

# Legislative Council.

Thursday 23rd April, 1912.

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Adjournment, special	3200

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

## QUESTION—STATE SHIPPING SERVICE.

*As to Loss of Vessel.*

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Has any governmental inquiry been held into the circumstances surrounding the recent loss of a State ship? 2, If so, will the Minister arrange for all papers in connection with same to be laid on the Table of the House? 3, If no inquiry has been held, will the Government, in view of the circumstances, consider having a full inquiry made?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Matters relating to maritime accidents come within the jurisdiction of the Department of Navigation. The Deputy Director of Navigation (Captain Moore) is now examining the loss of this vessel to decide what action he will take in the matter of a preliminary inquiry. 2, In the interests of national security this information cannot be made available. 3, Answered by No. 1.

## MOTION—GOLDMINING INDUSTRY.

*As to Manpower Proposals.*

Hon. H. SEDDON (North-East) [11.6]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House, in view of the vital importance of the goldmining industry to Western Australia, it is highly undesirable that the continuance of the industry should be imperilled by further heavy demands upon its personnel until there has been a comprehensive marshalling of the manpower available from other avocations less essential to the stability of the State and to the successful prosecution of the war effort.

This is one of the questions which I consider should occupy the attention of Parliament.

if only in view of the fact that it does vitally concern the welfare of the whole State and is an illustration of the way in which the manpower provisions are being carried out. I understand that the Government is desirous of closing this session, at any rate, temporarily, but I further gather from the Minister that it is the Government's intention that Parliament should be called together on the Premier's return. The discussion that is taking place at present in the Eastern States on the question of unified taxation is one that is going to have a tremendous influence on Western Australia, amongst other States, and the stand of the Premiers could very well be supported by an expression of opinion by Parliament on the question which is being discussed. After all this is a sovereign State, and the relationship between the State and the Federal Governments is one that should be watched, because there is a danger, especially in a time like the present, that the importance of that sovereignty may be overlooked.

With regard to the goldmining industry, while it has been referred to during the discussion on the statements of the Premier and the Chief Secretary, the matter is still in a state of considerable uncertainty. Members only need to refer to this morning's newspaper to discover that that state of uncertainty has by no means been cleared up, because while there is a statement from one Federal Minister in Kalgoorlie, which is intended to reassure the people of that community, when one reads the statement of the other Federal Minister, whose department is specially concerned with the question of manpower, one is not quite so sure whether there is any consistency between the statement of the one Federal Minister and the statement of the other. That uncertainty has prevailed right throughout the whole period since the question of the closing down of the industry was first mooted. It is because of that and of the contradictions that have been apparent from time to time, that one feels there should be an expression of opinion by this Parliament with regard to the effect of the proposal to take more men from the goldmining industry and the effect of such action on the State as a whole, bearing in mind the general policy of the Federal Government in relation to manpower in industry.

Incidentally, one might refer to the effect, which I have also mentioned, of the Federal Government's financial policy. While that may have been inaugurated with the idea of taking the fullest advantage of the resources of the Commonwealth in order to make them available for the war effort, the fact remains that the policy adopted to date can only have the effect of achieving a result the reverse of that aimed at—from the standpoint of finance. It will certainly have a boomerang effect regarding future contributions to loans and taxation. The effect will definitely be to reduce the incomes of many people who are at present contributing in both directions on a considerable scale. A man cannot pay what he has not got and that will affect Commonwealth revenue in future.

With regard to the question of manpower, which is associated with the well-being of the goldmining industry, we must recognise what has taken place already. Hon. members will remember perusing a report in the Press the other day regarding the effect of the Federal Government's manpower policy as applied to Queensland. It was pointed out that a considerable number of men had been taken away from industries and yet no employment had been found for them. Some were even on the dole. From the standpoint of efficiency, the application of the manpower provisions leaves much to be desired. The position in relation to the goldmining industry is today just as obscure as it was when the manpower policy was first mooted.

I shall place before members a brief history of the trend of that policy. The entry of Japan into the war had immediate repercussions on the goldmining industry. Until then there had been a steady drain on the industry as more and more men enlisted. Adjustments were made from time to time by the mine managements to meet the situation thus created. While some men were manpowered, that applied mainly to those who had been in key positions associated with production and treatment. The general attitude of the mine managements was that any man who desired to enlist was to be liberated, subject, of course, to the manpower considerations to which I have already alluded. With the entry of Japan into the war, the position became complicated. In one week alone 800 men joined up and the effect upon the industry was such that further adjust-

ments became necessary. To such an extent did the young men enlist on the goldfields that practically no developmental work can be carried on at the present time.

Attempts were made by the industry to adjust itself to the new situation. The outstanding fact, however, is that the enlistments from the goldfields have been on such a scale that the industry is worthy of special consideration from that standpoint alone. When we compare the enlistments from the goldmining industry with those from other occupations, the goldfields record compares more than favourably with others. However, no allowance seems to have been made from that standpoint and apparently the proposal is to take further manpower from the industry, a move that cannot fail to have a detrimental effect on the future of goldmining in Western Australia.

I desire briefly to refer to the relationship between working costs and tonnages. The fact is well known that once the output is below a certain minimum tonnage, costs must rise. The effect of that will be selective mining, which will have a serious effect on the life of a mine and will limit the period during which the industry will be able to carry on. Obviously no industry can be continued at a loss. Towards the end of January certain statements were attributed to members of the Federal Government regarding goldmining, its importance and continuance during the war period. Those statements were referred to in the Senate and were made the subject of an inquiry. The Ministers concerned denied that they had made any such statements, but the matter was further pursued. A deputation waited upon the Federal Treasurer in order to point out the serious effect on the industry in relation to the welfare of Western Australia. The reply furnished them was that the Federal Government had no intention as far as possible of interfering with the goldmining industry, but that the Government considered there should be no new activity in the industry in the direction of opening up new mines. The next development was noted in connection with the mission of the Federal member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. H. V. Johnson, M.H.R.) to his electorate. There he made certain statements under bond of secrecy with regard to what was to happen in connection with the industry. Secrecy was to be observed on account of what would happen if the information were made public.

Hon. C. B. Williams: No one knows anything about it now.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The matter was fully discussed wherever Mr. Johnson went and some organisations had the experience of hearing debated on the streets the question about which they had been pledged to secrecy. The result of Mr. Johnson's visit to his electorate was definitely to disturb the people on the goldfields because the gist of the talks was that a greater number of men employed in the industry would be required for urgent war work. On all hands it has been recognised, I think, that the attitude of the industry is that it is prepared to co-operate to the fullest extent in the war effort. That has already been shown from the standpoint of the number of men who have enlisted and from the standpoint of the managements in their ready response to any requests made to them.

The result of Mr. Johnson's visit was that reassurances were sought by those whom he had consulted. At the same time, when the matter was further discussed, certain inconsistencies in public utterances were noted. Apparently an attempt was to be made by the Government to take so many men from the industry as to really threaten its extinction. At the same time there were other avocations that could not be said to have any relationship with the successful carrying on of the war effort. In view of that fact the feeling became general that the whole question should be further explored.

It was suggested that until there was some evidence that the Government intended to deal with what were held to be unnecessary avocations, even to the extent of closing some down, the goldmining industry should be given full recognition for its contribution to the war effort. The matter was again brought up in the Senate where it was discussed for a long time. Again it was the subject of a deputation to the Federal Treasurer, Mr. Chifley. The result was that a further assurance was given with regard to the taking of men from the industry. Yesterday in the Press I read a statement indicating that a Federal Minister whilst in Kalgoorlie had given the following reply—

Up to this moment the closing of the industry has not occupied the serious consideration of the War Production Executive.

Hon. J. Cornell: Why was Mr. Johnson sent here?

Hon. H. SEDDON: These happenings are arousing uncertainty in the minds of the people. We are asking ourselves what we are to understand with respect to the attitude of the Federal Government towards goldmining. If a definite statement had been made that it considered in the interests of the war effort men should be taken away from the industry, we could understand it. It is the continual backing and filling on the part of Federal Ministers on this question that is doing not only no good but is causing disturbance and uncertainty, with the result that people are living in a condition of mind that is anything but conducive to efficiency or satisfaction with the efforts of the Government. Another Federal Minister is visiting Perth. He is the man most vitally concerned in the question of manpower. This morning he made a definite statement in the Press regarding the attitude of the Federal Government in the matter of manpower. He also made an incidental reference to the goldmining industry. I understand he had a consultation with goldfields members.

Hon. J. Cornell: Members of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Hon. H. SEDDON: What the result of that was I have yet to learn. We may hear about it before the debate on this motion is finished. The whole position is a further reflection upon the vacillation exhibited towards this industry. Not only is that so, but a large number of men are still being taken from the goldfields. The requirements of the military authorities are being filled and further adjustments are being made by the mine managements to meet that position. It is felt that we are rapidly approaching the point when the continuance of the industry will be a matter for serious consideration from the standpoint of manpower. We must have some men working on the mines. The question of whether that minimum can be arrived at is one which should have been discussed with those most concerned, namely, those who have in their charge the welfare of the industry, before any definite step was taken. It appears to me that an attempt is being made to take men from the industry in order that they may be brought fully under the control of the military authorities in regard to war work. We have had some experience of military methods in the carrying out of construction works, as well as of the way in which similar works are carried out under ordinary industrial conditions.

We realise, therefore, that this system is not going to be of benefit to the taxpayers, but rather the reverse. In support of that contention I would refer to a certain work which was put through by a mine management with the assistance of its men. A construction job was handed over to it. Expedition was the principal factor, and a condition associated with the work. The job was completed in as many days as it would have taken weeks to do had it been carried out by the military authorities. The mine management suggested that if there was urgent need to use men from the mines, probably with its staff and facilities, it could well carry out that work to the satisfaction of the military authorities should it be entrusted to it. By that means the management would be able to retain its own organisation rather than that the men should be taken from work to which they were accustomed, and brought under conditions which obtain in military circles.

