

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL**THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F.**

Baxter—East) [12.12]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until a date and hour to be fixed by the President, which time of meeting shall be notified by the President to each member by letter or telegram.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 12.13 a.m. (Saturday).

Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 4th December, 1931.

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

QUESTION—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY REDUCTION.

Mr. **SLEEMAN** (without notice) asked the Premier: Is he aware that the Treasury have applied the cut under the financial emergency legislation to people drawing as little as 2s. a day under a sanitary contract? If so, will he see that it is altered and, if not, will he make inquiries?

The **PREMIER** replied: I will make inquiries.

QUESTIONS (2)—TIMBER INSPECTION FEES.

Mr. **J. H. SMITH** (without notice) asked the Premier: 1, Does he endorse the attitude of the Minister for Forests in loading the farmers and landholders with an increase of inspection fees on timber from private property? 2, Is he aware that the Forests Department have now created another trading concern, working in conjunction with one firm? 3, Is he aware that under the arrangements made with Millars through the Forests Department, he is making that firm a present of between 18s. and 19s. per load at the expense of the workers in the industry?

The **PREMIER** replied: 1, Yes. 2, No. 3, No.

Mr. **J. H. SMITH** asked the Premier: Following on his reply to my question No. 3, will he make inquiries into the matter?

The **PREMIER** replied: Yes, I will inquire into the matter, but I think the hon. member is entirely wrong.

QUESTION—WOMEN CLEANERS.

Mr. **IEGNEY** (without notice) asked the Premier: Is he aware that a number of women cleaners engaged through the Child Welfare Department to do three days' cleaning at Government House ballroom after the Shell ball received 2s. 6d. per day, that after representations had been made by the women they received an extra 2s. 6d., and that seeing the payment for that obnoxious work is 8s. 6d., will he grant the difference?

The **PREMIER** replied: I do not know how the ballroom was cleaned up, but I will inquire. Whatever is right will be done. I should imagine that the people who had the use of that ballroom, I suppose for some charity purpose, should clean it up. Usually that is done.

QUESTION—MAINTENANCE DEFAULTER.

Mr. **MARSHALL** (without notice) asked the Premier: Will he make investigations into the case of a man who was separated from his wife, was unable to keep up maintenance payments and served a term of imprisonment at Fremantle, and is now treated as a single man when in search of employment?

The PREMIER replied: I cannot answer the question. If a man is not keeping his wife, surely he should not be treated as a married man.

Mr. Marshall: But he has to pay the maintenance order.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member supplies the name, I will make inquiries.

QUESTION—INSURANCE STATISTICS.

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE (without notice) asked the Premier: During the discussion on the Estimates I asked him to supply certain figures regarding insurance and later when I gave him a reminder he promised to do so. Will he supply them?

The PREMIER replied: I had overlooked the hon. member's request. I certainly will supply them.

BILL—SECESSION REFERENDUM.

Council's amendments.

Schedule of three amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Richardson in the Chair: the Premier in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 5.—Insert after the figure "(1)" in line 17 the words "Within six months of the passing of this Act."

The PREMIER: We should not be bound to take the referendum within the period of six months. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 5.—Delete the words "a compulsory basis on" in line 19.

The PREMIER: The member for Guildford-Midland had those words inserted in this Chamber, the object being that a suitable amendment to give effect to compulsory voting would be inserted in another place. Consequently, the amendment made here needs to be struck out and a properly drafted amendment—amendment No. 3—inserted in lieu. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

On motion by the Premier, the following amendment was agreed to:—

No. 3. Insert a new clause to stand as Clause 17, as follows:—

17. (1.) It shall be the duty of every elector to record his vote at the ballot.

(2.) It shall be the duty of each Returning Officer, at the close of the ballot, to prepare a list (in duplicate) of the names and descriptions of the electors enrolled for his district, who have not voted at the ballot, and to certify the list by statutory declaration under his hand.

(3.) The list so certified shall in all proceedings be prima facie evidence of the contents thereof, and of the fact that the electors whose names appear therein did not vote at the ballot.

