

his way, and in a month's time he will be established there. Shortness of money is the old excuse of the Chief Protector, given frequently before the Royal Commission. Here is an opportunity for the Government to save some money, and I hope the Treasurer will see that the money is saved. I entirely disagree with the Royal Commissioner's recommendation No. 21, for the establishment of a special court for the trial of natives. It would be a woeful waste of money to appoint special magistrates and constitute special courts for tribal disputes. I can easily imagine the fun the Minister for Justice would have in looking for someone with a knowledge of tribal grievances and tribal languages, and consequent ability to square up tribal differences. The Commissioner must have been in a generous mood when he made that recommendation. I have now quoted recommendations with which I agree and also those with which I disagree. I am especially pleased that all the slanderous statements regarding cruelty and conditions of slavery have utterly failed to be substantiated by the critics who were so free with their comments before the Commission was appointed. They were, at best, merely exaggerated general statements, no definite charges being made. Further, no definite evidence of slavery or cruelty was given before the Royal Commission. I hope that the critics in question will now be satisfied, and that in future they will pause before making defamatory statements concerning decent people in the North. Finally, I trust the Minister will see that the appointment of a duly qualified medical practitioner for Derby will be expedited in order to check the spread of that loathesome disease leprosy.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 9.50 p.m.

## Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 25th September, 1935.

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

### QUESTION—DAIRY PRODUCTS MARKETING BOARD.

#### *Charges on Farm Butter.*

HON. H. V. PIESSE asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Do the Government consider it reasonable to charge a levy of 2½d. per lb., plus one-half per cent. administration charge, on farm butter when the makers of farm butter have no possible chance of participating in the premium paid by the Marketing Board? 2, Are the Government aware that the money collected from this source is utilised for the benefit of the South-West factories in paying a premium of 1d. on choice butter? 3, Does the Minister consider the Board is carrying out the wishes of Parliament in making the levy apply to farm butter producers who make less than 20 lbs. of butter per week? 4, Do the Government consider that the administration of the Marketing Board is equitable, and are they aware of the fact that a certain section of the manufacturers who cold-store butter will have such butter sold without any marketing costs? 5, Are the Government aware that the producers of butter fat from York to Denmark, and from Northam to Geraldton, have no direct representation on the Board?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, This is governed by Sections 29 and 30 of the Dairy Products Marketing Act. Under these sections the amount of the contribution for stabilisation and administration purposes is determined. 2, No. The premium for choice butter is paid as authorised by Section 41, and is not limited to South-West factories. 3, The Act exempts pro-

ducers who produce less than 20 lbs. of butter per week, and who retail their own produce, also those producers in districts outside the metropolitan area who sell direct to a storekeeper for sale retail in his store in the ordinary course of business. The Board does not ask for contributions from these producers, and in so refraining carries out the provisions of the Act. 4, The conditions of storage are governed by Section 41, and this ensures that each storer shall pay his own selling charges. 5. No. Two producers' representatives are members of the Board.

### CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT ACT, 1899, AMENDMENT BILL SELECT COMMITTEE.

#### *Extension of Time.*

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson, the time for bringing up the report was extended to Tuesday, 15th October.

#### **BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.**

- 1, Plant Diseases Act Amendment.  
Returned to the Assembly with amendments.
- 2, Land Tax and Income Tax.  
*Passed.*

### **BILL—FORESTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [4.40]: The debate has been remarkable for its consistency and inconsistency—misguided and unreasoning consistency and amazing inconsistency. In 1929 I introduced a Bill on parallel lines to this measure. It was attacked and defeated by 16 votes to 10. In the following year, an identically similar Bill was submitted by Mr. Baxter, as Leader of the House, representing the Government then in office, and it was passed by a majority of 17 votes to 7. On that occasion, a number of members who voted against my measure received Mr. Baxter's measure with open arms—and we have had opposition to the present Bill—which is inexplicable in view of the past attitude, for the Bill was almost a replica of that introduced by my

predecessor. I say "almost a replica." It was not entirely so. Ours made provision merely to take one year's revenue from sandalwood: Mr. Baxter's Bill went farther and took the revenue for the preceding year as well—the revenue that had been denied our Government. At the time my Bill was rejected, the depression was apparent, and the State did not know where to look for money. The London money market had been closed against Australia for many months previously; the Loan Council had not commenced to function financially, and there were some thousands of men either marching the streets in procession or storming the Treasury Buildings, demanding work. From 1930 Governments have taken the whole of the revenue from sandalwood, and no effort has been made to block them. Why the change of front? Why the right-about turn on the part of some hon. members?

Hon. G. W. Miles: I was consistent, at any rate. I tried to block them.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY:** I have already dealt with that class of consistency of hon. members. In support of their attitude, those who are opposing the Bill raise the question of the necessity for the re-growth of sandalwood—a question that has been dead and buried for some years. Over £25,000 had been spent in that direction before Parliament closed further contributions to the fund, and, except for the fact that the importance of the sandalwood industry called for an experiment, the money might as well have been sunk in the sea. Nor was it the first experiment. As I have on other occasions pointed out, a test was made by the Forrest Government, and it ended in utter failure. Yet we hear Mr. Seddon advocating a continuance of experiments on the Eastern Goldfields, where the plants were eaten by the rabbits. Other members come to Mr. Seddon's rescue and suggest fencing with rabbit proof netting. They are, perhaps, not aware that on the goldfields, 2,650 acres were rabbit-netted for experimental sowing, and the Forests Department state that "even the expedient of netting each seedling plant within the plots did not serve to prevent the depredations of the rabbits," and that "the rabbits show an extraordinary preference for small sandalwood plants." Anyone who has any acquaintance with sandalwood growth must know that there are no such things as

"forests" of this particular timber. In the early days, even in untouched country, a puller was fortunate if he got 10 logs to the acre. It grows principally on barren hills, long distances apart, and it is seldom seen in flat country, probably because, in well pastured land, it is destroyed by bush fires soon after it shows its head.

Hon. R. G. Moore: Does not destruction by fire apply to all timbers?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, but fire is not likely to touch barren stony hills to the degree that it would destroy sandalwood on flat land. That theory was advanced by Mr. Craig. It would be a mad scheme to rabbit-net, at huge cost, large areas of country, while impoverished farmers are clamouring for similar protection for their wheat, and the State is not able to go to their assistance. The Forests Department have found that a good rain of 1 in. per month or three successive months at the end of summer is required for satisfactory germination, but from 1918 to 1929 the only satisfactory year was 1926. The rabbit-proof netting suggestion leads me to foresee that the next request we may confidently expect from some members is that the Eastern Goldfields water scheme should be connected with the plantations, the areas reticulated and sprinklers installed.

Hon. R. G. Moore: You are romancing now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not. Whatever district is chosen, the rabbit menace is there now or will be there later. Netting would have to be used; bush fires would have to be guarded against, and maintenance would have to be provided over the 30 or more years before the surviving timber would be fit for marketing. It has been stated that under this Bill we shall be taking £18,000. We shall not be taking £18,000. That aspect has not been touched upon.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I asked you before I made my speech, and you told me £18,000.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You should not take this money into general revenue while borrowing money for forestry work.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The fact remains that we are taking only £10,800, for, under the Act of 1918, we are entitled to two-fifths of the £18,000. How would the scheme of rabbit-netting be carried into effect with £10,000 a year? What Govern-

ment would attempt to provide the necessary money? No member replies. At Narrogin small experimental sowings were made in jam country. They were attacked by caterpillars, but showed good growth. Sowings in 1930 resulted in poor germination. Sowings in 1934 showed good germination, but were completely eaten off by rabbits while the plants were still young seedlings. At Lol Gray, sowings were wholly unsuccessful; at Highbury the nuts were dug up and eaten by hoody rats. At both those places no rabbits exist. In the Busselton district, tests were made. The first one, in 1931, was satisfactory, but a planting in 1933 was entirely unproductive of results.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You must have forgotten the superphosphate.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Forests Department say that rabbits were seen on the area at the time, but no attack had been noted. No doubt, the rabbits there will ultimately imitate the example of their brethren elsewhere and end the experiments. At Bendering and Ravensthorpe early experimental work was undertaken, but the rabbits destroyed the plants. Mr. Miles and Mr. Holmes made onslaughts on the Bill.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: On the 9th December, 1930, you said you admired our consistency.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not object to consistency, but with some members consistency has reached such a pitch that I was obliged to refer to it in my introductory remarks.

