is so surrounded with difficulties that one is at a distinct disadvantage because of not being able to get information. One is justly entitled to ascertain what a particular line, say maize, bran, or pollard, has cost. If we had that information we could arrive at some definite conclusion, but we cannot secure it. I know of a sale being effected, immediately after one of the shipments arrived, of a big quantity of maize, damaged, certainly. It was sold at £1 per ton. The purchaser paid £1 per ton and gave his cheque before getting de-

livery of the maize. Subsequently he received an account, presumably at cost, for £11 10s. per ton, running into hundreds of pounds. He returned the account and explained that he had already paid for it at the rate of £1 per ton.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Did he get the maize?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes. We can therefore assume that the cost of this maize was somewhere in the vicinity of £11 10s. per ton. I think it will be found that the merchants undertook to supply the Government with maize at something like £8 10s. per ton; but the Government, being under the impression that the merchants in doing the business were likely to make some small profit, decided that they would do the business themselves and import the maize, with the result, I am told, that the maize they could have bought from the merchants at £8 10s. cost them something like £11 10s. It must have been approximately this figure or they would not have attempted to make that charge. The danger, I fear, is that these huge losses I referred to earlier will be covered up and handed on to the unfortunate settler. According to the reply given by the Minister, we know that the total importations reached a value of £134,000, and from the same source we gathered that a crushing plant was put down at a cost of £702 8s. 2d. One crusher was subsequently sold for £75 and for another, still on hand, they ask £50. Therefore, on the crushing plant alone they have lost some £600. I propose to show how those losses and others can be transferred to the settler. We start out with a total importation value of £134,000. The consignments have been cleared up by auction and scores of tons which cost £11 have been sold at £3 10s., one lot, as I have shown, being sold at £1. The Government in arriving at the cost will probably take up this position: They can take the total cost and subtract the net sales in the clearing up as sold by auction, and they can debit the settler with the difference; not with the cost of the maize, but

the difference between the actual sales at auction and the original purchase, and instead of supplying the settler at the laid-down cost they can add all those losses to that cost and so cover up the losses.

Hon. C. Sommers: It is nice for the settler.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Everything points to the fact that it is going to be done.

Hon. H. Carson: They have already been billed at £11.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Some have been notified that their applications for seed and fodder cannot be received; but prior to receiving that notification they have received and planted the stuff.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Or other stuff which they did not order.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: After getting the fodder and seed they have received a notification that their application for it cannot be entertained, notwithstanding that they have already received the stuff and used it. The chances are that application will never be made to those people for payment. I am giving these illustrations to show what happens when a board usurps the functions of legitimate traders. To point out that there is something underlying this withholding of prices from the settler, I may say that I know of a gentleman carrying on a farm in this State for a very wealthy man resident in another State, and he has told me with his own lips that he obtained supplies from the Government early in this year, that he came down to Perth in March last and made application for his account and spent a considerable time in trying to induce somebody, anybody, to accept the money, but could not get anybody to tell him what he owed. He finished up by ordering another supply. That order was executed, and from that day to this he has never been asked for the payment for either order. He has plenty of money behind him, yet he cannot get anyone to accept it. Even the men who bought the stuff at auction at Fremantle have come to Perth and tried to get someone to accept

their payment money, but nobody could tell them what they owed. In some few instances they have been able to induce one authority or another to accept payment. I am prepared to produce a Fremantle citizen who came up here to pay for six bags of crushed maize, bought at public auction at Fremantle. He told me himself that he went to some office here where there were clerks in all directions—

The Colonial Secretary: How can we investigate general charges of that kind?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I told the hon. member on the Address-in-reply that the Government can have the information from me. I am prepared to assist him. I offered to help him in the matter, but the hon. member treated the thing with contempt and made no further inquiries; therefore it is not my duty to chase around after him. If the Government will not follow up these things hon. members cannot be blamed. I have told the Minister before, and I tell him again now, that I regard it as my duty to assist him. But when I come down to the House and ask legitimate questions and am put off with evasive answers, the hon. member has nothing to complain of if I do not run after him with information. On the question of wheat: For some idiotic reason the whole of the seed wheat supply was concentrated at Northam and distributed from there. It was nothing unusual for a man at Northampton having a surplus and being willing to supply his neighbours, to be told "That is our business, not yours. We will distribute this." And the next thing the man at Northampton knew was that the wheat for his neighbours was arriving from Northam, notwithstanding that he had surplus wheat which had been seized by the Government. All these charges, I presume, will be ultimately booked up against the unfortunate settler and this, perhaps, in a measure accounts for the neglect on the part of the Government to tell the settlers what they propose to charge them for the wheat and other commodities they have had.

These statements I make to illustrate what the Government experience when they usurp the functions of legitimate traders. Again, what has this Commission been doing for months past? Two or three months ago we heard that oatmeal had been reduced £2 a ton, while split peas had been reduced in a somewhat similar ratio. If that is all we are getting for £5,000 a year I think hon. members are entitled to have something more. Subsequently the Commissioners found that there was practically nothing more for them to do. In these circumstances it might be asked if it was a fair thing for them to interfere with the legitimate traders in the conduct of their business. The Commissioners arrived at the conclusion that they had a perfect right to do this. They have been very quiet for some time. But I cannot understand the sudden resurrection of the Commission at the eleventh hour. The Bill which brought them into existence expires the day after to-morrow. One Commissioner, we were told, has gone to Meekatharra, while the others have gone off somewhere else. Where is the necessity to go to Meekatharra to inquire into what prices should be fixed there? There was a necessity 12 months ago, perhaps. The whole of the Meekatharra supplies come through Fremantle, and if there is an increase at that port there is a corresponding increase in cost to the people of Meekatharra, the merchants and storekeepers at that place. All the Commission have to do at this end is to fix the increased price upon that which they have previously agreed to fix.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: They could telegraph.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The whole thing can be manipulated through one office in Perth, and all unnecessary expense could be saved. I suggest to the Minister that the man to control this at the present stage is the Government Storekeeper. Let them vest the Government Storekeeper with power to deal with any case of imposition which might arise, and if the merchant is victimising the general public or the storekeeper is doing so—I do not believe this would hap-