(4.) After the close of the ballot the Chief Electoral Officer shall send by post to each elector whose name appears on the list prepared in accordance with Subsections (1) and (2) of this section, at the address mentioned in that list, a notice in the prescribed form, notifying the elector that he appears to have failed to vote at the ballot, and calling upon him to give a valid, truthful, and sufficient reason why he failed so to vote.

(5.) Before sending any such notice, the Chief Electoral Officer shall insert therein a date, not being less than twenty-one days after the date of posting of the notice, on which the form attached to the notice, duly filled up and signed by the elector, is to be in the hands of the Chief Electoral Officer.

(6.) Every elector to whom a notice under this section has been sent shall fill up the form at the foot of the notice by stating in it the true reason why he failed so to vote, sign the form, and post it so as to reach the Chief Electoral Officer not later than the date inserted in the notice.

(7.) If any elector is unable, by reason of absence from his place of living or physical incapacity to fill up, sign, and post the form within the time allowed under Subsection (5) of this section, any other elector who has personal knowledge of the facts may, subject to the regulations, fill up, sign, and post the form, duly witnessed, within that time, and the filling up, signing, and posting of the form may be treated as compliance by the first-mentioned elector with the provisions of Subsection (6) of this section.

(8.) Upon receipt of a form referred to in either of the last two preceding subsections, the Chief Electoral Officer shall indorse on both copies of the list prepared in accordance with Subsection (2) of this section, opposite the name of the elector, his opinion whether or not the reason contained in the form is a valid and sufficient reason for the failure of the elector to vote.

(9.) The Chief Electoral Officer shall also indorse on both copies of the list, opposite the name of each elector to whom a notice under this section has been sent, and from or on behalf of whom a form properly filled up, signed, and witnessed has not been received by him a note to that effect.

(12.) Every elector who—

(a) fails to vote at the ballot without a valid and sufficient reason for such failure; or

(b) on receipt of a notice in accordance with Subsection (4) of this section, fails to fill up, sign, and post within the time allowed under Subsection (5) of this section, the form (duly witnessed) which is attached to the notice; or

(c) states in such form a false reason for not having voted or, in the case of an elector filling up, or purporting to fill up, a form on behalf of any other elector, in pursuance of Subsection (7) of this section, states in such form a false reason why that other elector did not vote,

shall be guilty of an offence.

Penalty: Two pounds.

(13.) Proceedings for an offence against this section shall not be instituted, except by the Chief Electoral Officer or an officer thereto authorised in writing by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Hon. P. Collier, the Attorney General, and the Premier drew up reasons for disagreeing to amendment No. 1.

Reasons adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

Farmers' Disabilities Royal Commission.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [4.55]: I ask leave of the House to make a statement regarding the report of the Royal Commission on Farmers' Disabilities.

HON. A. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) [4.56]: I do not wish to take exception to the Premier's making a statement, but I have a lively recollection that on every occasion when such a request was made while the hon. gentleman was in Opposition, he objected. Frequently he objected to our explaining propositions put forward by the professional officers of the departments, propositions having nothing to do with controversial politics. The Premier, when in Opposition, persistently objected to any Minister's making a statement that would not be open to debate.

MR. SPEAKER: This statement would not be open to debate.

HON. A. McCALLUM: The Premier asks for a privilege which he invariably denied to us when we were in office.

The Premier: But never successfully.

HON. A. McCALLUM: At the time I considered his attitude most unfair, because there was nothing of a controversial nature in the statements we wished to make. They represented purely the views of professional advisers in the departments. I do not desire to object to the making of a statement by the Premier now, but I suggest to him that the right thing to do is to make his statement through the Press, in the columns of which it can be criticised by us if necessary. A statement that cannot be discussed in this Chamber should not be made here. I do not consider that the Premier has the right to ask for special privileges over and above other members—more especially, privileges which he consistently denied to Ministers when he was in Opposition. The Government should have made their attitude towards the Royal Commission's report clear long before this, and their declaration of policy should be subject to criticism here. The Premier has no right to expect immunity from criticism. I do not know what the hon. gentleman is about to say; his views may be in accordance with mine. If the matter is urgent and important, I am prepared to overlook the granting of leave this time.

The PREMIER: I realise that my request is rather unusual, but I am not conscious of having, when in Opposition, invariably opposed similar requests.

