

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Would it not be better to adjourn until Tuesday next?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think it would be possible to do so.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 23rd February, 1915.

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

QUESTION—BREAD, PRICE PER LOAF.

Mr. FOLEY (without notice) asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that in some of the outback towns of the State 8d. per loaf is being charged for bread. 2, Can he inform the House whether it is within the province of the board appointed to deal with similar matters to go into this question?

The PREMIER replied: I am not aware of what the hon. member states. It is, however, a matter that the Commission can inquire into and take action upon, if necessary.

QUESTION—RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION, YILLIMINING-KONDININ.

1. Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON asked the Minister for Works: 1, In reference to the Government's recent promise respecting the Yillimining-Kondinin railway, namely, that it will be handed over to the Railway Department at the end of this month, can he yet state the definite date for such handing over? If not, why not? 2, Is he aware that settlers have ploughs, drills, and other agricultural machinery, furniture, fertilisers, seed wheat, etc., which they desire to take to their holdings, as soon as this railway is made available under reasonable conditions and freights, and that the whole of the districts served by the railway are suffering from the existing uncertainty and doubt as to when the railway will be opened?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Owing to the recent storms in this district, which have necessitated repairs to the railway, the line will be handed over to the Working Railways on the 15th March. 2, If so, the date has now been fixed and the uncertainty removed.

QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAY FARES.

Excursion rates, Eastern Districts.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to reduce the passenger fares on the country sections of our railways to the same basis as charged on suburban areas. 2, If not, in view of the heavy loss entailed by the present rates of passenger fares, is it the intention of the Government to raise the fares on the suburban areas to a higher basis?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, Not at the present time.

Suburban and Country.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Will he extend the time of excursion (summer) tickets from the

Eastern Wheat Belt to the same period as prevails upon the Goldfields? 2, Is he aware that the living conditions are equally as hot and trying on the Wheat Belt as on the Goldfields? 3, Is he aware that the period when excursion tickets expire in these areas is too soon to allow these wheat growers to get to Perth, owing to harvest operations?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Excursion tickets for distances up to 150 miles are available for return for one month; over 150 miles, for three months. It is not proposed to make any alteration. 2, Distance, not climatic conditions, is the factor which governs the period for which the tickets are available. 3, No. Excursion tickets are issued up to 5th April.

QUESTION—UNIONISTS AND PREFERENCE.

Hon FRANK WILSON asked the Premier: 1, Have instructions been issued by the Government that no man who was not a member of a trades union on the 1st August, 1914, is to be employed by any Government department? 2, If so, by what departments?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Return of particulars *re* Cue-Meekatharra Railway (ordered on motion by Mr. Holman).

By the ATTORNEY GENERAL: Amended regulations under Electoral Act.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

Mr. HOLMAN (Murchison) [4.35]: Further progress has been made by the Joint Select Committee on Money Bills Procedure, but it is extremely doubtful whether any final decision can be arrived at this session. I think, however, that an interim report will be prepared and will

be ready to present to both Houses on Thursday next. I do not think there is any possibility of coming to a final decision, at least a decision which will carry us over this session. I move—

That the time for bringing up the Joint Select Committee's report be extended to Thursday next.

Question passed.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Dividends Duties Act Amendment Bill.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1914-15.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the Loan Estimates, 1914-15.

In Committee of Supply.

The House resolved into a Committee of Supply for the purpose of considering the Loan Estimates, Mr. Holman in the Chair.

Vote—*Departmental*, £93,092:

The PREMIER AND TREASURER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [4.45]: The Estimates of expenditure under Loan Account for the current year are now before hon. members for their information and approval. I do not propose to enlarge to any great extent on the expenditure from Loan last year, nor do I propose to deal extensively with the proposals for the current year, because I have dealt with both sides of the Loan Account in my Budget speech, and it is only necessary to explain the items which now appear on the Loan Estimates and particularly those which involve new expenditure. Most of the loan expenditure for the current year is to complete works which were in hand and provided for under previous Loan Bills or Loan Estimates and little new work has been provided for during the current year. For the convenience of hon. members I have had a return pre-

pared in detail of the Loan expenditure for the year 1913-14 and side by side with it the expenditure for the six months ended 31st December last. It will be noted at the outset that the amount for "Departmental" for last year has been distributed over the different items which cannot be done when the Loan Estimates are submitted. It is always done at the close of the financial year when the distribution is made according to the work performed on each item under the Estimates. To the 31st December last the amount charged against "Departmental" which will eventually be distributed over the various works, amounted to £35,429 14s. 1d.

Mr. Taylor: For what period was that?

The PREMIER: The half-year ended 31st December last. The return before hon. members shows the amount expended on each of these items plus the amount provided on last year's Estimates for "Departmental." As I have already explained, the amount for "Departmental" is distributed over the various works, but not until the close of the financial year when we know what works have been commenced and how far they have progressed can we distribute the amount provided for departmental expenditure. This year the amount expended to the 31st December on each of these items is less the actual amount shown under "Departmental." The £35,000 will be distributed and added to each of the particular items, but it will be recognised that there will be no difference in the total. It will be found that £2,913,010 1s. 1d. was expended last year from the General Loan Fund, that amount being £496,208 less than in the previous year, or £705,622 less than was authorised by the Loan Estimates for the year. Last year £506,638 was found for the Agricultural Bank—that is over half a million of new capital, £278,000 for workers' homes, £56,219 on immigration and £41,242 on land purchases. This leaves a balance of £2,030,911 for public works and undertakings, of which amount £1,166,584 was expended on railways and

