

work on the Labour Bureau and that will reduce the position to a state of chaos. The employers in that event will probably have to form an organisation for their own protection so as to cater for their own interests with regard to labour. They know that they cannot secure any satisfactory service from the bureau because of the list that has to be followed. Should the officials of the Labour Bureau depart from that list in making engagements, they are soon brought to book and have to follow the list assiduously.

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 7th December, 1933.

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

QUESTION—SHARK BAY, NAVIGATION.

Mr. WISE asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary: 1, Will he give consideration to replacing the costly lighted buoys used in Shark Bay, by installing permanent dolphins, which ultimately would be cheaper and at all time more suitable to the conditions prevailing? 2, Is he aware that grave doubts exist locally that the engineers' soundings of the approaches to the jetty at

Carnarvon are correct, inasmuch as the lead-line passes through a few feet of loose mud on to the hard bottom? 3, Is he aware that this loose mud, in interfering with the majority of vessels, is likely to cause a serious accident? 4, Will consideration be given to sending a dredge to assist in installing dolphins at Shark Bay, which dredge subsequently could be used to deepen the approaches to the jetty-end at Carnarvon.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: 1, The construction of dolphins is a very costly work, but the proposal will be taken up with the Public Works Department. 2, The last soundings of the water at the end of the Carnarvon jetty were taken by Mr. Stanley about six years ago. These then showed sufficient water satisfactorily to berth coastal vessels. The matter of fresh soundings will be taken up with the Public Works Department. 3, No, but some masters have made comments on the difficulty of approach. 4, If any work be decided upon, the best method of carrying out same would be considered by the Public Works Department.

QUESTION—OLD MEN'S HOME.

Hon. N. KEENAN asked the Minister for Health: 1, Were pensioners, residing at the Old Men's Home during last year, ended 30th June, 1933, charged a sum of twelve shillings and sixpence per head per week? 2, Did such charge exceed the actual cost per head per week? 3, If so, by how much? 4, Was such excess applied to meet the general expenses of the establishment? 5, Is food supplied free to any members of the staff? 6, Is the cost of such food included in the general expenses of the establishment? 7, Are patients sent from the public hospital to the hospital situate at the Old Men's Home for recuperation? 8, Do such patients receive a more expensive dietary than pensioners residing in the Old Men's Home? 9, Is the increased cost of such dietary included in the general expenses of the establishment? 10, Will he favourably consider an improvement in the dietary at present supplied to pensioners residing at the Old Men's Home at a cost representing the excess of the present charge over the actual cost per head for maintenance of each pensioner?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: 1, No; but in respect of most pensioners the pension authority pays the home direct a

sum of 12s. 6d. per week as maintenance money. Previous to the recent decrease in the rate of pension this payment was 15s. 1d. per week. 2, The actual cost of maintaining the home last financial year was 11s. 6d. per head per week, exclusive of expenditure on buildings or machinery, or on repairs or renovations to such. 3, At present the boarding allowance exceeds the actual cost of maintenance by 1s. per week; last financial year the allowance fell short of the cost by 3d. per week. 4, Yes; nevertheless the net cost of maintaining the home for the last financial year was £5,015. 5, No; except the female nursing staff, three in number. 6, Yes, as limited by the answer to No. 5. 7, No; from time to time chronic cases are transferred from hospitals to the home. 8, No. 9, Answered by No. 8. 10, All inmates of the home must be treated alike. There can be no differentiation in favour of those who can, and do, pay for their maintenance, or of pensioners in regard to whom maintenance money is paid by the Pensions Department.

QUESTION—CHILDREN'S COURT PENALTIES.