Leave given.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [4.59]: I do not wish to say anything that will need to be answered. However, anything requiring an answer can be answered through the Press. The Royal Commission's report was made to the Government, and not to the House; but it was open to any hon. member to ask at any time that the report be discussed. I realise the limitations which I must observe. Every hon. member has carefully read the report, and knows every word in it. In fact, the report has already been discussed by some hon. members. I now wish to point out what has already been done by the Government. We should consider the protection afforded farmers, but nothing we can do will protect the farmer if his creditors take proceedings under the Federal Bankruptcy Act. Nothing can protect the unsecured creditors if a far-

mer seeks relief under the Bankruptcy Act. The overriding effect of the Bankruptcy Act must be kept in mind always. Otherwise, the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act protects the farmer. The other protection afforded the farmer is given under the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act, under which mortgagees cannot exercise rights against mortgagors without an order of the Supreme Court. A mortgage includes a contract for sale of land. This ensures consideration for the farmer whose property is mortgaged, though it does not apply against the Crown. Judgment creditors must obtain leave of the Supreme Court before issuing process of execution against the land of a debtor for sums of £50 and upwards, and the court may defer payment in judgments already given. Further, relief and assistance have been granted in various ways. Under the Premier's Plan the interest rate has been reduced; soldier settlers' interest has been reduced to $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; the Agricultural Bank has supplied a large number of farmers with fertiliser, sustenance, and clearing contracts on their own farms to help meet the store bills and carry on. Consideration has been shown in the matter of interest payments to the extent of £1,497,000, and in the repayment of principal instalments to the amount of £1,309,000. The interest bill of the Agricultural Bank last year was about £796,000, of which only £434,000 was collected. So that the Treasury had to find £362,000 to cover the balance. The House knows that every penny owing to the bank by farmers is borrowed money. The amount still owing by the Government is carrying interest and that must be paid. The principal and interest owing by every bank client, or any other person who has borrowed money from the Government, is being paid on borrowed money, which in itself is carrying interest. Last year the bank advanced to clients £1,346,000, and the bank holds a statutory lien over the crops to cover the cost of the fertiliser and sustenance advanced. As the money is repaid it will be held in trust. I am referring to money advanced last year for sustenance, fertilisers and other expenses in connection with the production of the crops. It may be mentioned that 8,830 farmers are clients of the Agricultural Bank, while the Industries Assistance Board has 208 ordinary and 180 soldier settler clients. The Industries Assistance Board are not taking new clients. In addition to all that has been done, the ex-

change advantage to the farmer is, as members know, a considerable sum, and that sum the Treasurer pays to the primary producer of wheat and wool, gold and timber, to the extent of £600,000 per annum. That is the benefit gained by the people of this country. It is a tremendous amount and is really a bonus to the industries paid by the Treasury. It is suggested in the Commission's report that a flour tax be imposed. This House has had that question under consideration, but there is the disadvantage in our case that so little flour is consumed in the State. If a tax were imposed on a twentieth of the wheat produced, it would not bring very much per bushel. There is another consideration, and it is that a bonus of $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel is to be paid on wheat. That is to be paid by the public. There is also the exchange advantage, which also is paid largely by the public of this State and by the people of Australia. It does happen in our case that some of our money is sold in London. I should imagine, if we applied the exchange against the public of the State, it would in the case of wheat consumed here amount to many shillings per bushel. True it is not on the actual bushel consumed, but it is paid by the public because they buy the money that the wheat brings in London plus the 30 per cent. exchange. So the public, through the wheat-grower, the woolgrower and the gold producer, are paying substantially against every bushel of wheat and every pound of wool produced.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: The Eastern States are paying a good deal of that.

The PREMIER: Where we sell our money in the Eastern States, exchange is paid there. Last year the profit amounted to over a million, but the people themselves paid a great deal of it. The Treasury paid no less than £600,000.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: The Eastern States paid more than we did.

The PREMIER: I do not think so.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Yes, they did.

The PREMIER: We have to pay on all that is imported overseas, plus the interest overseas which is paid by the people of Western Australia. So far as our export exceeding those amounts, we did sell money to the Eastern States. It must be borne in mind that the public are paying that money.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: And they do not pay it voluntarily, either.