tramways, details of which will be found in the return. This amount includes £69,648 expended for the new power station at East Perth. A sum of £89,870 was spent on harbours and rivers, including £66,141 on the Fremantle harbour works. Under Water Supply and Sewerage £350,280 was disbursed, which includes £140,581 on the sewerage of Perth and Fremantle. Development of Mining and Public Batteries accounted for £32,571, and Development of Agriculture for £132,121, which includes £64,813 on abattoirs. The remaining items of loan expenditure are:—public buildings, £44,166; roads and bridges, £6,166; brick yards, £13,710; State hotels, £17,090; quarries, £652; State implement works, £43,070; State sawmills, £126,415; State steamships, £5,906; State ferries, £2,000; State milk supply, £385. These items are self-explanatory, but if any further information is required it can be furnished by the Ministers in charge of the various departments concerned. It will be seen that the estimated loan expenditure for the current year is £2,853,798, and in connection with this matter I must inform the House that to finance this expenditure I am relying on receiving the amount necessary from a loan of £3,100,000 from the Commonwealth Government, being portion of the £18,000,000 loan which has been promised to the Commonwealth by the Imperial Government. The rate of interest for the loan has not yet been determined, but I anticipate that it will not be more than £4 2s. 6d. per cent. Members will agree. I think, that if the loan works out on that basis we shall have been exceedingly fortunate in obtaining funds to carry on public works under existing conditions at such a low rate of interest. In referring to Loan Estimates it will be seen that £888,464 has been approved under Railways and Tramways, of which amount £627,764 is for railways. This latter total includes £10,000 for the Bolgart extension. This amount is provided towards the construction of the Bolgart extension, the total cost of which will be about £50,500. I do not want members to

confuse the provisions of a Loan Bill with the works provided for under our Annual Estimates. We are only providing the amount necessary to carry on until the end of June; after that the balance will be provided for under a Loan Bill. For the Kukerin-Lake Grace railway £10,000 is provided. It is anticipated that a commencement will be made with this line, the total cost of which will be about £40,000. For the Wagin-Bowelling line £42,000 is provided. This is another new line, and I have provided this amount in anticipation of substantial progress being made this year. The work is already in hand and the total cost of it will approximate £96,000. For the Wongan-Mullewa line £85,000 is provided, and this amount is to complete the line. Almost the whole of it has already been expended. For the Yillimining-Kondinin line £47,000 is provided to complete that line, and there is £20,000 for the Wickiepin-Merredin line which has been completed. Towards the construction of the Wyalatchem-Mount Marshall line, I anticipate expending £30,000, but this will be insufficient to complete the work; it is expected that a further £37,800 will be required. For the working of new railways efficient water supplies are necessary, and at least £50,000 will be required under that heading, provision for which has been made accordingly. Additions and improvements to opened railways will absorb £100,000. This will not be sufficient to make all the necessary additions and improvements to opened lines, but under the conditions prevailing we must as far as possible carry on with existing conveniences. When a railway warrants additional expenditure for increased conveniences, we must find the money for the work, but I wish members to bear in mind the fact that at the present juncture it is not desirable to expend large sums of loan money, which are difficult to obtain and which might be more difficult to obtain in future, to provide extra facilities without which we might carry on although at some inconvenience to the users of the railways. There are many things which are necessary, but under the prevailing

conditions we are unable to provide all that is required.

Mr. Taylor: Do you refer to new lines?

The PREMIER: Principally to new lines. Members will realise that when new lines are constructed in country districts, while at the outset the conveniences required are not very elaborate, as the districts progress other facilities become necessary. The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson) mentioned the need for a weighbridge and other members have referred to other requirements in connection with railways which have been opened for years. I ask members to endeavour to get their constituents to appreciate the present position and to carry on for the time being with the existing facilities. This amount is considerably less than the Commissioner of Railways considers necessary, but in order to meet the financial exigencies, the items have been reduced. For rails and fastenings and rolling stock £159,000 has been provided which I am assured represents the minimum requirements under that head. For the Perth Electric Tramways, £23,000 will be required. This amount includes the purchase of the Osborne Park tramways for £4,250, the Mounts Bay-road extension, the building of the western sub-station and sundry small items. The Mounts Bay-road extension has been practically completed. The amount for the Perth Electric Tramways represents commitments for plant supplied, and the purchase of the Osborne Park line was completed early last year. Good progress is being made with the sub-station. We have to provide £238,700 for the electric power station at East Perth. We expect to have to meet this commitment in London before the 30th June next.

Mr. Taylor: That does not complete it.

The PREMIER: Hardly. There will be only a small contract outstanding in connection with the switchboard gear. All the other gear has been provided. Under the heading of Harbours and Rivers, £159,487 has been provided. One of the principal items is the Fremantle Harbour Works, £100,000. This is intended for the completion of the extensions of the north wharf eastwards and westwards and also

for carrying on the construction of the wharf in the dock basin. The work of deepening the entrance channel to 36 feet is being proceeded with as are also additions to sidings to facilitate wheat handling. At Bunbury increased berthage accommodation is being provided for, and it is anticipated that £15,000 will be expended this year on that work. At Albany, £30,000 has been provided to be expended upon the construction of a new jetty and the deepening of Nalbine Bay.

Mr. Thomas: Why the great disparity between the two?

The PREMIER: The hon. member will not ask me, on the ground that each place has a harbour, to provide the same amount of money to be expended upon each.

Mr. Thomas: Is Albany of so much more importance?

The PREMIER: Not from a political point of view.

Mr. Thomas: Nor from a financial point of view.

The PREMIER: There is not much disparity in the amount of the expenditure—

Mr. Thomas: Only about 50 per cent.

The PREMIER: Except that Bunbury has been provided with better accommodation than Albany up to date.

Mr. Thomas: Bunbury provides more in the way of revenue.

The PREMIER: That may be so, but the hon. member will appreciate that the trade of Bunbury is largely in connection with the export of national assets, for instance, timber, and we are only getting back some of the value for what we are exporting. At Albany dues are received from ships having very little in view, which make that the first port of call. Among them are the biggest ships trading to Australia and we must make provision for them.

Mr. Thomas: It is only on a par with the treatment we have always received.

The PREMIER: The hon. member has not much to complain about.

Mr. Thomas: I have a lot to complain about, and shall complain pretty loudly too.

The PREMIER: I fully anticipate that the same attitude will be adopted by hon. members on the Loan Estimates as on the Revenue Estimates. While they are asking for the introduction of economies, they will endeavour to show that more money should be expended in each particular constituency.