There is a further vital and important question that must arise if the intention of the Federal Government is to take men away from the industry. I refer to the wives and families of the men concerned. If the mine workers are to be engaged on war construction work that involves their being taken away from the district, they will be working under conditions where there will be no housing accommodation.

Hon. J. Cornell: They may perhaps be taken out of the State.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That, too, may arise. They will have no housing accommodation. The men will be faced with the position that either arrangements will have to be made by the Federal Government for the payment of separation allowances for the wives and families, or the men will be faced with the problem of maintaining two homes. Under either condition the position will be hard upon the men and their families. The effect upon the State's economy of the proposal has been covered in the references by the Premier and the Minister for Mines. The Premier said the effect of the proposal would be a direct loss of £2,000,000 to the State's revenue. The indirect effect has not been estimated, but it must be considerably more than that. Not an activity, particularly in the metropolitan area, can avoid being affected directly by the interference with the industry involved in men being taken away from it.

Other questions are also associated with the problem. The State's expenditure will have to be maintained in various directions. There will be the expenditure in connection with the Mine Workers' Relief Fund. That will have to be maintained, and as the mines will be compelled to cease production the burden on the State will increase. Payments to beneficiaries will have to be kept up. Then there is the question of men who have been taken out of mines under the Miners' Phtthisis Act. Those men will continue to be a burden upon the State's finances. That will have to be provided for regardless of the fact that the revenue which has contributed towards that expenditure will no longer be available.

Then there is the question of workers' compensation. All these factors will have to be taken into consideration and legislation will have to be introduced to meet the position. Undoubtedly the State's economy will be seriously affected not only in regard to revenue but in relation to expenditure. The services to the goldfields people in regard to schools and other facilities will have to go on.

Hon. J. Cornell: The railways will be affected most of all.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Other aspects will have to be considered. Concerning these a good deal has been said and divergent opinions have been expressed. I refer particularly to the present and future value of gold. We know what the attitude of the Federal Government is on this matter; but the attitude already shown by certain countries is significant. No one will accuse the United States of America of lacking in financial acumen. Whatever faults the Government of that country may possess that cannot be regarded as one of them. Right through the piece America has been acquiring gold. While many people have suggested that it has received it against its own wishes, America is still acquiring gold.

Hon. T. Moore: Did Mr. Johnson give you some secret information in regard to America's opinion. You know what his views are, do you not?

Hon. H. SEDDON: A reference was made by Mr. Johnson.

Hon. T. Moore: That is a secret. You know that an opinion was given.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That brings up the aspect of the relationship between this country and the United States. While there

may have been an expression of opinion by the representatives of America as to the desirability of producing further gold in Australia—

Hon. T. Moore: Or less gold.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The fact remains that the Soviet Government is the second largest gold producing country in the world and is still producing gold. The largest gold producer is South Africa, which is still producing it. There is no question of reducing the production of gold in that Dominion.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Is there any analogy between South Africa and Australia?

Hon. H. SEDDON: There is no question of interfering with the gold production of South Africa.

Hon. C. B. Williams: South Africa is not an importing country.

Hon. H. SEDDON: There is not much importing done there. South Africa is still producing gold and no attempt is being made to reduce the production. The gold-mining industry is vital to Western Australia.

Hon. J. Cornell: More so than to South Africa.

Hon. H. SEDDON: South Africa has other important industries apart from gold production.

Hon. C. B. Williams: We must import explosives.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The fact remains that in South Africa there is no question of interfering in any way with the production of gold. My contention is, as I said, that the goldmining industry is vital not only to the State but to our war effort. Even apart from war requirements, there are certain important commodities which we should endeavour to produce as far as lies in our power.

The statement has been made that we have too much gold in Australia, but notwithstanding that, an objection has been raised to the further export of gold. It is interesting to note, when we come to consider the relationship between our gold reserve and the note issue, how very small is the quantity of gold being held against that issued. In December last, against a note issue of £84,800,000, part of the gold reserve was only £74,839, the other part consisting of English sterling amounting to £21,800,000. Therefore, no one can say that the gold reserve is being maintained in

anything like the proportion it would be under ordinary banking conditions, let alone war conditions.

Hon. T. Moore: What about the sterling standard? What is wrong with that?

Hon. H. SEDDON: That has been very seriously interfered with. There has been an enormous increase in the note issue in Great Britain. The greatest problem England will have to face is the problem of inflation. If one wishes to ascertain the real value of the Australian note, one has only to look at the dollar exchange. That will give a person an idea of the purchasing power of our note, and will indicate how it has fallen in spite of a rigid system of price control of necessary commodities. In my opinion, the whole question has been wrongly approached. The matter should be subject to further investigation. I trust that during his visit to the goldfields the Federal Minister responsible for manpower will make it his business to consult with those who have in their hands the continuance of the industry, with a view to utilising the men engaged in it to the best advantage.

My reason for bringing forward this motion at the present time is because we have this Federal Minister in Perth. One of the questions he is to deal with concerns the goldmining industry of the State and its manpower. The Premier and the Minister for Mines are in the Eastern States negotiating with the Prime Minister upon this most important question, and I feel that the best way in which we can support them is to let them have an expression of opinion from this Parliament upon the question of manpower and its relation to the goldmining industry.

**HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH** (Metropolitan) [11.36]: I second the motion. In doing so I desire to endorse everything that has been said by Mr. Seddon. A couple of days ago the Chief Secretary told us that the State Government knew no more about this matter than did the man in the street. I am quite sure the statement was accurate, but nevertheless it shocked me, because it suggested the cavalier method in which the Federal Government has been treating the State authorities. The State Government knew nothing about the matter. Let me make some further reference to what Mr. Seddon said regarding the visit of the member for

Kalgoorlie in the House of Representatives. It is a fact beyond any possibility of doubt that he informed the Kalgoorlie Chamber of Mines that the Federal Government had practically decided to close down the gold-mining industry. He pledged the members of the Chamber of Mines to secrecy, even to the extent that they must not communicate with their London directors. Then, apparently with the idea of giving an "air of verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative," he furnished a number of details as to how the Government intended going about things.

For instance, he said that it had been decided that when the men were taken away, their families should stay put where they were, and that was one of his reasons for demanding secrecy, so that the thing should not get about at all. He also stated that the companies would be allowed to continue the employment of sufficient labour to prevent the mines from getting waterlogged and to keep the machinery in such repair as it could be kept while the mines were not working. He also suggested that some provision would be made in the way of compensation, although that was very vague. But having done all that, he attended meetings of unions and informed the men, first in Kalgoorlie and afterwards all over the State, the very things to which he had pledged the Chamber of Mines to secrecy. The result was that the next day 40 men turned up in one mine and asked to be released for military service, as Mr. Johnson had told them that the mine would close down.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The men preferred military service to road-making.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Then we have the statement by the Federal Minister, Mr. Dedman, to the same effect in Victoria, a statement most vigorously resented by the Minister for Mines of that State, who, as we all know, is an ex-Labour Premier of Victoria and at the present time the Leader of the Labour section in the Victorian Government. I am rather sorry that our own Minister for Mines did not make an equally vigorous protest. His statement that, after all, the gold would still remain in the ground, although perfectly true, to my mind conveys an entirely false impression, because there can be no doubt that, if the mines are closed down, a great number of them will never re-open.

As Mr. Seddon has said, we yesterday had a statement from a Federal Minister in Kalgoorlie that the matter had not been considered by the Federal Cabinet. In this morning's paper, however, members will read that the Federal Treasurer, Mr. Chifley, said that the goldmining industry would continue on the same scale as hitherto. What does all this mean? Does it mean that there is in the present Federal Government a complete absence of anything in the nature of united Cabinet responsibility? Is each Minister at liberty to go about the Commonwealth expressing opinions on matters of high policy without the consent of the Prime Minister and without the consent of his Cabinet colleagues?

While this sort of thing is going on in all directions, we have another Federal Minister, Mr. Ward, on a matter closely related to this question of employment, practically advising the coalminers to defy regulations framed by the Cabinet of which he is a member, and urging that defiance in spite of the statement of the Prime Minister that during the last three months—a period most critical and most threatening in the history of Australia—approximately 500,000 tons of coal had been lost due to strikes and abstention from work. We have to consider what is happening at the present time. We have this Ministerial discord as to what the policy is, but what is really happening?

Goldmining is classed as a No. 3 industry, so that men can be taken from it before men can be withdrawn from industries classed either as No. 1 or No. 2. There were 16,000 men employed in the goldmining industry of this State. Upwards of 5,000 of them have already enlisted or been absorbed in war work. Thus the industry has already contributed one-third of its personnel, and drafts are still proceeding. I understand that in the last week 100 men have been taken from Norseman, 451 from Kalgoorlie, and that it is intended in a very short time to take another 900 men. Already quite a number of the mines have been compelled to close down. Others that are capable, with their full equipment, of making substantial profits, are reduced to a bare hand-to-mouth existence, and do not know the day when it will be necessary for them to shut down.

Practically all the mines are living on their ore reserves, and this is, of course, a perilous proceeding so far as their future

is concerned. Development has been stopped in almost every direction; and the two-thirds of the personnel of the mining industry that is left is not the younger men. The result is that men of middle age, men who certainly would not be anything like the same value in some other occupation, men who have spent their whole lives in this industry, are left to carry it on.

The effects of the uncertainty prevailing at the present time are disastrous to the industry. It is a fact that recently there has been a considerable exodus from the gold-fields, an exodus of those women and children who, according to Mr. Johnson's statement, should have stayed put, as he said that that was the policy of the Federal Government. His whole intention has been destroyed. Under any well-organised form of government, I contend that the first step should have been careful Cabinet consideration, and the next step should have been consultation with the State Government. These two steps should have been taken before a word was said to the public, and before anything was said either to the managers or to the men employed in the mines.