Hon. G. W. Miles interjected.

The PRESIDENT: I think the Minister should be heard in silence. When Mr. Holmes and Mr. Miles were speaking, he did not interrupt them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Holmes and Mr. Miles said that the Government used loan funds for reforestation, and were taking forestry money into revenue. I have, from time to time, in statements read to the House, set forth the amounts that the Government were spending on forestry from loan funds. I have pointed out that money had been advanced through the Loan Council for that specific purpose in order to relieve unemployment. I have explained that there were a number of men—as a matter of fact there are over 1,000, and at one time there were 1,500—unable

to do laborious work; that they had been on the dole; and that they would have remained on the dole unless this class of work had been provided for them.

Hon. G. W. Miles: We quite agree with reforestation, but do not agree with your taking this money.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am dealing with all the points raised by members. In the last three years we spent £410,000 of loan funds for the purpose and £22,590 granted by the Commonwealth Government, who are subsidising us on a pound for pound basis to the extent of £100,000 this year, because they regard that aspect of our policy as one of national importance. Until last week not one word of protest was uttered against the use of loan money for the purpose. I cannot call to mind one instance of any member having raised an objection to the policy of the Government regarding the expenditure of loan money.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We do not object now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Nor can the scheme be logically condemned unless it can be shown that reforestation has been a failure. Of course it has been a great success. And what more reproductive work could have been chosen? We are rebuilding up a definite asset, not for ourselves, but for future generations. Why should they not contribute towards the cost? Mr. Miles and Mr. Holmes and others are striving to deprive us of a portion of the forest revenue to enable us to meet the interest and sinking fund on the loan money so expended. Surely if we expend loan money, it is essential to provide for interest and sinking fund.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: But you do not do that. You want to take this money into general revenue.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I was pleased to note that Mr. Angelo recognised the necessity for taking action in this direction. From his experience of banking, he is qualified to form a judgment.

Hon. G. W. Miles: He would soon be in the Bankruptcy Court if he applied that method to his business.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In 1918, when the Forests Act was passed, the revenue from sandalwood was only 5s. a ton. The total amount received for that year was only £2,368, three-fifths of which amount

was paid into the reforestation fund in the ordinary way. Parliament did not think it worth while to take that small amount into revenue. In 1924, however, a different position arose when the royalty had been immensely increased. The Government and Parliament recognised that all except £5,000 of the proceeds of royalties on sandalwood should go into revenue. The total amount received in royalty then was about £50,000. In 1930, the Government, with a Bill like this—except that it was double-barrelled—took the whole of the money, and it has been taken ever since. The failure of the sandalwood experiment was a sufficient justification for their action. Mr. Miles, who, apparently, is not kindly disposed towards the sandalwood proposition, with its attendant rabbit-proof netting, tried another device. He said that all Governments had been crediting revenue with large sums of money for interest due to the Agricultural Bank, but not paid. As Mr. Miles knows by his quotation of the Premier's reference to the subject, that procedure was provided for by Section 4 of the Agricultural Bank Act Amendment Act of 1912.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is not to say it was right.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Subsection 3 of Section 4 reads—

The interest on and contributions, at a rate to be prescribed by the Colonial Treasurer, to the sinking fund for the redemption of moneys appropriated by Parliament to the purposes of the principal Act shall be defrayed by the Bank out of the principal and interest paid by the mortgagors to whom advances have been made out of moneys so appropriated.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That was passed before I entered Parliament.

Hon. G. Fraser: Just as well it was.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It will be seen that the Treasurer had to be paid interest and sinking fund out of the principal and interest received from the different mortgagors by the Agricultural Bank, which had been made a corporate body, and there has always been sufficient principal and interest to comply with the statute.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Premier admitted having borrowed the money. He said that to do so was unsound.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: How various Governments can be charged with having thrown dust in the eyes of the taxpayers when they have simply been carrying out a law sanctioned by Parliament is puzzling to my comprehension.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Parliament was to blame.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Anyhow, it was the present Government that ended the legalised practice last year by the new Agricultural Bank Act.

Hon. G. W. Miles: They were forced to do so by the Federal Grants Commission.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Miles should give the Government credit for what they have done.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I do.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He should not indulge in condemnation of the Government.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I condemn the policy.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Act was passed in 1912, and the hon. member has been in the House for many years and has not raised the slightest objection to that procedure.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I have protested.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: When the hon. member has tolerated a law, which he now considers obnoxious, ever since he has been in the House, he should not use the circumstances as a weapon to create an atmosphere of prejudice against the Bill in order to secure its defeat. No Minister in any Government has done as much as Mr. Collier to preserve the timber industry. When he took charge of the Forests Department in 1914, he found that the Acting Conservator of that period was simply a clerk, who had had no training in the work, and who had been acting for 15 years. What did Mr. Collier do? He decided to supply the want of policy existing at that time. He advertised throughout the British Empire for a trained expert in forestry, and the result was the appointment of Mr. Lane-Poole, who was considered one of the best experts in that line to be found in the world.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Quite right.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member made a similar interjection a little while ago, and in that respect he is consistent.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Mr. Lane-Poole was a good man; I always said so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I merely wish to emphasise the hon. member's consistency to a further extent. From Mr. Collier's term of office as Minister for Forests dates the first genuine attempt at a scientific forestry policy in Western Australia. He

caused the classification of forests to be made, the first attempted in the State's history. Since then he has been responsible for the dedication of State forests to the extent of 3,885,010 acres. All the other Governments put together dedicated only a miserable 50,000 acres, and to Mr. Collier's enthusiasm for the preservation of our timber industry is due the fact, as I pointed out last week, on the authority of the officer in charge of the Forests Department, that the leeway to be made up in reforestation matters is gradually being overtaken.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I agree with your forests conscience.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member is showing his approval of the Government's policy in a singular way.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I am not with you in your bookkeeping methods.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is the record of the Government.

Hon. G. W. Miles: A good record, too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope hon. members will not be so unfair as to refuse to pass the Bill.

Question put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	16
Noes	..	..	..	..	8
Majority for					8

#### AYES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. R. G. Moore
Hon. A. M. Clydesdale	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. J. T. Frauklin	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. R. Tuckey

(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Hon. C. G. Elliott	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. V. Hamersley

(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### In Committee.

Hon. J. Nicholson in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 41:

Hon. G. W. MILES: It has been said that there is no hope of any money being used for the reforestation of sandalwood. My colleague said definitely there is no hope for its growth in the North. I reply to that by saying that he is not competent to speak for the whole of the North. A consignment was shipped from the Kimberleys only recently.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. member intend to move an amendment?

Hon. G. W. MILES: Yes. I hope the Government will give consideration to the question of the regeneration of sandalwood in the Kimberleys.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the hon. member state his amendment?

Hon. G. W. MILES: I move an amendment—

That the following words in lines 2 and 3 of the clause, "as it originally appeared in the principal Act, No. 8 of 1919," be struck out.

I do not think the Government have fully considered the question of regeneration of sandalwood in the northern part of the State. I hope the Government will inquire into the matter.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I can promise the hon. member that the matter will receive the consideration of the Government.

Hon. G. W. MILES: On that assurance I will withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

## **BILL—RURAL RELIEF FUND.**

### *Second Reading.*

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.13]: I do not intend to speak at any length, and I hope that a lot of time will not be spent on speeches during the second reading stage. The Bill is essentially one for Committee; all it means is the providing of machinery for the distribution of about £1,560,000 for the writing down of farmers' debts or making compositions. We have at the present time the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act which enables farmers and creditors to come together and make a voluntary composition. The Bill we are now considering goes a

little further; it has to do with the appointment of a board who will have extremely large powers. If it is impossible for a voluntary composition to be made between a farmer and his creditors, the farmer or the creditors may appeal to the board for a statutory composition to be made. The fund provided by the Commonwealth Government is to enable money to be paid, mostly to unsecured creditors, with a view to giving the farmer a chance to carry on his farm. But if that voluntary arrangement cannot be arrived at, the board will have power compulsorily to suspend debts. That to me is the most important part of the Bill, namely that the board, if they so desire, shall compulsorily suspend even secured debts. It is a very great power. The board can say to a first mortgagee, "The farmer is unable to bear the burden of interest on this mortgage, and we as a board will suspend the whole or any portion of his debt for a period of up to four years."