Miss HOLMAN asked the Minister for Justice, 1, Has the report of the proceedings in the Children's Court, published in the "West Australian" of 18th November, been brought under his notice? 2, Has he the power to review the penalties imposed by this court? 3, If so, will he exercise that power in the two following cases mentioned in the newspaper report, particularly in the second instance:—(a) Imprisonment for six months, for an offence against a boy aged 14 years, penalty imposed on the accused, a man aged 23; (b) release on bond to be of good behaviour for two years, being the penalty imposed on an accused man, aged 54 years, for an unlawful assault on a little girl of eight years? 4, Will he call for a report on both cases and make it available to members?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: 1, No. 2, No. 3, See answer to No. 2. 4, No. Decision (a) was in accordance with Section 322 of the Criminal Code under which the charge was laid. Decision (b) was in accordance with the practice laid down in Section 669 (b) of the Code, but was not as described in the newspaper. The defendant was not released on bond to be of good be-

haviour but on bond to come up for judgment when called upon and to be of good behaviour.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Premier, so much of the Standing Orders were suspended as to enable the second reading of the Bill to be moved at the same sitting.

First Reading.

Bill introduced by the Minister for Works and read a first time.

As to Second Reading.

On motion by the Minister for Works, the second reading was deferred till a later stage of the sitting.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Purchasers' Protection.

2, Loan, £3,946,000.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—FARMERS' DEBTS ADJUSTMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 4 of the principal Act:

Mr. FERGUSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 12 the word "three" be struck out and "two" inserted in lieu.

The clause provides that a receiver carrying on the business of a farmer shall receive 3 per cent. of the proceeds in any year. As I indicated on the second reading, the only section of the community making any profit out of the unfortunate farmer compelled to seek protection under this legislation are those people administering his estate, the receiver being the only man who shows a profit on the transaction. We know that certain receivers have a number of farmers' estates to administer, and the general opinion amongst the farmers who have sought the

protection of the Act is that the receivers are on a pretty good wicket. Their remuneration varies in accordance with the size of the estate and of the income derived from the estate. The Act provides that after receiving £10 10s. in the first year, the receiver shall get up to 3 per cent. of the income of the farmer in each year, with a maximum of £30. It seems to me that maximum is all right, and where the estate is a large one the receiver may earn his £30. But where the estate is a small one, the 3 per cent. is too high, and should be reduced. In respect of an estate the receipts from which are, say, £500 per annum, the receiver getting 3 per cent. is in receipt of £15 from that estate. If the receipts amounted to £1,000, he would get £30 per annum. That may be all right in the case of an exclusively wheat farmer, for wheat prices being particularly low, the farm would have to be a very large one to enable the receiver to get more than the maximum of £30. But the price of wool is on the increase, and it is quite likely that a good many of the farmers receiving protection under this legislation will be embarking more in sheep in the near future than they have done in the past. Moreover, in point of income from wool and stock the receiver does practically nothing, so in my opinion he is not entitled to receive very much remuneration as the result of the activities of the farmer in sheep and wool. A receiver in charge of a number of farms would be on a pretty good wicket if he received 2 per cent. instead of 3 per cent., as provided in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the Committee will not accept this amendment. Under the Act the receiver is entitled to get £10 10s. plus 3 per cent., but under the Bill he is to receive the £10 10s. or the 3 per cent. That is a very substantial reduction.

Mr. Ferguson: Only in the first year does he get that £10 10s.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But last year 500 farmers came under the legislation, and so it gave the receivers in the aggregate £5,000 plus 3 per cent. The Bill provides that in no case shall a receiver get more than £30 in any one year.

Mr. Ferguson: On a small estate, it is too large.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have effected a distinct alteration, the Bill reduc-

ing considerably the provision made for the receivers. I am sure the previous Government did not intend that the receiver should receive £10 10s. plus 3 per cent.; but the receivers went to the Chief Justice and got an order directing that they should receive £10 10s. plus 3 per cent.

Mr. Latham: The Chief Justice said they could make that contract if they desired, and that we could not stop them. Now, by the Bill, the Minister has stopped them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have had a deputation of receivers to-day protesting against the Bill. I told them they certainly could not get £10 10s. plus 3 per cent.