But instead of that, what do we have? We have Ministers, some of them new to office and with very little Parliamentary experience and less knowledge of affairs, "dressed in a little brief authority, most ignorant where they are most assured," going about the country saying that the Government has decided this and decided that, and thereby causing uncertainty and upset that might easily have been avoided had the matter been gone about in a decent fashion. No matter what the ultimate decision of the Government may be, what is the position today in Western Australia? The Premier definitely, in a statement for which he deserves to be complimented by every member of Parliament and by the people generally, had occasion to tell the Prime Minister that this State seemed to be singled out for all hardships.

What is the position of the North-West of this country? What has become of the pearling industry? What is the position of the cattle industry, either in West Kimberley or East Kimberley? Its outlets in the past have been through the Wyndham Freezing Works to oversea countries, and by shipping to the metropolitan market. Is either of these avenues open to the industry today? It is practically in a moribund con-

dition. If we go further and destroy the mining industry in the North-West, what will be left? Take the pastoral industry generally. It has been crippled over a considerable number of areas, by continued droughts, and even before the advent of these droughts it became embarrassed by a long period of low prices. Today it is threatened with all sorts of difficulties, including that of getting shearers. It seems impossible that a considerable reduction in the output of wool can be avoided.

It is unnecessary for me to say much about the position of agriculture. We all know the almost hopeless position it faces today. We know that a large number of men have left the land. I have been shocked by the stories told to me by men who have travelled through the drier agricultural districts and the least prosperous portions of the wheat areas, of the conditions to which hard-working men and women have been reduced. Their position is one of hopelessness.

I come now to the manufacturing industries. The Federal Minister, Mr. Makin, had to go to Kalgoorlie to discover that a foundry is there capable of being employed to a large extent on the work necessary for the war effort. As far as our manufacturing industries in this portion of the State are concerned, other members are more competent to speak than I am, but we know how orders obtained by factories here have been hung up because the necessary materials have not been supplied. We have the outstanding fact that, apart altogether from enlistments, this State has been for some time past, and is still, losing its adult male population. If the goldmining industry is closed down, what is to be done with the men? It does not look as if there is any great need for their employment here. Are they to be taken away to the other States as well? Only in the South-West is there any evidence of stability, and even there real difficulties have to be faced every day owing to the loss of manpower and because of many other reasons with which the members representing those districts are more familiar.

In face of all this, we have the fact that Western Australia has contributed far more than its share in the matter of enlistments. Some time ago we were advised that the failure of other States to maintain their quotas was made good by enlistments in Western Australia. The closing of the gold-

mining industry would be just the same if it were not effected as a matter of deliberate policy by the Federal Government but were brought about in pursuance of the present policy of attrition; by continuing to take away a few hundred men here and there until mine after mine closes down. In 1940, the value of gold output in this State was over £12,500,000. What became of that money? Only a trifle over £1,000,000 went in dividends to the shareholders, and a fair proportion of that sum came to Australian shareholders. Gold produced the largest contribution towards the wealth of Western Australia. In the Statistical Abstracts manufacturing appears to be larger, but those returns include materials and such like. When they are taken out, it will be found that for actual wealth production gold topped the list.

As far as agriculture was concerned, it was largely a matter of arrangement of some contribution by the Commonwealth Government, but it is a fact that gold received no assistance. What became of the value of the output? Over £1,000,000, or more than the total amount of dividends, was taken by the Commonwealth Government as an excise tax under a form of tax to which no other industry in the Commonwealth was subjected. According to the Premier, £2,000,000 went into the maintenance of State revenue through services such as transport and water supply. The great bulk of the remaining £8,000,000 was absorbed in salaries and wages, and was all subject both to Federal and State taxation. That is what is going to be thrown away. Reference was made by Mr. Seddon to contributions to loans. One important mining company—a company which is practically working as a salvage operation now—contributed £250,000 to the last loan.

Hon. T. Moore: It is nothing like salvage!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I hope not.

Hon. T. Moore: It is ridiculous to say that!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: If this policy of drawing men away from the gold-fields is continued for long, this concern will become a salvage proposition.

Hon. T. Moore: You say it has become one, which is wrong. It is a good mine!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I am aware of the fact that neighbouring mines in which the company is interested have prospects of very long life, but I would remind the hon. member that Government offi-

cial, sometime ago, condemned the mine as being nothing more than a salvage proposition.

Hon. T. Moore: There is a difference today.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member will have his opportunity later.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I do not know that the hon. member's remarks affect the question. It is a fact that this company contributed £250,000 to the last loan, and it is also a fact that if more men are to be withdrawn, it will not be able to continue operations, and I have no hesitation in saying that if it should be absolutely closed down, it will be extremely difficult to get the mine into production again.

Then we have to consider the importance of this industry as an avenue of post-war employment. No other industry in Western Australia can make anything like the same contribution towards post-war employment as the mines. Those now in operation are chiefly working on low-grade ore, and very low-grade ore, compared with what was mined in the past. I can well remember some 46 years ago, meeting Mr. Richard Hamilton on the main shaft of the Great Boulder Mine, and being told by him that he regarded, as a matter of sound policy, the reducing of the average grade of ore to be treated to two ounces per ton. Today, thanks to the introduction of the best machinery available from all parts of the world, and thanks to highly scientific methods, mines are showing a profit on not much more than 2 dwts., or one-twentieth of what was regarded as a fair average for the Great Boulder 46 years ago. Because of that fact, and because there are low-grade mines working on a narrow margin of profit, it is practically certain that once closed down they will not re-open for a good many years, if at all.

Let this be remembered, that a comparatively small mine employs a large number of men. It has authoritatively been calculated that every man employed on a mine maintains about five other people. I know of specific instances where individual mines, which are not regarded as being really important, are responsible for the maintenance of as many as 750 people. That shows, not only the disaster which is going to fall on us if the industry is abolished now, but also the handicap we will place on ourselves in the matter of post-war employment.



What is to become of the population of the mining towns—the business people? Are they all to go on the dole? Mr. Seddon has made reference to what other countries have done. He referred to Canada and South Africa. Canada produces more gold than we do and is still carrying on. That country is making a contribution to the war effort which we might envy when we take into account the enormous sums of money it has given to the British Government, and when we consider the generosity of its people in subscribing to the loans placed before them. We cannot say they show a poor spirit. Russia, after being invaded and while fighting for its life, is still maintaining its gold industry to the extent that it is now the second biggest gold producer in the world. Japan, after five years of war in China, is still keeping its gold industry going and is today a bigger gold producer than Australia.

Hon. T. Moore: Who knows what is happening in Japan today?

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: We do not actually know what is happening today, but we did know till recently. We do know that throughout the five years that it was engaged in war with China it kept the gold industry going.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is Mr. Moore in favour of shutting up the gold industry?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I previously made reference to the extent to which manpower might be conserved by the introduction of labour-saving machinery. A short time ago we had a strike in one of the Eastern States against the introduction of such machinery. The only reason given was that if labour-saving machinery was to be permitted today it would be insisted upon after the war. That is a most stupid suggestion to put forward. After this war is finished we will face a highly competitive world, and the only nations to enjoy a decent standard of living will be those that employ to the utmost extent labour-saving machinery.

The PRESIDENT: Under the Standing Orders I must interrupt the debate at this stage.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: It is only by the extensive employment of labour-saving machinery that any country can

maintain a really high standard for the whole of its people. Some people have the idea—to my mind it is an extraordinary idea—that what is wanted is work. It is not work that is wanted; it is the product of work or labour. If we could get the full product of work, if I found the Labour Party concentrating its efforts upon getting the utmost return of product from the labour used, I would be quite willing to join with that party in endeavouring to ensure that the wealth was generously and evenly distributed, but so long as the present idea holds that what is wanted is work with high wages, instead of the product of labour, I can only say that if the Labour Party had its own way it would bring Australia to ruin.

We have even been told by an authority that in the coal mines in this State, with the introduction of labour-saving machinery the cost of the coal produced at Collie could be reduced to less than half the present figure. And there is not an industry in this State that does not depend more or less on cheap coal. I am speaking of this only from the point of view of the manpower that might be saved.

Then there is the question of the employment of women and boys in transport and other suitable services. Other countries are employing women and boy labour. Why should not we? Our women and boys are just as capable of doing the work and are willing to do it.

The Honorary Minister: There is not a boy or a girl out of work.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: That is not the case.

The Honorary Minister: It is a fact.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Reference has been made to the unemployed on the dole in Queensland, 12,000 of them, and Mr. Forgan Smith has said that they are not all fit men. The same remark applies to the mining industry; they are not all fit men for any other vocation.

A few months ago, I think it was before Japan entered the war, Mr. Falstein, the member for Watson, said that "more than 10,000 persons in his electorate earned their living from the racing industry, not to mention the dogs." He put this up as a reason why the racing industry should not be interfered with: it

gave employment and livelihood to a large number of people. Now this argument has come back with boomerang effect and has proved a revelation of the number of people employed in this non-essential vocation. I do not think that racing can properly be termed an industry. The labour now used might well be made available for purposes far more helpful to the war effort.

Let me now contrast the position of the Eastern States with that of Western Australia. The Eastern States, under Federal policy, have for more than one-third of a century been subsidised by the primary industries of this State, namely, agriculture and goldmining. Those States are today enjoying a higher standard of prosperity than ever before. The spending power of the people is greater. Let us compare that condition of affairs with the position in Western Australia as it exists today and what it will be if this draft upon men employed in the goldmining industry continues to such an extent that the industry is practically closed down.