pen because competition is so keen—let the Government vest the Government Storekeeper with the necessary power to deal with any question which may arise and abolish the Commission whose members are gadding about the country spending money and giving us nothing in return. This is a reasonable request to prefer to the Government which preach economy and practices extravagance. They preach economy, shut up the Government offices on Saturday mornings in order to bring about some economy, and the amount saved out from the pockets of the civil servants is being frittered away by men who should never have been appointed to the positions which they hold and for which appointment there was no justification. I believe in the proposal to vest additional authority in the Government Storekeeper. A Minister has stated, "Let the Bill go through, the Commission can be dealt with on the Estimates." This took place in another place. I suggest to the House that this is a time when we should deal with the subject. There is no hope of dealing with it on the Estimates. This is the time when this House should exercise its rights and oppose the passing of this Bill. I urge upon hon. members to oppose the second reading. I should also like to announce, so far as I am concerned, that I intend to divide the House on the question if necessary.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.48]: If the Minister loses the Bill—and it seems to be promised—I think he has only himself to thank by coming down and suspending the Standing Orders and rushing the thing through in a couple of days. I read this Bill in conjunction with two other Bills, the Industries Assistance Bill and the Grain and Foodstuffs Bill. I ask hon. members, who take upon themselves the responsibility of rejecting the Bill on the second reading, to state how it is going to affect the position of affairs, so far as the Industries Assistance Bill and the Grain and Foodstuffs Bill are concerned.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: It is a separate matter altogether.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I am sure that anyone who has followed these questions closely will admit that the Control of Trade in War Time and the Grain and Foodstuffs Bill and the Industries Assistance Bill have all got to be read together. They were passed unanimously by Parliament, not only to deal with the drought but the war. But hearing hon. members speaking this afternoon one would almost assume that the war was finished. I think the country and outside observers of our proceedings during the last few weeks will re-echo the comment which I noticed in the *London Times* recently. This is how the position strikes the outsider. I am speaking of this apparent feeling on the part of hon. members that the war is practically over, and that we can resort to our ordinary work again. The writer of this article is dealing with the Commonwealth, but I think what he says applies even more to the States.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Who is the writer?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The leader writer of the *London Times*. I think he does represent some public opinion.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: The Yellow Press.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I ask one of our leading journalists in our Chamber to note that down. The *London Times* represents the Yellow Press. I do not want to waste time over the discussion on that point. It is interesting to note it, however. Here is one of our most eloquent journalists in the House telling us that the *London Times* represents the Yellow Press. I will read him some of it. Perhaps it will be put into the columns of our more respectable Press. The article in question is as follows:—

We watch with some concern the course which affairs are taking in the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia. . . . But we may be permitted to observe that to read its recent debates in the official record of its proceedings which has just reached us is to experience the feeling of having stepped into another world. . . . We turn to read the debates of its central Parliament. Here all is controversy; violent, partisan, remote altogether as it seems to

us, from the high vision that sent men—clear-sighed and joyful and unafraid—to their death on the dreadful beaches of Gallipoli. The game of party politics goes on. We have no concern with that, but feel impelled to record our opinion that there is something particularly grim about the printed records of such a game, played in these days with so complete an apparent forgetfulness of what is happening in the world outside. . . . The stream of abuse, innuendo, recrimination which has already flooded the House of Representatives will flow over the whole of Australia. And, meanwhile, in the trenches of Gallipoli, Australians, forgetting all these dusty conflicts of a momentary strife, will be fighting side by side the great fight for freedom under an alien sky. The contrast, we can only suppose, does not seem so strange to the leaders of Australia as it does to us. It is for them to judge. But is it worth while?

After listening to the debates this afternoon I would presume to say that I am voicing the Yellow Press of the Empire. But I would not presume to criticise other members of the Press. It makes one wonder, however, whether there is not some justification for the criticism of the outsider. There is no one more anxious than I am to see the Government turned out lock, stock and barrel. At the same time I pledged my word when the war broke out that I would not indulge, if I could prevent myself, in party innuendo, party recrimination and party debate.

Hon. J. Duffell: You have got out of control.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do not wish to be taken off the main line of my argument, which is that we cannot turn the Government out at the present time. They have the responsibility of conducting the affairs of this country. I do not wish to presume to dictate to the hon. member or to anybody, but I want to put before the House how matters strike me at a time like this. Is it worth while just now to deal with this criticism and recrimination and indulge in it if we cannot turn the Government out of office?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Is it worth while being here?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Fancy that hon. member having the audacity on a debate of this kind to interrupt me. He represents the Country party—

The PRESIDENT: I must ask the hon. member to aid me in keeping order by not replying to these disorderly interjections.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I beg your pardon, Sir. It is a very pertinent interjection, and a very pertinent reply I could make to it.

The PRESIDENT: Every interjection is disorderly.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I will not refer to the interjection at all. I am referring to the speech which was delivered by the hon. member last session. In my own mind I group these three Bills together. That hon. member was the most enthusiastic supporter of the Grain and Food-stuffs Bill and the Industries Assistance Bill and the House accepted them I believe without a division. They were accepted practically by both Houses of Parliament but here this Bill comes, not only supported by the Government—and that surely should appeal to some of us at a time like this, for after all they are the Government of the country, whether we like it or not; I did not put them here, and I should be very glad to see them removed from their responsible position, but endorsed by the leader of the Opposition in another place. I refuse to take the responsibility of voting against a measure of this kind at this particular juncture. I have protested most continuously against legislation of his character, as far as the drought is concerned, but as far as the war is concerned, I think my hon. friend Mr. Colebatch will be the first to admit that this law, as he calls it, of supply and demand—it is a law operating in certain instances—in a time of war goes by the board, temporarily it may be, but still it goes by the board. If it is necessary, owing to the war, that these powers should be exercised I am quite sure my hon. friend will, whether he is in position of responsibility on the Gov-

ernment benches or not, admit that in a time of war it is necessary to exercise powers suspending this law of supply and demand. When we come to the farmers and the Country party wishing to suspend the laws of supply and demand in order that they should be in a position to put money in their pockets, that indeed is a very different matter. This is a matter on which I protested against most strongly last session, and will continue to protest against it. If the leader of the House loses the division on the Bill he has only himself to thank, by trying to hurry the matter through and preventing us from tracing through all its ramifications the connection between this Bill and other Bills of a similar nature. I have a pretty clear recollection of what occurred last session. These protests are made by hon. members now, excluding the question of war, about the foolishness of suspending the ordinary commercial operations, but I say they themselves are to a large extent responsible after what occurred last session and during the previous session. Do we put the Bill through all stages to-night?