The PREMIER: It does not matter how it is paid, it is paid.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: They are entitled to take credit for paying it.

The PREMIER: Amongst the requests made by sections of farmers are that they shall be guaranteed against eviction for five years, that they shall be permitted to retain from their crop sufficient to cover next year's cropping, including sustenance, that there shall be a suspension of interest, and that there shall be a writing down of debts. No guarantee can be given other than the protection afforded by law that is already in existence and which is considered sufficient. Clients under the bank are in a safe position, and they cannot have any more consideration than they are receiving. With regard to sustenance, that has been provided, and as money is returned it will be made available to lend to Agricultural Bank clients. People outside are financing the farmer and all negotiations between the parties, and the financial institutions and others who supply the farmer have been helped considerably since the price of wheat went up.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: That is a very significant qualification, rendering help now that prices have gone up.

The PREMIER: That is all that is wanted. Farmers more than any other section are dependent upon credit. Credit is based on confidence and we should do nothing to destroy confidence. Many farmers who are under the bank may consider themselves perfectly safe if they act fairly by the bank. We know that land is practically unsaleable and that fewer creditors would dispossess a farmer because of the possibility of great loss. Thus practically every farmer who plays the game is assured security. Over last season's crop, wheat growers lost £3,000,000, but at 3s. 4½d. cropping costs would have been recouped. Wool prices improved substantially. Better prices mean something more than cash advantage inasmuch as they will restore credit, restore land values and the value of everything on the farm, and change the whole outlook.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: If credit is made available you call it inflation.

The PREMIER: We do not. It is right that those who live by farming, and all who trade with the farmer, should show the utmost consideration in bad times. I do not think any one of us would say the farmers' debts ought to be written-down. While consideration ought to be shown, and of

course will be shown, it is for the present all that can be expected. I say frankly that when we take out the cost of fertilisers and bags and other first charges against the crop of this year, it will make a considerable hole in any proceeds of the harvest. Whether the money is returned to Dalgety's or to other firms, or to the Agricultural Bank, it will be again available to help the farmer. The Royal Commission sent up a very clever report, but its recommendations were largely that various charges, such as railway freights and wharfage, should be reduced. These days, when we have made so many reductions in the amounts collected from the farmers, that is utterly impossible. If we were to reduce the railway freights, the amount would have to be made up by taxation, and so too with respect to any reduction in harbour dues. The report contains many useful suggestions and much valuable information. According to the report there are 2,000 farmers who can arrange their own finance, 2,000 that it is recommended may be managed by three trustees and assisted by those trustees, and 6,000 who largely are to be left to the Agricultural Bank, since they are mainly clients of the bank. If they pay their interest, plus this year's advances, the bank will be able to help them further. Otherwise there will be nothing for them or for the creditors in the end. The report says that if wheat were worth 3s. the position of the farmer would be considerably improved. Of course we now have reason to hope that wheat will bring 3s. There has been no delay in considering the Commission's report. The managing trustee of the Agricultural Bank wrote about it on the 3rd September, and that was replied to by the accountant on the 9th September. I got back just afterwards, and the Government considered the matter on the 13th October. Nothing more could be done than is being done, for we cannot help unless we can find the cash.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There is a decided limitation there.

The PREMIER: The House has to consider all sections of the people, and would have to consider the three parties here concerned, namely, the farmer, the secured creditor and the unsecured creditor. The Commission's plan does not provide anything like the protection for which many farmers ask. Some 75 per cent. of those farmers who are in trouble are clients of the Agricultural

Bank, which is the most sympathetic creditor of all. Owing to the fall in values, the security does not cover advances. Of course I know that most of the farmers wish to meet their obligations, but it is clear that very few can do so without time, and many can never meet their full obligations.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: And those obligations are mounting up.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The debts owing by the farmer to the Agricultural Bank are not his total debts.

The PREMIER: That is so.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: And if he does not discharge his liabilities, his obligations are mounting up.

The PREMIER: Naturally, if one does not pay his debts they will accumulate against him. I do not know that the House has a right to say that all farmers, whether paying their interest or not, should be relieved of the need to pay interest. I have said that if it comes to a writing-down, this is not the time for it. It would not be fair, either to the farmer or to his creditors.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Then interest and compound interest must go on.