We are entitled to ask by what sort of Government are these conditions of impoverishment being imposed upon the State. The Federal Government has not a clear majority in either House of the Commonwealth Parliament. It is a Government whose nominees were rejected with great emphasis in five of the six States at the last Senate election. It is a Government that is completely out of touch with the leading political members of its own party in all the States. Those leaders are men of far riper knowledge and wider political experience than can be claimed by any member of the present Commonwealth Government. So far as Western Australia is concerned, it is very nice for a State of little importance in the Federal scheme of things to have amongst its Parliamentary representatives the Prime Minister, the President of the Senate and the Speaker and Chairman of Committees of the House of Representatives. But this sort of thing will not butter our bread.

I draw special attention to the outstanding fact that while members of the Commonwealth Government are making contradictory statements regarding the intention to close down the mines, this very thing is actually being done by a policy of attrition. Let me direct attention to a statement made by the Minister for Mines

of Victoria, Mr. Hogan. He was reported as follows:—

The Minister of Mines (Mr. Hogan) in support of the protest, challenged Mr. Dedman's statement that gold was of little value in the war economy of the nation. If Mr. Dedman was an advocate of uncontrolled inflation without a gold reserve, he should say so. Goldmining was a country industry, and to stop it would spell ruin for many districts.

That fact has been the subject of reference by Mr. Seddon, and I also spoke of it a few days ago. In all directions we see illustrated the determination of the Government to conduct the war on trade union lines and to use every emergency that arises to put into effect some plank or other of Labour's platform. One day it is Mr. Ward pronouncing for nationalisation; another day it is Mr. Dedman threatening the discontinuance of gold production. Is that intended as a step towards the putting into operation of Labour's policy of winning the war without cost—of financing war expenditure, public works and social services by Commonwealth Bank credit—a policy that the Commonwealth Government as a Government is afraid to put into force or ever to advocate?

I feel that the State Government should appreciate the fact that members of both the other parties are entirely behind it in using every endeavour to maintain the production of gold as essential to the State and to insist that before the industry is destroyed or further impaired, there shall be a comprehensive marshalling of the manpower available in industries of far less importance to the economic stability of Australia.

**HON. C. B. WILLIAMS (South) [12.8]:** It is regrettable that the moving of this motion has been necessary because Australia is at war and we should not allow anything to disturb the friendly relations existing between the different States of the Commonwealth and the people generally. Still, if Governments make mistakes, they must be criticised. I am not addressing myself to the motion now with an eye to criticising the Commonwealth Government, because those who oppose the National Party understand the wonderful work the present Ministry has done as compared with the Administration it succeeded.

I view this matter of closing the goldmines very seriously indeed. Western Australia

has suffered greatly because the political influence in the East is so powerful and more or less because Western Australia's representatives in the Federal Parliament have had twopenny-halfpenny jobs handed out to them. To my mind those jobs were handed out to blind those members to what is being done to Western Australia. We have five members representing this State in the House of Representatives and six members in the Senate, a total representation of 11. Yet most of them have been given tinpot jobs—jobs that are bringing them in a couple of thousand a year as Speaker or President or an extra thousand a year as Chairmen of Committees—with their ordinary emoluments as well. It seems to me that those members have accepted the jobs for the sake of the extra remuneration and have forgotten their duty to Western Australia. When the time comes I trust that the people of Western Australia will not forget them.

We have the member for Perth (Mr. Nairn) as Speaker of the House of Representatives; we have the member for Forrest (Mr. Prowse) as Chairman of Committees in the House of Representatives. We have the Hon. J. Cunningham as President of the Senate, and Mr. Fraser as a Minister with Senator Clothier as Party Whip. These men, as members of Parliament, owe a duty to Western Australia, quite apart from their political beliefs. I venture to repeat what I have said on other occasions and what I would say if I were in Canberra, namely, that if I were a representative of Western Australia in the Federal Parliament no Government would ever put over this State what has been put over it in the last five or ten years, and particularly since the war began. I would see that the Government went out of office and would trust to the people of Western Australia to stick to me. I am sure that people would take the view that the duty of members was beyond politics and should ensure the retention of their political liberty. Because we are a weak State numerically, these impositions are inflicted upon us. I trust that I keep within the limits of commonsense when I say that if the goldmining industry is to be annihilated, would it not be better to leave the Japs to do it? Large towns like Kalgoorlie, Leonora and Wiluna are all endangered because of the nitwits in the East.

The Federal Minister for War Organisation of Industry (Mr. Dedman) has been in

Australia for 19 years or only a little longer than I have been in Parliament. Admittedly we need men for work in all avenues, but why should Western Australia have to suffer through this imposition on its goldmining industry? I am not greatly interested in goldmining in the Eastern States because those who know the facts are aware that before the price of gold went up by £1 an ounce, Queensland produced as little as £39 worth of gold per year. That was 10 or 12 years ago and probably that production was due to some fellows having taken a few gold rings from Western Australia and being required to sell them. Yet we have to tolerate the decisions of these nitwit Federal politicians, for nitwits they are. I maintain that anyone who would create dissatisfaction at a time when the enemy is at our gates is a nitwit and should not be retained in his job.

Reference should be made to the share market value of the gold mines. After the Mungana disclosures, the people of Australia said emphatically that Mr. Theodore was not to be permitted to remain in politics in Australia. His own people rejected him. Yet he has been placed in charge of some of the ramifications of the war effort that will affect the manpower resources of the country and the goldmining industry. We have listened to a speech by Sir Hal Colebatch who has stressed the point, that we do not know where we are. I might add, as the Cousin Jack said, "Neither do we know where we will be."

Mr. Chifley, the Federal Treasurer, says something, and Mr. Curtin knows nothing about it. Therefore, the Prime Minister sends Mr. Johnson over to Western Australia to make a fool of himself. Kalgoorlie as a Federal constituency has been practically ignored. Our great hardship is that those Western Australians who know the goldmining industry have never been consulted. Kalgoorlie will be cut out as a Labour constituency if the mines are stopped from working. The Lake View Mine has been reduced from 1,300 men to 900, I understand. Now, the Federal Labour Government depends on the member for Kalgoorlie to keep it in office. Notwithstanding its dependence on the Kalgoorlie seat, it proposes to do our goldmining industry this great wrong.

But no attempt is made to deal with racing. In Melbourne there were 16 races on one day a few weeks back. Until recently the people in Perth who control racing had to be almost kicked off their own courses. Who would lose if racing and trotting stopped to-

morrow? The thousands and thousands of men engaged in racing and trotting have, economically speaking, never created new wealth. To say that racehorses are needed to improve the breed is utterly absurd. We get a horse that races about three times a year. Let the various Governments put a stop to racing, if they are game to do so. Let the Labour Party in both Federal sphere and State sphere rise up and stop the racing that has been organised by John Wren of Melbourne.

Western Australia's position is one of pure and simple dependence on its goldmines. Our primary producers will get a somewhat better deal, no doubt, as an effect of the war; but the operation of the mining industry means there is nothing to go out of Australia, even if the product cannot be used here. Mr. Johnson come over here and told fearful tales concerning the goldmining industry—absurd tales. We have been reliably informed that the industry can carry on for two years without assistance. South Africa has employed black labour in its gold mines, but we have never done so, although there have been a few American negroes working in Kalgoorlie mines. Those blacks, however, received exactly the same wages as the white miners. Doubtless if labour were as cheap here as it is in South Africa, we could have many low-grade shows working.

It is absolutely necessary for us to win the war, no matter who goes down as business man or citizen. We are told that skilled men in our goldmining industries, possessing skill which cannot be acquired in a few months, are to be taken away to do rough unskilled work in the Army. During the first world war there was a conscription referendum, with the result that the Labour Party remained out of office for the best part of 25 years. Nitwits in the Federal arena would rather close down our goldmining industry than interfere with racing. Governments are not game to interfere with racing either here or in Victoria. I do not want the S.P. shops to be closed. I want to see our people have entire freedom to do what they like with their own money.

I hope Mr. Seddon's motion will be carried, and I am glad the motion has come from other than a Labour supporter. I will not allow anyone to bulldoze me into anything, even during war time. Nor do I intend to cut my political throat in order to please

anybody. Western Australia controls more than two-thirds of Australian goldmining. And let me point out that many men now at work in the Eastern States would not be working if our mines closed down. As regards Bendigo, Ballarat, and Ararat miners there can leave mining and work for farmers in the surrounding districts, but that does not apply in Western Australia. The Federal Labour Government sent over the Federal member for Kalgoorlie to ask our miners practically to surrender. In my time on the mines Mr. Johnson would have been told that he was trying to sell us a pup. He was lucky to get away with it in Kalgoorlie as he did. The carrying-out of the Federal proposal would put our mining industry in a worse position than it was in after 1921, when several mines closed down all at once in Kalgoorlie.

If mining were stopped, the water trouble would not prove fatal, even if the stoppage lasted for 25 years. It is true that Mr. Moore's electorate would be hurt, and also Leonora. What was the position of Leonora in 1930 and 1931? It cost this State, during the Premiership of Hon. P. Collier, a great deal to make work available for discharged miners who were in urgent need. If the Kalgoorlie people are going to lose the war, they mean to lose it with their own people. Kalgoorlie residents have in recent years been building houses valued at as much as £700 and £800. All because of some Federal nitwits, the town is to be destroyed. Those nitwits are mere political accidents. I would plead with Mr. Dedman that he should go back to Scotland before he endeavours to destroy our mining industry. His holding a portfolio is a mere accident, due to a racehorse.

I wish I could urge my views personally on Mr. Curtin. I fail to understand why the Prime Minister does not close down some members of his team. I call to mind that Mr. Scullin backed him in another matter, but the Labour Party knows what Mr. Scullin did in 1932. I regret that he was ever elected again to the Federal Parliament. I regret that he was ever taken back into a position in the Labour Party. I was not at the meeting to which Mr. Dedman called goldfields representatives. I did attend on the Monday when Mr. Dedman was not there; and I am glad of my absence from the other meeting, because I am not very tolerant of such people. There has been

much difference among Labour men about taking up the question to which the motion refers, but I support the proposition.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER** (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [12.29]: I greatly regret that this debate has degenerated so. The fault for that lies with members of this Chamber, and especially with Sir Hal Colebatch. Indirect charges have been made. Federal Ministers have been very unfairly attacked by two speakers, so far, in this morning's discussion.

