

has the chance of a lifetime of reducing to reasonable proportions the flow of money from Western Australia to the Eastern States—it will have done the equivalent of making two blades of grass grow where none grew before. This is not a party question or a political question; it is a question involving our survival. We realise that our great primary industry, wheat, has been very sick indeed. I have come fresh from a select committee which elicited that millions of bushels of wheat of the 1938-39 crop had passed from the farmers to the merchants at an average price of 1s. 1-1/3d. a bushel. Those farmers have been squeezed out at a loss of about 1s. a bushel as compared with the market price that ruled in the early days of the war, and the loss has been colossal. There are other primary industries that would find a great outlet for their produce by way of raw material for secondary industries if only we could succeed in the object of not carrying all our eggs in one basket but of undertaking more diversified production. Our economic system is certainly ill-balanced. The primary industries have made the State, and in referring to primary industries I include gold mining. The Premier always insists upon gold production being included in primary industries.

The Premier: I think you must have been reading my policy speech.

Mr. BOYLE: I am quoting a little from my own policy speech, which I think was infinitely better than the Premier's. However, there is one policy upon which I shall always agree with the Premier and the Minister for Labour and that is the need for making this State more independent of the Eastern States than it is at present. That question admits of no successful contradiction and I again assure the Minister of all the support I can possibly give him.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 21st November, 1939.*

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

### BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Potato Growers Licensing.  
Introduced by Hon. H. V. Piesse.
- 2, Bread Act Amendment.  
Introduced by the Honorary Minister.

### BILL—DAIRY INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

### BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

### BILL—INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.42] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this measure is to insert new machinery provisions in the Income Tax Assessment Act to authorise the collection of income tax by instalments. As indicated in Parliament last year and by the Premier in his policy speech, the Government's intention is to abolish the financial emergency tax and collect the money required at the source under the provisions of a scientifically designed Income Tax Assessment Act. For obvious reasons, the Government cannot forgo the revenue at present collected in the form of financial emergency tax, but nevertheless, it

believes that the same amount of tax could be raised on a more equitable basis if collections were levied under legislation having regard to the taxpayer's domestic and other responsibilities. Admittedly the present financial emergency tax represents a considerable improvement on the legislation originally introduced in 1932, when a flat rate of 4½d. in the £ was levied on all incomes, with a commencing figure for married and single persons of 40s. and 30s. a week respectively. A graduated scale of taxation has been substituted for the flat rate, and the Government has, from time to time, altered the commencing figure for married people in order to exempt basic-wage earners. Notwithstanding these improvements, however, the financial emergency tax still runs counter to many of the principles laid down by taxation authorities. The principle of capacity to pay is recognised to a minor extent only, while the usual statutory deductions are ignored altogether.

To give the taxpayer the full benefit of the operations of a scientifically designed assessment Act, and at the same time to preserve under the change over, all the advantages of the present system of collecting the emergency tax on salaries and wages at the source, the Government brought down a measure last year similar to the Bill now before the House. That Bill was defeated in this Chamber. Subsequently, at the elections held early in the year the Government submitted the issue to the people for endorsement. The fact that the Government was returned with an increased majority is, I think, sufficient indication that its proposals were acceptable to the community.

As hon. members are aware, a system of collection similar to the scheme proposed in the Bill is already in operation in South Australia and Victoria. It is becoming apparent that the other States will probably be forced to adopt a similar system at some time in the future, since in recent years the burden of taxation has made it increasingly difficult for taxpayers to meet their obligations to the assessing authorities on the due date. In Western Australia the Income Tax Assessment Act makes no provision for the payment of income tax by instalments, the tax assessed being due and payable 30 days after service by post of a notice of assessment. While the Act gives power to the Commissioner to extend the time for

payment when good and sufficient reasons are advanced, this provision does not satisfactorily meet the position. Because of the difficulty I have mentioned, the Commissioner has been inundated with applications either for an extension of time or for the payment of tax in periodical instalments, with the result that much of his and his senior officers' time has been absorbed in dealing with these requests. Apart from any other consideration, matters have now reached such a stage that some action should be taken to relieve the present position both for the taxpayer and the Commissioner.

Turning now to the scheme of the Bill, we propose to insert in Part VI of the principal Act, which deals with the collection and recovery of tax, a new division providing for the payment and collection of income tax by instalments. Any taxpayer whose income consists of salary or wages will commence, at the beginning of each financial year, to accumulate funds for the payment of his income tax assessment. To ensure the accumulation of the necessary funds, the Bill provides that the employer shall make deductions from each payment of salary or wages at rates to be determined by Parliament. The amounts deducted are then to be applied by the employer in the purchase of stamps of a corresponding value, which will be handed over to the employee, together with the balance of his salary or wage. Forthwith, after receiving tax stamps from his employer, the employee will be required to affix them in a special book which he is to keep for that purpose, and thereupon cancel them in the presence of his employer or the paying officer. Thereafter no further responsibility will attach to the employer, the custody of the stamps being the concern of the employee. When in due course the latter receives his assessment notice from the Commissioner, based upon the income tax return that he will have lodged with the Commissioner, he will forward his stamp book to the Department, with the notice of assessment attached, in order to make the necessary settlement. If the value of the stamps is in excess of the amount of tax, his credit in stamps will be refunded in cash. Similarly, if the value of stamps is insufficient to meet the full amount of tax, the taxpayer will have to meet his debit in cash.

Under the proposed new system, no change is contemplated in respect to the furnishing

of returns of income. Each employee will still be required to lodge with the Commissioner a return of his income for the preceding year, and assessments will be made by the Department upon those returns throughout the year as at present. However, if the Bill becomes law, a uniform due date will be fixed for the payment of tax by all taxpayers whose income consists of salary or wages. This will be shown on the notices of assessment as the 14th June, irrespective of the date of actual issue of such notices. Thus an employee receiving his assessment notice early in the calendar year will be able to continue to accumulate his stamps until mid-year when his full liability must be discharged. The presentation of stamps at the end of the financial year will, of course, simply represent a final accounting between the taxpayer and the Commissioner.

The deductions for stamps will not represent the measure of the liability of the employee for the payment of tax as it does under the present Financial Emergency Tax Assessment Act. The actual tax liability of the employee will continue on the same basis as at present obtains in respect to payment of income tax; that is to say, under the new system of collection, the income tax liability will still have relation to the taxpayer's income of the preceding year, and will not be based upon the salary or wages from which the deduction is made.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is there any provision for a man who loses his book?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think we provide for contingencies of that kind. The rates of these deductions are set out in a complementary measure, the Income Tax (Rates for Deduction) Bill. The relevant rates are as follows:—

(a) Where the rate of salary or wages does not exceed £8 per week, the rate of deduction shall be sixpence for every £, and for every fractional part of a pound exceeding 10s. payable to the employee.

(b) Where the rate of salary or wages exceeds £8 per week, the rate of deduction shall be ninepence for every £, and for every fractional part of a pound payable to the employee.

While these deductions will be made from gross income, in the final accounting, tax will be assessed upon the employee's net income of the preceding year, after allowance has been made for the appropriate statutory

deductions. Hon. members will realise that the deductions represent nothing more than a compulsory saving towards the discharge of the taxpayer's liability. The rates of deduction proposed in the complementary Rates for Deduction Bill represent a compromise between the scales fixed in the Victorian and South Australian legislation. In South Australia there is a flat rate of 1s. in the £, and the Victorian Act provides for graduated rates of deduction according to the weekly salary or wage.

Provision is made in the Bill whereby the Commissioner may issue to any employee a certificate exempting his salary or wages from deduction during any specified period. This provision has been inserted to deal with cases where taxpayers find, immediately upon the commencement of a financial year, that they will not be liable for payment of any tax on the basis of the previous year's income. Such cases will arise either where a taxpayer's total income does not amount to the statutory exemption, or where deductions in respect of dependent children and so on, bring his income beneath that amount. Taxpayers coming within this income group will be encouraged to lodge their returns immediately after the expiry of the financial year so that they may have issued to them exemption certificates for presentation to their employers. Similarly, if at any time during the financial year an employee considers he has accumulated enough stamps to meet his liability for the previous year, he will be entitled to forward his stamp book to the department and demand an assessment. Here too, an exemption certificate will be granted when the taxpayer has discharged his liability.

In a Bill of this kind, it is necessary to make provision for group schemes to meet the convenience of employers and employees who desire to avoid the necessity of purchasing and retaining stamps. Under the group scheme proposals set out in the Bill, it will be possible for any particular employer and his employee to arrange with the Commissioner of Taxation for the employer to make the required deductions in accordance with the Commissioner's directions. These deductions will be paid over to the department in cash. Employers coming under a group scheme will be required to keep records of the amounts deducted in respect of each employee. When the em-

ployees concerned receive their assessment, they will be given credit for the deductions made from their salary.

Those are the main proposals of the Bill, other provisions being mainly of a machinery nature. Members will have noticed that no provision is made for compulsory deductions on behalf of persons other than employees. Such a scheme necessarily involves placing the responsibility for the deduction on a person other than the actual income earner. Obviously it is impossible to apply a system of this kind to business and professional men. However, if these people choose to set aside surplus funds in anticipation of their tax liability, they will be able to acquire tax stamps from authorised vendors, but in any event, the matter will be left entirely at their discretion. Here we are following the Victorian rather than the South Australian system. Under the latter, taxpayers may make arrangements for the payment of tax by instalments in advance of assessments. A similar provision formerly operated in this State, but in view of the experience of the Taxation Department, the Commissioner considers that its re-enactment would serve no good purpose, as it was found in the past that taxpayers invariably preferred to await receipt of their assessment notice, and then apply for permission to pay by instalments.

The Bill is to come into operation on a day to be fixed by proclamation, but such proclamation shall not fix a day previous to 1st July, 1940. The deduction of financial emergency tax from salaries and wages of employees will cease as from the commencement of the proposed Act. Because the inauguration of the new system will necessitate a considerable amount of re-organisation in the Taxation Department, probably the very earliest date on which the new system could be put into operation would be the 1st July next. The staff will have to be supplemented, and additional accommodation provided for the public. Until Parliament has given its approval to the Government's proposals, it will be impossible for the department to begin preparations for the change-over. However, with the experience of Victoria and South Australia to guide it, the department considers it will be able to accomplish this change-over with a minimum of inconvenience, and that it will be possible for all arrangements to be final-

ised in time to permit of the new system being put into operation on the 1st July, 1940.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Will it cost more to collect? You said there would be extra staff?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It must cost more, because we have to provide not only additional staff but also additional accommodation in order that the public might suffer as little delay as possible. The Bill of course deals only with the method of payment and collection of tax. The question of rates will be determined by Parliament next session when the Land Tax and Income Tax Act comes up for revision in the usual way. The rates will then be fixed in accordance with the budgetary requirements of the Government for the financial year 1940-41.