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Do you approve of that?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I will tell you later. The point is, are we going to agree to the second reading of the Bill or are we not? If we do not agree to the second reading, we are going to throw away one and a half millions of money provided by the Commonwealth Government. On the other hand, if we are going to accept that money we shall have to provide the machinery for its distribution, and to provide the machinery we have first to pass the second reading.

Hon. H. Seddon: We can amend the Bill.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, but that is for the Committee stage. So we should not require a lot of long second-reading speeches, but should hasten through this stage to the Committee stage.

Hon. A. Thomson: It might be desirable on the second reading to draw attention to any inaccuracies in the measure.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Quite so. The Bill is not going to be a tremendous lot of help to the farming industry. First of all, more than half the total indebtedness of the farmers is owed to a Government authority, namely the Agricultural Bank, and so more than half the farmers' debts are excluded. Also there will be excluded almost entirely the first mortgages, for it is not likely this money will be used for compositions with first mortgagees.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: It could be so used.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, but it is not likely. It will be used almost entirely for unsecured debts, and perhaps for some second mortgages. It can only be used if the using of the money will enable the farmer successfully to carry on. So a good many farmers will be excluded under that provision. The money cannot be used to resuscitate old debts which are not repayable under the statute of limitations. The only really important point to be considered is, are we going to allow a board to be appointed which shall say, "We will statutorily suspend secured debts." Personally, I think that in extreme cases it has to be done, else many farmers will have to go out. If a man has a mortgage on a farm and the security is not there, why not tell him so? For if the security is not there, he is never going to realise it, so it is not going to do any harm to the mortgagee. I will not spend any more time on the Bill at this stage, but a lot of attention will have to be given to it in Committee. I will support the second reading.

**HON. C. H. WITTENOOM** (North) [5.20]: I will support the second reading. Generally speaking, I am glad to be able to congratulate the Federal Government on their efforts, as far as they have gone, to give some assistance to the farmers who are in an unfortunate position. The Bill was clearly explained to us by the Honorary Minister last night, and also by Mr. Piesse in a long speech. I think those two gentlemen have left nothing further to be explained. This is a Bill with which members can deal much more effectively in Committee, for it is essentially a Committee Bill. Whilst the administration of the fund has been left in the hands of the State Government they are not given a very free hand. What they are asked to do is to provide State machinery for the distribution of the money. Very definite instructions are given to them as to the direction in which relief is to be afforded. So it is useless at this stage to discuss whether it would have been better for the State if at least a portion of the available money had gone to rehabilitate the farmer, replacing his plant or machinery, or providing him with wire netting, instead of applying the whole amount to relieve him of his debts. I am inclined to agree with Mr. Piesse that

the Federal money would have been distributed to greater advantage had a rehabilitation scheme been evolved on terms similar to the recommendation to the Federal Wheat Commission. However, it probably cuts both ways for, if relief be given to the creditors, the farmers will be in a better position to deal with those creditors. And the knowledge that the Commonwealth Government are sympathetic will make it easier for the farmers to deal with the storekeepers later on. Those storekeepers have been very liberal towards the farmers, and of course the farmers wish to reciprocate. The £12,000,000 provided for the whole of Australia will not last more than three years, if that long, but I think we can expect that if the money is wisely administered we shall get something in the nature of a rehabilitation scheme next time we apply to the Federal Government. Being a representative of a province embracing all kinds of rural industry in the more settled areas of the South, where fruit, potatoes and the like are produced, and having recently travelled through the districts of Corrigin, Kondinin and Kulin, and being thoroughly conversant with the conditions of the wheat-growers in the South-East Province, I realise the position of those farmers who have waited patiently for this legislation, and I congratulate the State Government on the prompt manner in which they have brought down the Bill. Whether the relief to the sufferers will be equally prompt, time alone will tell. We have complaints from all over the country at the slow work of the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, but of course we must remember that they have to deal with thousands of clients, and we can only hope that in this case the more needy farmers will be dealt with first of all. But it is necessary that the work should be done quickly, for time is largely the essence of the contract. As Mr. White is known to be a quick worker and very efficient, I hope he will be one of the three trustees selected: personally, I hope he will be made chairman. The Minister has promised that a farmer shall be on the board, which I think is quite necessary. When the Government are appointing the third man, who is to be a business man, I hope he will be a man with country store-keeping experience; for the country store-keeper has been the hardest hit of all, has been dealt with more harshly than the business men in the city.

Hon. H. Seddon: Do not you think his debts also ought to be written down?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Possibly so. The Minister, when moving the second reading, read out the five clauses under which the trustees cannot grant this Federal money. The Bill gives the trustees a tremendous lot of power, and therefore I hope the Government will be very careful when selecting the three trustees, and will choose the best men available. Another point: Considering the Federal Government have provided this large sum of money for Western Australia, £1,300,000, surely the State Government can assist by making all applications free, or, if not free, at all events based on a very low flat rate to the farmer. I hope the Honorary Minister will try to influence his Government to accept an amendment on those lines. As it is now, the applicant has to pay the cost of his application and the cost of his meetings, and in addition, since as a rule he is not well acquainted with figures, he has to pay the cost of an accountant. All these costs might mount up to £10, and I repeat that these fees should be considerably lessened.

Hon. A. Thomson: With a thousand farmers that would mean £10,000.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Yes. I hope the House will expedite this legislation. It should not take very long in Committee to decide for or against the various amendments appearing on the Notice Paper. I hope members will do all they can to hurry the Bill through. I support the second reading.

HON. T. MOORE (Central) [5.30]: My remarks on this Bill will be brief. I believe the measure will be accepted by the House. It certainly is a Committee Bill. It seems to me that the general public have not a proper conception of the unfortunate position of our farmers. It is not understood that farmers got into debt whilst working hard, and acting in good faith concerning those from whom they obtained credit. That point is missed by the general public. It is also believed by a certain number of city people that quite a lot of things have been given to the farmer, that he has had money handed to him by the Agricultural Bank, and that he has not had to foot the interest bill. That is running in the minds of many city people. A larger number of our farmers would not

have been in trouble, but for the economic position created by the depression. That is why we say the farmers are entitled to some relief. Were it not for the farmers, how would the city people or the people generally get on? We must give relief to those who are carrying on business in the country. Farming is the one industry we have to look to. Too many people do not understand the position in which the farmer finds himself.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They may be referring more to group settlers than to farmers.

Hon. T. MOORE: There may be something in that. Some distinction should be drawn between types of creditors when the creditors are called together. There should be some distinction, for instance, between country storekeepers and the large firms who have farmers in their debt. Most of the large firms, if not all of them, have shown a profit throughout the depression. At the end of the year most of the firms who have been dealing in what the farmer uses and produces in the way of machinery firms, and those who buy and sell wheat and wool, have shown a profit.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Do you include the country storekeeper?

Hon. T. MOORE: I say with the exception of the country storekeeper. Mr. Seddon wanted to know whether the country storekeepers' debts should not also be written down. That cannot be done under this Bill. We should set out to see that as far as possible the country storekeepers shall receive, in the distribution of the money, something more than the firms who have not shown a loss are to receive.

Hon. A. Thomson: We cannot put that in the Bill.

Hon. T. MOORE: I believe we can. At any rate, I think that by administration it can be done. It would be a fair thing to do it in the case of country storekeepers, because when the depression came the country storekeepers and the farmers were the first to feel the pinch.

Hon. A. Thomson: I believe that.