Hon. J. Cornell: What about Mr. Williams?

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: I include him. It was an unfair attack on the Federal Government, including the Prime Minister. Sir Hal Colebatch made a big point of the labour that was available. There is nobody out of work in Western Australia, and it is foolish to say that Mr. Dedman came to Western Australia to close the mining industry. He did nothing of the sort.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: I did not say he did.

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: He has come to Western Australia to examine the position. Every effort is being made to investigate all industries and release as much manpower as possible. That is his job, and to that end he appointed the Auditor General, who has been seconded to the Federal Government, to take over that important job. Every industry in Western Australia will be closely examined, as in fact it has been for many weeks. It is all very well to say that we can put girls into men's jobs. We are trying to do that. We are seeking to release as much manpower as possible. Consider the Perth trams. The conductors are mostly men past middle age, sick men, or returned soldiers unfit for active service.

Why should we allow this great question to degenerate into a political argument? Everyone knows that the State Government, the Labour Party, and the members of the Opposition Parties have one mind on this question, and that is that everything possible must be done to save the goldmining industry. Everyone in Western Australia knows the tremendous blow it would be to our State economy if that industry were closed down. I would direct members' attention to the fact that the situation has materially changed in the last few weeks. I remember that the Minister for Agriculture

(Hon. F. J. S. Wise) went to the Eastern States a few months ago and I followed him to a conference, and we found that there is a school of thought in the Eastern States, backed up by eminent men, which believes that the day of gold as a means of currency has gone. They think that, and have been trying to exploit the position.

Hon. J. Cornell: Who thinks that?

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: Several men. There is a big school of thought along those lines.

Hon. J. Cornell: I know that Mr. Dedman does.

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: The question of the goldmining industry in Western Australia was fully discussed when I was in Melbourne and when Mr. Wise was there before me. I obtained an assurance from the Federal Minister that nothing would be done to the industry until it had been closely examined by the Federal and the State Governments.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Which Minister gave that assurance?

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: Mr. Ward.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That is another one!

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: They are still taking men away from the industry. You know that, do you not?

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: Soon after I came back from Melbourne there was a rapid deterioration of the war situation.

Hon. T. Moore: My word there was!

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: We did not know what was going to happen. We did not know whether the Japanese would not land in a few days. Any Government with a sense of responsibility would have had to plan for the future and that is what was done.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You let horse-racing continue because your votes are there.

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: That is rubbish. Why talk such rot? From the point of view of racing I do not know a horse from a donkey, but I know that that statement is greatly exaggerated.

Hon. G. W. Miles: There is any amount of manpower available in the horse-racing world.

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: There are many men living on the racing industry who would not be worth twopence.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You have not the courage to tackle the problem.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The war situation has now improved, and no action will be taken in the industry until it is absolutely essential to do something drastic to get men, and before that is done every man and woman in Western Australia will be called upon to do his or her job. The Federal Government has not singled out the goldmining industry for special attention but is giving consideration to every industry in the Commonwealth. Why unfairly attack a Federal Minister when he is in Western Australia? From my own knowledge I am aware that every endeavour is being made to release as much manpower and to close down as many non-essential industries as possible. The motion, if carried, will be very helpful, but the discussion has been spoiled by the fact that the seconder of the motion went out of his way to make the question a political one.

Hon. J. CORNELL: And the Honorary Minister has improved the occasion.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That may be the hon. member's opinion.

**HON. J. CORNELL** (South) [12.36]: There are a few points I desire to touch upon. I think the Honorary Minister let himself loose when he referred to what Sir Hal Colebatch said as being an attack on the Federal Government and on Federal Ministers who are over here. There is one Labour Premier in Australia for whom I have always had the highest regard on account of his honesty, sincerity of purpose and candour, and that is good old Forgan Smith. What did he say? He said that he was sick and tired of having to listen to the vapourings of the heaven-born geniuses sent to the Commonwealth Parliament, and I am with him one hundred per cent.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Honorary Minister has endeavoured to suggest that they are heaven-born geniuses.

Hon. G. W. Miles: He thought he was on a bread Bill!

Hon. J. CORNELL: I think he must have had some of the stuff that makes the bread rise, when he let himself go.

The Honorary Minister: That is cheap enough!

Hon. J. CORNELL: I do not exempt others in the Commonwealth Government and Parliament from criticism. The opinion expressed by Mr. Forgan Smith will stand

up to the closest scrutiny and examination. A fair proportion of the Federal Government are rejects from State Parliaments. I have not the slightest desire to indulge in personalities, but we cannot get away from the fact that Mr. Vic. Johnson did not come to this State on his own account. Federal Ministers were responsible for his coming here. There is not the slightest shadow of doubt that his mission was distasteful to him, but he did what he was asked, with the result that what he was told to say has now been repudiated by the authority that—there is no question in my mind about it—delegated him to say it.

Reference was made to our old friend Ned Hogan, the Minister for Mines in Victoria. If ever a man in any Government of Australia knows goldmining, it is Ned Hogan, and he knows what it would mean to Western Australia if anything happened to that industry. Mr. Hogan's electorate adjoins Corio. I think it is the Ballarat division. According to report he told Mr. Dedman that while Mr. Dedman was anxious to get men out of the mining industry, there were quite a number in his own electorate who were making whisky which was not necessary for the troops.

The Honorary Minister: They like it though!

Hon. J. CORNELL: I know. Mr. Hogan has said that the mining industry is a country industry but, as Mr. Williams remarked, no analogy or comparison can be drawn between the goldmining industry in the Eastern States and that in this State. The only mining concern in South Australia is at Iron Knob, though for all practical purposes Broken Hill is in South Australia; but I am concerned about goldmining. Anyone who goes through Victoria or New South Wales or most of Queensland or Tasmania knows that the goldmining industry in those States is a mere circumstance, and that the main industries are agriculture, horticulture, dairying and manufacturing. The greater portion of this State, however, is totally dependent on goldmining. As Sir Hal Colebatch has said, one mine alone maintained 750 people.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: It was a small mine, too.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Since the Bluebird closed down—it was the richest little show at Norseman—there have only been two mines operating there, namely the Central Norseman and the Norseman Goldmines.

Those two mines maintain a population of over 3,000 people. If they were stopped tomorrow all those people, with the exception of about 50, would have to leave the district for there would be nothing for them to do. The same can be said about Wiluna. With the exception of a few pastoralists the population there is dependent on the mines. So there is no analogy between our metaliferous mining industry and that of the Eastern States. Mr. Hogan intends to fight to the last ditch against any inroads into the industry in his State, unless and until the manpower in other industries is exhausted. We should do so here as well.

Now I shall return to the remarks of the Honorary Minister, who said that no man, woman or youth who was in need of work could not secure employment in Western Australia. That may be so, but are they employed in any industry—apart from the direct war effort itself—that is as essential to the wellbeing of the State as is the mining industry? The other day my wife and I went to one of the large emporiums in order to buy a wedding present and I was astounded at the display of goods, such as glass ware, china and so on. I asked where supplies came from and I was told they had been imported from England. In another place the Minister for Lands remarked that some of the cargoes that had been landed here would not bear inspection. Those cargoes comprised in the main non-essential commodities and bore no relationship whatever to the war effort. Notwithstanding that fact, a multiplicity of labour is involved in manufacturing, transporting, and selling those lines. Take the beauty parlours. Are they essential?

Hon. T. Moore: Ask the ladies!

Hon. J. CORNELL: A few may claim that they are essential. Then there is the brewing industry. Undoubtedly the mining industry is far more essential than the brewing business, yet brewing plants are working to capacity never before achieved. These represent two of the many sources from which manpower can be withdrawn without any undue loss to, or interference with, public interests. Then there is horse racing. In my youth I was a racing enthusiast but experience changed my views. I found that it was only the man on top that knew what would happen.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You should have got on top.

Hon. J. CORNELL: In the metropolitan area we find that the tax contribution from S.P. fines represents about £500 a week, which is added to the State revenue. What has happened to prevent the manpowering of that industry? That is something I cannot understand. We have amongst us British refugees and others from Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, but we have no prisoners of war in this State.

The Honorary Minister: People are very reluctant to give the refugees any work at all.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is not altogether so. I know of a man—true he was Western Australian born—who started work six hours after he had landed in the State. He commenced almost at once as a teacher at the Technical College.

The Honorary Minister: But that man had special qualifications.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We have internees, but under the provisions of international law we cannot make them work. Mr. Parker could give us some idea of how many prisoners of war there are in Australia; but however many they may be, they are all in the Eastern States. Those people can be employed in connection with our war effort apart from actual combatant duties. Assuming that it becomes necessary for men to be withdrawn from industry, the mining industry should be left untouched until other avenues have been exhausted.

I want to know—we have had no statement on the point—if men withdrawn from industry here are to be employed on war work in Western Australia. Are they to be sent to the Eastern States to engage in war work there? We know what happened during the 1914-18 war and what has happened during the present conflict. Sir Hal Colebatch has drawn attention to the State's record of enlistments. I will instance what happened in connection with one particular unit during the previous war—the tunnelling corps. Western Australia was asked to supply 50 per cent. of its strength, equal to the total number furnished by the other five States.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: And Western Australia did so.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. In doing so the best men in the mining industry were allowed to enlist and go oversea. Some did not return while others who did did not take up mining again.