The PREMIER: Not necessarily. Nothing short of suspension of interest would save that. If a man can pay interest, should he not pay it?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And if he cannot?

The PREMIER: Then he does not.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And your policy is that he then has to get off the land.

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is either compound interest or get out.

The PREMIER: That is quite wrong. There are farmers who have not paid the Agricultural Bank for ten years.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But I am dealing with the other banks.

The PREMIER: Of the 10,000 farmers there are 8,000 to be considered, for 2,000, it seems, can help themselves. I believe that largely the amount will have to be written-down to a manageable sum, but I do not think any debtor has the right to say to a creditor, "You must write it down." But also he has not the right to say, "I will not pay you."

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Would it be wrong for Parliament to create a tribunal to go into that?

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Well, why do you not do it?

The PREMIER: So far as the 8,000 are concerned, the report of the Commission makes no recommendation except the flour tax proposition and the reduction of railway freights.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You do not like that; what is your alternative?

The PREMIER: If I were asked what is the alternative to the paying of just debts I would have to confess I know of no alternative. I do not think the House should say to a farmer who cannot meet his obligations, "You need not do it."

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The farmer does not ask for that.

The PREMIER: Public meetings are being held at which the proposal is made that no one shall pay interest this year.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But that is only trying to get the Government to function.

The PREMIER: No, the Government are functioning.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Well those people doubt it.

The PREMIER: Of course it is impossible to satisfy the hon. member. What he would like would be to see the Industries Assistance Board functioning.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: No, but I want the Government to have a policy in respect of the parlous position of the wheat growers.

The PREMIER: We have had this matter well discussed, but no suggestion has been made other than that of the member for Kintanning (Mr. Piesse).

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Surely that is a Government responsibility.

The PREMIER: The Government have accepted the responsibility and are prepared to help in every possible way. The only way in which the creditor can be paid is by time, and by the surplus proceeds of the crops from year to year. To hear members, one would think that great pressure was being brought to bear on the farmers. That is not the case really, except in some instances under hire-purchase agreements.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: In many instances.

The PREMIER: The Commission's plan does not set up any recommendation that would mean the assistance which members would like to render. There is no suggestion made by the Commissioners that would be as effective as the Industries Assistance Board system. The first object, I suppose,

is to keep the farmer on the land and allow him to produce crops. I think that is recognised by all. It is being done by all the financial houses to-day, and many of the farmers' debts are too heavy to liquidate in full. There is little doubt the creditors are prepared to compromise and give the farmers a chance. The creditors must do this or, alternatively, get nothing in the end. I know that, but it would be wrong in me to ask the House by legislation to discharge the debts of any section of the community.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You could regulate the distribution of the proceeds.

The PREMIER: I do not know that even that could be done, although under the existing law the proceeds are regulated to a certain extent. I should like to know whether any further action could be afforded by legislation. I do not think so, unless the farmers' debts are to be written off, and I do not propose to suggest that to the House.

Mr. Griffiths: The farmers would like their debts funded.

The PREMIER: There is no chance of selling a farm to-day. Suppose a farmer says, "I am in a hopeless position and never will be able to pay," he can discharge his liability by taking advantage of the existing Act. He can take advantage of the Act, and I suppose in some cases that will be done. I admit that it would take many years for all the farmers to discharge all their debts, possibly more than five years. It must be remembered that the debts have been set up by the farmers, and so far as they can discharge them they ought to do so.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why not arrange for deferred payments?

The PREMIER: That is the arrangement. We have legislation to do that. The Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act is on the statute-book and is doing good work. The good-will of the financial houses and business people is far more important than any legislation we can pass. That good-will has been established, and there is ample proof of it. I have discussed this matter with experienced men. We find that the situation has been made fairly comfortable just now in almost all cases. There is less to complain of to-day than there has been at any time during the last year. I have carefully read the report of the Royal Commission, and cannot find in it any suggestion that would constitute a complete protection to the farmer. I think I have shown that the flour tax proposal would not be workable for the reason

that the consumers are already paying very considerable sums to the primary producer through the exchange. Our duty is to do justice to all three parties concerned, the farmer, the secured creditor and the unsecured creditor. Lasting harm would certainly be done by ill-considered proposals that would destroy the credit of the farmers. We shall do all that is possible to help the farmers, and will keep in touch with financial houses, as we have done in the past. Since the report was issued, there has not been a day when the position has not received attention.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It has been getting worse every day.