Hon. T. MOORE: Both of them felt it very severely and are still in trouble. Many country storekeepers are practically on the road to bankruptcy because they stuck to the farmer in the bad days. Instead of trying to do what we cannot do,



that is, write down the storekeepers' debts. I hope the board will see that in any compositions that are made the country storekeepers get a better deal than is meted out to the large firms, which by their balance sheets have shown a profit. The big firms ought to agree to that. The struggling settler is the man who keeps the big firms going. I hope they will see that those who have been hardest hit receive the best possible deal under our legislation. I am of the opinion that the amount given is inadequate to do the job well. The board have a stiff proposition to face in the conduct of this business, and must find out what are the hopeless cases before they start making any distribution. If every case has to be sifted out so that the board may be in a position to know what each farmer should receive, it will have a very stiff proposition to face.

Hon. L. Craig: First come, first served.

Hon. T. MOORE: That would be a wrong principle to follow. This money has been given by the Federal Government and we want to see it distributed on an equitable basis. Parliament and the State Government should see that all those who are entitled to receive any part of the money shall receive that part. Although I am anxious to see this legislation brought into operation as quickly as possible, I know that an injustice will be done unless a complete survey is made of the whole of the farmers in the country who are entitled to make claims upon the money.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That is where the Agricultural Bank inspectors will come in handy.

Hon. T. MOORE: We shall not know how much money can be given until we know the exact number of those who are entitled to participate. It would be impracticable to begin distributing the funds on any basis until the authorities know exactly the number of men they have to deal with, and the amount of indebtedness in each case. Then only will they know the amount of money that has to be provided in each case.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: How long will that take?

Hon. T. MOORE: It will take some time.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: About three years.

Hon. T. MOORE: Unless this is done we shall have those who are first in, best dressed.

Hon. L. Craig: I expect the board can fix a basis of composition, say 5s. in the pound.

Hon. T. MOORE: It is a question of finding out exactly what can be done. I fear that this will take some time. In the country one hears people ask when the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank are going to do anything. They too have to make a complete survey of all their clients. When that is done they will know how much indebtedness has to be carried. That much work will have been done, and the results will be available for use in connection with this Bill. In the case of the private banks I understand that no survey has yet been made of the indebtedness of their many clients. The board will probably prove unpopular. When one Government hands over to another Government the distribution of funds, as is the case now, they can make the other Government very unpopular by not giving them enough money to go round. That is what happens in connection with all these grants. We find discontent arising in connection with every grant we have distributed to date. Even those who receive the greatest amounts are not satisfied.

Hon. L. Craig: They never would be.

Hon. T. MOORE: And those who receive the least are dissatisfied.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That is consistency.

Hon. T. MOORE: When one Government finds the money and hands it to another for distribution, the receiving Government are always unpopular.

Hon. L. Craig: We farmers are never satisfied.

Hon. T. MOORE: I feel sure the House will accept this Bill, and that anything members can do in Committee to improve it they will do to the best of their ability. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

## BILL—BUILDERS' REGISTRATION.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 10th September.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West [5.40]): For some years it has seemed to me that once or twice in every session a Bill finds its way to this Chamber that is designed to inflict hardship upon someone. Such

Bills are not designed for the benefit of all. Some are designed to afford an advantage to a few people at the expense of the whole. This particular Bill comes definitely within that scope. It seems to represent an attempt on the part of the Builders and Contractors' Association to secure parliamentary authority for the creation of what may develop into a close corporation in the building trade. Under the guise of an attempt to remove from the building industry that objectionable person known as the jerry-builder, and, according to the member in charge of the measure, to overcome the apprenticeship problem, which is and has been so serious, we are asked to pass this Bill. I am of opinion that the measure will do neither of the things claimed for it. It gives the jerry-builder freedom to continue his operations for the term of his natural life. It makes no provision for apprentices, being absolutely silent on that point. There is nothing in the Bill that is likely to improve that position in any way. In that direction its sponsors express some pious hopes, and even these are not very sanguine. On the other hand the Builders and Contractors' Association are seeking power that is likely to make them building autocrats. They want power over the man who desires to spend his money in bricks and mortar, a power that is definitely restrictive. In effect they say, "You may build, so long as you do so in accord with our wishes. You are not to have any freedom of choice as to whom you shall employ. We are the people who are going to say who shall or shall not be engaged." That is a proposal on all fours with an advertisement I saw in the "West Australian" last week. That follows the principle of preference to unionists in quite an open fashion, and I suppose quite fairly so in view of those who are concerned. It is addressed to all shop assistants, the wool, skin, hide and oil sections and says, "Buttons must be worn and produced at pick-ups; no buttons no work." It is signed by the Fremantle representative. If the Bill is passed, we can imagine the Builders and Contractors' Association announcing "no builders' buttons, no job." We are told by the hon. member who introduced the Bill that it embodied conclusions arrived at after 18 months careful investigation and deliberation. He did not tell us anything about what led to those conclusions. As a matter

of fact, we knew very little about them until a day or two ago. Apparently the Builders and Contractors' Association are not anxious to enlighten the public regarding their business, nor are they anxious to enlighten Parliament on that subject. It seems to me to have remained for the president of the association, after dining sumptuously the other evening, to let one of the cats out of the bag. That gentleman is reported to have said—

Various committees of the association had been particularly busy in conference with various trade unions. The suggestion had been made that preference should be given to unionists. If some means could be devised by which the unions would be comprised solely of craftsmen—

I do not know what else they are composed of; I always thought unions, and particularly building trades unions, were composed of craftsmen.

—this subject could be developed with considerable advantage to both builders and tradesmen.

That is to say, the Builders and Contractors' Association definitely want preference to unionists—in conjunction, I suppose, with the union.

Unfortunately, the latitude of laws and regulations made it possible to gain admission to unions far too easily.

This is telling the unionists how to conduct their business.

A committee of the association had also concerned itself with the standardisation of quantities, and the matter had been practically finalised. A great many difficulties could be overcome by the registration of legitimate builders, he continued, and with this was wrapped up the vexed question of apprentices. A large section of persons conducting building operations in Perth at present had no concern other than the commercial aspect of the work they were doing. On the other hand, the association felt bound to do something for the improvement of the trade and to train men to take the place of older tradesmen. Painters, plumbers, carpenters and others should be brought under the control of the Apprenticeship Board, and the same conditions should apply to all unions connected with the building trade. Sub-letting was being carried out by people who were nothing more than commercial speculators.

At the same gathering other speakers made definite references to this Bill, and some interested persons said they wanted it piloted through this Chamber. From the speech I have quoted it is perfectly clear that the Builders' and Contractors' Association in this instance are emphatically desirous of preference to unionists. This

House has always stood for no preference, at all events since I have been a member.

Hon. T. Moore: The House may still change its mind.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Possibly. It has always stood for equal rights to everybody. Consistency, as quoted here, seems to be a popular slogan; and I am following consistency as regards the Bill. The House has always definitely opposed preference when trade unions have, in conformity with their policy, openly urged it. Now, because the Builders' and Contractors' Association seek, not straight out after the manner of unionists, to obtain preference for their association, we are asked to reverse the oft-repeated determination of this Chamber. I sincerely hope that the House will not show any change of front in this instance. If the hon. member in charge of the Bill had even explained what was done during those conferences extending over 18 months, we would know where we are.

The Honorary Minister: When you speak of preference to unionists, are you referring to employees or employers?