Mr. Carpenter: I will show that more money should be expended at Fremantle.

The PREMIER: The hon. member may have more reason to complain because we recognise that Fremantle is our principal port and we should make provision so that any ship trading to Australia might with safety call at Fremantle. We are not making the progress which we should and would make under normal conditions. The amount has been reduced below that asked for by the engineers to provide the necessary shipping facilities at the principal port.

Mr. Taylor interjected.

The PREMIER: One has to appreciate the fact that the facilities provided at Albany are not anything in comparison with those provided at all other ports, with the exception, perhaps, of Geraldton. Under these circumstances we are not concerned so much about Albany as that it is a port for providing shipping facilities for the producers, and it is for the purpose of providing the cheap handling of products that we require facilities at Albany.

Mr. Thomas: Are they held up half as much as at Bunbury?

The PREMIER: I can assure the hon. member that such is the case. Notwithstanding that sometimes Bunbury has difficulties in finding all the accommodation necessary for ships to take away our timber, the facilities at Bunbury are better for handling timber, than the facilities for handling wheat at Albany. We must provide at Fremantle all the facilities necessary for berthing accommodation for any ship coming to Australia. We have to admit, whether we like it or not, that Fremantle is our principal port. It is the principal port of the State and should be provided with additional shipping facilities. I may assert that there is no other State of the Commonwealth, so far as the State Government is con-

cerned, that is provided with the same amount of money and the same facilities at the outer harbours than we have in Western Australia. That is something that should be taken into account when the question of the expenditure at Fremantle is considered. The sum of £7,000 has been provided for works at Gladstone Wyndham, Onslow and Carnarvon; £1,896 at Port Hedland, and £2,500 in connection with contemplated harbour works at Geraldton. I had better pass that quickly as the hon. member is in his place. Water Supply and Sewerage £307,359. This heading covers sewerage for Perth and Fremantle £150,000, the money being required for the construction of two filter beds, a new syphon under the Swan river, further reticulation works at Perth and Fremantle, improvements to the Perth septic tanks, and two additional pumping stations at Fremantle. Also Metropolitan Water Supply £80,000. This amount is intended to cover the cost of various improvements and additions to the existing service, also the commencement of a proposed new hills' water supply.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Hear, hear.

The PREMIER: For the various gold-fields water supplies £35,470 has been provided, and for the agricultural districts £20,000, which includes drainage and irrigation. Development of gold-fields, etcetera, £108,000. The items under this head are development of mining, £27,000; from this item the mining industry is assisted; erection of State batteries, £21,000; State smelter at Ravensthorpe, £60,000. This item has been provided to assist the mining industry at Ravensthorpe by way of advances to cover working expenses, and on account of copper ore produced and exported. Under the arrangement the whole amount will be recovered with interest. That is the amount that will have to be provided to give assistance under the Assistance to Industries Act.

Mr. Taylor interjected.

The PREMIER: I may say for the information of the hon. member that I have already approved of the expenditure of £4,000 to carry on the development of

mining in his district. Development of Agriculture, £930,500. This large amount is principally made up of £350,000 for the Agricultural Department and £500,000 for assistance to settlers. That is under the Assistance to Industries Act as well. Under the former heading the additional amount is required to provide further working capital for the bank. The latter is a new item, and is intended to cover the cost, which, unfortunately, has become necessary, of assistance to those unfortunate producers who have been impoverished by the recent drought; the assistance will be in the nature of seed wheat and fodder, also financial assistance under the Statute.

Mr. James Gardiner: £500,000.

The PREMIER: We anticipate £500,000 will be sufficient with the method provided for handling the fund. The money may be used over and over again. The only amount required for actual expenditure will be that used before the 30th June. We have made provision in the Loan Bill for £700,000, but it is anticipated that the £500,000 will be sufficient until June next. The Loan Estimates are in the same position as the Revenue Estimates. If it is found necessary before the end of the financial year to spend more than is provided we may excess on the Loan Estimates as we do on the Revenue Estimates, but we anticipate that £500,000 will be sufficient to the end of June. Another item is £32,000 for abattoirs, cold storage, etcetera. From this item it is proposed to commence the construction of freezing, chilling, and canning works at Wyndham. Roads and Bridges, Public Buildings, etcetera, £134,000. Under this head public buildings absorb £85,000, the expenditure being intended to cover the Woorooloo sanatorium, commencement of new Government offices, maternity home, and elsewhere.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Make it Weld Square.

The PREMIER: Provision has also been made for reinstating the Perth-Fremantle road at an estimated cost of £29,000, also for preliminary work in connection with the new road and railway

bridge in the vicinity of Fremantle, in connection with which borings are now being conducted. I may say that the Commissioner of Railways and his engineers have already passed on the responsibility for the condition of the Fremantle railway bridge from their own shoulders to that of the Executive. The Commissioner has pointed out that owing to the many piles which have been driven from time to time a new bridge will be required, therefore a large amount will be necessary for repairs, amounting to £13,000. The bridge is perfectly safe at the present time, but in order to keep it in repair and for public safety a large amount would have to be expended. As that amount is not warranted, in the near future a new bridge for railway purposes will have to be constructed, and we propose to make a commencement. The borings will be made at as early a date as possible. Other undertakings, £225,715. Under this heading, £100,000 is provided as additional capital for the Workers' Homes Board; although the operations of the board have been practically suspended at the present time, the amount is required to cover advances under commitments. Under Trading Concerns, additional capital is required, the amounts provided being, Agricultural Implement Works, £15,000; ferries (new boat), £6,000; sawmills, £23,000; brick yards, £11,000; State hotels, £15,000; the latter item being in connection with the establishment of State hotels at Bolgart and Corrigin. The two remaining items of expenditure requiring explanation are, purchase of plant (suspense) £50,000, and purchase of stock (suspense) £5,000. In connection with these items a new principle is to be introduced into the public accounts. In the case of the plant suspense account, it is intended that the plant required in the construction of public works shall be charged to a suspense account instead of to the particular work upon which it may be utilised for the time being. Under the system to be adopted the undertaking will be charged with the hire and depreciation of the plant, which it is considered will be a much more satisfactory method than

has been adopted in the past, where one work has frequently borne the whole cost of the plant, notwithstanding that it may have been available for other works.