Mr. Thorn: Did the receivers actually collect it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. They may have collected more. They were able to collect more owing to an understanding with the debtor and the creditors; but this Bill will stop that. The member for Toodyay said that wool-growing is becoming profitable and that the wool-growers will be receiving a bigger income, which will result in the receivers having to do more work. That is admitted. The Committee should remember, however, that the Bill is for the dual purpose of helping the wool-grower and the wheat-grower. I regret to say that occasionally I have discovered that the crop which has been put in has been used to fatten sheep. In the hon. member's own electorate, one of his constituents, not in an unfavoured district, has never had more than a 5-bushel average of wheat for years past. I wondered how it was possible during all those years that he got that low average, and then it occurred to me that the sheep got the crop. The Committee will be well advised to accept this provision. We are taking away from the receivers something to which they are entitled.

Mr. Latham: The Act did not say that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Chief Justice said so.

Mr. Latham: I say he did not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Crown Law Department is my authority for making that statement.

Mr. Thorn: The receivers were getting it both ways, and they ought to have made a refund.

Mr. McDONALD: I should be sorry to see the amendment carried. As the Chief Justice's decision was conveyed to me by the people interested, I understand the re-

ceivers had the right to get 10 guineas each year, plus 3 per cent.

Mr. Latham: I would like to see the decision.

Mr. McDONALD: If that is so, the Bill represents a very considerable reduction to the receiver. Any attempt to reduce the remuneration below the basis set out in the Bill would not be in the interests of the farmers themselves, because anyone who has had experience of these matters knows that many farmers are unbusiness-like in their methods and there is a considerable amount of work involved in putting their affairs straight. The remuneration should not be fixed at too low a figure; if it is, the farmer will not get the supervision he should get. I think the old system is better, but the Minister does not agree with me. Under the old system the creditors and the debtor, subject to the approval of the director, had control of the remuneration, and the scale was elastic. Possibly sometimes too much was paid, but the remuneration should not be fixed at an amount less than that set out in the Bill. It would not be proper, or in the interests of the farmers themselves, to reduce the remuneration below 3 per cent.

Mr. LATHAM: It is provided in the regulations laid on the Table of the House that the trustees shall receive £4 4s. for holding the first meeting, £3 3s. for the annual meeting, and £2 2s for any meeting held in between. The Act provides that, in addition to such fees, the receiver shall be entitled, with the sanction of a resolution of the creditors, to retain, by way of emolument, the sum of £10 10s. It was thought at the time that that £10 10s. would be paid only for the first year. It was a fee to be paid to get the affairs of the farmer in such a state that they could readily be understood. Besides the fee of £10 10s., there was to be an annual charge limited to 3 per cent. We thought the farmer was amply protected by that provision, because the creditors would have to approve of the remuneration; even if they approved and it was thought to be unreasonable, then the matter could be referred to the director. I do not know where the Minister got his idea from, but the Chief Justice said that the farmer could contract out of the Act by paying the trustee £10 10s., plus 3 per cent., and that is what the farmer did in

some cases. The Bill certainly limits the remuneration to 3 per cent. and there is no opportunity of contracting out of the Act. As I pointed out last night, the Act is not fool-proof, and does not prevent a man from entering into such arrangements as he desires. Unfortunately, that is what happened. I do not know where the member for West Perth got his information, but it may be a little more reliable. However, if he will look at the Act, he will see that £10 10s. is mentioned, and not £10 10s. per annum. The 3 per cent. would be an annual charge. My interpretation, I think, is the right one. A remuneration of 2 per cent. would be too little. It might be sufficient for smaller estates, but provision must be made for the bigger estates. The amendment of the Minister should be the means of saving farmers a considerable amount of money.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. LATHAM: I move—

That paragraph (b) be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—(b) Subsection (5) of section four of the principal Act is hereby repealed, and the following new sub-clause inserted in lieu thereof:—

(5) The director may allow the deputy director or receiver to charge against the estate of a farmer any out-of-pocket expenses bona fide incurred by the deputy receiver or receiver in connection with some special service rendered for the protection of the assets of the farmer or in connection with the farmer's business and which expense does not in his opinion come within the category of an ordinary office expense.