Hon. T. Moore: It was a small unit.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Mr. Moore belonged to a battalion similarly affected, and he knows that no Eastern States men reinforced Western Australian battalions during the 1914-18 war. On the other hand, he knows that men from this State reinforced almost every unit sent abroad from the Commonwealth. To indicate how that spirit has been maintained in this State, I was told by a high authority known to all of us that after the Crete debacle, the second 11th Battalion mustered 23 effectives. The suggestion was made that it should be reinforced with Eastern States men but those 23 officers and men refused to agree to such a procedure. They said that no other State was going to reinforce a Western Australian battalion. When the man I speak of left the Middle East, the battalion was 750 strong and all were Western Australians. If men are to be withdrawn from the gold-mining industry to undertake war work, I think it should be done on the strict understanding that they would be engaged on work carried out in Western Australia. The other States already have the advantage of war industries established on a sound footing; they have the advantage of prisoners of war and other benefits as well.

There is one other phase to which I shall make reference. I do not wish to say anything detrimental to Mr. Dedman, the Federal Minister for War Organisation of Industry. He is an ex-Imperial soldier and was a Government forestry official at the time he won the by-election for Corio. The story narrated by Mr. Williams about a horse applied to Mr. Lawson, who had the racehorse wished upon him. It helped Mr. Chisley, the present Federal Treasurer, and beat Mr. Lawson. That horse carried Mr. Dedman to victory in the Corio by-election, after Mr. Casey went Home.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is why they are afraid to touch Casey now.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It seems extraordinary to me now that a Commonwealth Minister of the Crown, charged with the responsibility of a survey of the manpower of Australia, should visit this State and, in considering matters affecting the goldmining industry, should convene a meeting of representatives of the Parliamentary Labour Party only, whose members hold the same political views as he does. In this Chamber alone there are seven members who represent goldfields constituencies, three North-West

members, Mr. E. H. H. Hall, Mr. Seddon, the President and myself. I think it would have been much better—I am not blaming Mr. Dedman—

The Honorary Minister: You should blame yourself.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I blame those who probably made the suggestion to Mr. Dedman. I think it would have been infinitely better if he had convened a meeting of the parliamentary representatives of mining constituencies generally and not confined himself to members of his own party. He should have endeavoured to secure an all-round expression of opinion. Many years ago I visited South Africa at a time when the question of miner's phthisis was prominently before the public. Later on Dr. Watkins Pitchford and Dr. Sayer of the Bureau of Mining, U.S.A., visited Perth. The late John Scaddan was then Minister for Mines in the Mitchell Government. In order that the matter might be considered from various angles, Mr. Scaddan convened a meeting of all the parliamentary representatives of goldmining constituencies. That was as it should be.

The Honorary Minister: That was in the piping times of peace.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The fact that Mr. Dedman confined his inquiries and other activities to members of his own particular brand of parliamentary political representation, is mainly responsible for some of the hard things that have been said this morning. I am glad my colleague spoke as he did. He is nothing if he is not forthright. I can understand why he did not attend the meeting; he could not have restrained himself. The debate on the motion may do some good, and I hope and trust that before any further inroads are made into the mining industry to reduce its present manpower, something definite will be done. I have already indicated what could happen to the industry; it could close down tomorrow. I trust that before any attempt is made in that direction, whatever the exigencies of the day may be, other industries that are non-essential will be denuded entirely of their manpower before the goldmining industry is further depleted to the detriment of Western Australia as a whole.

*Sitting suspended from 1.0 to 2.15 p.m.*



**HON. T. MOORE** (Central) [2.15]: As a member representing a goldmining constituency, I feel I should have something to say on this motion, not that I feel it will do much good. I say that advisedly, because I believe—as I have said in the past—that as far as this House is concerned, discussions on this and similar matters receive but little notice. We certainly keep a printing staff working, but we are incurring much expenditure all for nothing. Very little publicity is given by the Press to our debates. Therefore, in my opinion, these discussions are a waste of effort. Many people in my province, as well as others, have said to me, "How long is the Council going to last?" Some have said to me that the Council is one of the industries which ought to be closed down and from which men ought to be manpowered for the war effort. I agree with them. But the calibre of members is such that perhaps not much use could be made of them in the war effort; and on that account I could not advocate the closing of this branch of the Legislature.

I desire to draw the attention of members to the parlous condition of the goldmining industry. I know what is happening, particularly in my own province, where a very good mine has closed down and is not likely to re-open. That is because what Mr. Seddon suggested today was not done by the Federal Government which preceded the present Government. It is all very well now, when Labour is in power in the Federal sphere, for Sir Hal Colebatch to run it down and to say that it has no policy, and is not running the country properly.

**Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch**: I did not say that it was not running the country properly.

**Hon. T. MOORE**: The hon. member belittled the Federal Government by making extravagant statements which do not become a statesman of his experience. I was amazed! He mentioned in a sneering way that the Federal Government is made up of rejects of State Parliaments.

**Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch**: I did not say that. Mr. Cornell did.

**Hon. T. MOORE**: I am sorry. I will retract what I said.

**Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch**: I said that the Federal Government comprised men who could not get into the State Parliaments.

**Hon. T. MOORE**: That is worse. Members of this Chamber should not indulge in such flippancy. I am surprised at members of this House laughing at such a joke, as it suggests that people elected by a democratic vote are not fit to be members of a Government. It shows how deeply ingrained is prejudice in some members. That is one reason why Parliamentarians are so belittled outside the House. What good did Sir Hal Colebatch's contribution do to the debate? He even went so far as to say that at the present time we were salvaging one of the best mines in the State, not knowing the fine developments that have taken place in that mine. It shows how much out of touch he is with the Wiluna mine, which is now a sound proposition, according to the best authorities. It shows how far prejudice will carry a man away. This is a time when we should be serious.

No Federal Government in the past has adopted so comprehensive a policy as has the present Federal Government. So why single out the members of that Government for unfair comment? We have today in Western Australia three Federal Ministers, and I am very pleased they are here. I was not invited, but made it my business to meet Mr. Dedman. He is a very approachable man, and I placed before him my views as to what would happen were the goldmining industry to be closed down. I endeavoured to show him, as was pointed out this morning by Mr. Seddon, what a calamity it would be to the State and particularly to the people engaged in the industry, if it were closed down. He made notes of what I said. Should any other member wish to approach Mr. Dedman, they will easily be able to arrange to do so. Where there is a will there is a way!

I particularly regret the party nature of the speech made by Sir Hal Colebatch today. When he reads it in print, I think he will realise that he has not done democracy much good, speaking as scathingly as he did of the accredited Government running the Commonwealth today. It is shocking to think that such statements could be made by a man of his experience. He said the great trouble today was that the Federal Ministers were inexperienced. Had Sir Hal Colebatch experience when he assumed Ministerial office in this State? It is all a question of brains, commonsense and integrity.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: I did not go about the country declaring that a policy of Cabinet had not been approved of.

Hon. T. MOORE: I say quite honestly that Sir Hal Colebatch has made a statement in this Chamber one month which he has refuted the next.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: When?

Hon. T. MOORE: That occurred many years ago. We should not at this juncture raise party strife. Never in the history of Australia was it more important that all parties should be unanimous.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: Why not have a united Government?

Hon. T. MOORE: Would it not be a lovely Government if we were to make Sir Hal Colebatch a member of it, especially when he thinks so little of it? Would oil mix with water? I say that the Curtin Government is certainly standing up to its responsibilities and is doing a good job, especially in our war effort. That is the main thing.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: The members of that Government have altered their views considerably.

Hon. T. MOORE: I wish the hon. member would alter his views.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member must address the Chair, not individual members.

Hon. T. MOORE: Some members cannot refrain from interjecting, Mr. President. At all events, the views of some members are not worth much. This political attack, as I will call it, came mostly from an old statesman—or supposed statesman—Sir Hal Colebatch. Mr. Seddon was fair in his remarks, except that he did not tell the whole story regarding what Mr. Johnson said. Mr. Seddon knows that he could not tell the whole story, and that it has been told only in part outside.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: How did it get out?

Hon. T. MOORE: How does anything get out?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Mr. Johnson said something.

Hon. T. MOORE: Put it back on the man!

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Who else could?

Hon. T. MOORE: How many men did Mr. Johnson meet at the various meetings he attended? Those men were asked to respect the confidence he placed in them and not to divulge any information given to them.

Mr. Seddon knows the whole story and knows that it has never been wholly made public. I do not intend to make it public, as that duty does not lie in my province. As I said, Mr. Seddon was fair up to a point. He made out a very good case. Had he moved the motion some time ago, he could have taken credit for originality, but the opinions which he expressed in regard to the marshalling of manpower have already been made public. We have heard that there are men engaged in dog-racing—I have never heard of dog-racing in this State—who could be man-powered, and we know there are men still engaged in non-essential occupations who could be diverted to war work. That is what the Federal Ministers are inquiring into to-day, and I suggest that at this stage we should be helpful, not critical. It is easy to be critical, but why not try to be helpful as well, particularly at the present time?

As far as Mr. Johnson is concerned, he is aware of the position. Certain information was given to him and he took action. Despite what this may mean to the people on the Murchison, if the worst came to the worst they would be quite prepared to make every sacrifice possible to help the war effort. That applies generally to all people on our goldfields. So far as my own province is concerned, I have no doubt whatever about the unanimity of opinion on that score. Mr. Johnson was straightforward, honest and plain speaking. It was wonderful to see the spirit exhibited by the goldfields people. It has always been so. They do not want to ride about in motor cars all day and all night, as do the people in the metropolitan area.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: As soon as they come to Perth, they do.

Hon. T. MOORE: The men I am speaking of rarely come to Perth. That is the type of man carrying on the goldmining industry. I do hope we shall drop this idea of trying to score political points in these times. We must do so if democracy is to continue. Let us be fair and face up to facts. Do not let us belittle ourselves. There are, of course, some members of Parliament whom I would belittle. I could pick out some scapegoats, but I would not refer to members in the way that Sir Hal Colebatch referred to Federal Ministers today.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Are you referring to Mr. Williams?