However, in order that members may gain an approximate idea of what these rates may be and how they will affect typical grades of income, the Treasurer has had tables prepared for distribution. These tables give a comparison between taxation payable under the existing rates and under the proposed amalgamation. They show the amalgamated tax payable on various incomes if the rate commenced at 9d. in the £ and increased by .01d. for every £ of taxable income up to a maximum of 4/6 in the £ and with—

(a) The statutory exemption for persons with dependants reduced at the rate of £3 for every £2, instead of £2 for every £1 as at present; and

(b) Deductions for children reduced by £1 for every £1 by which the net income exceeds £500.

Naturally it is not possible at this juncture to say whether the rates I have mentioned will be the rates actually imposed next year, since they are merely based on tentative estimates of the total requirements for 1940-41. Accepting these rates for the moment however, members will have noted that it will be necessary to amend the provisions of the assessment Act dealing with the adjustment of the statutory exemption.

As to the minimum rate of 9d. in the £ which it is suggested might be levied under the amalgamated tax, payment will be made only on taxable income instead of on the total income under the financial emergency tax. Thus, while single men will pay at a higher rate—and also, to a lesser extent, married men with no children—relief will be afforded to persons on comparatively low

incomes who have greater family and other responsibilities. This aspect of the Government's proposals cannot be overstressed, for the main purpose of this measure is to enable all taxation from income to be levied under legislation which has regard for the principle of capacity to pay. In this connection the Government is particularly anxious to relieve the man with dependents on whom the present taxation presses with real severity. Unless the Government is prepared to forgo portion of its revenue, it will be necessary to offset these concessions by collecting more money from those in a better position to pay.

The Government's proposals will therefore involve a higher tax on single people without dependants, and all persons earning high incomes. Then again, the amalgamation will rectify various anomalies that have arisen in regard to the tax payable in various income groups because of the unscientific incidence of the Financial Emergency Tax. This has resulted in certain people paying more, and others less than they would have done under a properly graduated tax on income levied under the scientific principles of the Income Tax Assessment Act. The effect of the changes in the rates, the statutory exemption, and the deduction for children, that I have mentioned, would be to return a total collection approximately equal to the present yield from the Income Tax and Financial Emergency Tax. This however, is only a tentative conclusion. On the other hand, the Treasurer will have the benefit of a full year's increase in the returns from probate duty under the new rates that were recently approved by this House. Then again another loophole will be closed against opportunities for the evasion of payment of income tax. When the system of collection at the source is instituted, the department will be able to detect a good proportion of the leakages that inevitably occur under the existing system.

Another factor that will have an important bearing on collections is the prospective improvement in the taxable capacity of income earned during the current year. In this connection it is not too much to hope that pastoralists and wheatgrowers will again have some income to tax.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It will be a long while before they get any.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: If these anticipations are realised, then the rates of

the taxation which will be imposed next year will return more revenue than they do at the present time. However, before the end of the current year—which will be the first year of income to be assessed under the proposed legislation—the Treasurer will be in a position to know accurately the total revenue the Government would have received if the proposed rates for the amalgamated tax had been applicable during 1939-40. On that basis the Treasurer will then be able to adjust the rates to meet his budgetary requirements for the financial year 1940-41. The Bill will mark a considerable improvement on the dual system now in operation and in view of the fact that the principle underlying the Bill has met with almost unanimous approval, I do hope that the House will agree to the measure and that we shall be able to arrive at a stage whereby it will be possible for this new idea to Western Australia to be put into operation as from the 1st July next year. There may be some objection to the Bill from various points of view, but I hope there will be no opposition to the principle. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

### **BILL—INCOME TAX (RATES FOR DEDUCTION).**

#### *Second Reading.*

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.7] in moving the second reading said. This Bill which is complementary to the previous measure seeks to fix the rates of deductions to be made from the wages and salaries of employees under the scheme I have just outlined. As already explained, the rates of tax payable under the new system of collection will be fixed annually by Parliament as in the past. The Bill simply provides authority for the necessary deductions to be made at the source before the taxpayer receives his assessment. The rates for deduction are 6d. in the £ where the rate of salary or wages does not exceed £8 per week and 9d. in the £ where this amount is exceeded. Having regard to all the factors, it is considered that these rates represent the best compromise between the Victorian and

South Australian scales. If the rates were fixed at too high a figure an excessive number of refunds would be inevitable, while on the other hand, if they were fixed too low they would involve payment of large lump sums in the final accounting between the Commissioner and the taxpayers, thus defeating one of the main objects of the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

## **BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).**

### *Further Recommittal.*

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, Bill again recommitted for the further consideration of Clauses 2 and 9 and a new clause.

### *In Committee.*

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair, the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

#### Clause 2—Commencement.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 the words "a date to be fixed by proclamation" be struck out and the words "the thirtieth day of June, one thousand nine hundred and forty" be inserted in lieu.

The reason for the amendment is that it is necessary that the Bill, when it becomes an Act, shall come into operation on the 30th June and coincide with the issue of licenses on cars commencing at that time. This system was followed in South Australia and caused no inconvenience at all. There will be power under the Bill to appoint a committee and thus everything will be in readiness on the 30th June next.

Amendment put and passed: the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 9—Interpretation and application:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That in proposed new Section 55, Subsection 3, line 2, after the word "Crown" the words and parentheses "(either Commonwealth or State)" be inserted.

A motor vehicle taken out of the hands of the insurer for defence purposes by either the State or the Commonwealth should be

left on the Commonwealth or on the State as the case may be, and not come on the pool.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I oppose the amendment. The insurance effected can be taken over by the Commonwealth. We should make certain that when a car is taken over by the Commonwealth it is insured.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Honorary Minister appears not to see the effect of the clause as it stands. The Crown is represented by two Governments—Commonwealth and State. Why in legislation we should differentiate between the Crown as represented by the State and the Crown as represented by the Commonwealth passes my comprehension. Without the amendment the door will be left open so that the pool created by the Bill will have to stand the cost of a car taken over by the Commonwealth. As a result, when premiums are being fixed for insurance under the Bill, they will be fixed at higher rates because of the added risk, since insurance follows the car right up to the time when the policy is determined. The amendment is vital.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not see that the amendment will have much effect on premium rates. However, it would be unfair that the owner of the car should not receive a reimbursement for the unexpired portion of the term of the policy.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Under the clause as it stands, he would get no reimbursement.

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope the amendment will be carried.

Amendment put and passed.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, the words "Commonwealth or" inserted before the word "State" in line 3 of Subsection 3, and after the word "State" in line 3 of Subsection 3 the word "respectively" inserted.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That a new subsection to stand as Subsection 6 be added to proposed new Section 55, as follows:—"This Part shall cease to have any effect in regard to any motor vehicle commandeered, requisitioned, or used for military or defence purposes under any Commonwealth Act, regulation or proclamation."

The pool should not be saddled with expenses in respect of any motor vehicle commandeered, requisitioned, or used for military or defence purposes. Why should not

the Commonwealth be responsible for persons injured by vehicles so taken over? The Commonwealth should take over the policy with the vehicle.

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

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That in Subsection 3 of proposed new Section 57 after the word "used," line 1, there be inserted the words "and licensed."

To protect the position, a motor vehicle should be both used and licensed for the carriage of passengers for hire. The insertion of the words "and licensed" is essential.

Hon. G. FRASER: The point that worries me is that another portion of the Bill lays down that an unlicensed vehicle shall be a charge on the pool. That being so, what need is there for the words "and licensed" here?

Hon. L. Craig: Does the amendment exempt unlicensed vehicles?

Hon. G. FRASER: No. An unlicensed vehicle comes on the pool.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The inclusion of the words is absolutely necessary. The provision relates to a policy covering a vehicle that is used and licensed. It could not relate to a vehicle used and unlicensed, because the licensing and the effecting of the insurance are practically one and the same thing. The claim against an unlicensed man is a totally different class of claim from a claim that a person might have against a licensed man. If the unlicensed man is worth powder and shot, proceedings can be taken against him to recover damages. This provision is designed so that the damages may be deducted from the policy money to answer the liability.

Hon. A. Thomson: Suppose the words "and unlicensed" were not inserted, would not the effect be the same?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not think so. I emphasise the importance of the amendment, because the person who is insured must necessarily be licensed and he, in turn, is bound to indemnify the injured person against any claim based on the death of or bodily injury to any person who, as a passenger carried or about to be carried for hire, was being conveyed in or was entering into or alighting from that vehicle. If the

words are not inserted, the effect will be that every policy relating to a vehicle used, whether licensed or not, will come under this provision as to indemnity, and that is not intended.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Surely the amendment is in keeping with the Act.

Hon. L. Craig: Suppose the driver broke the law and was not licensed; is the vehicle exempted from liability?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No. The driver could be sued at common law. The Act provides that the owner must insure himself and also insure each passenger.

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope the amendment will be defeated, as I think it will cause complications. This Bill is designed to protect people, irrespective of whether vehicles carry third-party risk or not.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The policy will relate to passengers carried in a vehicle. If the vehicle is not licensed to carry passengers, the policy will not apply.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is the point.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (i) of Subsection (3) of proposed new Section 59 be struck out.

The effect of this paragraph would be to make it more difficult for the injured party to obtain compensation. Why should a better deal be given to an uninsured person than to an insured person? That is my reason for the amendment.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The provision relates to the owner of a car who might be away and whose servant might use it.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If the paragraph be struck out, an innocent person whose car is stolen might be liable in damages to the extent of many thousands of pounds. This paragraph will protect an innocent person against the action of some dishonest person. I may decide to go for a trip and have no intention of registering my car. I leave it in my garage; some dishonest person assumes possession of it and perhaps kills somebody. Unless this paragraph be retained, I would be liable because I should have insured my car. There is, however, no need for a man to insure his car if he does not intend to use it. True, the insurance on my car might be due on the 30th June and if I did not renew it and someone

took the car unlawfully on the 1st July and injured some person, then I would be liable. If I have no intention of using my car, and leave it in the garage, and somebody steals it and meets with an accident, I should not be liable. The provision is essential.

Hon. G. Fraser: If the owner does not insure, it will be his fault.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: But the owner might have bought the car cheaply with a view to selling it, and have no intention of using it. In that event, he should not be held liable.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That Subsection (2) of the proposed new Section 65 be struck out.