The Colonial Secretary: No.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Then we have 24 hours to consider it. I have got my time fully occupied. The Colonial Secretary knows perfectly well from the public interest and the public agitation that there are in the liquor Bill and from the interest and public agitation which there are in the Health Bill, and over the deliberations of the Select Committee for the control of racing, while I myself am interested in one or two Road Act Amendment Bills which I want to look into, and which must be fairly considered, that when he tries to rush this thing through in a couple of days he must expect to lose the Bill. I certainly think my hon. friend is well justified in protesting against the bringing down of this Bill and rushing it through in this hurry. I think it is required of members of this House not only to follow this thing up and carefully examine it, but to do so in order that they may put their views in such a way as to carry some little meaning, if not conviction, to hon. members,

I am under the impression that we are not being given time to thoroughly work it out. I am under the impression, though I am not certain, that I could convince hon. members that we are likely to stultify ourselves if we refuse to pass the second reading of this measure. I am not in a position at the moment to show that absolutely; but I can make this statement that the Bill comes before this Chamber introduced by the Government and supported by the leader of the Opposition in another place, and also by one of our old friends and colleagues, Mr. Connolly—and all who sat here with Mr. Connolly may be assured that if he and the Government agree as to the Bill, there must be something to be said in favour of it. Under those circumstances I am not prepared to take the responsibility of voting for the rejection of this Bill, and I think it is much to be regretted that the Minister would not, or could not, give us a little more time for its consideration.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan) [8.2]: I am able to agree with at least one point in the speech delivered by the hon. Mr. Sanderson, and that is in connection with the method in which this measure has been brought before the House. It is, I think, a big commentary on the Government that they should have brought down immediately before this re-enactment of the Control of Trade in War Time another Bill the object of which is to wipe out one of the three allied Acts we have now on the statute-book, showing that they pay more attention to the wiping out of that Act than they do to the re-enactment of this Bill. I do not think we would stultify ourselves by voting against the second reading. Rather do I think we should find ourselves in that position if we voted to put it again on the statute-book. It seems to me that the time is most opportune. We have an opportunity now after a twelve months' trial of the operation of these three Bills. It has been conclusively pointed out by various hon. members, and has been concisely put by the hon. Mr. Colebatch, that the twelve months operation of these three Acts have resulted, firstly in dearer food, secondly

in less profit to the farmers, and thirdly in the greatest possible loss to the Government. By re-enacting a measure which has had that result after twelve months' operation, we would, I think, indeed be stultifying ourselves. I do not understand the allusion by the hon. Mr. Sanderson to turning out the Government. Personally I have no wish to turn the Government out. Speaking for myself I should be sorry to see any other hon. member than my hon. friend opposite in that position which he has in a difficult time occupied with satisfaction to the House, and a great deal of credit to himself. I am extremely sorry for him in the fight that he has had to put up against overwhelming odds not only of numbers but of reason. I have not the slightest hesitation in voting against the second reading of the Bill, because I am firmly of the opinion that the House made a bad bargain when they agreed to the passing of this Act and they will be now putting themselves right with their consciences and right with Parliament if they pass it out.

Hon. F. CONNOR (North) [8.7]: I shall oppose the second reading of this Bill on principle. It is the outcome of a policy which made its advent with a movement to interfere with private enterprise opening up and developing this country. In my humble opinion everything which the Government has done in this direction has been diametrically opposed to the best interests of the State itself. I want to be emphatic on that. I would like to draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the early days of the phase of this question when there was a cry raised by the Government as a party cry, a political cry, a "God help us" cry—the cry against what was known as the meat ring. The advent to this State of the people accused of being the meat ring was the occasion upon which has been hung the whole of this class of legislation, which has since advanced by leaps and bounds until we now have boards and boards and boards. I have been a long time in this country and in my opinion that policy has been the means of stopping and deteriorating the progress of this country generally. I

have no hesitation in saying that and I want to put the point clearly. I do not intend speaking at length on this measure but what I have to say I want to say clearly and to the point. The beginning of the policy which we are discussing to-night was the appointment by the Government of people to control private enterprise in this State; and the beginning of that policy was directed against the meat ring. I have listened in this House to debates on this question; I have listened to my hon. friend the leader of the House making the most extraordinary statements in this connection, bolstering up this policy which has developed to the point we are discussing here to-night. That policy was to take away the control of the development of the State from those who understood it and place it in the hands of people who do not, and who could not, understand it as well as those who established the industries. That is the question we are discussing now, and that is the whole present policy of the State. If this legislation is to be continued, if the Government of this State are to take into their own control all the big industries of the State into their own hands, what is going to happen? Is it going to result to the advantage of the State? I hold it is not. It is not necessary to refer specifically to steamers, to saw-mills, to ferries, to tramways, or to the hundred and one other things which I cannot enumerate from memory. We are discussing all of them now in the form of an apparently innocent Bill to perpetuate a board which the Government appointed; and although we are only discussing the appointment of that board there is a big question of principle before the House and before the country to-day. That principle is whether Parliament and the country are determined to continue the policy of interference with private enterprise for all time. The appointment of this board may not have done much harm. I am not speaking from that standpoint. What I want hon. members to understand is that if that principle is to be perpetuated the industries of this country will be crippled, capital and the people who are prepared

to invest capital will be driven out of the country. I speak feelingly because owing to the effect of the legislation to which I am now referring it is a toss up whether or not I myself shall leave the country. I want to bring this point home to the Government. It is worth bringing home to the House and to Parliament generally, that the effect of this policy for the past two or three years has been entirely opposed to the best interests of the State, inasmuch as it has done considerable injury to and interfered with the operation of our industries by the people who are best capable of carrying on their development. I will not say that the Bill is no good, because I do not know enough about it; but I am speaking on the basic principle that we must not unduly interfere with the enterprises of the country. That is the question before this House and that is the principal reason why I am speaking to this Bill. After all, what does this Bill do? It appoints three or four gentlemen at fat salaries who may or may not be capable of understanding what it is they have to decide upon to do. I rose merely to say that the policy of the Government which is an important part of this Bill is a wrong one. It would be better to allow the people themselves to carry out the task of developing the commercial interests of the country than to allow a lot of political hooligans who do not know what they are talking about to come in and take charge and destroy the interests of the producer, the consumer and the public generally of this country.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [8.15]: This measure, like many others introduced this session, has been used as a peg on which to hang a good deal of abuse of the present Government and their administration. I remember when the measure was first enacted there appeared to be a general impression that it was necessary, and almost immediately after it became law the consensus of opinion was that it had already justified its existence, that it had had a very salutary effect on the traders of the State. I am aware that in Western Australia and other States there are many traders

who do not require a drastic law of this description to regulate their business, and that it is never the intention of the law to interfere with anyone who carries on business in a legitimate manner. It is for the purpose rather of regulating those who will use the necessities of the people for their own benefit. Mr. Holmes referred to the law of supply and demand. After what the hon. member said, I feel inclined to be slightly suspicious of that law. I am not sure whether there is not some other influence or law at work to regulate the law of supply and demand. If, as the hon. member says, it is absolutely inadvisable to interfere in any way with the law of supply and demand, why did he give us such an instance as that in connection with the shipping trade? He told us that, although conditions have not been altered, yet owing to the interference of the Federal and State Governments the shipping people have put up the freights from 60s. to 90s. per ton. I presume the same law of supply and demand is in existence, but it appears to me that there has been some interference with that law when, without any other good reason except that they had the power to do it, those people put up the price from 60s. to 90s. If this sort of thing is possible, I am not sure that we, who are responsible to the people, are justified in simply sitting back and letting things take their course. This measure, when first introduced, was an honest attempt to protect the general community. I presume hon. members are interested in the welfare of the community as well as in that of the traders who will be affected by the Bill. If the interests of the community demand that some protection should be given them, even although instances can be quoted where perhaps it comes hard on the trader the fact remains that the experience of the last 12 months has shown that there are times when it is necessary that the general community should be protected. I have noted also that, instead of the opposition being aimed at the Bill itself, it is aimed at the Commission or at certain members of that Commission. If all, or even part, of what has been said against the Com-