Hon. T. MOORE: Nobody takes any notice of him.

The **PRESIDENT**: The hon. member must not reflect on any member of this or of another Chamber.

**Hon. T. MOORE**: If what I said was a reflection, I am sorry. When the Youanmi mine closed down, some of the men went to work on other mines. The trouble is that the miners do not know from month to month what is going to happen to them. That has been their position since the outbreak of war, and consequently some of them enlisted. It is time that there was a sizing up of the whole position to see what can best be done.

I feel, however, that we should approach the Federal Ministers now in the State in a proper spirit, and certainly not belittle them. I am pleased to see that Mr. Makin has discovered a plant at Kalgoorlie. Sir Hal Colebatch spoke sneeringly about it, but the fact remains that Mr. Makin did discover this plant at Kalgoorlie. We are heavily handicapped in our war effort and it is therefore pleasing to note that this plant can be made use of. We have in Kalgoorlie many power plants, which should prove of wonderful assistance in the manufacture of munitions. That would be a fine thing to supplement the mining industry. That is the point, because its manpower is just about depleted now. Recruits are still coming from the mining industry. They are coming out this week and have been doing so right up to the present.

It is certainly time some comprehensive policy was set up. I heartily endorse the motion, but it is not original. Federal Ministers are here today to get our views. They are quite agreeable to meet Mr. Seddon and Sir Hal Colebatch. They are prepared to hear everybody. I have no doubt the representatives of the Chamber of Manufactures have met them. We saw yesterday that there was a meeting of people with Mr. Dedman. These things could have happened last year, but I am not here to compare Governments with Governments. We should not belittle men when they are on the eve of doing things. I hope that what has been said about the Governments today will not appear in the Press. I raise my hat to these men for the work they are doing in very difficult times. We are passing through a period when nobody knows what is going to happen. We have to trust our political and military leaders.

During the debate yesterday the military authorities were spoken of very slightly.

We were told they had the wind up. Such statements are very foolish. Whether it is the political people who are criticised or the others, it does not give the public a good impression. We know what "getting the wind up" means. I hope a policy will be set up quickly. I candidly admit that different statements have been made. What we have seen in the Press has later been refuted by Ministers. Whether the Press or the Ministers were right I am not in a position to say. I am not like our friend, Sir Hal Colebatch, who was not at Mr. Johnson's meeting, but said that Mr. Johnson came here with bald statements. He did not hear them but took the information second or third hand. I know that Mr. Johnson did not come here with bald statements, but with pretty well set-up statements backed by facts, as, I think, Mr. Seddon will endorse when he replies. The Chamber of Mines and others have said, "If such is the case we are with you." The people in industry said, "Yes, if it is necessary." I will leave it at that, and to the good sense of members of this House to remember always, if they believe in democracy—and they cannot believe in democracy or this House would not exist—

**Hon. C. F. Baxter**: What is democracy today?

**Hon. T. MOORE**: The hon. member has lost faith in it, but if we do believe in it do not start belittling Governments elected by the people, because at the moment they are having a particularly hard time and should not be unduly criticised. The passing of this motion will have no effect outside. The powers that be are going to meet Mr. Dedman, and have been meeting him, and the Premier and the Minister for Mines have arranged to meet him. We will have, I believe, a comprehensive policy set up by the Curtin Government in connection with the mining industry, and I hope the industry will be saved.

**Hon. J. M. Macfarlane**: Then you do not believe in democracy!

**HON. H. S. W. PARKER** (Metropolitan-Suburban) [2.37]: I was impressed by some of the remarks of Mr. Moore who enunciated what my views have been for some time, that democracy will fail if we have party politics. I am glad he agreed with me because we have so often tried to get a National Government. We are, however, now told

that this is a democracy, and because it is a party Government we must not criticise it.

Hon. T. Moore: It should not be unfairly criticised.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is a question of degree.

Hon. T. Moore: If you think this is fair today you are very biased.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I think the House will agree with me that up to the moment I have not said a word about the Government, but the hon. member fully realises I have a tremendous opportunity to do so if I wish to exercise it. I will exercise it very mildly. We are told that Mr. Johnson came over here fortified with facts, but one speaker said they were told in secret. If they are so good, why should we not all hear them? Why should they only leak out? We have also been told that this House is no good because it does not get publicity. I am afraid Mr. Moore does not read the goldfields papers, because they give a lot of publicity to the deliberations of this Chamber; so much so that a goldfields member complained that even my humble self got a certain amount of space in the "Kalgoorlie Miner." Certainly he has not read this morning's "West Australian."

This Chamber is giving a considerable amount of confidence to the people. Were it not for this House the present State Government could not exist because some of its measures would have been passed, and when the people had seen the effect of them they would have elected another set of representatives. The hon. member should be very pleased indeed that this Chamber does exist, because we have kept Western Australia on a fairly even keel.

This debate is, to me, very welcome because it gives an opportunity of going into the question of manpower. It seems to me that the question of manpower has been exercised in a wrong way. Too much influence, I fear, has been brought to bear on the Government by organised bodies and those institutions, in some instances, carried a great many votes, with the result that under this democratic form of Government human nature has taken effect, and the Government has felt that if it bumped against these organisations things might be a little difficult. That was pointed out very clearly by an earlier speaker this morning.

I would like some assurance that there has been a complete combing of various industries and occupations before the goldmining industry is seriously affected. The main thing we have to fight for in Western Australia is our goldmining industry. It is invaluable, and always has been. Of course before we do that it is necessary to maintain our present form of Government; in other words, fight for our country. We must first of all have our country, and the next thing is to ensure the continuance of our goldmining industry. The other industries depend on it.

A phase that strikes one very forcibly is that as we get into the trams we find what appear to be able-bodied men collecting penny fares. On the buses girls do this work. I am not sure of this point, but they all appear to be under 21 years of age. Surely our tramways could be combed to see whether these tram conductors could be replaced by girls, and put into occupations more suitable for men. We should employ more women and girls, as the Honorary Minister pointed out. I feel sure that we could employ women on the trams, and I have no doubt that in many instances they could be employed in the Railway Department selling tickets, ticket collecting, and examining tickets at the gateways, and so release more manpower. These men may not be altogether fit, but they could do other jobs that men must do.

The Civil Service should be thoroughly combed. I do not know whether that has been done, but I should like an assurance that it has and that all the able-bodied men have been released and replaced by men who are not fit to take the field. My remarks also apply to the three services. There appear to be many men in the Navy, Army, and Air Force who apparently are able-bodied but are merely doing clerical work instead of being in the field. I fully appreciate that we cannot denude the Civil Service, the railways and tramways of every able-bodied man. Some of the jobs require able-bodied men, some of whom may have special qualifications so that they could not easily be replaced. Because an able-bodied man is employed in the Civil Service, it does not necessarily follow that he should be put into the Army; he may have some exceedingly valuable knowledge that is required in the particular office he holds. However, I should like an assurance from the Minister

that all this is being done, that all able-bodied men in all walks of life have been set free for war service, before we attempt to draw further manpower from the basic industry of this State—goldmining.

**HON. H. V. PIESSE** (South-East) [2.47]: I do not intend to give a silent vote on this matter. I congratulate Mr. Seddon on the excellent manner in which he introduced the motion. To a layman like myself, who does not know a great deal about the goldmining industry, Mr. Seddon's information was very helpful and assisted me greatly in determining how to cast my vote. Mr. Moore said this Chamber is of practically no account and that its advice is of no value. I should say that advice such as has been given to the Government on this motion must be helpful to Ministers when the State's case is put before the Commonwealth authorities. We know that the Government of Western Australia is 100 per cent. behind maintaining the goldmining industry in this State.

This morning I had an opportunity to interview Mr. Dedman on various matters, one of them potato growing and the manpower required for that industry, and also on points affecting the agricultural industry. I had a very pleasant chat with him. He is an approachable man and apparently knows exactly what he is going to do. Undoubtedly he is seized with the fact that the war must come first. On that point we can agree with him. Nevertheless, when one considers the great deal of manpower that has been drawn from the agricultural industry and the marvellous response in the shape of voluntary enlistment from the goldfields areas, we must conclude that greater care should be given to such important industries before the manpower resources are further depleted.

In the course of discussion with Mr. Dedman, I remarked that Mr. Stitfold was very courteous and was always ready to listen to our requests. I understand that in the Eastern States the directors of manpower have committees whose members possess a knowledge of the various industries, and they are in a position to act in an advisory capacity to the chief officers. I do not know whether we have a similar committee working with Mr. Stitfold. If we have, I doubt whether any member could mention the personnel of the committee or the work it is doing. Cer-

tainly there should be such a committee and the mining and agricultural industries should be represented on it.

Yesterday I received a letter from a farmer in the Denmark district, who is producing cream and potatoes and is also a fisherman. He is performing essential service. He has a son aged 19 years who has been called up and is the only boy on that property who can work a motor plough that the father has purchased. The plough is not only used to break up that man's farm; it is used to do ploughing for the neighbours to enable them to produce the larger quantities of vegetables desired.

The Honorary Minister: Did he apply for exemption?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Yes, but he has been called up. I have taken up the case with the Minister for Lands and officers of the Manpower Board. This is a case in which exemption should have been granted. We are stressing the need for keeping our men on the land, and equal need exists for keeping our miners on the goldfields. I would comb the aerated water factories I represent and take every man before I would permit of any interference with the goldmining industry. There are many industries from which manpower could be obtained. Why not start with the grocery stores? People could carry away their groceries as they will have to do after the 1st. May.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Those stores are almost empty now.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: No, they are not. Women and girls could be employed for that work.