Mr. Taylor: What life have you set down?

The PREMIER: Not any particular life.

Mr. James Gardiner: The cost will be debited to each work that the plant is used upon.

The PREMIER: Under existing conditions we provide a definite sum estimated to be required to meet departmental expenditure on loan works, but at the end of the year we distribute that amount over the various works according to the amount of expenditure. In regard to plant, much the same proceeding will be adopted. The cost of the plant will be charged against a suspense account. Take a dredging plant, for instance, which is purchased to carry on dredging at Bunbury, but which is in excess of the dredging requirements at Bunbury; the plant is then shifted to Geraldton, it is not fair to charge the purchase of the plant to the Bunbury Harbour Works, although it was purchased in the first instance for that particular work, therefore the plant is charged to suspense. Then an amount according to the life of the plant will be charged to Bunbury, and the balance will be held in suspense, and when the plant is used for any other work an amount will be charged against this other work until the whole item disappears.

Mr. Taylor: And you may still have the plant if it is looked after.

The PREMIER: We may still have the plant with the suspense account cleared. These are the only matters that call for any explanation on my part. The various statements are provided at the end of the Loan Estimates, and I may say I have also provided on this occasion a return showing the expenditure of each item for the last year, and showing the amount expended up to the 31st December. Members may wonder why we only expended £990,000 to the 30th December, and yet we provided for considerably over £2,000,000 to the end of June next. Mem-

bers will better appreciate that when I say that there is one item alone accounting for half a million pounds providing for assistance to settlers, which will be all expended from now until the 30th June. It will be expended in the first half year. Some of the works are nearing completion, but until they are completed the amount is not debited against them, and as the works are drawing to a completion the amount is greater in the second half year than in the first. That is all I have to say, and I submit the Estimates of the Loan Expenditure for the year to members for their favourable consideration and adoption.

Progress reported.

BILL—LOAN £2,850,000.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending the Bill.

First Reading.

Introduced by the Premier, and read a first time.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [5.20] in moving the second reading said: I desire to explain to hon. members that, apart from the necessity of obtaining by Loan Estimates authority for the expenditure of loan funds, it is essential that authority should be obtained to raise the necessary money for the purpose of carrying on public works. Hon. members will observe that as regards amounts the Loan Bill and the Loan Estimates do not agree. There is frequently misunderstanding as the result of these discrepancies. A Loan Bill, I may explain, merely gives authority to raise money for specific purposes, which purposes are stated in the schedule to the Loan Bill. Until authority has been given under the Loan Estimates the Government are not legally authorised to expend loan money in directions other than those provided by the schedule to the Loan Bill. Further, the Loan Bill is, as a rule, necessary in order to provide authority for the raising of the funds re-

quired by the Government to carry on until March of the succeeding year; and the loan provision under this Bill is for the purpose of enabling the Government to carry on until March, 1916. Thus, hon. members will see at once that some items in the Loan Bill must be in excess of the corresponding items on the Loan Estimates; while other items of the Loan Bill may not appear at all on the Loan Estimates, because the Government have already received authority under a previous Loan Act to raise the money required for those items. Although the Government had a sum of no less than £2,018,670 available for raising on the 30th June last, a further loan authorisation has become necessary, this being due in some cases to further authority being required for specific authorised undertakings and in others to the contemplation of undertakings such as railways, Agricultural Bank, and assistance to settlers and others. It will be remembered by those who were members of the last Parliament that during the session of 1913 a loan authority of £2,000,000 was granted; and the whole of this sum was subsequently raised; but under the Loan Act of 1912 a sum of £2,018,670 has still to be raised; and that is after allowing for temporary raisings by Treasury Bills. So far as it has been considered expedient, reappropriations have been made in the Bill now before the House to assist items which are deficient; and, although it is quite possible for further reappropriations, for the time being, to be made, which to an extent will provide the authority for some of the new items, I have considered it more advisable to ask for further authority rather than adopt the other course. Hon. members will understand that while we had on 30th June last authority to raise a sum of over two million pounds, a fair proportion of that sum had already been raised, and at the same time there are certain items which actually remain in abeyance. The authority to raise the money, however, does not compel us to raise it; but we consider that as it is almost completely within the realms of certainty that various works will be commenced sooner or later, and

that accordingly the money will be expended, it is not desirable to keep down the total of the Loan Bill by reappropriating funds, although, on the face of it, that course might appear better than, seemingly, to ask for authority to raise four million pounds. In point of fact, the intention of the Government is only to raise the amount necessary for the purpose of completing the works mentioned, and of providing for the works authorised by the Loan Estimates from time to time. A large total in a Loan Bill does not necessarily commit Parliament to large expenditure. The Loan Bill really does nothing except give the necessary authority to raise money as required from time to time under Loan Estimates. I am, therefore, asking the House to authorise the raising of £2,850,000, as detailed in the Bill. It will be seen that the items are principally those to which I have already made reference in dealing with the Loan Estimates, with the exception of provision for the Nyabing-Pingrup Railway, £31,000, and also the Esperance-Northwards railway, for which I have provided £40,000. The Agricultural Bank and assistance to settlers absorb no less than £1,250,000 of the amount. Hon. members will at once admit that in allocating out of a total of £2,850,000 no less than 1¼ millions to the development of agriculture and to assistance to settlers, the Government are treating the farming industry very generously. The generosity of the Government in this respect springs from their consideration for the fact that the settlers are suffering severely at the present time and the further fact that the well-being of the man on the land means a great deal to the well-being of the State as a whole. I have really nothing further to add except to ask hon. members to bear in mind the fact that by passing this Bill they are not committing the country to any expenditure, but merely granting the Government authority to raise money for the specific purposes set forth in the Loan Estimates, which are equally in the control of the House. The Loan Estimates will grant the Government authority to spend money

on the works, but only if Parliament so desires. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Frank Wilson debate adjourned.