The subsection will give protection to the uninsured. Unless negligence can be proved against the owner or driver, he will not be liable for payment for emergency or hospital treatment. Surely when the nominal defendant has had to pay those charges, he should have the right of action against an uninsured person.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have been advised that the subsection is necessary. It appears in the South Australian Act.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I do not think it does.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The subsection is essential. Why should the owner of a vehicle have to pay for emergency treatment when he has not been at all negligent?

Hon. G. FRASER: I support the amendment. The subsection will provide a loophole for those who desire to evade payment.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The subsection should be retained. Some members seem anxious to protect the pool. This provision will not affect any person in particular.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But it will affect the premium.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If a man can prove to the satisfaction of the court that he has not been responsible in any way, it would be unjust to make him pay.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I believe the proviso does not appear in the South Australian Act, on which this Bill has been modelled.

Hon. A. Thomson: If the South Australian Act contains something unjust, why should we copy it?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Justice has been done to the person deserving of recompense,

but we should ensure that the premium rates are not affected by retaining the proviso. Upon the person seeking to recover, the subsection places the onus of proving negligence against the uninsured person. Negligence is one of the hardest things to prove, and if members wish to have the rates of premium increased, they will retain the subsection. The proviso should be omitted.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment is to strike out Subsection 2.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I do not agree with Mr. Nicholson. It has now been decided that emergency treatment must be paid for irrespective of the cause of injury. The clause goes on to say that although the driver of the vehicle may be responsible for the accident the owner must pay damages, but the Minister will still continue to pay for the emergency treatment. I cannot see why an innocent person should be forced to pay damages; therefore, these words must remain in the clause.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I, too, hope that the clause will not be amended.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

New clause:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move—

That the following be inserted, to stand as Clause 4:—

Amendment of Section 4: Section four of the principal Act is amended as follows:—

(a) by inserting therein before the definition of "District" a new definition as follows:—

"Approved insurer" means any duly incorporated company carrying on insurance business in Western Australia under the provisions of the Commonwealth Insurance Act, 1932;

(b) by deleting therefrom the definition of "Owner" and inserting in lieu thereof a definition as follows:—

"Owner" when used in relation to a vehicle which is the subject of a hire-purchase agreement means the person in possession of that vehicle under that agreement, and, when used in relation to a vehicle which is the subject of a hiring agreement (other than a hire-purchase agreement) under which the vehicle is hired for a period of not less than six months, means the person in possession of that vehicle under that hiring agreement. Save as aforesaid the term "owner" means any person who owns a vehicle.



My object in moving for the insertion of this new clause is to take the business out of the hands of the State Insurance Office, and put it into the hands of all insurance companies. I am strongly opposed to State trading concerns or to their extension.

Hon. G. Fraser: Are you afraid of the competition?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No, because that has nothing to do with me. I have had an experience of the State Insurance Office that is not altogether pleasant. Inquiries were made by the Minister at the State Insurance Office concerning a business transaction between certain clients and an insurance company. Surely the State Insurance Office was not set up as an inquiry agent. It is the practice amongst insurance companies taking over lapsed policies to make inquiries concerning the previous risks and costs associated with such policies. Apparently the State Insurance Office goes into the question of current policies already held by insurance companies. The State undertaking has not been formed on an actuarial basis that would enable it to arrive at its own costs, and has to depend upon the methods adopted by insurance companies generally. In 1932 Parliament amended the State Trading Concerns Act by taking out of it the Rocky Bay Engineering Works. The amending Act was assented to in 1932, but has not yet been proclaimed, and we are still humbugging about with those engineering works as if they were part and parcel of State trading concerns.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am in favour of the State Insurance Office being included in the definition of "approved insurer." As this form of insurance will be compulsory it will be a form of tax, and that being so there is no reason why the State office should not participate in the business. The insurance of motor cars is not the type of business insurance companies generally favour. If the State Insurance Office is allowed to do this business, Parliament will have an opportunity at any time to see the figures with regard to motor car insurance; otherwise we shall know nothing about the costs. I should like to see words added to paragraph (a) bringing the State Insurance Office into this business. Members may recollect that the Honorary Minister suggested an amendment to provide that the insurance companies that

had been approved under the Workers' Compensation Act should automatically be approved under this particular legislation. Such an amendment would avoid the possibility of the Minister refusing to approve of any insurance concern except the State Insurance Office.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Parker has referred to the amendment I suggested, but the Committee disagreed with it and the suggestion was not adopted. I still think my suggestion would meet the case.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Although this Chamber has decided against the principle of State trading concerns, it will be remembered that last session it departed from that stand for the protection of men who had been insured for a number of years under the Workers' Compensation Act. The Government this year is endeavouring to extend the operations of the State Insurance Office under this measure, and apparently takes the view that as motor car insurance is to be compulsory there is sufficient justification for bringing the State Insurance Office into the business. Next year the Government need only make it compulsory for persons to insure their dwelling houses for it to be suggested that that, too, would be sufficient justification for placing such insurances with the State Insurance Office.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Parker has indicated his desire to move an amendment to include the State Government Insurance Office.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is so. I move an amendment —

That in the definition of "approved insurer" the words "any duly incorporated company carrying on insurance business in Western Australia under the provisions of the Commonwealth Insurance Act, 1932," be struck out and the words "any person or association of persons carrying on the business of insurance who or which has been approved by the Minister as an approved insurer for the purposes of Part IVA. of this Act and includes the State Government Insurance Office as established under the State Government Insurance Act, 1938," inserted in lieu.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I trust the Committee will not agree to Mr. Parker's amendment but will accept the new clause proposed by Mr. Baxter. I think the latter will

achieve the purpose of allowing any duly incorporated insurance company to operate under the Act.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I hope the amendment will be agreed to, although I would like the Bill as a whole to be defeated, were that possible. The new clause has been prepared with no other object than to exclude the State Government Insurance Office from participation in third-party risk business. I am opposed to State trading concerns on principle, but in view of the fact that this form of insurance is to be compulsory, I think we should know what charges are to be levied before we approve of the legislation. There may be a certain amount of justification for the attitude that has been adopted in that the determining of the rates to be paid is to be left to a committee. Should Mr. Baxter's amendment be agreed to, however, we shall place in the hands of the private insurance companies, business that is to be made compulsory. In those circumstances motor owners should have the right to decide whether they shall insure with the State office. I think the measure is clumsy and will prove difficult to administer. The whole matter could be dealt with simply and inexpensively under the scheme that I suggested earlier in the piece. There is no gainsaying the fact that Mr. Baxter's new clause has been prepared by the insurance companies.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Nothing of the sort! You have no right to say that: it is not true.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If I cannot say it, I can still think it.

The CHAIRMAN: You have said it, so it stands.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The new clause suggests that we shall compel people to insure with the existing companies. If the matter were voluntary, I would not hesitate to agree to that course, but as third-party insurance is to be compulsory, we should give the Minister the right to say what companies shall be approved. I feel sure the whole of the existing companies will be approved by the Minister and in the circumstances the State office should be allowed to participate in the business.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I do not think the new clause, as proposed by Mr. Baxter, will cover Lloyds, which is not an incorpor-

ated company. Many insurance companies operating here are not duly incorporated and the new clause might restrict business.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The wording of the new clause is similar to that already included in the Workers' Compensation Act, so members need have no fear regarding the position.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The issue is clear and can be boiled down to a few words. Shall the motoring public be protected by the added competition of the State Government Insurance Office, or shall the whole business be conducted by the private insurance companies? Mr. Thomson's arguments were forceful and apt.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: To talk about added competition by the State Government Insurance Office is useless, because the committee will assess the charges, so the element of competition will not enter into the matter. Some members say they are opposed to State trading and when a proposal such as this is before them, they say, "This is different." I take exception to Mr. Thomson's remarks about the insurance companies drafting the new clause. Such a provision is already in the Workers' Compensation Act and I have taken the clause from it. If members desire the scope of the State office to be extended, they can vote accordingly but I am not prepared to accept such a proposition.

Amendment put and a division called for.

The CHAIRMAN: Before tellers are appointed I give my vote with the ayes.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	..	..	12
<hr/>					
A tie	..	..	..	..	0
<hr/>					

#### AYES.

Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. W. H. Klison
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. J. T. Franklin	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. W. J. Mann
	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. H. V. Plesse
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	Hon. H. Seddon
	(Teller.)

#### PAIR.

AYE.	No.
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. J. J. Holmes

The CHAIRMAN: The voting being equal, the question passes in the negative.

New clause put, and a division called for.

The CHAIRMAN: Before tellers are appointed, I give my vote with the noes.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes .. .. .	12
Noes .. .. .	12
A tie .. .. .	0

#### AYES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo  
Hon. C. F. Baxter  
Hon. L. B. Bolton  
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt  
Hon. V. Hamersley  
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane

Hon. J. Nicholson  
Hon. H. V. Plesse  
Hon. H. Seddon  
Hon. H. Tuckey  
Hon. C. H. Wittenoom  
Hon. G. B. Wood

(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Hon. J. Cornell  
Hon. L. Craig  
Hon. J. M. Drew  
Hon. J. T. Franklin  
Hon. G. Fraser  
Hon. E. H. Gray

Hon. W. H. Kitson  
Hon. W. J. Mann  
Hon. G. W. Miles  
Hon. H. S. W. Parker  
Hon. O. B. Williams  
Hon. A. Thomson

(Teller.)

#### PAIR.

AYE.  
Hon. J. J. Holmes

No.  
Hon. W. R. Hall

The CHAIRMAN: The voting being equal, the question passes in the negative.

Bill again reported with further amendments.

### BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

*In Committee.*

Resumed from the 16th November. Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on Clause 2, to which Hon. H. S. W. Parker had moved an amendment that all the words of the clause after the words "as follows" in line 13 be struck out and the following words inserted in lieu:—" (b) in relation to insurance under Part IVA of the Traffic Act, 1919-1930."

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Bill provides for the State Insurance Office to undertake all classes of insurable risks. That means it will have a general open go. My amendment is to extend the activities of the State Insurance Office only to insurance under Part IV of the Traffic Act.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Bill does not provide for general insurance out-

side of motor vehicles. The Government requires the right to undertake the whole of motor car insurance and if it cannot get that, it does not want anything. The statement was made that this clause covers all classes of insurance. If hon. members think that is so and they want to confine it to insurance of motor vehicles, an amendment can be moved along those lines. That a motorist should go to the State office for third-party insurance and then have to go to private companies for cover with regard to other risks is opposed to commonsense.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I do not think the Honorary Minister has a right to assume that third-party insurance will be taken out with the State office. How the Minister can take this clause to refer to insurance of motor vehicles only is beyond me. "All classes of insurable risks" does not relate to motor vehicles only.