missioners is true, then hon. members will be quite justified in demanding that new Commissioners be appointed; but it is not an argument against the principle of the Bill to say that it has been badly administered. Personally, I am quite aware that this particular measure, or rather the Commission which have been administering it, are not very popular in Western Australia. Whatever good the Commission has done has not been given a great deal of publicity. I presume that they have done some good. In fact, it was admitted quite early in their career that the Commission had had a very good effect in regard to the fixing of prices. At the same time, I maintain that the position as it was 12 months ago is to a large extent unaltered to-day, and if there was need a year ago to have this measure, there is equal need now for its continuance. I fail to see how anyone who supported it on that occasion can now speak bitterly against it, more especially as their main objection is to the manner in which it has been administered and not to the Bill itself. I am not going to do any special pleading for the re-enactment of the measure. At the same time I wish those who have spoken against it to remember that, if they refuse to agree to the continuance of the Act, and effects occur which perhaps they did not foresee, then the responsibility will be on them. At the present time, if it is necessary to put it into operation, we have the machinery. On the other hand, if the Act is not re-enacted and circumstances arise making it desirable to have this power, the trouble will be that we will not be in a position to interfere with the course of trade, even if it appears necessary. Emergency measures in regard to other matters have been considered necessary. They have been re-enacted, although they gave the Government very drastic powers which, in some instances, have not been used. Exception was not taken to their being re-enacted. It is only when we come to this measure, affecting the great majority of the people, that exception is taken. An attempt has been made to belittle the work done by the Commission.

I have not had time to look up facts and figures in connection with their work. At the same time, the cases quoted by hon. members do not in any way give an impression of the large amount of important work done by the Commission. It is all very well to say that in respect of large matters the Commission have failed. As Mr. Colebatch pointed out, those matters had nothing to do with this measure. They were matters which could have been and would have been attended to independently of this measure. To say that the Commission were successful in regulating the price of jam and so forth, but that when it came to larger measures they failed, is very misleading. This is a measure which was intended to regulate the price of foodstuffs more particularly, and it does not do away with the importance of the Bill to refer to it as regulating the price of jam. If the regulation of the foodstuffs of the people is a small question, I want to know what a large question is. Personally I consider the Bill deals with a most important problem, one vitally affecting the interests of every man, woman, and child in the State. and those who take the responsibility of saying that it shall not be re-enacted cannot relieve themselves of their full responsibilities by saying it is a twopenny-halfpenny measure. I support the measure for the same reason that Mr. Connor opposes it, namely on principle.

Hon. F. Connor: Not the same principle.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: It is the interpretation some people put upon the word. It is generally a question of interest, and I can see that in this opposition the interests of the Chamber of Commerce and a great many other interests which hon. members do really represent have over-balanced them and, in consequence, hon. members have got clean off the track in regard to those they should represent. Instead of their opposing this as a matter of principle, my impression is that they are opposing it on a question of interests, the interests of those with whom they are particularly associated. In conclusion, let me again repeat that those who refuse to sup-

port the re-enactment of the measure take upon themselves the responsibility of saying that, although we are living in abnormal times, there is no need for the Government to interfere with the usual course of affairs in connection with the trade of the State. I wish to enter my protest against this opposition. In my opinion, it is absolutely necessary that the measure should be re-enacted, for it is as necessary to-day and during the continuance of the war as it was when first enacted.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE (South-West [8.26]: The evidence against the continuance of this Commission is abundant. If ever there was a measure unjustly claimed to be a party question it is this; because it is easy to recollect that there was not one dissentient voice against the original Bill. If this is a party question, I should like to know what is not a question of party. We are all responsible for the passing of the existing Act. What we have to ask ourselves is, have the Commissioners justified their existence? No one will dispute that they have disorganised trade. Take, for instance, the question of wheat. The Commission brought about such a position that the Government had to send away for wheat themselves, and I am satisfied that if the position had been left to the general dealers this action would not have been necessary. There are altogether too many Commissions in existence, and, in consequence, they have not enough work to do. In asking whether this particular Commission have justified their existence let us take for instance some of the principal foodstuffs. Did they keep down the price of wheat? No one will deny that they fixed the price of wheat when it was fetching over 5s. Is it not a fact that the members of the Commission themselves went round looking for wheat which they thought was being held? I do not want to say anything about them personally, further than to show that they were quite incompetent for their task. They were offering a certain price for wheat, and it mounted up until eventually they had to go to business men for assistance in

the matter. At the sales yard, notwithstanding the existence of this Commission, whose object was to keep down the price of the necessities of life, bran, pollard, and maize, especially maize, were sold over and over again by auction, the price mounting up and up. What were the Commission doing at the time that they should have allowed that state of affairs? Is that a mess, or is it not? There was bran, pollard, maize, wheat, and there was also the question of butter. Did they keep down the price of this? How can it be suggested that they did any good in that direction? Why did not they give attention to the necessities of the settlers and attempt to keep down the price of galvanised iron and similar things? The prices mounted up in spite of them. I say advisedly they left out the question of the law of supply and demand, and I claim that there must be a buyer before there can be a seller. Have these men justified their existence, apart from the personal point of view altogether? My emphatic opinion is that they have not in any way done so. I know that this is so from the experience of one member of the Commission who went to a store down South and asked what they were selling jams and other things at. Whether he knew the value of the goods or not I do not know, but they said "We will let it rest at that, and we will fix the price." It was not a party question when it was before the House. It was simply a measure drawn up for the control of trade, and to keep prices down to a reasonable measure for the consumer. It was an experimental measure. Have the members of the Commission kept down these prices? I think the answer must be in the negative. There were no big stocks in the State at that time. What has happened in regard to shipping? Freights have gone up in spite of them. Why did they not give us cheaper freights and all that sort of thing? They have just about as much power to control that as they have to control the continuous rains we have had recently. Having voted for the Bill as

experimental legislation, I feel it my duty to vote against this measure.