BILL—INCOME AND PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENTS TAXATION.

Message.

Message received from the Governor and read recommending the Bill.

First reading.

Introduced by the Premier, and read a first time.

Second reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [5.30] in moving the second reading said: Hon. members will, I think, agree that under the conditions at present prevailing it is necessary that the Government should have at their disposal funds sufficient for the purpose of assisting such of our citizens as have been less fortunate than others in retaining or securing employment, and also for the purpose of rendering assistance needed in other directions. I want hon. members to appreciate the fact that the question of special taxation under existing conditions does not apply to Western Australia alone. Other States have found it necessary to impose special taxation for the purpose of meeting abnormal expenditure, and side by side with that the falling revenue. We have not been singular in that direction, nor have the other States. Under normal conditions it might not have been necessary to obtain additional funds by the means now proposed, but our railway revenue has been declining month by month, due not only to war conditions, but largely to drought, and we are endeavouring, with the means at our disposal, to tide our people over the trying difficulties which have forced themselves upon them, and at the same time to enable the State to recover to some extent its position. We have also to admit that there are disabilities suf-

ferred by many citizens, and we are called upon to provide assistance to any section which may require it. I think the present measure will be a test of the sincerity of our friends on the Opposition cross benches. They frequently assert that they are grateful for any assistance which is being rendered to the settler, owing to the unfortunate conditions which have of late come about, and they also state that they are prepared to assist other industries if called upon to do so. I am going to put them to the test in this matter, and see whether they really are prepared to help those citizens, who, while they may not be directly interested in an industry, are at the same time citizens worthy of as much consideration as those who are on the land. If our friends opposite are really sympathetic, they can help us to give the people to whom I have referred much needed assistance. It is only fair to our friends opposite, however, to state that they did not consult us in regard to this matter, nor did we consult them. I have not extracted from them any pledge, nor do I propose to do so. It is a matter that they can answer for themselves.

Mr. Willmott: You want to extract our bit of "brass."

The PREMIER: That interjection has a great bearing on the position. If that is the case, we can withdraw the assistance we have rendered to the settlers, because we do not wish to provide "brass" for those who have it. If a settler has "brass" he does not require assistance from us.

Mr. Willmott: The trouble is he has not gold.

The PREMIER: We want hon. members to recognise that after the mature consideration of many forms of taxation available to us, under the existing conditions, the two proposed in the measure before the House will, in my opinion, be the means of raising the funds which we require, and at the same time the tax will bear lightly upon the community, more so indeed than many other methods of taxation which might have been suggested. First, we deal with the income tax. It is really a tax in addition to the

income tax already imposed, with this difference: the income tax which operates at present provides that a person shall pay this year a tax on his income obtained last year. The new tax, or super tax, provides that he shall pay a tax this year on his income of this year. It has been suggested in some quarters that the tax should be paid on the basis of last year's income. This would be quite unfair, because the incomes of a number of people may have practically disappeared while the incomes of others may have diminished.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: How will you estimate it?

The PREMIER: We shall not estimate it.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: They do not pay on the estimate; they pay on the actual income.

The PREMIER: How can we say what the income will be until the present year has expired? Each citizen will only pay according to the income he receives for the twelve months. The main feature about the measure is that we recognise that any person, whether he be a Government servant, or a private citizen, earning an income from his own exertion, or by any other means, provided that income exceeds £156, will have to pay a proportion of it to a special fund, which will be established for the purpose of providing for those in need of assistance and who have fallen on evil days through no fault of their own. As I have just mentioned, we have exempted all persons in receipt of less than £156 per annum. If a person were to pay one per cent. on £157, he would be in a much worse position than the person receiving £156, and instead of compelling the person in receipt of £157 to pay £1 11s. 8d., it will be seen that we provide that the tax he will be called upon to pay will be £1 only. Beyond the £157, of course, that provision will not apply. Another point to keep in mind is that if any person is not receiving any income during this particular calendar year, he will pay no tax. I want that clearly understood and remembered. If his income has diminished to such an extent that he has none left, he will not pay

any tax. If a person's income exceeds £156 he will have to pay in accordance with the table set out in the schedule. Under the provisions prevailing just now, if additional funds are necessary—and I do not think hon. members will deny that they are necessary—

Hon. J. Mitchell: They ought not to be.

The PREMIER: Even admitting the hon. member is right, but I would not admit it for a moment, the fact remains that additional funds are necessary. That is the position we have to face. Funds are essential to enable the executive to provide for the needs of all expedients. We have made provision for the various industries to enable them to carry on. We have provided for the agriculturist to the extent that he can obtain stores, seed wheat, and manures. But there are hundreds in the community who, through no fault of their own, but entirely on account of the prevailing conditions, have been thrown out of employment; their livelihood is absolutely gone.

Hon. J. Mitchell: This will not give them more work.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member will read the Bill he will see that the money which is to be raised under this tax will be earmarked to provide special work that has not already been provided for by an appropriation of Parliament.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Will it be paid in wages?

The PREMIER: Of course it will be paid in wages. If the hon. member will listen without interrupting he will learn something. The position has arisen that we require funds for specific purposes. If we are prepared to help those who are engaged in definite industries to enable them to eventually recover, that is, to help them over their temporary troubles, we are entitled to assist those who though not attached to any definite industry, also find themselves in difficulties. The amount which will be raised by this tax, will be merely for the purpose of helping those who are in dire distress to-day, a distress which is temporary.

Mr. Smith: Will the amount raised be used for providing work, or merely to afford these people help?

The PREMIER: It is specified that work must be provided. Hon. members will notice that it is specifically set out that the net proceeds of the taxes shall, subject to an appropriation by Parliament, be applied to the carrying out of special and necessary public works, whereon surplus labour within the State may be profitably employed, or to such other purpose as may be approved by resolutions of both Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Smith: Do you not think that you should supply a schedule of the proposed works?