The Honorary Minister: Read on.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It says "including third-party risks in connection with the ownership and use of motor vehicles." This appears to be a subtle way of extending the operations of the State Insurance Office. I support the amendment.

The Honorary Minister: I would not be a party to any subtle means of—

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I did not say the Honorary Minister. I said the Bill. The Honorary Minister has a clever draftsman.

Hon. G. FRASER: The clause as it is drafted is very plain to me. It says, "All classes of insurable risks, including third-party risks in connection with the ownership and use of motor vehicles". If that is not plain, then I do not know the meaning of the word. If any alteration is required, the only one need be that instead of the words "including third-party risks" being where they are, they should follow the word "vehicles".

Hon. A. Thomson: Yes, that should clarify the position.

Hon. G. FRASER: We should either strike out those words or insert them after "motor vehicles".

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The fact that there is no approved insurer under the Traffic Act makes it rather a question whether the Committee can agree to the amendment in the form proposed, that is, to provide that this will be limited to insurance under Part IV of the Traffic Act, 1919-

39. We could delete all the words after "classes of insurable risks" down to and including "ownership". Then the paragraph would read, "Subject as hereinafter provided, in relation to all classes of insurable risks and use of motor vehicles". That is the only way out of the difficulty.

Hon. G. W. MILES: We should delete the words "third-party risks" if the State office wants to handle the motor car business as well as third-party risk. That is the point the Committee should decide.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Parker's amendment is to delete the whole of the proposed paragraph. Does Mr. Miles wish to move an amendment on the lines he indicated?

Hon. W. G. MILES: It should be sufficient to strike out the words "including third-party risk." If that can be accepted as an amendment, I will move to strike out those words.

The CHAIRMAN: If Mr. Miles moves that amendment, it will be necessary then to strike out the Proviso.

Hon. G. W. MILES: My object is to decide whether we shall allow the State office to undertake motor insurance risks as well as third-party risks. If the words I have suggested are struck out, then the State office will have that power. I move an amendment.

That the words "including third-party risks" be struck out.

The CHAIRMAN: There are now two amendments before the Chair.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It might be advisable to report progress at this stage, and I will have an amendment drafted to meet the position.

Progress reported.

### **BILL—FIREARMS AND GUNS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*In Committee.*

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

### **BILL—RESERVES (No. 2).**

*Second Reading.*

**THE HONORARY MINISTER** (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [8.13] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has been brought

forward for the purpose of enabling the Government to proceed with a plan for the erection of new Government offices on portion of Reserve A 1149. This is a Class A Reserve set apart as Government Domain, and comprises what is usually referred to as Government House gardens. As members are aware, there is an urgent need for the provision of centralised accommodation for the Government departments. Many of these are at present housed in antiquated and unsightly buildings scattered throughout the city in such a way as seriously to affect the efficiency of their staffs. The lack of centralised accommodation not only delays the transaction of departmental business, but causes considerable inconvenience to members of the public, and many hours are wasted by persons travelling to and from one office to another, when they have occasion to do business with two or more departments. Apart from these considerations however, the question of providing new office accommodation for the Land Titles Office and the Department of Agriculture is a matter of particular urgency. The erection of a suitable building to house these and other departments—according to the accommodation available—is the first step contemplated in the Government's plan for the provision of a centre of administration. The Government realises that in a matter of this kind where we are planning for future as well as present requirements, both the location and nature of the buildings must be determined with due regard to their ultimate effect on the amenities of the city.

As to the matter of location, it is pertinent to quote from a report of the Town Planning Commission wherein it is pointed out that the problem has to be considered from three aspects. These are—

- (a) the most suitable position to give the greatest convenience and service to the greatest portion of the business and general community;
- (b) the most suitable position from a town planning point of view, having in mind the possible and probable development of the City; and
- (c) the most suitable position from an aesthetic viewpoint.

The Government had these considerations in view when some years ago it appointed a committee comprising the Under Secretary for Works (Mr. Munt), the Under Treasurer (Mr. Berkeley), and the Principal Architect

(Mr. Clare) to report and advise on sites that might be utilised for the purpose of centralising the Government offices. In considering the suitability of the various sites, the committee assumed that—

- (a) The desire was to centralise the bulk of, if not all the Government offices.
- (b) That any site selected should not only be large enough for present requirements, but should also allow of a good margin for future extension;
- (c) The site must be on sufficient area to allow of the creation of a Governmental centre with a pleasing grouping of buildings in a proper garden setting which would be a definite contribution to the beauty of the city.

Reporting to the Government on the results of its investigations, the committee mentioned only two sites that fulfilled the conditions I have outlined. These were Government Domain and the Esplanade. The committee was strongly of the opinion that Parliament House grounds should be entirely preserved for its original purpose, and in this connection pointed out that while it would be possible to erect all the buildings that would be required for years to come on this reserve, nevertheless it should be developed as suggested by the original designers. The members emphasised that if buildings were erected on the full front of the present Barracks, Parliament House would be completely blanketed from the city, and would in fact become virtually a back yard. On the other hand, if buildings were erected divided by an open space to disclose a vista of Parliament House from the city, the flanking structures would have to be disproportionately tall, and by comparison would then so completely dwarf the former as to rob it of all dignity. Other difficulties are associated with the same site, notably those connected with the slope of the ground, such as the necessity for providing entrances at various levels, and the matter of foundations.

With regard to the Treasury Building site, the committee agreed that by erecting tall buildings on these lands sufficient accommodation could be provided for some years to come if the Town Hall site were included. However, the committee pointed out that to do this it would be necessary to use virtually the whole site for building construction, and that while the result would be a very fine and commanding structure, it

would not have any semblance of a setting as visualised and premised by the committee. A subsequent check made by the Principal Architect has now disclosed that if new buildings on this site were taken up to the maximum building height allowed, namely 125 feet, we would only be able to provide sufficient accommodation on this area to meet present requirements and allow a further 10 per cent. for future expansion. Assuming that the area occupied by the Town Hall would not be available, then the site would only suffice to house the existing staffs.

Having regard to the committee's considered recommendation in respect to all the available sites, the Government last year brought down a Bill providing for the excision of an area of just over two acres from the Government Domain. That Bill failed to meet with the approval of members of this Chamber. Subsequently, however, the Government referred the matter to the departmental committee constituted under the provisions of the Public Buildings Act, for further consideration and report. As members are aware, the committee consists of the Public Service Commissioner (Mr. Simpson) as Chairman, the Principal Architect (Mr. Clare), the Under Treasurer (Mr. Reid), the Town Planning Commissioner (Mr. Davidson), and the Public Works Land Resumption Officer (Mr. Hall). Copies of this committee's report to the Premier on the proposed new Government offices have been distributed amongst hon. members. On referring to the report members will see that this committee gave consideration to a site for public buildings at the eastern end of Government Domain, on the basis that the western boundary of any excision from Government Domain for this purpose would coincide with the rear fence of the Lodge enclosure. In this connection I would recall that last year's Bill would have taken in the Lodge building.

The committee was not asked to report on the Esplanade site—which was one of the two sites favourably commented on by the earlier committee—since the Government definitely rejected the idea of erecting public buildings in that particular locality. Various schemes were considered by the committee in relation to the proposed excision. In its report the committee states—

In all of the schemes mentioned hereafter the total excision of land from Government

House Domain would not exceed approximately four acres. The total area of Government House Domain is approximately fourteen acres.

This excision would not in any way interfere with the existing garden area of Government House grounds.

To allow of a reasonable layout of buildings on the comparatively narrow piece of land between the rear fence of the Lodge and the eastern boundary of Government House Domain, it would be necessary to provide for a future roadway from St. George's Terrace to the Esplanade.

As the buildings would be carried to the maximum height, this roadway should be at least 100 feet wide.

Scheme "C" indicates what is considered to be the best use of the area available. This provides for a 60ft. setback from the St. George's Terrace frontage to allow of a garden setting on this front.

Scheme "D" is the same as scheme "C" except that the buildings are brought up to the frontage, thus permitting the introduction of another wing.

The complete scheme "C" would provide sufficient accommodation for the present requirements of all departments, plus a margin of 6½ per cent. for expansion, and scheme "D" would provide for a margin of 25 per cent.

To provide for sufficient accommodation it has been necessary with these proposals to make the maximum use of the area available, and this has resulted in an east and west orientation for a large portion of the building.

Such an orientation with our summer conditions should be avoided if at all possible.

The need for the maximum use of the area available has made it impossible to provide a proper setting for such an important building.

Because of the very large expenditure which will ultimately be involved in the centralisation of Government offices, we feel that an endeavour should be made to plan for a group of buildings properly arranged in a spacious setting with a view to the ultimate creation of a governmental centre which would not only centralise Government offices, but which would also be a real contribution to town planning and to the dignity and amenity of the city.

Such a development is not possible on the small area which it is proposed to excise from Government House Domain; but if the block at present occupied by the Christian Brothers' College could be added, sufficient land would then be available to allow of the satisfactory planning of the governmental centre.

Schemes "A" and "B" show the type of arrangement which would be possible if this extra land were available.

Development along the lines of these proposals would ultimately result in a really fine

governmental centre in which it would be possible to obtain a north and south orientation for all buildings.

Plans of the four schemes mentioned—"A," "B," "C," and "D"—will be available for the scrutiny of members tomorrow.

In its final analysis, the committee states—

We feel that the ultimate aim should be the creation of a Governmental centre in a proper setting, and this could only be achieved if the Christian Brothers' block is obtained. Scheme "B" is considered the best solution of the problem and is strongly recommended for your consideration.

The report continues:—

It would probably be many years before this area would be required in connection with the scheme, but if the property were acquired now, before values are enhanced by our operations, the building could either be rented to the college authorities until required for our own purposes, or, alternatively, it could be used for Government offices for the time being.

Reporting to the Chairman of the Public Buildings Committee, the Town Planning Board offers the following comment on the committee's proposals:—

The Government House site fulfils all requirements from the point of view of convenience, future development and aesthetics, and . . . is the best available in the city. . . . We therefore recommend the adoption of the Government House site, and after viewing the proposed schemes of development submitted by the Government Architect, we recommend the adoption of scheme "B."