Hon. W. J. MANN: Apparently preference is wanted both ways this time—preference to registered builders and preference to unionists. So both parties are in the one bag. It matters not whether a union of workers or an association of masters urges such a principle. It appears that there has been active collusion between the masters and the unions. That view is supported by the fact that 18 months' negotiations have been required to arrive at the conclusions which are responsible for the Bill. It is equally evident that if these parties are allowed to have their own sweet way, the cost of building will go up without delay. On that point I am definite. The 18-months conferences between the bosses and the other fellows have had no other object in this sweet life than to push up the cost of building; and that is one of the things we are here to protect the public against. If there is any other reason for those conferences I would like to hear it. We are told that the Bill has the blessing of the Royal Institute of Architects. One would expect that. I have nothing to say against the institute. I believe it to be a necessary and estimable body. I regret that

all people who build do not employ architects, because to employ a competent architect pays in the long run. However, the fact that the architects have given the Bill their blessing should not weigh with this Chamber. Now to summarise. It is claimed for the Bill by its sponsor, firstly, that it will make for peace in industry. I fail to see in the Bill anything that indicates prospects of peace in industry. The statement, though delightful in itself, is totally unsupported by facts. I suggest that if the Bill makes for any peace at all, it is likely to be peace at a price; and that price will increase the cost of building to the public. That is the price which will have to be paid for any peace in industry in this direction. Then it is said that the Bill would have the advantage of guaranteeing continuity of employment with duly qualified builders. It will probably have that advantage for some people, because all others not conforming to the idea of preference or not feeling disposed to undergo an examination or apply for registration will be frozen out. Again it will be a matter of "No button, no job." Then we are told that qualified builders—the word "qualified" here means registered—will be all the better able, under the Bill, to meet their commitments for both wages and materials. If that is not a definite indication that building costs will go up, I do not know what is.

Hon. G. Fraser: Nonsense!

Hon. W. J. MANN: Let hon. members disagreeing explain it how they like. If it is not what I have stated, I am incapable of forming an opinion at all. We are definitely told that builders will be better able, if the Bill passes, to meet their commitments for both wages and materials. That is a statement made by the sponsor of the Bill. As he is the man who explained it to us, I think we can fairly draw that inference. As regards their commitments, builders are bound by law to pay, and particularly to pay wages. If they cannot pay wages and commitments, whether they be builders or anything else, they have no right to be in business. Again, it is said that the Bill would "ensure knowledge needed to erect buildings in keeping with the requirements of clients." Is not that knowledge already possessed by the builders operating?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Not by quite a number of them.

Hon. W. J. MANN: In that case, why Clause 10 of the Bill? I await a reply. Clause 10 is the clause which provides for the registration of any person who has been trading as a builder or supervisor of buildings for the past two years. He is the fellow who is to have, for the term of his natural life, full permission to carry on, whether he is a jerry-builder or anything else. If that is not so, then the clause ought not to find a place in the Bill. I may ask, is it not a fact that nearly all builders, registered or otherwise, build to suit their clients' pockets? If a person desires a cheap structure, so long as it conforms with the building regulations, he can have it. Almost any builder will work to a price. A builder will give a price for a cheap job, and one gets what one pays for. Similarly as regards a substantial job. It is fair to ask what constitutes a builder. Certainly there is a definition of "Builder" in the Bill—"A person trading as a builder." That is pretty broad. I know men trading as builders to-day who have no pretensions to being craftsmen. Some of them started as builders by making coffins. That was their trade. Is the builder a craftsman, and if so of which of the number of trades that are required in the construction of a modern building? Is the builder necessarily a carpenter, or a bricklayer, or a plumber, or a painter? I do not think that the builder as we know him to-day, at any rate the big man, is any of those things particularly.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: How does that situation fit in with the union compulsion of one man, one job?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am not prepared to enter on that phase at the moment. I have asked that question regarding builders because it bears on the subject of apprentices, to which I shall refer later. The other day I was speaking to a builder in the city, a good reputable builder, who quite freely admitted to me that he had never had any building experience until a few years ago, when he started trading as a builder. He made use of these words: "There are a number of successful builders who have never nailed a plank or laid a brick." Nevertheless those men to-day are trading as builders and, according to my friend, they are very good builders, too. They make no pretence to be craftsmen. Their success and advance-

ment have arisen from their ability to create, from close study, their capacity to make use of others, and their powers of observation and enthusiasm. They are the men who, it is claimed, will have the training of apprentices.

Hon. E. H. Gray: There are not too many successful builders such as you describe.

Hon. R. G. Moore: One of the most successful builders in the State was a school teacher.

Hon. W. J. MANN: There are many excellent builders who are good craftsmen, rendering excellent service to the public. If they desire to carry on their avocations as in the past, we have no right to tell them that they must submit to an examination or that they must subscribe to the policy of preference to unionists.

Hon. E. H. Gray: What about the Master Printers' Association?

Hon. W. J. MANN: That organisation does not subscribe to the principle of preference to unionists.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It represents a very close corporation.

Hon. T. Moore: At any rate, preference to unionists is not included in the Bill.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Those builders should be permitted to carry on unmolested, as they are to-day.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: Should there be no registration?

Hon. W. J. MANN: They may not desire to have registration. I do not know that many of us, at our time of life, would like to face an examination arising out of our respective callings. There may, of course, be some heroic exceptions. It has been asserted that registration will eliminate the jerry-builder. I combat that contention strongly. I regard such a contention as absolute nonsense. So far from eliminating the jerry-builder, the Bill will provide for him a lifelong tenure in the industry. I have already pointed out that builders work to a price. Jerry-building goes on because of the demand for low-priced work. It is associated with the law of supply and demand. At the same time, I regret that the system provides an opportunity for unscrupulous people to trade in badly-built structures.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: That is what we desire to do away with.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I have no time for that type of person, whether he be a builder,

speculator or a member of a registered association.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: Then you will support the Bill.

Hon. W. J. MANN: If jerry-building is to be controlled or even minimised, the Bill will not achieve anything in that direction.

Hon. G. Fraser: Surely it will help.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I will suggest a much more effective way of attaining that objective. At present a person desirous of building a home must submit complete plans and specifications to the local authority. In the metropolis, the plans have to be submitted to the City Surveyor. I understand that gentleman is highly qualified and he and his officers carefully peruse the plans and specifications to determine whether the proposed building will be a desirable one, whether it will be habitable and will be of sufficient strength, and whether the laws of hygiene and other essentials have been attended to.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That does not apply regarding some suburban authorities.

Hon. W. J. MANN: It applies even to country road boards.

Hon. R. G. Moore: And to all municipalities.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I think it applies everywhere.

Hon. G. Fraser: In some instances, plans are dealt with by building committees.

Hon. W. J. MANN: But they represent the local authorities. The point I am making is that the right of veto is possessed by the local authorities regarding plans and specifications submitted to them. In many instances in country areas builders are associated with the bodies that pass judgment on the plans and specifications. The Mayor of Busselton is a builder and contractor. Fees are collected, and when the local authority is satisfied with the plans, the builder is given permission to go ahead with the work. After that, with few exceptions, the local authority does not bother any further, particularly with respect to average jobs.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is, so long as the plans and specifications comply with the requirements of the Municipal Corporations Act, which is 50 years old.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Am I making the speech, or is the hon. member?

Hon. E. H. Gray: I am trying to help you.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I can get along without the hon. member's assistance. The manner in which the plans and specifications are dealt with, is largely farcical. As soon as the plans are approved, the builder can go ahead with the work, and nothing else is done.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: That is not always so.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I have already pointed out that there may be a few exceptions. If members desire to get rid of the jerry-builder, the best remedy will be if, when the contractor or builder has finished his job and before the building can be occupied, the authority that has passed the plans and specifications in the first instance, inspects the building and, if satisfied, issues a certificate to prove that the building has been constructed in conformity with the plans. If that were done, the jerry-builder would vanish.

Hon. E. H. Gray interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity to speak later on.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Anyone interested in building operations would be pleased to pay a small fee in order to receive such a certificate.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: But that could not be issued unless the work had been under supervision.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Then why trouble about plans and specifications? Why require those plans to be lodged and, if they are passed, the builder be allowed to go and do what he likes? It appears as if the Builders and Contractors' Association had gone into conference for 18 months in an endeavour to find ways of getting more money out of people, and as a result submitted the scheme contemplated by the Bill.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Why ridicule them because they study their own business?

Hon. W. J. MANN: Some people are incapable of studying anything.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Of studying their own interests?