The PREMIER: Not in the Bill. The hon. member wants to know how we propose to spend the money before he gives us authority to raise it. Clause 13 of the Bill shows distinctly that the tax is earmarked. It does not become part of the Consolidated Revenue Fund. The tax will be paid into the Treasury and the net proceeds will be credited to a special fund. Then, I must come to Parliament and submit a schedule of works, showing how we propose to expend the money, and that schedule will have to be approved.

Mr. Smith: Are you going to proceed with the works immediately?

The PREMIER: As soon as we get the money. I can assure hon. members that this session is not going to close until provision has been made to meet the difficulty we are faced with. That being the case, we are asking authority first to raise the necessary money. We require to put those words in definitely, so that Parliament may understand that there is no authority to spend the money. The money will be spent subject to an appropriation by Parliament, and the only method of obtaining an appropriation is by submitting what we might term supplementary estimates. If the Bill becomes law, we propose to anticipate to some extent the amount we shall receive under it, and we shall proceed with works by drawing on the public account.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Then what is the force of having them approved afterwards?

The PREMIER: The hon. member has misunderstood me. I said that as soon as the Bill becomes law, we will bring down supplementary estimates. As soon as the supplementary estimates are adopted we will proceed with some of those works, anticipating the revenue to be derived under the measure, because the bulk of the revenue will not be payable until after the 30th June next.

Mr. Smith: Why not give us some details of the work now?

The PREMIER: Judging by some of the brilliant articles we read in his newspaper the hon. member cannot be expected to have much knowledge of Parliamentary procedure, but we expect him to understand that a Bill to raise a tax never has attached to it a schedule showing how it is proposed to spend the money.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: He asks merely for a forecast.

The PREMIER: Well the forecast is this: Special urgent works to employ the surplus labour in the State.

Mr. Smith: Merely shifting sand?

The PREMIER: The hon. member cannot look beyond North Perth. All the sand in the State is in North Perth, and he imagines that we are going to spend all the money there. We are not. It is our intention to introduce a schedule of works and to ask the approval of Parliament for the spending of the money largely in districts where the money will be raised, which is the only fair method of distribution under a tax of this nature.

Mr. Green: Then much of it will be spent on the goldfields.

Mr. James Gardiner: Are the works to be reproductive?

The PREMIER: Not essentially. We hope to make a great number of them reproductive. Many works, such as feeder roads, we have had to hold up for want of funds. When a railway is built it is essential to give the settlers facilities for getting their produce to the railway. For some time past we have had to hold up such works, and it may be found that we can advantageously employ a number of men in constructing these

feeder roads. We are asking the various departments to frame schemes which will help us in finding employment, for we propose to spend the money as much as possible in the employment of labour rather than in the purchasing of materials.

Mr. James Gardiner: Of course you do not wish to employ this labour in useless work, such as shifting sand?

The PREMIER: No; I can give the member for North Perth (Mr. Smith) an assurance that if there is no more useful work in North Perth than shifting sand none of the money will be spent there. We are going to put the men on to urgent and, as far as possible, reproductive works.

Mr. Smith: Why not give us an idea as to what those works are?

The PREMIER: The hon. member will appreciate the fact that if the works we propose are not satisfactory to his side of the House he and his colleagues can object to the items when the estimates come down. If they so object we cannot spend the money.

Mr. Smith: What is the objection to giving us the particulars now?

The PREMIER: Only that each item must receive mature consideration before we bring it down.

Mr. Smith: Why not have said so?

The PREMIER: I am not able to say much without the hon. member interjecting. I have told the hon. member that it is not the usual practice on a taxation Bill to submit proposals for spending the money. The only thing the hon. member has to consider at present is whether the conditions are such that, for the purpose of relieving the situation, it is necessary to obtain further funds. If he thinks not, then he is in duty bound to vote against the measure, for no schedule will help him. He has to decide whether, for the purpose of employing those in his constituency out of employment, it is necessary to obtain this money. No member can deny the proposition that the present situation demands that we shall provide additional funds to relieve unemployment. I was interested in noticing that the *West Australian*, in this morn-

ing's issue, made reference to this proposal and went so far as to say it was not prepared to render any assistance in passing a Bill of this nature unless we first committed ourselves to a wholesale reduction of salaries and wages throughout the Government service.

Mr. Munsie: And retrenchment.

The PREMIER: And retrenchment. It is rather an amusing attitude to adopt. The *West Australian* says, "We will not help you to raise money to relieve unemployment unless you create unemployment." I want to make the position of the Government quite clear. From the very outset of our present difficulties, that is, when we were first faced with a drought and a consequent failure of the harvest, and were overtaken by the greatest war in history, there was a general demand on the part of certain employers to reduce salaries and wages wholesale.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You have no right to say that.

The PREMIER: I have. I have said it previously, and I defy contradiction. I am referring particularly to the Employers' Federation, who speak on behalf of their members. Naturally we hold the members responsible for the official utterances of their organisation, just as hon. members opposite hold the workers responsible for the utterances and decisions of organised Labour. From the outset of our present troubles the Employers' Federation desired a reduction of salaries and wages. There is absolutely no ground for such reduction at this stage. If to-day the necessities of life are dearer than hitherto it must be due to the fact that the cost of production is greater, or else that there is something in the nature of a combine in their distribution. Take flour, in the form of bread: Bread, an essential of life, has gone up considerably during the past few weeks, and all other necessary commodities have gone up likewise.

Hon. J. Mitchell: The Control of Trade Commission agreed to the advance.

The PREMIER: The conditions were such that the Commission had to agree to the retail price of 5d. The Opposition

have a representative on the Commission. The Commission took everything into consideration and agreed to the advance. The Arbitration Court, a legal tribunal on which the employers have a representative and of which a judge of the Supreme Court is chairman, named a certain wage as a minimum rate on which a man in Western Australia could live under normal conditions. In similar manner 9s. a day was declared by the Government to be the minimum on which a man could reasonably exist under normal conditions. Those conditions have changed somewhat.

Mr. James Gardiner: The Arbitration Court fixed 9s. also.