Trustees have read into the existing subsection that they have the power to charge their office expenses, such as telegrams, postages and other items. Surely the fees paid to them should cover their office expenses. If a trustee has to visit a debtor's farm, then he ought to be paid extra. But trustees should do something for the 3 per cent. or the 10 guineas they are paid. I hope the Committee will agree to the new paragraph.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have no objection to the amendment. In fact, I consider it an improvement.

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

Clause 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Amendment of Section 7, principal Act; Effect of stay order:

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I move an amendment—

That to Subsection (2) of Section 7 of the principal Act, before the amendment proposed in the Bill, the following words be added:—

And provided further, that the director may at any time terminate or extend the operation of a stay order, as he shall deem expedient. On the termination of such order the farmer shall cease to be subject to this Act.

Having had a good deal to do with farmers, I am certain that the manner in which the Director has carried out his duties has contributed greatly to the success of the Act. This little additional authority to the Director will enable him to deal with rebellious or recalcitrant trustees. There is much clamour for security, and the amendment will help to provide it until there is a general rehabilitation of the industry.

The Premier: Is this amendment supported by the Primary Producers' Association?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I think so.

Mr. Latham: The trouble is, who is going to finance the farmer if the creditors do not?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I agree. The creditors may ask, who is going to finance this? If the Director is given power to extend the stay order, what will happen to the farmer? The farmer may have to sit down and starve. In the other case, the farmer can defy the Agricultural Bank and his creditors as long as the stay order subsists. I know where this amendment came from. It did not come from the hon. member's brain.

Mr. Griffiths: I spoke about it last night.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know the genesis of the amendment. It cannot help the farmer. In the farmer's own interests I cannot accept it.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—Amendment of Section 8, principal Act; Powers of receiver in regard to moneys derived from carrying on farmer's business:

Mr. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That in paragraph (d) after the word "employ," in line 4, there be inserted "a Government officer as."

If the amendment is carried, outside auditors will not be employed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have no objection to the amendment.

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

Clause 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Amendment of Section 10, principal Act; Quorum at meetings:

Mr. LATHAM: I ask the Committee to vote this clause out. It provides that a quorum shall consist of three creditors. Section 10 of the principal Act sets out that at a meeting of creditors the Director shall preside, no quorum being stipulated. Under the clause, what would be the position if there were only the Agricultural Bank and one outside creditor?

The Minister for lands: I propose to amend that.

Mr. HEGNEY. I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the clause:—"or all creditors if less than three."

If the creditors are less than three in number, all the creditors shall form a quorum.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the hon. member will withdraw his amendment because I have had one drafted that will cover the position. The effect of my amendment will be to permit of creditors being present and voting at the meeting either personally or by proxy.

Mr. Latham: I do not like proxies.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do, and the creditors have asked that it should be included in the Bill. In fact, the Chamber of Commerce asked me this morning to include it in the Bill.

The Premier: It is their concern.

Mr. Latham: But it is the farmers' concern too.

The Premier: The proxy would be exercised in accordance with instructions.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Many of the creditors could not exercise a vote if it were not for proxies.

Mr. Latham: There has been no provision for proxies to date.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Why should there not be provision for proxies?

Mr. Latham: I think it is wrong.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is done every day. Storekeepers in the country could not always be running down to town to attend meetings.

Mr. Patrick: If they could not be present, they could send representatives.

The Premier: That is what the amendment means.

Mr. Latham: It might mean that all the proxies would be given to one man.

Mr. HEGNEY: The Minister's suggestion covers what I had in mind, so I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move an amendment—

That after "creditors," in line 3, the following words be inserted:—"or all the creditors of the farmer where the creditors are less than three in number. Such creditors may be present and vote at the meeting either personally or by proxy."