Hon. E. McLARTY (South-West) [8.33]: It is not my intention to attack the personnel of the Commission. I think its members are perhaps as good as any others who could have been selected, and that they have done their best according to their lights. The question I wish to deal with is as to whether such a board is necessary at all, and whether, having had that experience for the past year, it is advisable to re-enact this measure. The members of this board are just about as handsomely paid as any other officials in the State. When we realise that there are three members of the board, each receiving £750 a year, it seems to me that it is altogether too much expense for the requirements of the situation. I ask why they should be paid a sum of £2,250 in order to keep this board in existence. I am quite aware that a great many complaints have been made against the action of the Commission in the past. I fully realise that they had considerable difficulties to contend with, and that the applications have been so numerous that some mistakes at all events are pardonable. We cannot expect that a matter of such gigantic proportions as they have to deal with will be run without some little faults being found. Apart from that, the conclusion I have arrived at is that the Commission is not required. I do not know any great benefits which have been derived from the Commission during the time it has been in existence. So far as regulating the prices of commodities is concerned, I think the public generally can take care of themselves. If any excessive prices are being charged we find keen competition in those particular lines of business. We find that the public will avoid the man who endeavours to extort from them, and they will go to another who sells at a reasonable price. There is a market value for everything, and, as has already been stated, the law of supply and demand will regulate prices to a great extent. I noticed a short time ago that the Commission reduced the price of milk to 5d. a quart. There was a hue and cry

amongst those concerned in the milk trade, who practically refused to supply at the price, and the Commission subsequently reconsidered the matter and put a more reasonable price on milk. To my mind the members of the board were not capable of judging the value of the cost of producing a great many of the goods with which they had to deal. I know something about the production of milk. I am quite sure that, taking the past 12 months and the excessively high price of fodder into consideration, the dairymen have not been getting along too well, and that the action of the Commission was not justified. I do not believe that if the Bill is not re-enacted and the services of the Commission are done away with that the country will suffer to any extent. I believe that trade will regulate itself, and I will therefore vote against the second reading of the Bill, not from any prejudice to the board, because, so far as I know these gentlemen, I have the greatest respect for them, and no doubt they have done their duty to the best of their ability, and I have no desire, as Mr. Millington has said, to reflect upon the Government. When the Bill was brought forward in Parliament last year members of this House readily gave their assent to it. I believed, as they did, that there was some necessity for it at the time. I think the necessity we have had in the past does not now exist, and that it has passed away. I think, too, we can very well dispense with the services of this Commission, which is costing the country £2,250 a year. It is no use approaching the Government just now in a matter of urgent requirements, and no use for the roads board in the State to ask for any relief. The roads throughout the whole country are impassable. They have never been in such a state of quagmire as they have been during this winter, on account of the increased traffic and the excessive and continuous rain we have had. The boards find it no use asking for help, for the Government cannot give it, even a paltry £100 that a board may require. But here we are asked to agree to the continuation of an expenditure of £2,250 for a purpose which I do not think is

necessary at all. I do not desire to labour the question. There is a good deal which might be said about the Bill, but I am at all events prepared to vote against the second reading.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [8.38]: I have no desire to detain the House at any length. When I have made up my mind to vote against any measure introduced by the Government, I owe to them and to those I represent, some explanation of my action. I am not going to refer in any shape or form to the actions of the Commissioners in the past, or take them to task, but simply to give two reasons why I am opposed to this measure. The first reason is that any interference to my mind between the producer on the one hand and the consumer on the other, should be eliminated for the benefit of those two parties, whether that interference be by the Commissioners, by brokers, or the middleman, or any other party does not matter at all. The mere fact of interference with the even intercourse of trade between the producer and the consumer adds to the cost of the commodity which is supplied, and takes from the profits of the producer, or is added to the cost paid by the consumer. Because of that, unless some special circumstances warrant it, to appoint a Commission to deal with these matters, we would be detrimental to the interests of those two parties. My second reason is that 12 months ago we had certain anticipations as to what might happen as a result of the war. We thought that it was possible that the war might not follow the lines which it has done, and we thought that possibly our enemies might have been more successful on the seas than they have been, and that their fleets on which they had spent so much pains for many years might not have been disposed of and would have become a menace to our shipping, and to the British trade throughout the world. Our experience, however, has shown that that is not so. The ships of our Empire are now secure on the high seas, and there is free intercourse of trade throughout the

world to-day. It is as free as ever, and as untrammelled as it was before the war. No doubt the amount of shipping on the seas has been reduced for commercial purposes, but its reduction does not affect any person in this community more than any other. The intercourse of trade is as free to one as it is to the other. The abnormal circumstances that we anticipated 12 months ago have, therefore, not been realised. Although our shipping may be restricted and limited to a certain extent, our trade is still open to the producer and consumer in different parts of the world to take advantage of those ships which exist. For these two reasons I am opposing this measure, and believe there is no necessity for the Commission to interfere with the free intercourse of trade because of any abnormal conditions existing to-day. We know that war is as a whole a matter of uncertainty. There may be an overflow at the points at which our Allies and ourselves are facing the enemy. If that overflow takes place, all the measures which this Parliament may place on the statute-book will not affect the position one iota. If trade is interfered with, and the overflow and our enemies' power affects the trade in Australia, we shall not be protected by a Commission, and the Commission will be absolutely useless in those circumstances. As it is, there has been no overflow in this way, and intercourse of trade is untrammelled, even as it was prior to the declaration of war. These are my reasons for voting against the second reading of this measure.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW (Metropolitan-Suburban) [S.43]: I would not like to give a silent vote on this question. At the outbreak of the war this Bill was enacted, I understand, unanimously by both Houses of Parliament. The condition of the atmosphere of this House has altered since then. I gather from the arguments of the hon. gentleman that the reason for the change is that our trade is no longer interfered with by the enemy. Our shipping is no longer menaced except possibly in the Channel or in the North Sea by

German submarines. I am one who, in normal times, deprecate most strongly any undue interference with trade. If this Bill was to continue, or any measure of the same kind was proposed during peace times, I would oppose it most strongly. I think the menace to our shipping trade has for the moment passed altogether. But the German fleet, although cooped up, may still be a menace. We do not know what preparations the Germans are making with their fleet. We do not know what fast cruisers they may be having built, and we do not know before the war is over what changes may take place in the range and in the power of German submarines. The menace which existed 12 months ago, although it cannot be so pressing, to my mind still exists. For that reason I shall certainly support this Bill. There is another reason why I think this Bill should be supported. I think perhaps in the Old country it would be as well if a measure of this kind were in force now. There is repeated friction in different trades; in the coal trade, for instance strikes have been going on, and allegations have been made as to undue profits on the part of the coal mine owners. Similar conditions might possibly prevail here if our shipping becomes interfered with. I do not apprehend that this Commission will have to put the powers which it possesses into force, but it is a good thing to have these powers in reserve, and for this reason I will support the Bill.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [S.45]: I rise to oppose the second reading of this Bill. As already stated when the measure was first brought down the prospects were very different from what they are at present. We little knew what we should have to go through or what feelings would permeate the community during the most trying times that have been passed through. I am sure that the quiet confidence which has permeated the community during the most trying time which the Empire is passing through was never anticipated, notwithstanding all the forces which have been arrayed against us. Yet to-day we are

able to say that we have not a shadow of doubt as to the ultimate issue of the present campaign. Notwithstanding that the German fleet is still bottled up, I have no hesitation whatever in saying that it will remain bottled up until we feel that the time has arrived to let it out. In those circumstances I realise that this board will be no longer necessary, that it would only be a waste of time and money to renew it. Consequently I shall oppose the passing of the second reading.