The PREMIER: Not at all. No member has had the temerity to suggest that we should by legislation discharge even a portion of the farmers' debts.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Would I be in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in moving that the Premier be given an extension of time so that he may deal with the immediate problems of distribution of the present crop proceeds on a pro rata basis?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. member would be out of order in moving such a motion. No discussion on the Premier's statement can be allowed.

DISCHARGE OF ORDER.

On motion by the Premier, Order of the Day for the second reading of the Bills of Sale Act Amendment Bill was discharged from the Notice Paper.

MOTION—FEDERAL. TARIFF.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the previous day of the debate on the following motion by Mr. Doney:—

That in the opinion of this House the present protective tariff by its harsh effect on the primary industries has a highly injurious bearing on progress in this State, and consequently stands in need of an early and drastic downward revision, and that this resolution be forwarded by this Government to the Federal Government.

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

Sitting suspended from 5.35 until 6 p.m.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Richardson in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Legislative Council has amended Clause 2 by striking out paragraphs (i) and (j) of proposed new subsection (3a).

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolution reported, the report adopted, and a committee consisting of the Premier, Hon. A. McCallum, and the Attorney General appointed to draw up reasons for disagreeing with the Council's amendment.

Reasons adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

Sitting suspended from 6.10 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—SECESSION REFERENDUM.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council notifying that it insisted upon its amendment No. 1 to which the Assembly had disagreed now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Richardson in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

On motion by the Premier the amendment insisted upon by the Council was disagreed to.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

Assembly's Request for Conference.

The PREMIER: I move—

That a conference be requested with the Council on the amendment insisted upon and that the managers for the Assembly be Mr. Millington, Mr. J. MacCallum Smith and the mover.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

Sitting suspended from 7.35 until 8.15 p.m.

BILL—HOSPITAL FUND ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Richardson in the Chair; the Minister for Health in charge of the Bill.

Council's amendment: Delete Subclause 3 of Clause 3.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

This, as members know, is merely a question of the costs of action that a magistrate may allow.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—SECESSION REFERENDUM.

Council's further Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference on the amendment insisted on by the Council and disagreed to by the Assembly, and had appointed Hon. W. H. Kitson, Hon. H. Seddon, and the Chief Secretary as managers, the President's room as the place of meeting, and the time forthwith.

Sitting suspended from 8.22 to 9.10 p.m.

Conference Managers' Report.

The PREMIER: I have to report that the managers met and failed to agree. I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Bill is therefore lost.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council notifying that it insisted on its amendment to which the Assembly had disagreed, now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Richardson in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

On motion by the Attorney General, the amendment on which the Council had insisted was disagreed to.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

Assembly's Request for Conference.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I move—

That a conference be requested with the Council on the amendment insisted upon and that the managers for the Assembly be the Premier, Mr. Kennelly and the mover.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

Sitting suspended from 9.46 to 10.15 p.m.

Council's further Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference, and had appointed Sir William Lathlain, Hon. J. Nicholson, and the Chief Secretary as managers, the President's room as the place of meeting, and the time forthwith.

Sitting suspended from 10.20 to 11.53 p.m.

Conference Managers' Report.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I desire to report that the conference has failed to agree. I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed.

CLOSE OF SESSION.*Complimentary Remarks.*

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [11.55]: That closes the business of the session. We have been sitting for a good deal more than twelve months. Owing largely to the unfortunate financial position we have had a really trying year. We shall adjourn now, but before we go I should like to wish you, Sir, a pleasant Christmas and a much happier New Year than the past one has been. Also I should like to convey my good wishes to the staff. I have the highest appreciation of the unfailing courtesy of the Leader of the Opposition. Indeed throughout the present arduous period the sympathetic atti-