Mr. LATHAM: If the Minister would include "representatives" instead of "proxy" I would agree to the amendment. I want to see a duly accredited representative sent to a meeting by the creditor, who is unable to attend personally. The manager of the Bank of New South Wales does not attend meetings: he sends a representative.

The Premier: The proxy attending a meeting would have his instruction in writing as to how to act.

Mr. LATHAM: I object to that procedure. One man might go round collecting a lot of proxies and convert the meeting into a one-man show, and he might be able to wind up the affairs of a farmer. I do not want to see that happen.

The Minister for Lands: I do not think it is so important, but I would like to hear the legal point of view.

Mr. McDONALD: I should say that the amendment was a convenient one. I recognise the difficulty mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition. I do not think any serious danger will arise. It sometimes happens in connection with companies that one man may secure a number of proxies, but I do not think that any scheme of a nefarious character against the interests of the farmer is likely to arise. The person who receives a proxy must always attend the meeting. The term "proxy" sometimes refers to a written authority and sometimes to the person who attends to represent someone else. In my opinion, the balance of convenience would be in favour of the Minister's amendment.

Mr. LATHAM: The deputy director might receive proxies of all the parties concerned. I want to see them represented

personally. I move an amendment on the amendment—

That at the end of the amendment, "proxy" be struck out, and the words "his representative" inserted in lieu.

The Minister for Lands: I have no objection to the amendment on the amendment.

Mr. MOLONEY: Anomalies may arise if the amendment be left in its present form. As it stands, it will allow one person to represent 50 people. That is not the desire of the Leader of the Opposition. I am in accord with his objective, but I cannot vote for the amendment in its present form.

Mr. SEWARD: I agree with what the Leader of the Opposition desires, but I do not think his amendment will accomplish what he contemplates. Different creditors could still appoint one person to represent them.

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

Clause 9—Amendment of Section 2 of principal Act:

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The clause embodies the most important amendment in the Bill, and proposes to extend the power of the director very considerably and increase his work to a great extent. I am afraid it will result in delay, and will have an irritating effect. It will give the director power, without consulting the creditors, to spend their money. It might be all right if the creditors were consulted first, but as the clause stands I am afraid it is dangerous. I hope the Minister will justify the proposed amendment.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: All security matters are dealt with in Perth by the various institutions concerned, and the amendment by which the power will be transferred from the receivers to the director, will facilitate any security matters that will arise. The only reason for the amendment is that it will expedite the work.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: But will it delay the business of the creditors?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not see how it can. The director is always on the spot, and the receivers come in contact with him frequently. I fail to see how the creditors could be embarrassed.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: To-day a lien must be registered within a given time, and liens have to be negotiated and arranged. That can be done by the receivers to-day, and

the people concerned can be negotiated with and then registration can be effected. At given periods there is a rush of work and I am afraid that if all the work is concentrated in the director's office, he may find difficulty in coping with it, and that may inconvenience creditors who may not be able to register their liens within the prescribed time. If the Minister has considered the point carefully, I am prepared to abide by his opinion, but I am afraid we shall be overloading the director and perhaps causing irritation to the creditors by reason of the delay through concentrating all the work in one office.

Mr. LATHAM: The receiver represents the creditor and an irresponsible man as receiver might permit the farmer to mortgage his property, thus depriving the creditors of their rights and embarrassing the farmer. A safeguard is necessary, and it is wise to have the director as that safeguard.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I am worried about liens.

Mr. LATHAM: Only liens outside of those arranged by the creditors would be involved.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Then my objection disappears.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 10—Rights of secured creditors:

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be inserted:—“(e) if the director shall be of opinion that the rate of interest chargeable by any creditor is unreasonably high, having regard to the value of the farmer's property and the condition thereof, he may reduce such rate to such figure as he shall deem to be reasonable.”