Schemes "A" and "B" when completed, would provide sufficient accommodation for the present requirements of all Departments, plus a margin of 33 per cent. for expansion. As already mentioned complete schemes "C" and "D" would provide margins of 6½ per cent. and 25 per cent. respectively. In view of the recommendations of the committee and the Town Planning Board, it is proposed to resume, under the provision of the Public Works Act, the area at present held by the Christian Brothers, if Parliament agrees to the excision sought under this Bill.

Hon. L. Craig: Has the Christian Brothers' site been offered to the Government before?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. This resumption is all the more necessary in that it is possible that the college lands might be sold at some future time, and utilised for the erection of flats, or some other purpose

which would detrimentally affect the value of the Government buildings as well as Government House itself.

Turning now to the building plans: these show that it is proposed to erect a group of offices with one central building of nine storeys surrounded by four smaller blocks of six storeys. Except in the case of the central structure, tiling will not be necessary. The first block to be erected would be in Government Domain grounds on the north-western corner. This building will be of sufficient size to accommodate the Titles Office, the Agricultural Department, and some other, smaller, Government Departments. The committee has estimated the cost of the structure at £280,000, but points out that it is not possible to provide a firm estimate until a design has been prepared for the building. Here I may mention that the rentals at present paid for temporary office accommodation in Perth would be sufficient to meet the interest on expenditure to the extent of £50,000. It is not proposed to erect other buildings in the proposed scheme until circumstances necessitate such a course.

If hon. members turn to the Schedule of the Bill, they will see that the western boundary of the proposed excision runs towards the river from St. George's-terrace from the existing fence behind Government House Lodge. The frontage is thus 143 feet less than that provided last year. The area involved comprises what was formerly the stable yard and cow paddock of the old days. The portion facing St. George's terrace is unsightly and has not been used for many years, while the southern portion is utilised to a certain extent by the Government gardener. It is not expected, however, that the southern part will be required for building purposes for another 40 or 50 years.

It must be emphasised, therefore, that the proposal will in no way interfere with the amenities of Government House. The whole question has been discussed with and approved by His Excellency. Some objections were raised last year to the principle of utilising Class A reserve lands for the purpose of Government buildings. Investigations made by the Minister for Lands have failed to reveal any clear record of the original reservation of the Government Domain; but it appears that, with Stirling Square, it was retained for public

purposes, including the erection of officers' quarters and other buildings. It is interesting to note that a plan of the town of Perth, as it was in 1845, shows that Government Domain then ended at the east end of Pier-street, which had been surveyed through to the river. In subsequent plans, such as the 1853 plan, Stirling Square and the Government Domain are clearly shown to differ materially from their present areas. When Government House was built in 1858 to 1860, a portion of Pier-street was built upon, notwithstanding that no authority existed for the partial closure of the road. By the time the existing boundary of Government Domain had been defined, in 1899, when a survey was made to ascertain whether the new hall-room of Government House would encroach upon Stirling Square, the boundaries of the latter had been driven westward the width of what was formerly Pier-street, plus an additional 114 chains.

Government Domain was finally gazetted as a Class A reserve in March, 1900. The Minister for Lands advises me that until that date it was simply referred to in despatches as if it were set apart as a site likely to be used for Government purposes. I may add that the Minister for Lands made a searching investigation into the historical aspect of this matter; and the speech that he made in another place is not only very informative, but well worth studying. A careful search has failed to disclose any reference implying that the Imperial Government had any authority to dictate the purpose for which the land might be used. However, while the records show that there was no obligation on the part of the Colonial Government to approach the Imperial authorities in regard to the proposal to utilise portion of Government Domain for public buildings, nevertheless we did make such an approach; and the Dominion Office replied in the following terms:—

Downing Street,  
28th February, 1938.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch No. 34 of the 13th December last and to thank you for sending preliminary advice of the proposal to erect public buildings on a portion of the grounds of Government House.

2. In the light of the information contained in your despatch, I see no objection in principle to this proposal and would be prepared to give my consent, so far as such con-

sent might be necessary, when the formal request referred to in your despatch is received. I assume that your Ministers will consult their legal advisers as to the legal procedure necessary to carry out the proposal.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,  
Malcolm MacDonald.

The Officer Administering  
the Government of Western Australia.

Member: You ask for the land after this House previously rejected a proposal to utilise it for Government offices.

The HONORARY MINISTER: One of the objections to the prior Bill was that no communication had been despatched to the Dominions Office in connection with the proposed site.

Hon. J. Nicholson: In Mr. Malcolm McDonald's reply, did he refer to the date of your letter?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. Our letter was dated the 13th December, 1937, and his reply, 28th February, 1938. As to the objections that were raised last year to the exsion of land "set aside for the people," I point out that if this Bill passes it will be possible to demolish the Agricultural Department building, which stands on a site reserved for public buildings known as Reserve B5, and restore the site and lands of the adjoining institute to Stirling Gardens. In commending the measure to the House, I should again like to quote from the Town Planning Commission's report—

The Government House site fulfils all requirements from the point of view of convenience, future development and aesthetics . . . . . and is the best available in the city.

As members are aware, the site has a river frontage, it is in close proximity to the professional and mercantile offices of the city, and it is handy but not too close to the shopping centre. I hope members will give the Bill their earnest consideration. I am sure that if they consider it with an open mind they will agree that the proposed site is the best possible for Government offices in the city. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [8.39]: While I agree with the Honorary Minister that it has long been necessary to provide additional accommodation for Government departments, I cannot agree with the dog-

matic attitude of the Government in resur-recting a proposal that last session was disagreed to in no uncertain way by this Chamber. That proposal was to build public offices on the Government Domain. The Government has already gone as far as to place a big unsightly heap of sand about 50ft. high on the portion of the Domain it is proposed to utilise for the Government buildings. This the Government did without first obtaining Parliament's approval of the site. One wonders how this particular land can be utilised for buildings such as the Government desires to erect. The land is unsuitable from the point of view of foundations; while, in addition, the loose sand dumped on it has to be dealt with. My view of the reports that were laid on the Table of the House on this subject is that the two committees were restricted in the scope of their inquiry and report. I see no mention in those reports of the Public Works Department site, although I do see reference to Parliament House grounds. The reports centre on Government Domain, thus backing up the Government in its attitude to force upon Parliament this proposed site. Surely, the vote last session—19 to 8—should have convinced the Government that this House at least was determined not to allow public buildings to be erected upon Government Domain. What is the position? The Government must spend £55,000 or £60,000 to acquire the Christian Brothers' College property. Why the necessity for that? Reference has been made to the view to be obtained from the Domain site; I do not regard that as important. The land is flat and the administrative building would hide the view of Government House. One would not know that Government House existed. Then there is the objection on the score of expense, the costly foundations and the acquisition of the Christian Brothers' College property. The expense alone is sufficient to condemn the proposal. Further, the site is right at one end of the city, distant from transport and far away from Parliament House. There should be a definite connection between administrative offices and Parliament; one cannot get away from that fact. The Government has nothing to support it in its proposal beyond its determination to acquire this particular piece of land and proceed with the buildings. The sites committee made reference to the Treasury block. I am not very keen on it,



although it is a fine site where very large buildings could be erected; but such buildings would be costly at the present time. Other sites are available.

Member: Where?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Alongside the Public Works Department buildings is a large area of land covered with tin shanties. Although I favour the retention of old buildings, anybody who knows the Public Works Department building as I know it, is aware that it is worse than a rabbit warren. It puts me in mind of African prisons where natives were incarcerated in early days. The building is in every way unsuited for its purpose; one has to go through one room to get to another. In such circumstances, it is impossible for officers to do justice to their work. That building must come down. It was suitable for the purpose for which it was erected; but sooner or later it will have to be demolished, and the sooner the better. Architects could no doubt utilise the frontage. There is also the frontage to Malcolm-street, a big sweep of land, immediately adjacent to Parliament House, and a road could be constructed to continue the terrace direct to Parliament House. To what does the objection amount that the erection of buildings there would block out Parliament House? Could not the architects design a structure of which we could be proud? Facing Malcolm-street is a large area, and it would be easy to level off an additional area if more land was necessary.

Hon. W. J. Mann: We should do as other countries do, retain something worth looking at.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: But we have to consider the economical and the practical side. We want Government departments located conveniently to Parliament House. There are the Observatory and Hale School sites which are quite near to Parliament House.

Hon. G. Fraser: But they are further from the centre of the city than is the proposed site.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: They have better transport facilities and are situated close to Parliament House. Not a word is being said by the Government of the Hale School site. That site has been granted on a 99-years lease, and the Government could resume it any time and pay, not the actual value of the buildings, but the value of the buildings for Government purposes. That

is the effect of the agreement. Therefore we would not be paying out a large sum of money unless the buildings were worth it to the Government. Several sites are available, but the Government must go to this extreme distance from Parliament House, notwithstanding that the city is expanding in other directions. Why should the Government be so determined to have this one site and no other when Parliament has stated in no uncertain voice that it will not agree? Perhaps the Government thinks that by filling the Government Domain with sand and making it unsightly, we shall be more likely to agree. That course of action, however, is more likely to make Parliament adamant. Why has the Government taken upon itself to have a lot of sand dumped on a Class "A" reserve? For the Government to do that is not right. Let members take a walk to Government Domain and inspect the site.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: The sand will take years to settle down solidly.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes, and in order to level the block and hold the sand, a retaining wall will have to be built on the Esplanade. If the block is to be levelled, the maximum height has not yet been reached. Probably a height of 65 feet will be necessary to secure a level surface. Is it intended to level the block to that extent? Undoubtedly a start has been made to do so. I cannot understand the attitude of the Government. Last session a similar proposal was rejected, and I hope there will be a larger majority this session against the excision of this block from the reserve. This year only one reserve is dealt with in the Bill. Last year other reserves were included in the same measure, and the whole Bill was lost. This year, however, we have a clear cut issue, and members have an opportunity to say in no uncertain voice that they disagree with the proposal of the Government. I hope the Bill will be rejected on the second reading.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [8.50]: I, as members know, have always favoured the proposed site for the new buildings. I did so even before I entered Parliament. As a youth I often had in mind what a wonderful site Government Domain would make for public buildings, and I have not changed my mind. For years people throughout the country have been urging upon the

Government the urgent necessity for constructing new buildings for the Department of Agriculture. Mr. Baxter spoke of the Barracks being like a series of rabbit warrens. They are a palace compared with the offices in the Department of Agriculture. There we have highly paid technical and other officers working in rooms not fit for any Government officer who tries to do his job efficiently. For years we have been working to get these new buildings erected. The Titles Office is a disgrace to the Government. Today the section of Government Domain in question is not even occupied by gardens; it is just an open paddock. It belongs to the Government, and land values at present are low. The situation is as central as any we can get, with the exception of the Treasury Buildings. The Treasury Buildings are the centre of Perth; all distances are measured from that point, and the proposed site is less than half-a-mile away. It is certainly much closer than is Parliament House to the centre of Perth. I object to the erection of these buildings being held up by Parliament. If members could agree upon a site, we might get somewhere. But not ten members of this House would agree upon a site. All they will agree upon is that the proposed site is not the best one. They just say they will not agree to that, and nobody representing the views of a majority of the House has been able to select a site and say, "This is a site of which we approve." Amongst the sites suggested are Hale School, the Observatory, the block next to Parliament House, the site of the Public Works Department, the site of the Treasury Buildings, and a site over the Beaufort-street bridge. Thus we are getting nowhere. I suggest that the House appoint a select committee and let it say which site shall be adopted. The Government appointed an independent and unbiased committee to select a site.