On motion by the Colonial Secretary debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Industries Assistance Act Amendment.

2, Marriage Act Amendment.

Received from the Legislative Assembly.

BILL—COTTESLOE BEACH RATES VALIDATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd September.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [8.50]: This Bill has been introduced for the purpose of rectifying technical errors which have occurred in the rate book of the Cottesloe Beach road board. As has already been pointed out by the Colonial Secretary, the form of rate book comprises two pages, with matter on both pages requiring the signature of the chairman of the roads board. This rate book is in a form supplied by the Government and it is only after all a technical error, which this Bill is intended to rectify, but the question has two phases, one of which is very important. Unless those errors be rectified by the passing of this measure, the Cottesloe Beach roads board will be deprived of the right of recovery of some hundreds of pounds worth of arrears of rates. In the minds of some people it is thought that the Bill aims at the recovery of rates owing by a few people. That is wrong. Arrears of rates are owing by a large number of

people who, unless this Bill be carried, will be able to shelter themselves behind a technical error that has been made by the chairman of the roads board in not signing both pages of the rate book instead of one only. This Bill is really only asking this House not to deprive the board of that power of recovery, and I do not think it is necessary to say anything further in its support. No principle is contained in the measure, which seeks only to give the Cottesloe Beach Roads Board the opportunity of collecting rates owing by those who are in arrears. In the circumstances there should be no objection to the passing of the Bill.

Hon. A. G. JENKINS (Metropolitan) [8.53]: We are told that the object of this Bill is to afford an opportunity for the collection of arrears of rates. There have been from time to time a number of Bills of this character placed on the statute-book. I tried to find out what we would be validating by the passing of this Bill. I asked the chairman of the roads board concerned and I am told that the information would be made available. I endeavoured to get the information from the Secretary of the roads board, still without success. I was given to understand that the amount involved was small indeed, but I have since been informed that the sum is £700. If the leader of the House assures me that the amount involved is £700 I will support the second reading of the Bill. But I do think that the House is entitled to know the amount in this measure.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [8.55]: I got into communication to-day with the secretary of the Cottesloe Beach roads board, and he informed me that the amount outstanding is about £700. He came to the House this evening with a list of persons who owe those rates, in order that I might, if I chose, submit the list to this Chamber. I told him that to do so was scarcely necessary. I did not want to look over the list in order to find out who owed money to the Cottesloe Beach roads board; and I can assure the House that the Secretary is quite prepared to prove that some £700 is owing to the

board which cannot be collected unless this Bill is passed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—SALE OF LIQUOR REGULATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 22nd September.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN (South-East) [8.56]: I do not desire to detain the House except to say that we have before us two courses in respect of legislation governing the sale of liquor either of which would be acceptable. There are two measures, one dealing with the hours during which liquor shall be sold and the other continuing the Government's power to suspend the sale of liquor. I think Mr. Kingsmill is right in keeping these Bills separate. If a majority of members agree, then the course would be when we go into Committee on the referendum Bill, if the Government agree to adopt the practical suggestion made by the Hon. Mr. Colebatch, instead of having a referendum which will be delayed for months and cost a lot of money, to put the responsibility for deciding this question on the shoulders of the legislature, and thus save the enormous expense of a referendum and the difficulties arising from inconsistent voting. This could be done in a Bill of a couple of clauses. Then the other Bill could be passed. I want hon. members to bear in mind, and I especially want the temperance people of this country to bear in mind, that when the Act of 1911 was passed there was a compact made regarding local option, that a compact was entered into with the liquor trade. I agree that compact does not bind the temperance people who repudiated it. But, I submit, it is binding on hon. members who voted for that compact. All subsequent transactions in connection with the liquor trade have been based on that 10 years' notice. Sellers and buyers of licensed houses and leases knew that in 1921 the people would have absol-

ute local option without any obligation of compensation; but they also knew that until 1921 the compact formally made by the Legislature existed. With myself and other hon. members who voted for the Act of 1911, the problem is this: how far does the war emergency justify interference with that compact? By a practically unanimous vote both Houses said that if disorder threatened the Government must be clothed with absolute power over licensed houses, to suspend licenses, either partially or absolutely. That, of course, is interference with that compact, but it was unanimously recognised as necessary to safety and good order in the country. The temperance advocates have without a doubt created a very strong public opinion that the war conditions demand that thrift and temperance should be specially assisted, and that to do it there must be a further interference with the liquor trade. There can be no doubt that the public have generally accepted that view of things. But it is equally beyond doubt that the great body of the public want to deal as leniently with the liquor trade during this period of time—notice as the welfare of the country will admit, and the public crusade put forward in plain language that eight to eight would meet the case, opening at eight o'clock, thus ending the pernicious practice of drinking before work. Everybody will admit that it is a pernicious practice that men should begin the day with liquor. The proposal was to fix the opening hour at eight o'clock in the morning and the closing hour at eight o'clock in the evening, after the hotel dinner hour is over, and those who have been accustomed to refreshment of that kind at dinner will have had it. I think the Government would have been wise if they had acted on that general result of the temperance people's education of the country and brought in a specific Bill fixing the hours of eight to eight during war time.

Hon. A. Sanderson: All over the State?

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Yes, during war time. I am not particular whether it is eight to eight or nine to nine. I think that is a matter for the wisdom of both

Houses of Parliament. In either case the Legislature will be giving the temperance people what they at first asked, or almost that, and what I know a very large proportion of the people in the trade are prepared to accept.