The PREMIER: And in some awards 10s., as in the case of the clerks. After all, the cost of living is not greater to the clerk than to the navvy. However, let us take it at 9s. In view of the fact that the cost of the necessities of life has considerably increased since the conditions became abnormal, to ask the men receiving the minimum living wage, fixed for normal conditions, to accept something less, is to place a burden on them which we are not entitled to ask them to carry.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Can you not give the railway men 9s.?

The PREMIER: Not in the sense the hon. member would do if he were in power. We have left the railway men in a better position on 44 hours a week than they enjoyed with 48 hours a week when the hon. member was over here.

Mr. Green: And the salaried staff also.

The PREMIER: Yes. I know the hon. member has a confused idea on this question. Let me tell the critics on our own side that the Labour organisations of the State at the very outbreak of the war, when they saw these trying conditions approaching, came to the Government and asked us to withstand the attack that would certainly be made with a view to a general reduction of wages throughout the Government service; because such reduction, if successfully engineered, would only be used by the private employer in support of his own case. Yesterday I received from the general secretary of the Railway Association a letter commending the Government for having so long

stood up against the cry for reduction; and I want to tell the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green) that I am going to stand up against it while I remain here. They say there is not sufficient funds to carry on our industries under the abnormal conditions, and that, rather than bring about a reduction of wages for the same services rendered we should, by a reduction of hours, distribute the work over those left. The Railway Association asked for it and, with the exception of one branch, which affects me as much as anybody, they have loyally accepted the decision arrived at. There is only one branch standing out, and the member for Kalgoorlie, if he so desired, could explain the position of that branch.

Mr. Green: I am in favour of the Government's attitude in regard to those men, but what about the salaried staff?

The PREMIER: What would the hon. member have? He, and others who have not thought out this matter sufficiently, want us to place the salaried staff in a position different from that of the wages staff, while we pledge ourselves to stand up against any reduction of salaries and wages. We do not care a continental about all the others who happen to be on the salaried staff. If we reduce salaries we require to reduce wages also.

Mr. Green: Why not a tax?

The PREMIER: We have the taxation measure now. I do not wish to be misunderstood. We have been roundly abused by some of our outside supporters and taken to task for the attitude we have adopted, although it was certainly encouraged and supported by them some months ago, as was shown by the conference held in this building between the Control of Trade Commission, the Employers' Federation and representatives of the Labour Federation, who asked that we should not introduce a reduction of salaries, but should rather adopt a reduction of hours.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! How far does this concern the Bill? If the Premier makes it part of his speech on the measure it is going to develop into a general discussion, and I will have difficulty

later on in confining the debate to the Bill.

The PREMIER: May I submit that if we cannot discuss this subject we cannot discuss the Bill. This is the question underlying the measure, namely, whether the prevailing conditions are to be met by retrenchment, by reduction of wages, or by a general tax. I am trying to show that the proposal we submit will call upon everybody in the community to carry his or her share of the burden instead of it falling only on those employed by the Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier has entered into an argument of a recent administrative act of the Government with respect to reducing hours. This has nothing to do with the Bill now under discussion.

The PREMIER: But the fact remains that equally with that administrative act is the necessity for this Bill. From the point of view of the Executive, I cannot disconnect the two things. We could not possibly continue to have men working 44 hours in one branch of the service, and the balance suffering no reduction. To make it fair all round we had the alternative of introducing a proposal for a reduction of salaries and wages to those not affected by the reduction of hours, or some form of general taxation as is provided in this Bill. We are trying to meet the position which has arisen as fairly as possible by distributing the burden over the whole of the community and not confining it to any one section.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: This is not for the railway employees but for the unemployed.

The PREMIER: I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that this is the only opportunity I shall have to fairly explain the position of the Government, and I ask for your indulgence, because otherwise it will be impossible to make that position clear.

Mr. SPEAKER: My experience of discussions in this Chamber has been that when I have allowed latitude in this direction, it has been demanded by every hon. member who has spoken subsequently. In order to be fair towards

every member I have found it impossible as debates have proceeded, to keep them within limits, and my inability to do so has given rise to a good deal of personal recrimination. I do not desire that this should be repeated. I demand that, as far as possible, the merits of the Bill shall be discussed, and I do not want the Premier to give a lead which other hon. members may justly claim to be entitled to follow.

The PREMIER: Clause 13 shows that the moneys are to be raised for a specific purpose namely, for the carrying out of special and necessary public works whereon surplus labour in the State may be profitably employed.

Mr. Taylor: That is the crux of the Bill.

The PREMIER: Yes. I would point out that while the Government are responsible by administrative act for the reduction of hours in one branch of the service, we were compelled to either adopt that course or effect retrenchment to meet the case. If we retrenched, it would cause an additional number of men to be thrown on the unemployed market. The *West Australian* urges retrenchment and consequently further unemployment, and, side by side, a reduction of the salaries of Government servants. The object of this Bill is to avoid any such unfair position. If an employee is giving full service, as in normal times, he should not be called upon to render the same service at present and to receive something less in return for it. If the service is not so great, his hours should be reduced if necessary, and he should be paid at the same rate per hour for the time actually worked. The same applies to the men on the salaried staff.

Mr. Bolton: Are you reducing the hours of the salaried men?