Hon. A. Thomson: And the committee dealt with two sites.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Nothing of the sort. In fact two committees have been appointed to consider the question of sites. What does this House expect the Government to do? The Government obtained independent advice, and Parliament says the proposed site is not acceptable. What should the Government do? If we turn down this pro-

posal, we should offer some alternative, but all we do is to say, "You cannot have that site." If the Government suggested the site of the Treasury Buildings or of Hale School, we would still say, "You cannot have it."

Hon. A. Thomson: You have suggested the appointment of a select committee.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I would suggest anything in order to get progress. We are holding up the erection of the new buildings without offering the Government any assistance. If we suggested a particular site, it would be different, but we are not able to do that. Something should be done to reach finality. The money is available; land is available, but this House merely says, "You cannot have that block". The position has become absolutely ridiculous. It is time we arrived at some agreement. Of course, if we approved of a site and the proposal was not accepted by another place, we would be stultifying ourselves. How many members would agree with Mr. Baxter's ideas? Perhaps four or five.

Hon. J. Cornell: How many would agree with you?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Perhaps four or five. How many would agree with Mr. Cornell? Perhaps two. We are getting nowhere. I do not think the majority would agree with Mr. Baxter, though he suggested all the vacant land in West Perth. He is not satisfied in his own mind where the buildings should be erected. He has suggested three sites—those of the Observatory, Hale School and Public Works Department.

Hon. G. Fraser: And none of them is near the centre of Perth.

Hon. L. CRAIG: All of them are "ungettable". Government Domain is accessible to Perth, Victoria Park and southern suburbs, and I consider that is the best site. Many members disagree. Very well; but let us do something to assist the Government in selecting a site so that buildings urgently necessary might be erected.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Let the Government suggest another site.

Hon. L. CRAIG: And another session of Parliament would pass before the matter could be considered. If that site was not approved, still another session would pass, and so we would be in 1941 and no agreement would have been reached.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: This site was disapproved last session.

Hon. L. CRAIG: But nothing was done to suggest another site. I favour the Government Domain site and shall support the second reading of the Bill, but I ask the House to take action that will result in assisting the Government to proceed with the erection of buildings that are urgently required.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [8.59]: I felt somewhat diffident about taking part in this debate until we received a curtain lecture from Mr. Craig. He blames us, and asks what we are going to do. Why blame us? Members know that long before Mr. Craig entered this Chamber, the need for better housing accommodation for the staff of the Department of Agriculture was urgent. That was 15 or 20 years ago. The obligation does not rest on Parliament unless Parliament is asked to participate in solving the problem of the best site for Government offices. So far Parliament, as such, has not been asked to participate in the preliminaries that would lead to a decision. All that Parliament has been asked to do is to approve of this proposal.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: This does not refer to the site.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is all Parliament has been asked to do. If Mr. Craig will not agree with me, that is for him to say.

Hon. L. Craig: You are entitled to your opinion.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Recently I was speaking to two prominent city architects, and they discussed this vexatious question. They confided to me to the extent that they said they could not understand the stupidity of Parliament. I told them that members of Parliament might be stupid, but that they were not so in this instance, because they had not been asked to do anything in connection with the preliminary work leading up to the selection of the site. The architects said, "We will exonerate Parliament in those circumstances, and reflect upon the culpability of the Government." They pointed out that when dealing with such a far-reaching project of a permanent nature as the erection of up-to-date public buildings that would house the Government departments for the next fifty years, surely insularity should be dropped, and the Government of the day should go outside its own ranks in the consideration of the issues in-

volved. They said, "Summed up, the opinion of the committee is the opinion of one man. However highly qualified that man may be, the opinion of a committee is only that of the Government Architect. The other members of the committee know nothing about architecture. On such a far-reaching question, surely the Government of the day should have endeavoured to get the best possible architectural advice available in the State, and Ministers did not get it."

Hon. L. Craig: An architect need not necessarily know all about the selection of a site.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Mr. Craig may be content to jerry-build for himself, but should he want a substantial house erected, he would surely avail himself of the services of an architect.

Hon. L. Craig: We are talking about the site.

Hon. J. CORNELL: And an architect has something to do with that question.

Hon. L. Craig: Not much.

Hon. A. Thomson: He has everything to do with it.

Hon. J. CORNELL: If Mr. Craig were to take an architect to Herdsman's Lake and ask him to build a house there, the expert would probably suggest a boat instead!

Hon. L. Craig: Mr. Clare must know his business!

Hon. J. CORNELL: Mr. Clare may be an excellent man in his profession, but he is not the only man on the committee. There are others. The Town Planning Commissioner is a member. He never agrees with anyone else. He falls out with himself when he cannot get somebody to disagree with. Then take Mr. Simpson, the chairman of the committee. He is an excellent man, but he is all things to all men. The position he holds must necessarily help him to be all things to all men. Then there is the Under Treasurer. All he is concerned about is finance. But we are not so much interested in that question, which should not arise in the consideration of the site for the erection of public buildings. He is a wise man who can assess the amount of funds necessary to enable the public departments to be housed properly for the next fifty years. We are told that the whole Bill presented to Parliament last session was lost on the question of a site for public offices. The whole Bill was certainly lost, not because of the

Council's managers, but on account of the attitude of the Assembly's managers, and more especially because of the whims and wiles of a certain individual. There was no need for the whole Bill to be lost last session. If it was lost, it was certainly because of the question of the site for these buildings. Perhaps that has been one reason for the Government changing its ground. There was an objection to excising part of Government Domain. This session we have been told that the site proposed is not that embodied in the Bill of last session. The new site is a little further east, but still in Government House grounds. If there is anything to choose between the two sites, the one now proposed is the worse. I make that claim because I understand the proposal is not only to excise portion of Government Domain but to extend it to an area to the eastward. The committee said that the portion to be excised from Government Domain was useless in itself for the purpose. The Government is building up 20 feet of sand on portion of the site, and is ignoring the Biblical advice against erecting a house upon sand. Whereas last session the Government was prepared to take sufficient land from Government Domain to meet its requirements, the proposal now is not to adopt that course. The Government suggests taking the worst end of the block, consisting of about four acres, which the committee claims is not enough. It reminds me of the lady in one of Marryatt's novels, who excused herself on the ground that "It was only a little one." The departmental committee claimed that the site was "very little." Parliament objected last session to the Government not taking sufficient to meet requirements for all time, and we are again asked to agree to an excision that the committee claims is not sufficient to meet future requirements. In its report the committee says—

Such a development is not possible on the small area which it is proposed to excise from Government House Domain, but if the block at present occupied by the Christian Brothers' College could be added, sufficient land would then be available to allow of the satisfactory planning of the Government centre.

If sufficient is excised from Government Domain for the purpose of the erection of public offices, six acres could be taken, and that would leave eight acres untouched. Why take four acres from a Class

A reserve which would cost the State nothing, and then proceed with negotiations to acquire an equal area, if not more, of adjoining land on which a large block of buildings is erected? That area to the east is held in fee simple and its resumption will involve the expenditure of a large sum. That is what I object to. I shall oppose the second reading of the Bill on that ground alone. If I were to reverse the vote I recorded on the Reserves Bill of last session, it would be on the understanding that sufficient was taken from Government Domain to meet all requirements. If it is necessary to resume an additional area upon which a huge building is already erected, involving a large outlay, then I would much prefer to see the present proposal dropped and a site resumed west of Parliament House. From all points of view, there is no comparison between the Hale School site plus the Observatory grounds, and the one dealt with in the Bill.

Hon. G. FRASER: There would be a squeal from the public if Government offices were erected on the hill.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Squeal from the public? If in years gone by Parliament had displayed foresight enough to resume all the land between Harvest-terrace, Hay-street, Havelock-street, and Parliament-place, then in 50 years' time the citizens of the day would have talked about the statesmen who had vision enough to look ahead.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. CORNELL: Look where we will about Perth, there is no site comparable with that on the hill, and Parliament House itself has one of the finest sites available for such an institution within the British Empire. Now Parliament is asked to agree to the excising of four acres from Government Domain and to resume by negotiation a few acres held by the Christian Brothers. That proposal cannot have my support. I am not a valuer, but I understand from Mr. Baxter that the resumption of the land I suggest west of Parliament House would not involve an expenditure equivalent to that necessary for the resumption of the land and buildings held by the Christian Brothers.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No, it would not involve so much expenditure.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The question of accessibility has been mentioned.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You would not suggest there is any comparison between the Government Domain site and the one you suggest?

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Government Domain site might serve the people of South Perth, Victoria Park, Guildford and Midland Junction, but if we were to take a census we would find that for every one person inconvenienced by the eastern site, two or three persons would be inconvenienced by the adoption of the western site that I suggest. When considering the question of accessibility, we can truthfully say that today Fremantle is part of Perth, from the standpoint of Government administration. Therefore the western site would serve the port better.

Hon. C. B. Williams: But people would have to break their journey to town.

Hon. J. CORNELL: If Mr. Williams were to visit other cities throughout the world, he could then talk about accessibility. Then, again, Government offices are not availed of to any great extent by the general public. More people visit Boans or Foy and Gibson's in one week than patronise the whole of the Government offices in three months. As to accessibility for members of Parliament, I am not concerned about that for one moment. A half-mile walk would do them a lot of good. I have pinned my faith to that site ever since I came into this House and I still pin my faith to it. A good and apt illustration of how the offices on the proposed site would be viewed can be drawn from the experience of Anzac House. I have been associated with the R.S.L. movement in this State since 1919, and that organisation has proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the removal of the headquarters from the old site in Stirling Gardens—the old institute—to the new site has been wise in many respects. It has been wise from the letting point of view and from many other aspects because the old building is in a no-man's land, so to speak. It is not frequented by too many people other than those passing in motor cars or buses. We have proved that beyond doubt, and that is an apt illustration.