Hon. H. Millington: Then you are in the confidence of both parties.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I know that a very large proportion of the holders of licenses will be willing to accept nine to nine. The greater part of the really responsible men in the temperance ranks will also be willing to accept that. I have consulted a number of responsible men on both sides, and they have agreed to nine to nine, some of my temperance friends preferring eight to eight. The Bill provides that lessors, not only private lessors, but the Railway Department also, shall make to the licensees a concession proportionate to the lessened hours for selling liquor; but I am going to move an amendment which will go further, namely, that the Government should make a corresponding rebate in the licensing fees. I do not think anyone will suppose that those concessions, even including the concession in respect to the licensing fee, will at all meet the losses the license holder will have to submit to. It is only fair to recognise that this legislation, whether carried out as the Government propose, or as Mr. Colebatch has proposed, will impose considerable losses; in fact it would fail in its object if it did not do this. What is to be said to those license holders by men who believe in justice as well as in temperance? What I have said to them is this: "We are all losing heavily through the war conditions. There is not a man in the country with a going concern on his hands who is not losing heavily, and the license holders will have to come in." I recognise that this legislation will impose upon them a still further burden than that they have to share with all other business people, and the only consolation I have been able to offer is that their loss will be the country's gain, that in so far as they sell less liquor during this war time,

there will be greater savings in the pockets of the people, and it will be a public benefit. I have indicated that I will vote for either eight to eight or nine to nine. I am going to propose a further amendment; I have already indicated that I will propose an amendment that a corresponding rebate shall be allowed by the Government in respect to the license fees. But the most radical amendment I am going to propose is a new clause, as follows:—

That during the continuance of this Act it shall be an offence if any person treats another; penalty £5.

Hon. members may smile. It is the law now in greater London, and if it can be carried out in greater London it surely can be carried out in little West Australia?

Hon. A. G. Jenkins: I would like to buy you a drink when we get Constantinople.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I do not think any argument is necessary to show that this is a very sane proposal.

Hon. F. Connor: A very dry one.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: And most effective for husbanding the resources of the country and the health of the people. What happens under the system of treating? I was very innocent about it in my first electioneering campaign. One of my earliest experiences occurred when four enthusiastic supporters beguiled me into an hotel parlour and one of them called for refreshment. Of course I had lemonade; it was either that or a cigar. But we had hardly wiped our mouths after that first round when friend No. 2 said "We had better wet the other eye." I did not know what on earth it meant, but presently another round of drinks came, and were consumed. And then friend No. 3 was not going to be meaner than the other two, and so we had another, then another, and in the end there were five rounds.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Five lemonades!

Hon. A. G. Jenkins: You must have been gassy that evening.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: That is the chief evil of the treating system. So

many men go on wetting the other eye until they are nearly in a weeping condition generally. Surely if this is being tried to-day in greater London there will be no difficulty about trying it here. At all events, I have given notice of the amendment, and it will appear on the Notice Paper to-morrow. My advice is, let us read the Bill a second time, and we can then decide in Committee whether Mr. Colebatch's proposal is to be carried out as proposed, or on the basis of the Bill. Either will satisfy me. The Bill will then go back to another place when we have transmogrified it, and made it a straight-out responsible piece of legislation for temperance and thrift. If the other House accepts it, then the thing is done. If not, we will have a second opportunity of putting what we want into the continuance Bill.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [9.14]: I have to ask whether there is any need for a Bill of this nature. The Government evidently think there is, or they would not have introduced it. Apparently it is the impression of the Government that the result of the war justifies legislation in this direction. I do not agree that the war justified the introduction of this measure. I do not think that the people are any less prone to drink or spend more money since the outbreak of the war than they did prior to it. In the agitation, which was the means of bringing down this Bill, the war has been fastened on as a lever by which to move the machine. When a full measure of local option was before this Chamber I supported it. I say this may be construed to a certain extent as a measure of local option, and that it is just about the last joint in the tail of local option. I do not think that a reduction of hours in the liquor trade is in any way going to affect the ultimate issue of the gigantic struggle in which we are involved, nor do I think it is going to make people any more sober. But a mandate has been issued in another place and it has come along to this House for us to adjudicate upon. I confess I am somewhat in a fog. Were I asked for an opinion as to the need of this Bill I would say that

there was none, or at all events no more now than there was in normal times. It has been said that even if there was a reduction in hours it would be a blessing even for the soldiers who were going to the front, and that we would then see fewer of them drinking. I never was a teetotaler in my life, but I suppose I spend as little money on drink as any one. I do drink occasionally, and I enjoy a drink just as any other member of this Chamber. So far as the drink which the soldier indulges in is concerned, we must bear in mind that he is going to the front, and there is little in the way of transgression that I would not shut my eyes to if I saw it. I think that anyone who will stop to think for a moment of the duty of the man who has put on uniform and is going to fight for the Empire will excuse him his shortcomings in such a time as this. Probably he is going to return no more. No State in the Commonwealth or the Commonwealth itself, to my knowledge, has agitated in the direction of liquor not being supplied to men in uniform. So far as the soldier is concerned, I hope he will not enter into the question. If he transgresses I think his transgressions are excusable.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: If he had a wet canteen he would be all right.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That would be very much better. It may be said that I am opposing the principle of a referendum, that is of the people deciding for themselves in this matter. I think in times like this, if the war is justification for the introduction of this measure, that there is one tribunal which should take the lead. If Parliament can convince itself that there should be a curtailment of the hours in which liquor should be sold owing to the war, then I say Parliament should grasp the nettle and take the action itself.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. CORNELL: After all, we must, by the introduction of this measure, show the people that there is need for it. Who do the people look to, and who should the people look to for guidance in times of need and stress? I say they should look to their legislators. If we think it

should be done I say we should do it and accept the consequence, after even if its final results are seen in the ballot box. We justified the need for giving countenance to this measure inside the four corners of Parliament by blaming the war. Then we say "Let the people settle this for themselves; we are of opinion that by the introduction of this legislation and making machinery whereby you can act there is a corresponding need for the curtailment of the hours in which liquor shall be sold." Now is the time when Parliament and the representatives therein should act. I am a believer in the democratic form of Government. I think anyone who pauses for a moment must recognise that one of the greatest factors in our enemies' success to-day has been the fact that when men who were in the position to act said to those under them that certain things had to be done they were done. It may be said that I am opposing the referendum. There is, however, no State or country in the world which has adopted the system of the referendum or the initiation and referendum without putting a saving clause in it. There are three or four instances in which the referendum is in operation where Parliament is supreme; that is to say that legislation comes immediately without the referendum being applied to it. One is war, and another is rebellion. Then there is plague, and such like emergencies which may arise, one may say incidentally, and which need the directing hand of Parliament, and in which there is no time to submit the matter to the people. I am consistent in taking up this action so far as the referendum is concerned because war is the lever for its introduction and even in times of war we are going to ask the people to decide for themselves. I venture to say that I am no more in sympathy with the temperance people than with that much maligned gentleman vulgarly known as "Bung." I do like to see all sections of the community have a fair deal. I say that the proposals contained in this Bill for the method of counting the vote of the elector are loaded. I say it gives one section of the community infinitely more ad-