Hon. J. Cornell: Would you approve of customers being allowed to pull their own beer?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I would not object to that, and I do not think the hon. member, in his earlier years, would have objected. Every avenue of employment should be gone through with a small tooth comb before we interfere with our wonderful primary-producing industry on the goldfields. I again congratulate Mr. Seddon on having introduced the motion. While some of the discussion has been heated, I feel that the printing of the information in "Hansard" must prove helpful to the Government.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

**ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.**

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kilson—West) [2.55]: I move:—

That the House at its rising adjourn to a date to be fixed.

**HON. C. F. BAXTER** (East) [2.56]: In the existing state of affairs, it is not reasonable that the House should be adjourned to a date to be fixed later on. There are several important questions pending, amongst them that of uniform taxation. On that question the Prime Minister appears to be adamant, but he has to obtain a majority in the Senate, even if he has one in the House of Representatives. Then there is the question of the goldmining industry with which we have been dealing today. Another place is sitting and a number of Bills have been introduced there. We have been told outside the House that the Bills will not be proceeded with, but the Government has not said so. If the Lower House proceeds to consider those measures, this House should not be adjourned to a date to be fixed. No one knows when that date would be; probably it would not be till next session.

The position confronting us is peculiar. The House should adjourn to a specific date, even if we meet for only a couple of days. We do not know what will happen from day to day. Many vexed questions have arisen since we adjourned before Christmas, and I think any adjournment at this stage should be for a specific period. The Premier will shortly be returning from the Eastern States and should be able to report to Parliament on the important business he has been discussing at the Premiers' Conference. I understood that the Minister for Mines went to Melbourne especially to discuss mining matters with Mr. Dedman, but Mr. Dedman is in Perth. According to the Press the two Ministers are to meet in Melbourne on Sunday next. We want to know what is going to happen in the goldmining industry, which is a vital industry to this State. It is not right to ask Parliament to adjourn to a date to be fixed. A date might be fixed 10 days hence, but then a period must elapse before the House could be called together again.

**HON. V. HAMERSLEY** (East) [2.58]: I was under the impression that the Chief Secretary intended to ask the House to ad-

journal for a fortnight, and had he done so I believe that would have met the wishes of members. To ask for an adjournment to a date to be fixed will give no assurance that we will meet in three weeks, a month or even six months. I support the remarks of Mr. Baxter; we do not want to be left in the air. I cannot overlook the remarks of Mr. Moore. There may be a few other members of the community who think that his party ought to ignore the Legislative Council. It comes as a shock to be treated in this way and to hear the suggestion that it is immaterial whether this House meets or not. It would be far more satisfactory if we knew that we had to return on some definite day, say a fortnight hence.

**HON. E. H. H. HALL** (Central) [2.59]: I am surprised that the Chief Secretary should have moved this motion, if for no other reason than that he has repeatedly reminded us that he has always treated the House with the courtesy due to it. Seeing that the whole of our time today has been occupied with the consideration of a motion dealing with the most important industry of the State, surely the member who introduced that motion should be given an opportunity to reply to the debate. I think the Chief Secretary ought to arrange a sitting at which that discussion could be completed. Presumably the decision will rest with members, but I certainly think that the House should adjourn to a definite date.

**HON. J. CORNELL** (South) [3.0]: I should not like to see the House take the business out of the Minister's hands, but I do realise that there is a large majority of the members here assembled who are of opinion that the Chamber should not adjourn to a date to be fixed, but that it should fix a specific date. For this there are several reasons. One is that certain regulations have been disallowed. Two of those disallowances are popular among the public, though they may be disconcerting to those who promulgated the regulations. Fresh regulations are certain to be made. We know what happened last session. A regulation was disallowed, but was again promulgated in other language.

Then there is the question with which the Commonwealth Government intends to go ahead, though the State Premiers are unanimous against the proposal. If the House

would agree to adjourn to, say, next Tuesday fortnight, what hardship would be entailed? The only possible hardship is that of bringing members here with little or nothing to do. But that is part of what we are paid for. Surely at a time like this we will not consider that aspect for a moment. Inconvenience will be experienced by two Ministers; but if there is something to do it should be done. I am sure Ministers would be only too willing to do it. If there is nothing to do, the House can again adjourn to another date. I hope the Chief Secretary will agree to that proposal.

**HON. H. SEDDON** (North-East) [3.3]: I endorse the remarks of Mr. Cornell. I do not like the idea of taking business out of the Minister's hands, although I did it on one occasion.

The Chief Secretary: The business of the House is in the hands of the House.

**HON. H. SEDDON**: I understand that the Minister feels he cannot fix a definite date owing to the fact that until the Premier's return there cannot be a decision upon what is now occupying the Premier's attention. But if, as Mr. Cornell suggests, we adjourn to a definite date, we could come down then. I think it would strengthen the hands of the Premier if the House passed a definite motion against uniform taxation, instead of adjourning to an indefinite date.

**HON. H. S. W. PARKER** (Metropolitan-Suburban) [3.4]: Would the Minister amend his motion by adding words such as "but such date not to be later than" such and such a date?

Members: We cannot do that.

**HON. H. S. W. PARKER**: Would the Minister be prepared to add to his motion "but that such date be not later than the 12th May"? Then we would have to meet by a certain date, but the meeting must be earlier than that date.

#### *Personal Explanation.*

The Chief Secretary: Members are well aware of the present position, and—

**HON. J. CORNELL**: The Minister is replying, is he not?

The Chief Secretary: Quite so.

**HON. J. CORNELL**: I desire to move an amendment. If the Minister replies now, I shall endeavour to vote the motion out with a view to inserting a new date.

The Chief Secretary: I have no wish to prevent a member from submitting any amendment or motion whatever. I believe misunderstanding has been caused by a member not moving an amendment; but Mr. Cornell, as one of the oldest members of this Chamber, has no right to assume that when I rise to reply some other member is going to move an amendment.

**HON. J. CORNELL**: I suggest to the Minister that in order to meet the views of members he agrees not to fix a date.

The President: I assume that the Minister takes the position that he is making a personal explanation.

The Chief Secretary: Very well.

#### *Debate Resumed.*

**HON. W. J. MANN** (South-West) [3.7]: We want to get down to something definite. With a certain amount of diffidence, which I feel for the same reason as other members have voiced against taking the business out of the Chief Secretary's hands, I suggest that the consensus of the House appears to be that we should adjourn to a fixed date. Therefore I move an amendment—

That after the word "to," the words "a date to be fixed" be struck out and the words "Tuesday, the 12th May," inserted in lieu.

**HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH** (Metropolitan—on amendment) [3.8]: I second the amendment. I would greatly have preferred the Chief Secretary, realising the feeling of the House, to alter his motion accordingly, or else give some assurance that the House would be called together. I believe the public expects that Parliament should be in session at the present time. There are two matters pending, uniform taxation and the position of the goldmining industry; and until those matters are settled, Parliament should remain in session.

**HON. C. F. BAXTER** (East—on amendment) [3.9]: I purposely opened this question at an earlier stage of the sitting in order to give the Chief Secretary an opportunity to accept the feeling of the House. The last thing I want to do is to take the business out of the Minister's hands. It is not the custom in this House to take action of that nature. I hoped the Chief Secretary would check himself when he knew the feeling of the House. The hon. gentleman

says that sittings of the House take up the time of Ministers; but the deliberations of Parliament are highly important. After all, there is some talk about meeting at 11 a.m. It is highly inconvenient for Ministers to be here at that hour. The complete black-out of this building would require only a small expenditure, small as compared with the expense to which some private persons have been put. Before the next session, at all events, Parliament House should be blacked out, so that Ministers might have a greater amount of time free from Parliamentary duties. But the more important business of Parliament should not be set aside for that reason. I hope the Chief Secretary will accept the amendment.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—on amendment) [3.11]: As I remarked previously, I believe members to be just as fully aware of the present position as I am. They know of the Premier's absence on the very matters upon which they are laying so much stress. We have no information as to when the Premier will return; but until he does return no Minister is in a position to reply adequately to what has already been said in this Chamber. I cannot say that the time of this House has been very valuably occupied today; if my candid opinion is desired. Not one thing has been said today that the Government is not fully aware of and has not made representations upon. So how can it be argued that what has been said here this morning will be of any material value?

I do not want to enter into any discussion on this subject, and I do not wish to be the cause of bringing members back on a particular date if there is nothing for us to do on that date. I contend that the reasonable course is to adjourn this House to a date to be fixed, which will be in conformity with what the Assembly proposes to do, as I am advised. When we do meet on the next occasion, what is there to discuss?

Hon. J. Cornell: No harm will be done.

**The CHIEF SECRETARY:** No harm will be done, but there is valuable work to be transacted that will not permit of wasting time or coming here when there is nothing to come here for. I have no desire to prevent any motion whatever being dis-

cussed in this Chamber. That, I think, is clear from my attitude during the last two sittings. I have given every member an opportunity to say what he desired on every question that came before the House. There has been no attempt on my part to prevent any member from expressing his views. In fact, members have had better opportunities this time than they had ever before. However, I have no feeling in the matter. Whatever the House decides will be quite satisfactory to me. I am merely stating what the position is. The Legislative Assembly, I am advised, will adjourn tonight; and that is the reason for my moving the motion that we adjourn to a date to be fixed.

If members feel they would like to come back to the date mentioned, Tuesday, the 12th May, I do not mind, although it is inconvenient to attend the House when there is so little to be done, while at the same time there is a host of things to be done outside. That is the position. Members cannot complain that they have not had every opportunity while we have been sitting to discuss items on the notice paper. I have no intention of debaring them from considering any motions, but I think they could very well leave the matter where it is in regard to an adjournment. I oppose the amendment but, with whatever the House desires I shall be only too pleased to fall in.

Amendment put and passed.

Question, as amended, put and passed.

*House adjourned at 3.18 p.m.*