Hon. L. Craig: People never use Government buildings unless they are obliged to do so.

Hon. J. CORNELL: My 27 years' parliamentary experience has taught me that, so far as country people are concerned, it is not

the electors who go to the Government offices but in nine cases out of ten, their Parliamentary representatives. If this Bill is rejected, the best thing to do will be to lift the matter altogether out of the field of departmental recommendation. Let us constitute a Royal Commission consisting of the Government Architect, other architects and another highly qualified person, and let us have an open investigation. There has not been such an inquiry yet. The Royal Commission could present its report to the Legislature.

Hon. L. Craig: Parliament would still have to agree.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Then the Government should allow the Legislature to decide whether it will adopt the recommendation of the Royal Commission, without cracking any whip whatsoever or endeavouring to influence any member of Parliament as to the direction in which he shall vote, just because the question is bound up with Government policy.

Hon. G. Fraser: Do you think you will get anyone to agree on any particular site?

Hon. J. CORNELL: My idea is that such a commission would lift the matter out of the realm of politics.

Hon. G. Fraser: I did not say any political site; I said any particular site.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The commission would be bound to arrive at a decision and the decision arrived at—

Hon. L. Craig: Would not be agreed to by Parliament.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It must be.

Hon. J. CORNELL: If it were not, that would not be the only time that Parliament would have procrastinated. But Parliament would not then have any excuse for saying that the commission was narrow in its composition or that it was biassed or, if not biassed, that the members were more or less subservient to the Government by reason of the fact that they were in the Public Service. One other phase I wish to refer to. I do not know how many years ago it is, but it is not so long since this House, in the dying hours of a session—at 3 o'clock in the morning—supported a measure giving the Government of the day power first of all to sell the site of the present Government buildings and then power to lease that site. I regret to say that men whose forebears were born in this country subscribed to that proposal. What is going to happen if this site

is agreed upon and in the course of time buildings are erected there? Unless that Act of Parliament is repealed, the Government of the day will have on its hands the present site of the Titles Office, the Treasury Buildings and Lands Department. As night follows the day, the Government will either become landlords or will lease the site as a building site. It will endeavour to obtain revenue from what I venture to suggest is the best site in Perth. If a central position is needed, ample land is available further up Barrack-street. It is all very well to put cotton wool in one's ears and to say it amounts to sacrilege to assert that the Town Hall must go. But as we have all to go, so in the course of time the Town Hall will have to go. The question will then become one as to whether the municipality or the Government should have that site. If I had my say, and the public offices were erected elsewhere than where they are now, I would see to it that, rather than that the State should become a landlord to private individuals, the municipality should have the site. I am afraid I have detained the House too long. I will conclude by reiterating my intention to vote against the second reading.

**HON. E. H. ANGELO** (North) [9.25]: The Bill is a very important one, entailing not only the expenditure of a large sum of money that will not be reproductive—we shall get no revenue from it—but also the proper carrying out of governmental administration for decades to come. Further, the convenience of the public has to be considered and when buildings are erected they must be of such a type as to be a credit to this beautiful city. A scheme has been recommended by the governmental committee, but I have heard of about six or seven other ideal sites.

**Hon. C. B. Williams**: You are not going to introduce the eighth, are you?

**Hon. E. H. ANGELO**: No, I am going to ask for information. I am not satisfied that we know the last thing about this matter. I am not sure that we are decided as to the best site on which these offices could be erected. I voted against the Bill last year because we did not have sufficient information as to the exact position where these offices should be built. As a result of what I have heard to-night, I am still of the opinion that more information should be obtained before we undertake this important

work. Mr. Craig and Mr. Cornell have suggested an inquiry. If we allowed the matter to rest for another year, an honorary Royal Commission of five members from each House of Parliament could be appointed to take evidence, not only from Government officials but from everybody who was regarded as an authority on the most suitable site and the proper kind of building to erect thereon. I am sure that if we appointed five, or even three, members from each House, those men would have sufficient wisdom to sift the straw from the wheat and submit a report upon which the matter could be finalised. I would like it to be understood that whatever report was submitted, should be accepted, and that whatever site was selected should be the site Parliament agreed to. The matter would then be settled once and for all and the Government could go ahead with its project. Of course there is the objection that we would have to wait for another year. But we have waited a few years already. I am prepared to admit that we need new accommodation, especially for the Agricultural Department and the Titles Office. Surely, however, we can wait just another year. Furthermore, is this a year in which we should undertake huge expenditure? Do we know what is likely to occur in the next 12 months? Surely there are other more important directions in which the money, if it is available, can be spent than on the erection of new offices? The mayor and councillors of the Subiaco municipality wanted to launch out with a scheme for new council chambers, etc. They were asked to have a referendum of the people of Subiaco, and on Saturday last by 1,700 votes to between 300 and 400, the ratepayers decided that this was not the time in which to spend money on public buildings.

**Hon. G. Fraser**: You can always get a "no" answer.

**Hon. E. H. ANGELO**: Mine is not a "no" vote for the public buildings, but I must vote against this Bill until I am satisfied by a thorough investigation by members of both Houses that one site or another is the best. If a Commission decides that the Government Domain site is the right one, and I am a member of this House, I will vote for that site. If it says that the Hale School site is the best one, that will get my vote. I am prepared to abide by the decision

of the Commission after full investigation and inquiry.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are giving a "no" vote.

**HON. G. B. WOOD** (East) [9.31]: We are all agreed that the time is long past for a change in the offices of Government departments, particularly in the offices of the Department of Agriculture. For the last 15 years I have advocated that the present offices belonging to that department should be scrapped. I have no desire to harass the Government or to prevent it from erecting new offices; but I am definitely opposed to the site suggested in the Bill.

Hon. G. Fraser: What is your proposal?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Mr. Craig said that no one had put up any alternative suggestion. Every speaker to-night has suggested some alternative.

Hon. L. Craig: But all were different.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The site I suggest is the land where the Barracks building is situated.

Hon. L. Craig: That is a different suggestion.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That was mentioned by Mr. Baxter.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I am not wedded to that, for the site proposed by Mr. Cornell may be even better.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The Committee appointed did not deal with either suggestion.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: When the Government comes down session after session with a suggestion for one site only, it must expect opposition. The Honorary Minister said that Perth was developing in an easterly direction. I hold there is no room for Perth to develop in that direction.

Hon. G. Fraser: It will always be the centre of Perth.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Perth is finished in that direction. That site is a little worse than the one proposed last session, because it goes a little further into that corner. The objection to the Barracks site is that it would hide Parliament House. Will Parliament House be completed in our time, or in the time of our children? As things are it would be a good thing if the corrugated iron which roofs Parliament House were hidden from the city. I have yet to learn that it is necessary to erect nine-storeyed offices on the Barracks site. If that be objectionable, let us have the Hale School or Observatory

sites. The committee appointed by the Government dealt only with two sites, Government Domain and Parliament House site. I do not know whether it was a committee competent to deal with the subject. True, the Town Planning Commissioner was a member of it, and should know something about the matter.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: What about the instructions to the committee?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The committee was told to report on two sites. I have yet to learn that it was given a free hand to examine any other site. The site near Adelaide-Terrace would be very expensive. There would first of all be the cost of buying the Christian Brothers' property, and I understand that would cost £65,000. Despite all the sand that has been heaped upon a land, I think it would be a very costly thing to erect buildings there. It would be impossible to put up massive buildings on that site without first of all driving a large number of piles into the ground. We know what that locality was like before the reclamation work was undertaken; it was nothing but a swamp. The river came close up to St. George's Terrace at one time. No one could tell me that in a place where the river has been running for centuries, it will not be necessary to drive a large number of piles before any building can be erected. I shall do my best to defeat the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. C. B. WILLIAMS** (South) [9.36]: I support the Bill. To my mind the choice of the Government represents the most central site for the people of the State, those who have to find the money. It is close to the terminus of nearly all the traffic that comes into the city, and is itself within five minutes of the centre of the city. Some members have suggested that the site for the Government buildings should be at this end of the Terrace. I do not know what axe they have to grind when they make that suggestion. Some members oppose the Government Domain site because they say that the Christian Bros.' land will have to be purchased. Is it not better to resume that land now, than to do so 10 or 20 years hence? Mr. Wood may know more about Western Australia than I do but I regard his arguments as illogical. Already magnificent buildings have been erected on the south side of St. George's-terrace and along

the Esplanade. If the ground is swampy, the difficulties have been overcome.

Hon. G. B. Wood: They are not nine-storeyed structures.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: There is one nine-storey building fronting the Esplanade.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It is 11 storeys in height.

Hon. G. B. Wood: It is built on a hill.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Apparently the hon. member overlooked those buildings that have already been erected near the river. They are quite close to the Esplanade. The site that has been chosen would be convenient to all who come to the city, whether from the goldfields or anywhere else. People who come from the country districts naturally enter by the central station, and it is not a far cry from there to the proposed site. It seems to me that numbers of people who want the Government buildings to be erected elsewhere must have land in the vicinity of the sites they think best. I do not mean anything by that remark, but that is how I view the position. All the trams from North Perth, Mt. Lawley and other suburbs to the north go to the Esplanade. The buses, whether from Fremantle or elsewhere end their journeys there. As I have said, the trains come to the central station, which is quite close to the site in question. To resume the Christian Bros.' land may cost about £65,000, but I would point out that a huge expenditure would also be required on new buildings up this way. Some members want a Royal Commission appointed to tell us what to do. We are elected to do what we think is best, and we should do it.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: We want a decision.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: We shall never get a decision if we leave that to select committees and Royal Commissions. Suppose we do get a Royal Commission made up of ten members of Parliament. They may be Welshmen, Irishmen and Scotchmen, and we shall never get anywhere. As I have pointed out, all transport comes into the city close to the site which has been selected. Do members want people who are coming up from Fremantle to break their journey here to call at some departmental office, and then proceed on their way to the city? Reference has been made to what King O'Malley did in the way of buying land for his Government. We all realise

what a wonderful thing it would be if the State Government had resumed the whole of Hay-street 25 years ago. We would then have had a beautiful thoroughfare, as wide as that small portion fronting the northern boundary of the Parliament House site. The purchase would also have brought millions of profit to the Government. I am afraid there is a lot of log rolling going on. People are espousing the cause of sites in localities in which they have some interest. Eventually Government House itself will have to be moved. From the point of view of living quarters there is no reason for having Government House on that block of 14 acres. We get nothing out of it except the building that is on it. The large buildings in the Terrace and along the Esplanade have had to be erected on what have been referred to as rotten foundations, and the new Government offices will have to be erected on similar land. It would be ridiculous to ask the people of North Perth, Mt. Lawley and other suburbs to go a mile out of their way to transact their business with Government offices when they could do it in the centre of the city. I see no point in the statement that public buildings erected at this end of the city would be handy for members of Parliament. We have our free passes on the trams, whereas members of the general public have to pay their own fares.