Hon. W. J. MANN: The contention that the Bill will improve the position regarding apprentices was rather futile because the Bill makes no such provision. The tradesmen will take apprentices, not the builders. In very few instances master builders and contractors control tradesmen, so what chance would they have of training

apprentices? They sub-let the various sections of the work, and they would have nothing for apprentices at all. The trouble regarding apprentices and the dearth of skilled labour is attributable to two factors. When we consider the latter phase, we must remember the war, as a result of which there is a whole generation missing from our community. Many thousands of young men went to the war and, unfortunately, did not return. That is one reason why there is a dearth of skilled labour. The unions themselves are to blame for the other factor. For years past they have approached the Arbitration Court and secured awards under which the employment of apprentices was restricted.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is the main cause of the present position.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The restriction has certainly been overdone, and the unions must bear portion of the blame for existing conditions. Of course, I do not advocate that an employer should be permitted to have as many apprentices as he desires, and I agree there should be some regulation of that phase so as to safeguard against operations being carried out by boy labour. I am sure that when members look into the Bill they will not accept it, but I would be more kindly disposed towards the measure if I thought it would improve the position regarding apprentices. On the ground that the measure is designed for the benefit of a few people and, if agreed to, will increase building costs, I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. R. G. MOORE** (North-East) [6.14]: I intend to oppose the second reading of the Bill principally because I cannot believe it will accomplish what has been claimed for it. It seems to me that the Bill will merely set up a board that will create additional costs that will have to be passed on to the long-suffering public. I can see nothing in the Bill that will make the condition of the building trade better than it is to-day. The great trouble regarding jerry-building now is not that the person who undertakes such jobs is not competent to do better work, but that his honesty of purpose and integrity are at fault. If we require builders to be registered, they can be required to pass an examination as to their efficiency, but that

will not disclose anything about their integrity and honesty.

Hon. G. Fraser: Both are factors.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: If a man is a crook builder, he will be crook, whether he is registered or not.

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

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I imagine it is going to be very difficult to arrange an examination for builders and to determine whether one man is suitable to be registered as a builder and another unsuitable. A variety of tradesmen are engaged in building—carpenters, plasterers, bricklayers, plumbers, painters, electricians, etc.—and any one of them, if he so desired and was qualified in his own trade, should be able to get registration as a builder. He would probably employ men in the other trades who were not registered. Sometimes a man who is not a first-class tradesman proves to be a first-class builder, and a man who could not pass an examination in any trade might be a good builder. He might be able to handle men and might be possessed of knowledge as to how a job ought to be done. Such a man would be qualified to take charge of a job, as plenty have done. When Mr. Mann was speaking, I interjected that one of the builders in this State who undertakes large jobs was formerly a school teacher, and I do not think anyone would say he has not made a wonderful success of his work as a builder.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Plenty of labourers become lawyers.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Not enough, unfortunately.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: During the last few years, quite a lot of lawyers have become labourers.

Hon. G. Fraser: And quite a lot of them ought to be labourers.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: There are many features of the Bill that I do not like. Under the measure an unregistered builder may take jobs in value up to £300, but not over that amount. If an unregistered builder had two or three separate jobs which were included in the one contract, and the price exceeded £300, he would still be debarred from accepting the contract. A man might have a house which had cost a couple of thousand pounds and might require additions costing £300. Any jerry-builder could undertake the work of providing those addi-

tions, but if someone else wanted a £200 job done to a house and a £150 garage erected on the same block at the same time, such a builder could not accept it. That shows the fallacy of the Bill. If tenders were called for one job in one month and for the second job in the next month, he could undertake them, but if tenders for the two jobs were called simultaneously, he would be disqualified. How, then, can it be claimed that people will be protected against the jerry-builder?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Does not that apply to almost anything?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: What does the hon. member mean by anything?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: If I give a man four receipts for 10s. each, I have not to affix a duty stamp, but if I give a receipt for the full amount of £2, I have to affix a stamp.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: That is an entirely different proposition, and to show that it is different, I will carry the argument further. If I give a man a receipt for £20, I have to affix a duty stamp of 1d., but if the man pays me £1 per month for 20 months I have to affix 20 penny stamps. Some people, when short of ammunition, will put up any argument.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I notice that that is what you are doing.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I have plenty of ammunition left yet. Clause 12 is a penalty clause and constitutes the most iniquitous provision I have seen in any Bill that has been brought before the House. An association of people have combined to get an Act of Parliament, if they can—I hope they will not—and they propose to give the board the right to deal with a man after he has been dealt with by the court. The man to be dealt with in those circumstances would be a registered builder, not an unregistered builder. He would be a man who had been admitted as one of the elect. He has done something in the nature of a misdemeanour and has been punished for it. Then the board, like the Barristers' Board who strike people off the roll, propose to take a hand. They are going to keep, not a black book, but a white book. Unless a man's name appears in the white book, he cannot carry on as a registered builder. The board may inflict any penalty they like. They may debar a builder from undertaking building operations again for six months, 20 years, or for life. It has been said that this Bill

is designed to protect the public. A builder whose registration has been cancelled would be a man who had passed an examination, since he had been a registered builder. After his conviction for some offence, he is to be prevented from carrying on his occupation as a builder. He could start as a butcher, a baker or a grocer, or in any such line of business about which he knew nothing, but he would be debarred from continuing in the occupation for which he was qualified.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: There are plenty of other callings in which he could not engage. He could not start as a plumber or a dentist.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I said that he could engage in any other business. The hon. member wishes to put words into my mouth. After entering into some other business, the man would have an opportunity, if he felt so inclined, to resort to practices that were unfair. That, however, would not worry the registered builders, so long as they could keep him out of their ranks. The man whose registration had been cancelled would either have to engage in some occupation about which he knew nothing, or starve. We are asked to pass a Bill to give the board that power. I consider it a most unfair proposal. Let me call attention to the constitution of the board to be appointed under the Bill. It is proposed to have a Mussolini, a one-man board who can do anything he likes.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Where do you get that?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: From the Bill. Paragraph (c) of Clause 5 reads—

The board shall consist of three members, namely, the president of the Royal Institute of Architects, the Principal Architect (Government), who shall be chairman, and a representative appointed by Master Builders and Contractors' Association.

Two members are to form a quorum and the chairman is to have a casting vote. There will be two members on the board and the chairman will have two votes, consequently it will be a one-man board. If a Mussolini happens to be appointed to the position, all he has to do is to say, "This man must go out." We are asked to pass a Bill containing a provision of that kind.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It would not be the first time that had been done.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: It has not been done yet. Let me direct attention to another matter. Some people will be exempt

from registration, amongst them metallurgists and surveyors. If tenders were called for a new town hall, what would a metallurgist or surveyor know about the constructional work? Yet such men would be admitted simply because they belonged to one of the societies whose members are to be granted exemption. The building trade is at present protected by municipal and road board authorities, who control the erection of buildings in their respective districts. Nobody may erect a building in any such district unless he submits a plan, which has to receive approval. If the builders do not do their job, it is not because machinery is lacking to compel them to do it. The Bill seeks to get a certain class of people registered and to give them power to keep others out. I maintain that the measure will not achieve the object claimed for it. We have been told that the Bill will improve conditions for apprentices, but I fail to see how apprentices can be affected in any way. No greater volume of building would be done as a result of the activities of the board, but certainly more expense would be involved and more inspections would be necessary, and there would be no guarantee that people would get better buildings. At first sight the fees proposed to be charged do not appear to be very high, but let me point out that the board will sit in the metropolitan area. If a man who is in the country wishes to come to town with the object of eventually becoming a master builder, it will cost him £10 or £15 to do so, because one cannot come to the city, pay board and lodging and an examination fee, without incurring that expenditure. The cost naturally will be passed on to the public.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: There is loss of time also.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Yes, and loss of time as well. I cannot see anything in the Bill to recommend it. If it would do what was claimed for it, I would give it my support, but there are clauses in it with which I do not agree. As I pointed out at the outset, it is not possible to make a man honest by Act of Parliament, and with the introduction of a measure of this kind, builders would just be harassed. If one wants to get work done in the cheap-est way—

Hon. G. Fraser: In a cheap and nasty way.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Not at all. If one wants work done cheaply he calls for tenders. Master builders to-day tender for contracts and those who are calling for tenders are not obliged to accept the lowest tender. The Bill has been introduced for the protection of the master builders themselves and not for the protection of the public. Its objective is to provide a close preserve.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It was introduced for the protection of the industry.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Not at all. As I have pointed out, the builders who are not registered can go on to any job of a value up to £300, and if there were a job worth £1,000 two or three of them could take it and split it up. The whole thing is absurd and I intend to oppose the Bill.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [7.50]: When the Bill was before another place last session I was approached and told that it was an innocent little measure and was going to afford protection to everybody. I was asked then whether I would support it. My reply was that I wanted to see the Bill before I pledged myself. Having examined it, I cannot see that anyone is going to derive benefit under it except the Master Builders' Association and those associated with them. No one else will reap any benefit from it. If anyone is to derive a benefit, from whom will they get it? From the public of course. When you get a combination of capital and labour, one naturally becomes suspicious.