vantage than the section against which it is proposed to legislate. I do not know where this proposal contained in clause 5 emanated from. I say it is unfair. The principle adopted and laid down for the election of our parliamentary representatives has been departed from, and the principle of transfer, which should be the prerogative of the elector is taken from him. In this Bill it is proposed, if it becomes law, at the taking of the vote on the hour, that every elector who goes to the poll should only have one vote, and that he should indicate his vote by means of placing his cross beside the particular hour he wants. That would be fair enough if we stuck to the old plumping system and let the particular hour which had the greatest number of votes, whether it was in the majority or not, stand, but this Bill takes to itself the prerogative of distributing the votes of the electors in a preferential manner. It says that if any particular hour has an absolute majority of all the votes cast the votes given for the lowest shall be transferred to the next lowest hour and so on until some hour scores an absolute majority of the whole of the votes cast. The same result would occur if they started at both ends. As the result of a short journey I had between Midland Junction and Perth to-day I drew up a hypothetical case which practically proves the injustice of the system, and I say it is time to inquire into it. I have made out a set of figures taking them at random and I will give them to the House. I take a considerable interest in methods of voting and I think it is my duty to explain to the House how, if the choice of transfer or preference of the voters was left to their own inclination, the results may be different. The method under which it is proposed to count these votes assumes that the elector who votes for 6 o'clock would indicate his preference for the next highest hour, thus:—7, 8, 9, 10, 11, if he could not get 6 o'clock, and that the elector who votes for 11 would equally vote the other way. Taking the assumption that the framers of this Act have put forward, I will quote these figures: 10,520 voters, we will say, have

cast a vote for 6 o'clock; 2,000 have cast for 7 o'clock; 300 for 8 o'clock; 1,500 for 9 o'clock; 1,000 for 10 o'clock; and 10,500 for 11 o'clock, giving a total of 26,320 votes. In the method of counting adopted by the Government, and no hour having an absolute majority of the votes cast, 6 o'clock would fall out and the votes would be transferred to 7 o'clock. That would give 7 o'clock 12,520 votes. Still no one hour has an absolute majority. The votes are then transferred to 8 o'clock. That gives 8 o'clock 13,320 votes, an absolute majority, and it is the hour for which the lowest number of electors have recorded the first preference votes. Taking the same assumption that the elector would mark his ballot paper in this order of preference as proposed, what would be the result? The first thing that would happen would be that 8 o'clock would fall out having the least number of votes of the six hours, and the eight o'clock votes would be recorded to nine o'clock, which would give nine o'clock 2,300 votes. No particular hour having a majority of votes, we would take the next lowest hour, which would be ten o'clock with 1,000 votes. No. 10 would fall out and its votes would go to eleven o'clock. Seven o'clock would then fall out and the votes recorded for that hour would be transferred to 9 o'clock. We then, after the fourth count, would have three hours left in: six o'clock with 10,520 votes, eleven o'clock with 11,500 votes, and nine o'clock with 4,300 votes. Taking our electoral system as it stands, nine o'clock would fall out, and what would be the result? The votes recorded for that hour would all go to eleven o'clock, and eleven o'clock would win with 15,800 votes. If the clause as it stands is agreed to, I shall not have been a party to it. I am not going to agree to take up an antiquated system, or a system I know nothing about, before taking from the elector the right to indicate his own preference. I would go so far as to support a proposal that an elector should exercise his first choice by the numeral one, and then allow him to continue his pre-

ference or not. Of course if he did not exercise his preference, he would, to some extent, disfranchise himself. But I am not prepared to support a proposal such as that set out in the Bill, as to how the votes shall be recorded, and how they shall be counted. I would be prepared to favour one specific proposal being put to the electors, as to whether the hotels should remain open from eight in the morning to ten in the evening. I would be prepared to support a proposal that this House should place those hours in the Bill, but that would not be acceptable to the Government. It would be wise on the part of the temperance advocates if they allowed the elector to decide whether the hours should or should not be from eight a.m. to ten p.m. I agree with all that has been said about drinking early in the morning. I favour a reduction of the hours in the morning because of the bad influence the drink has on individuals, and that alone. There are one or two other matters that I desire to deal with in the Bill, and I would crave the indulgence of hon. members to permit me to refer to them. As we are aware, a Bill was passed by the Victorian Parliament for a reduction of the hours, and the hotels were absolutely closed at a certain hour. Since then, however, an amending measure has been passed which allows the hotels to remain open; but they are not allowed to sell intoxicating liquor; they can only sell soft drinks. Clause 13 of the Bill before us, to my reading, would meet the case. There would not be any necessity to pass an amending Bill. Clause 13 reads—"No licensee shall have or keep his licensed premises open for the sale of liquor," and "liquor" is defined as meaning intoxicating liquor within the meaning of the Licensing Act. I submit that if a reduction of hours is agreed to it does not necessarily follow that the hotels will be closed because the measure will only provide that intoxicating liquor shall not be sold. I submit that the hotels will still be permitted to remain open to sell refreshments other than intoxicating liquor. There is another point that I am opposed to, and that is that the same clause pro-

vides that it shall be an offence for a publican or any of his servants to serve a customer with intoxicating liquor after the closing hour. But it is not an offence so far as the man who is served is concerned. It is proposed in clubs that it shall not only be an offence to serve, but the man who takes it and drinks it will also commit an offence. What is flesh for one is flesh for another. If a man in a club is liable to be fined for drinking after hours, a man in an hotel should be in the same position. There is one other matter I desire to touch upon. To the unsophisticated the title of the Bill would lead one to believe that the measure was for war time only, but if we read the Bill through we will find that the intention is that the measure is not to be for war time only. The intention is to keep it as a war time measure, and if possible to continue it. Of course it is provided in the Bill that it may be continued by both Houses passing a resolution. If a piece of legislation is going to be for emergency purposes it should remain as such, and when the time arrives when it is about to expire, and Parliament thinks that it has done good, then the whole course ought to be gone through again. The Bill should either be re-introduced as a permanent piece of legislation, or, if the war should still be in progress, it should be re-enacted as war legislation. I recognise that there is more behind this proposal than we really think, and I will at all times raise my voice to assist the people in deciding matters for themselves. I am not going to be a party to bringing about legislation by subterfuge. My remarks clearly indicate that I reserve to myself the right to do what I like with the Bill in Committee.

On motion by Hon. A. J. H. Saw debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.40 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 28th September, 1915.

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

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Works: Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage, and Drainage Act, amendment of by-laws.

By the Minister for Mines: Harbour and Light Department, report for year ended 30th June, 1915.

QUESTION—STATE SINKING FUND.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines: Has his attention been drawn to a report in this morning's newspaper, alleged to be a report of the proceedings at the Premiers' conference, and in which it is stated that the Premier of Western Australia, Mr. Scaddan, "explained to the conference that he proposed to divert £260,000 a year from the sinking fund account into the public works account. This amount he stated was paid annually from the general revenue to the sinking fund trustees, and periodically stock was redeemed. Instead of redeeming stock the money would be invested in short-dated Treasury Bills." If so, will he ex-