tude of the Opposition generally has been very helpful, and I think the public must realise that, as a Parliament, we have all endeavoured to do the best possible for the people of the State. That is as it should be, but it seldom happens that it is so. I am very grateful to my friend the Leader of the Opposition and those associated with him for the courtesies they have extended to me and the part they have played during the long and strenuous session. To those who sit on this side of the House I wish to offer my sincere thanks. They have had a most difficult and trying time, notwithstanding which they have been as loyal as few men have been in my experience. I thank them for the services they have rendered to the country in the attitude they have taken up at all times during the session. There is just a tinge of sadness in this breaking up to-night when our thoughts turn to our old friend Mr. Walker, the member for Kanowna, who was here when first I came into the House. I believe he came in with Mr. Troy, the member for Mt. Magnet, some time before the Leader of the Opposition came, and before I came. I am sincerely sorry that Mr. Walker should be stricken down by illness, and I can only hope he will make a speedy recovery. Then there is Mr. Lutey, the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe, for whom we all have the most profound respect, and Mr. Teesdale, the member for Roebourne. For the moment those three members are seriously ill and, deploring their illness, we all hope they will be with us again when next we meet. Miss Holman, the member for Forrest, too has been through a grievous indisposition, but fortunately she is now sufficiently convalescent to make an occasional welcome appearance in her place in the House. Many other members have been temporarily laid aside by the prevailing influenza epidemic, and so we have not known from day to day how many would be able to turn up to meet the House. We offer them all our sympathy, and hope they will speedily recover. During the past two years we have had a fairly anxious time. Two Bills have gone by the board to-night, two measures dealt with by managers of the respective Houses. I cannot help regretting that the spirit of compromise which should actuate us has not been in evidence, and so two measures that would have been useful have been lost. However it is of no use saying any more about that. All members will,

I trust, have a pleasant time during the festive season, and I hope that not only members of Parliament, but the people of the country also, will have in the New Year a very much better year than the past one has been. Australia has never before been through so difficult a time, a time accompanied by so much distress. Many people who were rich a couple of years ago no longer have any considerable possessions, men who have never before been unemployed now find themselves out of work, and indeed many adverse influences seem to have conspired to make life difficult for thousands of our people. I hope that by the time we meet again everything will have brightened and that we shall then have very much happier times.

HON. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [12.0]: I endorse the sentiments expressed by the Premier. I hope you, Sir, will enjoy a pleasant Christmas, and a complete rest after the arduous duties you have been called upon to perform during the greater part of the year. I also hope the Chairman of Committees, the "Hansard" staff, and the officers of the House will have a happy Christmas. At the close of the session we can say that, notwithstanding we have been dealing with quite exceptional legislation, of a character which it is considered the circumstances of the country have warranted, the business of the House has been conducted in excellent temper. Nothing that either the Press or the public can regard as a single scene has occurred during the trying months that are behind us, despite this most unusual and distasteful legislation. I sympathise with the Premier and his Ministers. They have to carry out a thankless task and a disagreeable duty in these times. As one who has had some experience of the work and responsibilities of office, I have felt that, consistent with doing our duty by the principles we hold, we could not but give any Government sympathetic consideration. I hope that the conduct of the Opposition has not been amiss in this direction. I also join with the Premier in expressing regret that our old friend, the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe (Mr. Lutey) has not been present throughout the session. I am sure that the older members who have been acquainted with him, and know of his many sterling and excellent qualities, can have nothing but the deepest regret that he has been laid aside through illness. Another member whom we all love so much, the member for Roebourne (Mr.

Teesdale), has also through illness been kept away from the House for most of the year. In the concluding portion of the session one of the oldest and most distinguished members, the member for Kanowna, (Hon. T. Walker), has been laid aside through illness. It has not been a very lucky Parliament in this respect. I am sure that the enjoyment of every member at Christmas time will be affected by the knowledge that some of their colleagues are not experiencing good health. I hope the Premier will not find it necessary to call the House together before the usual time of meeting, but in these days, when circumstances are changing so rapidly, one never knows what lies ahead. It may be found that further legislation of an emergency nature will be required. I hope, however, that will not be so, and that Australia is about to enter an era in which we shall be able to get through our difficulties without any further legislation of an emergency character. In referring to our invalided members I should have mentioned the member for Forrest (Miss Holman), who has for so many months been laid aside with a serious illness, but has happily been able to take her place in the House during the concluding week of the session.