Hon. G. Fraser: You then get peace in industry.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: At a price. We got peace in industry on the goldfields! Peace in industry does not apply to this Bill. It may be peace amongst the Builders' Association who have been collaborating for the past 18 months, but if we pass the Bill there will be trouble with the public. I ask myself what property owner, be he small or large, will benefit as a result of the passing of such legislation? The Bill will not get rid of the jerry-builders. As a matter of fact they are brought in on the ground floor. There are all sorts of contractors and all sorts of architects and it becomes the duty of he who is providing the money to have a look at what is going on and to see whether he is getting that for which he



is paying. If he is not sufficiently interested, I do not know that it is the business of this House to protect him. I could take hon. members within half a mile of this House and show them a residence the plans and specifications of which were prepared by a leading firm of architects, and the building erected by one of the best contractors. When the foundations were in, the owner had a look at them and said, "I had this house designed so that it would stand on the level of the street. Now it is below the level of the street." Can we legislate against that? No. And that building was in the hands of a recognised builder, not a jerry-builder, and the plans had been prepared by a leading firm of architects! The builder was one of those heaven-born gentlemen we have heard so much about to-night. Yet we get that result. This little Bill has turned out to be loaded, and I congratulate Mr. Mann on the way in which he handled it earlier in the evening. He referred to a meeting of the Builders' Association and an excellent dinner they had, which dinner, I suppose someone would have to pay for later. After the dinner the builders began to talk. It was said that the fervent hope was expressed that the Bill now before the Legislative Council would have a speedy passage. I agree entirely with that; I think it will have a speedy passage. It is desired to have preference to unionists and that piece work shall be cut out. Apparently they want the man with the money to pay. I have yet to learn that the best tradesmen are unionists. Unionists are made to join up to take advantage of an award of the Arbitration Court, and if we like to follow out the procedure to its logical conclusion we find that the good men carry the inferior men all the time. The good men can earn more than the inferior men, but the inferior men make the pace, and the best men will not do more than the inferior men do because both get the same pay. Now it is desired to introduce that into the building trade. I do not propose to say any more on the subject. The Bill in my opinion, instead of being an innocent little affair, is quite dangerous and should have a speedy passage as was suggested at the dinner to which Mr. Mann referred. I have no more to say except to repeat that if it got rid of the jerry-builder there might be some justification for its introduction, but it provides for the registration of

the jerry-builder for the rest of his natural life. I oppose the second reading.

## **BILL—CREMATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Assembly's Message.*

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

## **BILL—REDUCTION OF RENTS ACT CONTINUANCE.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 11th September.

### **HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [7.58]:**

This is one of the emergency Bills that was introduced in the period when the depression first made itself felt. But I think it is one that we could very well decline to renew. I have frequently come across anomalies and instances of hardship to those who have leased premises. Because of the improved position of the tenants those who have leased premises have not been able to take advantage of the improved conditions because of the Act. I do not think that was the intention of Parliament when it passed the original measure, and although by discontinuing it now we might work certain hardships, I think we should readily say that the Act should go into the limbo of the past. A number of these financial emergency measures probably will not be continued very much longer, for we are told on all hands that things have greatly improved. Unfortunately in my province some of the sections of the community still find it difficult to see daylight. But where these tenancies have been taken up, mostly in larger centres, undoubtedly those who have invested their savings in certain properties should be given opportunity to handle those properties themselves. I think they are prepared to meet the conditions of to-day. I have heard people claiming that it is impossible for them to get sufficient income to live upon from their tenancies, whereas the tenants themselves are taking full advantage of the measure before us. I therefore feel it is our duty to those owners of properties to relieve them of the trouble they have been suffering under in recent years. I do not know of any cases where material hardship

would be imposed by our discontinuing the Act which it is the purpose of the Bill to continue. Therefore I will vote against the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. C. F. BAXTER** (East) [8.3]: This is one of the measures which were placed on the statute-book when a few years ago we found that the financial position was in a state of chaos. At that time it was very necessary to put into operation the Acts comprising the financial emergency measures, otherwise there would have been very serious consequences. In 1931 things were very bad indeed. There was very little loan money for the Government, and many private people had their capital frozen to such an extent that business generally became very bad. It was one of the worst periods in the history of the State. Since that time, especially during the last few years, the financial position has improved, at all events in the sense that there is now more than double the amount of loan money available to the Government. Borrowing from the Loan Council has been freely exercised, all public utilities have increased their returns to the Treasury, taxation has yielded a colossal fund—one tax has increased from £200,000 to £600,000—and with all this additional money in circulation the conditions generally have greatly improved. I do not wish to be misunderstood; I do not wish members to think that I am saying we have turned the corner. Because we have not, and neither shall we do so until such time as the value of our primary products has greatly appreciated. We must remember that the principal avenue for us to look to is that represented by our exports, because our primary industries are responsible for 95 or 96 per cent. of our total exports. Until recently the return from almost every avenue of primary production has been very small indeed, and scarcely one of them has been paying its way. During the last year or two timber has shown a tremendous improvement, but that is only one industry. Gold, of course, has been a great standby, the wool position has considerably improved, and the outlook for wheat is growing brighter, while butter prices have improved together with the prices of other products. Still, until there is a vast improvement we cannot say we are on the road to prosperity. However, that does not affect this measure. There is a lot of money in circulation and

conditions have improved to such an extent that there is no longer any need for this measure. Moreover, we should as soon as possible get rid of restrictive legislation which is interfering with the commercial life of the people. Only last week I remarked that Parliament is frequently engaged on the framing of restrictive legislation, restricting the efforts of the people and making it more difficult to carry on the commercial activities of the State. This measure has certainly been a restriction. But on the other hand it has been a godsend. Still, from my experience of late I consider it is of no use at present, and if it is not of any value, why keep it on the statute-book? There have been cases of great hardship, and there may be a few people still suffering, but things have so improved that they should not be suffering any longer. Many people in the evening of life who have saved a little money and put it into property and are looking for a return to live upon, have been placed in a well-nigh impossible position, some of them, including widows with families to rear, getting scarcely enough to live upon. If there are still any such cases, of course they should be relieved. But generally speaking things have gradually improved, and for loans there is now plenty of money available, so I feel there is no longer any real need for this measure, notwithstanding that when, some years ago, I advocated that it should be placed on the statute-book I felt I was doing right. Now, however, the time has arrived when the position is so improved that we can remove the Act which this Bill represents, and leave people to carry on their commercial life in their own way. I intend to vote against the second reading.

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

#### **BILL—TENANTS, PURCHASERS AND MORTGAGORS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.**

##### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 11th September.