The PREMIER: No; the public service has been reduced in strength because a number of men have joined the expeditionary forces, and we have not filled their places. I do not wish to pursue that phase of the matter further than to say that we have considered the position carefully, and have come to the conclusion that there is only one method by which

we can provide for the present position, and that is by way of a tax to be borne by the whole of the community, and not one section of it. In regard to the justice of the tax I have a return containing examples of the operations of the Income Tax rate on the basis of the year's taxable income, showing the amount per week, fortnight, month, half-year, and year. The object I had in view was to set out clearly the amount to be paid by persons earning different incomes, if they paid by the week, fortnight, month, half-year, or year. There is a provision stipulating that any person who pays his taxation in advance will receive a discount of 5 per cent. of the amount of the tax. My object is to encourage those who know their income fortnightly or monthly to have the amount deducted instead of waiting until the half-year has elapsed, and then probably having to pay a half of a fortnight's or of a month's pay to meet the tax. It will be easier for them, and it will provide us with funds immediately to proceed with the works we have in view. If we stipulated that the tax should be paid half-yearly, none of the money to be derived would be available until July next. If a man has a definite wage or salary he can have the amount deducted weekly or monthly, as the case might be, and that money will be available to us to utilise in carrying out the objects of the measure. The graduation is fixed on an actuarial basis in order that there shall be no sudden leap in the amount payable under one figure as compared with another. The scale rises gradually from pound to pound until a maximum of 8 per cent. on the highest income is reached. It will be observed, too, that the rate starts at one per cent. as a minimum, and rises to a maximum of 8 per cent. Under the previous measure we provided for a maximum rate of 15 per cent. In order to partially make up the difference, we propose to introduce a tax on amusements. We consider that conditions are such that a person who can visit a race-course and pay ten shillings for admission to the grandstand, and half-a-crown for admission to the saddling pad-

dock, or who can visit picture shows and pay 1s. for a front seat or 6d. for a back seat can very well under prevailing conditions when some people are in need of the necessities of life, contribute one penny to aid in providing employment for his less fortunate brothers. This applies to all forms of entertainment, but the Commissioner of Taxation may exempt from the tax any entertainment for a purely charitable purpose. This exemption will not apply to anyone who organises a charitable entertainment out of which he secures the bulk of the profits.

Mr. Willmott: How will benefits be regarded?

The PREMIER: They will be exempted. It may be asserted that a tax of one-twelfth of the total amount of the gross receipts from an entertainment is fairly heavy, but, under the circumstances, I do not think it is heavy. When we bear in mind that the measure proposes to enforce the tax for a definite period of 12 months, and no longer, and for the specific purposes outlined in the Bill, members will agree, I think, that the tax will not be an undue burden on those who are earning incomes. No member will say that anyone receiving £156 to £5,000 a year or more can very well complain of the amount of the tax imposed on his earnings, or that anyone who visits entertainments can complain of the amount to be derived from his pleasure for the object of providing employment and carrying on necessary works during the present depressed times. Provision is made whereby companies will come under this measure, but, in order that they shall not be unfairly treated, they will be regarded, for the purposes of this measure, in the same light as an individual, though they will not be relieved of the taxation for which they are liable under the Dividend Duties Act. The individual will be taxed under the present Income Tax Act and under this measure, and we propose that a company shall be taxed under the Dividend Duties Act and under this measure. But if the amounts payable by a company under those two measures would exceed the amount paid by an in-

dividual under the Income Tax Act and under this measure, a deduction will be allowed. A company to-day pay 1s. in the pound on profits irrespective of the total amount. If the total amount is only £200, the company pay on that sum. If the income of an individual is £200, he pays not 1s. but 4d. in the pound income tax. If a company make £200 under existing conditions they would have to pay 1s. under the Dividend Duties Act, plus the tax provided under this measure. But if the total exceeds the amount which an individual in receipt of a salary of £200 would pay, the difference will be deducted so long as the amount payable does not fall short of the liability under the Dividend Duties Act alone. In other words, we are trying to put the company on the same basis as the individual if the super tax hits them harder than the individual. If under the Dividend Duties Act a company paid £50 taxation, and under this measure £25, a total of £75, and if an individual paid £25 under the Income Tax Act on an income equalling the company's profits and £25 under this measure, a total of £50, provision is made to reduce the company's contribution to £50. A company must pay the minimum of the taxation provided under the Dividend Duties Act.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You are letting them off too lightly.

The PREMIER: With the provision for the deduction I have outlined, I do not think they can complain.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The newspapers will like it.

The PREMIER: The deductions provided for under the existing Income Tax Act are provided for under this measure with one or two exceptions. The exemption under this Bill is fixed at £156. Further deductions of £10 per child and the amounts paid by way of premiums for life assurance are allowed. We have exempted life assurance companies under this measure because they are already taxed to the extent of about double the amount under the existing Act, which was largely due, I think, to a misunderstanding. However, I do not propose to alter that at present, but it would not be fair

to impose an additional tax on them now. In other respects the tax will apply much the same as under the present Income Tax Act. We are trying to make provision for those receiving a definite income to pay in advance. As I said, they will receive a discount of 5 per cent., and the prompt payment will enable us to put work in hand earlier than would otherwise be the case.

Mr. James Gardiner: Five per cent. discount should be a good scheme.

The PREMIER: It will be only 5 per cent. on the amount paid. In the circumstances I think the House will admit that the measure is fair and equitable, as regards the impost on both incomes and entertainments. In view of the conditions now prevailing it is necessary to obtain further funds and we shall be able to devote them to useful works, a schedule of which will be introduced at a later stage for the information of hon. members.

Hon. Frank Wilson: How much do you expect to raise by this tax?

The PREMIER: I estimate that it will yield from £150,000 to £200,000 in the 12 months. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Frank Wilson debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.16 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 24th February, 1915.

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motions by Mr. MALE, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Nairn on the ground of urgent private business, and to Mr. S. Stubbs on the ground of ill health.

QUESTION — UNEMPLOYED AND PUBLIC WORKS.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY asked the Honorary Minister (Hon. R. H. Underwood): 1, Is he aware that during the present month about 40 of the unemployed, who were sent at the State's expense to work on the construction of the Brookton-Kunjin railway, after working a few days, gave it up and returned to Perth? 2, Is it a fact that since the beginning of the year about double this number have acted in a similar way on this work alone? 3, If so, what was the cause of these men refusing to continue in this employment? 4, Is he aware that there is still room for a number of men on this work, and this shortage of labour is likely to delay the Public Works Department several months in handing this railway over to the Working Railways? 5, Are all these unemployed referred to, action with regard to those unemployed, list receiving Government assistance. 6, Are the Government taking any special action with regard to these unemployed, who have refused to remain at work in different parts of the country when sent there at the State's expense?