The Premier: I join with you in that.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am sure the Premier does. I hope that the clouds will soon lift, and that we shall get through our difficulties. I have no doubt that when Australia puts her head down it will be found that she is possessed of citizens of the character, grit and determination to get her out of her troubles. It has been said that we are perhaps rather late in realising our difficulties, but once we understand that we are "up against it" I am sure that the united determination, character and ability of the citizens of Australia will enable them to find a way through everything. I join with the Premier in wishing every member of the House a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [12.7]: In the absence of the Leader of the Country Party, as the oldest member of that party, I endorse the remarks of the Premier and Leader of the Opposition. I wish you Mr. Speaker, the officers of the House and the "Hansard" staff a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. I deplore the fact that the members for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe, Roebourne and Kanowna have been so seriously ill, but am delighted that the member for Forrest is with

us again. The session has had its disappointments. I regret that through the defeat of the Secession Referendum Bill the people will not be allowed the chance to express their opinion on the subject. The outstanding thing about the session, to my mind, is the assurance of the Premier that steps are being taken to carry the farmers through. I can only hope that these steps will work out as successfully as he anticipates.

MR. SPEAKER [12.10]: I am delighted to have heard the remarks of the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, and the member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths). I do not know whether this session has been a record one, but judging from the fact that we have 41 "Hansards" I think the session must be one of the longest in the history of the State. I endorse all that has been said about the absent members. Their absence makes us sad. I join in the hope that it will be God's will that they will yet be restored to us in sound health. To the Chairman of Committees and the temporary Chairmen, and the officers of the House I am grateful. I can say from the bottom of my heart that I appreciate the manner in which they and all members of the House have smoothed my path as the occupant of this Chair. In all my 37 years of active life in Western Australia the year about to expire has been a record one for me. I hope that 1932 will usher in a period of such prosperity that all in Western Australia will be able to look back upon 1931 as only a distasteful dream. I believe this State has a future second to none amongst the States of the Commonwealth. In our gold and other minerals, our agriculture, pastoral, fruit and dairying industries we possess untold latent wealth. This is essentially a State of primary production, and I feel sure that as time goes on it will be regarded with envious eyes by the sister States. I thank members for their kindness to me on each and every occasion when I have occupied this seat. The officers of the House have carried out their duties in a manner satisfactory to members. I hope the Government will not require to summon Parliament together again until next July. If the occasion demands, however, I know that we have on both sides members capable of dealing with any emergency that may arise. A good spirit has prevailed throughout the session. One has only to listen to the sentiments of the Leader of the Opposition to know that

he and his colleagues realise the difficult times through which the State is passing. They have endeavoured to back up the Premier's efforts in the matter of emergency legislation, and notwithstanding that it was nauseating to them they dealt with it in the right spirit. It makes me feel proud to have had the honour to preside over 50 members who have regarded the interests of the State first. To one and all I wish a happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

MR. RICHARDSON (Subiaco) [12.15]: This has been the longest session in the history of the Western Australian Parliament. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the temporary Chairmen of Committees for the great kindness they have shown to me throughout this long sitting. I admit that I entered upon the duties of Chairman of Committees with a certain amount of diffidence, but because of the assistance that has been rendered to me by members on both sides of the House my way has been made easy. Whatever success has been achieved by me has come about by reason of the goodwill not alone of members on this side of the House but of those on the Opposition side as well. I join in wishing all members very best wishes for Christmas. We have experienced trying times. The Speaker and Chairman of Committees are not supposed to take part in controversial matters that are before the House. You, Mr. Speaker, have refrained from doing so, and so have I. That will always be my intention. We have been through an anxious period, and while debates may, at times, have become heated, nothing has occurred that could be described as having exceeded the bounds of dignity. I express to members generally my thanks for their kindness while I have been in the Chair, and I tender my thanks also to the temporary Chairmen of Committees for the assistance they have been good enough to render to me.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell)—Northam [12.20]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn to a date and hour to be fixed by the Speaker, such time of meeting to be notified by the Speaker to each member by letter or telegram.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 12.20 a.m. (Saturday).