**HON. H. SEDDON** (North-East) [8.11]: The intentions of the Government as to these financial emergency measures seem to be obscure. When the Premier was delivering his Budget speech the other day

he indicated that it was the intention of the Government entirely to abolish the emergency cuts. The Act covering those reductions in salaries, wages and pensions also contains other sections dealing with, for instance, the reduction of interest. Seeing that the Government intend to abolish the salary cuts, I think they might have given us some indication as to what they intend to do with the financial portion of the same Act. Mr. Angelo the other night indicated what was really stated when the emergency legislation was placed on the statute-book, namely, that the proposed sacrifice would extend to all sections of the community, but would be exercised only while absolutely necessary. The intention at that time certainly was that the whole of the emergency legislation would be repealed as soon as possible. Now we have arrived at the position that the Government have introduced in this House three Bills to continue three of the emergency Acts, namely, the Reduction of Rents Act, the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act, and the Tenants, Purchasers and Mortgagees' Relief Act. All three of them are really part of the emergency legislation. By the introduction of those three Bills the Government have indicated that they are prepared to continue the taxation as it touches landlords and mortgagees, but are not prepared to continue it as against salary and wage earners. To that extent, therefore, they are not carrying out their intention in regard to the whole group of emergency legislation.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That was called the sacrifice.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes, it was declared that the sacrifice would be spread over the whole of the community. During the last few years some of the legislation has been lightened as against certain of those who have been bearing the sacrifice, but during that time the Government have made no attempt to reduce the sacrifice of those persons who come under the three Bills I have mentioned. The time has come when we should ask the Government to give us some idea why a portion of this legislation should be continued and the rest abolished. With regard to this Bill we are justified in asking pertinently why it has been brought before us. It was introduced in another place. The discussion was limited

to two short speeches. The only information given to members was given by the Minister in charge of the Bill, when he said that in 1935 something like 35 protection orders had been issued. To ascertain the position clearly, and find out how far this legislation operated at present, I asked the Minister certain questions. My object was to ascertain how far the protection orders and relief orders had been made use of during the years of the depression, and how many orders were in force at present. The answers to the question were certainly a revelation. This Bill was introduced and subsequently placed on the statute-book in 1930. It was brought down by the previous Government. At the time I considered they were side-stepping a certain number of their responsibilities, and placing upon the shoulders of a section of the community the burden of the depression. The man who had placed his savings in a small house was obliged to carry his unemployed neighbour for three months, rent free. The effect of that legislation has been that many thrifty persons who should have received and were entitled to demand the encouragement and assistance of the Government, were carrying a burden which should have been shouldered by the State. These people found themselves in the unfortunate position that their life savings were locked up in their houses. The houses were occupied by people who were out of work, and therefore unable to pay any rent. The house-owners had to carry not only the unemployed tenants but also suffer the loss of income. Further than that, they were unable to get any sustenance or relief, neither were they able to draw any old-age pension, if they were old enough to do so, because the possession of property placed them outside the purview of the Old Age Pensions Act.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: They were due for taxation, too.

Hon. H. SEDDON: These people were carrying a burden which really belonged to the Government. There are two kinds of orders referred to in the Bill. There is the protection order which protects the tenant who is out of work and unable to pay rent, for three months. At the end of that period he can again apply to the court, and, if the magistrate thinks the circumstances justify it, he can give a further extension not ex-

ceeding three months. The Act has been on the statute-book for five years. The other kind of order, known as the relief order, was given to the man who was purchasing his property, or over whose property there was a mortgage. The man who is unable to meet his obligations because of unemployment can apply to the court, and can obtain relief from the payment of interest or any further instalments on the property he is purchasing during the period for which the relief order is in operation. Those people were fully entitled to protection. They were doing their best to provide homes for themselves and their families. The duty of providing for the tenant was that of the Government. They should have seen to it that employment was provided for these people so that they might be able to meet their interest or rent, and their requirements in the way of food. The answer to my question disclosed the fact that the number of protection orders given to tenants in 1931 was 468. In 1932, the number had dropped to 116, about a fourth. In 1933, the number had dropped still further to 71, and in 1934, the number of protection orders was 18. In 1935, the total number of protection orders given to tenants suffering from loss of employment was ten. Under Section 13 of the Act, protection orders were issued in the case of those who were purchasing their homes, or were persons who had mortgages the interest on which they could not meet. There were only four such orders issued, and they were all made in 1931. According to the answers given to my questions, no such orders have since been made. There are only two protection orders in force at present. This means that only a few persons are claiming protection under the Act on account of unemployment. I should like to know why the Government consider this particular Act should remain in force when the figures indicate that very little advantage has been taken of it.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The Government have improved the conditions of the workers to such an extent that the number of orders has been reduced.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The hon. member may have it that way if he likes. The Act is practically inoperative. Why do the Government consider it necessary to retain it on the statute-book seeing that they are abolishing other sections of the emergency legisla-

tion? There are one or two features in connection with the Act that are undesirable. Unfortunately all tenants are not alike. Some are decent and honest, and try to look after the properties in which they are dwelling. There are others who are the reverse. I refer to the class of people who take full advantage of legislation of this kind. Frequently agents and owners are put to considerable expense because they have found themselves saddled with tenants who imposed upon them and knocked the properties about. That is an undesirable state of affairs, and one which should not be tolerated any longer. I should like to hear from the Minister why the Government are seeking to perpetuate this measure, whatever they may have to say about the others. I know of the case of a tenant who went into a house and was there for about six months. After three months, the property was handed over to an agent, who was asked to do his best to get the rent paid up to date. He was, however, unable to collect any rent from the tenant, notwithstanding that something like £20 a week was being paid out in wages in that house during the whole time. When the tenant was put out of the house by legal process, it was found that he had so greatly damaged the place that an expenditure of £50 or £60 had to be incurred to make it habitable for another tenant.

The Honorary Minister: The landlord had his remedy. That case was not affected by this legislation.

Hon. H. SEDDON: No, but the tenant was typical of the class of tenant that takes full advantage of this type of legislation.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What if the landlord puts up the rent 100 per cent.?

Hon. H. SEDDON: In this case the landlord did not receive a penny.

The Honorary Minister: That has nothing to do with the Bill.

Hon. H. SEDDON: This tenant was renting the house at a figure considerably less than the average ruling rate for that class of house, and that is how he knocked it about. There are people who pass from house to house and do so much damage during their tenancies that the owners can scarcely make it up during the ensuing 12 months.

The Honorary Minister: I think you are grossly exaggerating the position.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I could show the Honorary Minister the accounts handed in for

repairs due to the damage done by the tenant.

The Honorary Minister: Such a man does not come under the Act.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Tenants like that are numerous. They are the people who take full advantage of every opportunity that comes their way, and of any legislation of this kind that is put on the statute-book.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They could not get protection under this Act.

Hon. H. SEDDON: They do get protection, and take every advantage of any loophole in the law to obtain a house rent free, and to avoid paying any rent whatever if they can possibly do so.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What did the landlord charge the tenant per week? I suppose he charged as much as he could get.

Hon. H. SEDDON: In this case the rent charged was lower than the average rent charged for the same class of house on the goldfields. The tenant was getting a good deal, and this is how he repaid the consideration extended to him. I ask the Honorary Minister to justify the extension of this legislation for a further term. The figures given to me indicate that the law is a dead letter. It should not have been introduced in view of the figures that were available to the Government, but were not disclosed to members of either House until the answers were given to a direct question put by me in this House.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [8.28]: Perhaps I should not have risen except for the remarks of the last speaker who raised the point as to the necessity for this legislation. He has asked for a reply from the Honorary Minister. I do not know what is in the Minister's mind, but I will tell the House what is in my mind. The answers to the question asked by Mr. Seddon prove that this law is a dead letter. It has outlived its usefulness. To use an ordinary, everyday expression, the Act is as dead as Julius Caesar. What was the necessity for bringing down the Bill? We all know the Act is a dead letter and that it is inoperative, and the Government know that too. We also know that ten of our number in this House are going to the country in March next. It is evident that the Government want to place upon us the responsibility of putting out this Bill so that they can bring it up against us on the hustings. I am going

to vote for the second reading in order to defeat the objects they have in view.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 8.30 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Wednesday, 25th September, 1935.*

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

### QUESTION—ELECTORAL, ASSEMBLY ROLLS.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Is it intended to print the Legislative Assembly electoral rolls in the near future? 2, If so, will he state when the new rolls will be available?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: 1, Yes. 2, During October and early in November.

### QUESTION—WAR SERVICE HOMES.

Mr. CLOTHIER asked the Treasurer: 1, What is the annual premium for insuring a dwelling valued at £500 under the War Service Homes Insurance Scheme? 2, What is the approximate annual premium for insuring a State worker's home of the same value? 3, What were the additional risks carried by the War Service Homes Scheme, and the additional advantages of their policy com-