HON. C. H. WITTENOOM (South-East) [9.42]: I oppose the second reading of the Bill. This is no time for the spending of huge sums of money on public buildings. I think the Honorary Minister mentioned a sum of about £360,000. That would be only the beginning of the expenditure. By the time the buildings have been erected, probably another £100,000 will have been spent. We do not know how long the war will last. By the time the buildings have been erected they may be destroyed in one night. In times like these we should not embark upon costly structures such as these offices will be. We have all noted with regret the condition of many of our public offices. It is very bad. Reference is constantly being made to the Agricultural Department, and without doubt the offices there are an absolute disgrace. The Treasury Buildings, the Agricultural Department, the old Barracks and other buildings, have served their purpose for many years. Surely it will not matter much if they go on serving their pur-



pose at all events until the war is over. The State has to pay out vast sums in interest and this is no time in which to embark upon additional expenditure of this kind. It would be wrong to interfere with Government Domain. It is a beautiful site, and is one of the best assets the city has. It is close to the river and an enormous sum of money has been spent upon the foreshore. The land should be alienated for no other purpose than for gardens and parks for the beautification of the city. Large sums have been spent by the Government and the City Council on improving and beautifying the foreshore. It would be wrong indeed to sacrifice all the work that has been done and to erect public buildings on the site that has been chosen. It is not a good site in any case. I am opposed to the Government House Domain being used at all. It should be left entirely alone. Mr. Craig says none of us puts up suggestions, but I believe that every speaker before and after Mr. Craig has offered suggestions. Still, we are not architects, and our suggestions may not be worth much. A little while ago I was on one of the higher floors of the Treasury Buildings and looked down upon a lot of openings and passages.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Have you ever been lost in the Treasury Buildings?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Many times, and I am sure numerous members have found themselves in the same predicament. The place is like a rabbit warren. As an amateur, and not a professional architect, I am of opinion that the Treasury Buildings, plus the Town Hall site, would answer the purpose fully. We need not worry about gardens. When we come out of Government offices, we do not worry about flowers and so forth. It might be different if we were coming out of the Supreme Court, where it is possible to experience a bad time—with the result that one would be anxious to see flower gardens. But after worrying about farmers' difficulties in the Government offices one does not want to view gardens. Rather one wants to go elsewhere to obtain some relief in another direction. What we must have is sufficient room for a considerable number of offices on a good and convenient site, near the middle of the city and easy of access. In my opinion there is no place in Perth, not even the Old Barracks, that comes within coo-ee of the Treasury Buildings. It offers an excellent site, with

sufficient room for all departments. When the suggested building on the Domain is mentioned as being of eight or nine storeys, I maintain that if the Treasury Buildings do not afford the requisite room, we can keep on going up. Perth already has buildings of more than eight or nine storeys. There is plenty of room on the Treasury site—right in the middle of the city, and destined always to be in the middle of the city. As for the Old Barracks, not many years ago the question of demolishing them, and also the Town Hall, was raised. I was strongly opposed to the suggestion, for sentimental reasons. Even now I should be sorry indeed to see either the Barracks or the Town Hall demolished. Nevertheless, all of us must recognise that those two edifices are bound to go. The site of the Barracks, now occupied by the Public Works Department, would be suitable in many ways for Government offices. The Government has a big area of land there. As for the Barracks site not being on level ground, that does not matter at all. The only objection is that the site is a long way from the railway station and from the centre of the city. Therefore it is not comparable to the Treasury Buildings.

Not one of us is an architect. We are pastoralists and farmers and company directors and all sorts of things, but we have not much idea of architecture. It has been said this evening that the best course would be to refer the question to a Royal Commission and leave it for a year or more. I would say that until times are entirely different, until the war is over, the spending of about half-a-million of money on public buildings would be entirely wrong. We have got on with the present buildings for a good many years, and a few more years will not hurt us. I oppose the Bill.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [9.52]: The decision to be taken here is not only as to a block of ground, but also as to the erection of adequate public buildings. Many members have declared that the Agricultural Department and the Titles Office are long overdue for better accommodation than they have now. With that view I cordially agree. However, the construction of public offices to house the whole of our civil servants—as I understand is the

intention of many members of this Chamber and another place—needs to be approached with much caution. Firstly, I consider that we have men of great architectural experience in private practice here. In view of the fact that we are proposing to enter upon a scheme which will cost up to a million pounds before it is finished—

Hon. L. Craig: The cost is mounting up.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Let me point out to Mr. Craig that the cost of schemes "A" and "2C" is estimated at £550,000.

Hon. L. Craig: They are only alternatives.

Hon. A. THOMSON: There are schemes "A", "B", "C" and "D"—four in all. However, the point I wish to stress is that before Parliament decides to erect buildings to house our public servants in one central position, competitive designs should be invited from architects. We should do what was done in Canberra, and in the case of our own University. Let our architects who have spent many years in the study of their art have an opportunity to submit schemes.

Members: The question is one of site.

Hon. A. THOMSON: They would select the site as part and parcel of the scheme. The Government by this Bill ties us down to one site—a site that was definitely rejected last year. Let us take into consideration the instructions given to the committee with regard to new Government offices—

In accordance with your instructions, this committee has given consideration to a site for public buildings at the eastern end of Government House Domain, on the basis that the western boundary of any excision from Government House Domain for this purpose would coincide with the rear fence of the lodge.

That quotation is from the report of a committee which, when its report was laid on the Table of the House, we were led to believe had the opportunity to decide what in its opinion was the best site on which to erect public buildings. Hon. members have heard the instruction given to them—the Domain.

The Chief Secretary: The committee had already dealt with the bigger question.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am dealing with the question before us. I do not know of any other. I do not know what the committee dealt with previously. In another place it has been stated that there are various sites available, and that the resumption of the

Christian Brothers' site would cost between £60,000 and £70,000. I venture to say that if some of our leading architects were given £60,000 or £70,000 to modernise our present public offices on the Treasury site, the result would be satisfactory. The site is ideal. Certainly those offices could be modernised. What will happen to them if they are to be vacated? We know that at the corner of Barrack and Murray-streets there is a magnificent structure which has been vacant for years. Apparently no one is able to use it with profit to its owners. After the erection of new buildings we are to launch out into a big scheme. That means we are to start piecemeal, which is not in the interests of economy, or of good architecture, or of sound construction. The entire scheme should be placed before us so that we will know what will be the ultimate extent of the intended structure. It is not a matter of saying whether we will agree to the Domain site. A greater issue confronts us. That issue is whether the Government offices shall be erected on the Domain site. I cast no reflection whatever on the Principal Government Architect, who is certainly a most capable officer; but we have in this State architects who are equally capable of submitting an adequate plan for the erection of the proposed buildings. My knowledge of the subject enables me to say that the present Treasury buildings could be modernised. Anyone possessed of knowledge of building construction is aware that in this era of steel construction, with carrying stanchions, we are able to raise those buildings as high as necessary. In my opinion, the £60,000 which the Christian Brothers' site alone would cost, could go a long way towards modernising the accommodation of the Public Department.

The Agricultural Department, I admit, has housing which is a disgrace. To ask men of science to perform their duties in such ramshackle buildings is utterly unreasonable. But let us take a glance at a building which has lain idle for many years. Would it not be practicable to approach the owners of that building and ask whether the State can lease it for a period, or until such time as Western Australia will know exactly where it is, or even the Empire will know exactly where it is? Until then it would be unwise to launch out on a scheme such as that which is outlined now. I consider it to be not in the interests of the State that

we should at the present juncture embark on so huge an expenditure. The property to which I have just referred is lying idle. It has been used on many occasions, and the accommodation it affords is certainly infinitely better than that provided for the Agricultural Department today.

Member: To which building are you referring?

Hon. A. THOMSON: The building at the corner of Murray-street and Barrack-street. I am not suggesting that it should be utilised for public purposes, but merely as a temporary expedient for a year or two, or until such time as Australia knows exactly how the war will end. The interest that would be payable on the money required to purchase the Christian Brothers' College would more than pay rent for the temporary occupation of that building. I commend to the earnest consideration of the Government, and of Parliament, the suggestion that provision should be made to house all Government departments under one roof, if possible. I have been urging for many years past that we should call for competitive designs. We should give our young men who have passed through our University and are now qualified architects, and whose parents paid substantial premiums for their education, the opportunity to submit designs. The suggestion is worthy of consideration. I do not think that at the present time we should enter upon either of the schemes submitted to us by the Government. One of these schemes it is estimated will cost £280,000 and the other £270,000. In any case, before embarking upon a scheme of this nature we should have more information before us than we now have. I would even support Mr. Angelo's suggestion that a Royal Commission or a select committee should be appointed, not so much to decide upon a site, as to report upon the present Treasury buildings, with a view to obtaining plans and specifications to alter these buildings, which could provide public offices for many years to come.

Hon. V. Hamersley: One hundred years.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Fifty years at least. I object to the present method. This House has been too long in accepting principles which have been placed before it. As I said before, what we require is a public works committee. We also certainly want an eco-

nomie committee as well, which should carefully scrutinise all State expenditure. So far there has been no adequate check upon State expenditure on buildings. This is unfair to the contractors and the architects of the State. We are not only asked to approve of a site, but also to approve of the expenditure of over a quarter of a million pounds. At the present stage I think that is undesirable, and therefore I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. L. B. Bolton, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.5 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Tuesday, 21st November, 1939.*

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

### QUESTION—BULK HANDLING OF WHEAT.

*Sole Acquiring Agent.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for lands:—1, Is it a fact that one firm—Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd.—has been appointed sole acquiring agent for handling the 1939-40 wheat crop? 2, If so, is he aware that various merchants are today canvassing growers in an effort to have this season's wheat delivered to them as in past years? 3, As a multiplicity of agents must inevitably mean higher handling charges for growers, will he endeavour to have the handling of the wheat confined to one agent?