Farmers in the Merredin district have told me they are being charged 12½ per cent. interest, even at the present time. I have brought the matter under the notice of the Premier and he has explained how difficult it is to deal with cases of the kind. It would be well to provide in this measure a check against the charging of excessive interest rates.

Mr. DONEY: The member for Avon might have a better chance of succeeding with his amendment if he made it apply to unsecured creditors.

Mr. Latham: What about the Primary Producers' Bank?

Mr. DONEY: I do not know to what extent that institution might be involved, but

I cannot see any hope of succeeding if an attempt is made to interfere with the rights of secured creditors.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot accept the amendment, although on the surface it looks all right.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That would be submitting interest to arbitration, just as we submit wages to arbitration.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This legislation is designed to bring creditor and debtor together. The director is merely a figure-head administering the Act. Why place on him an obligation to reduce interest rates? If he exercised the power arbitrarily, he would have an unenviable job.

Mr. Patrick: Many more farmers would come under the Act simply to get a reduction of interest rates.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. No compulsion is contained in this legislation. The creditor can always refuse to go on, and if he adopts that attitude, the farmer has no redress.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: In many instances the creditor has already gone on because he has put his money into the venture.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but he would refuse to advance any more money. The member for Avon might mean well, but the amendment is only a species of kite-flying. The leaders of his party have too great a sense of responsibility to endorse such a proposal. The creditor could cry a halt tomorrow, and that would be the end of the farmer's career. If the creditor refused to carry on, his rights would not be destroyed. This legislation aims at encouraging voluntary co-operation, and yet the member for Avon would have the director arbitrarily, and without any knowledge of the circumstances, reducing interest rates. To include such a provision in the Bill would be particularly dangerous. Interest rates are already being reduced.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I suppose the Primary Producers' Bank were secured, but they were charging 12½ per cent. interest and are charging it to-day, and that is what has prompted the moving of the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 11—agreed to.

Clause 12—Amendment of Section 19, principal Act:

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I move an amendment—

That "five" be struck out and the word "seven" inserted in lieu.

The amendment would have the effect of extending the duration of the Act till 1937. There has been an outcry for security of tenure, and it has been repeatedly urged that some measure of security should be granted. The amendment would be a step in that direction.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the amendment will not be agreed to. Next year I hope to introduce a more comprehensive measure, and if we are going to deal with the question next year, there is no point in extending the Act for three years. An extension till 1937 would not give security of tenure.

Mr. Griffiths: It would be a gesture.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Everything depends upon the willingness of the creditor to carry on the farmer. If the creditor does not intend to carry on the farmer, this legislation will not help him. If the Act were extended for 50 years, it would not affect the farmer's security of tenure.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 13—agreed to.

New clause:

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I move:—

That the following new clause, to stand as Clause 9, be added to the Bill:—

Section 11, Subsection (2) of the principal Act is hereby amended by the insertion after the word "themselves" of the words "And provided that the farmer shall be authorised by the resolution to receive out of his moneys in the hands of the receiver, during the continuance of the stay order such annual sum, not exceeding £150 and not less than £25, as the director may from time to time determine and as the moneys in the receiver's hands may be sufficient to pay."

My proposal will give the director a certain amount of latitude and it will enable him to judge as between the man who is really in want of extra money, and possibly also the single man who may not require so much assistance. My amendments, so far, have not been received very favourably by the Minister, but I hope this will meet with a better fate.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Farmers have been fairly treated by their creditors who have not denied them a reasonable living allowance. At the present time immediately a farmer comes under a stay order the director has power to provide £30 out of the proceeds to carry the farmer on, and the creditors by resolution have power to give the farmer an additional amount.

Mr. Latham: Anything he likes.

Mr. Hegney: This new clause will restrict what may be given.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will.

Mr. Latham: Then we will agree to it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member wants to pursue a course which would destroy the confidence existing as between the farmers and their creditors. The creditors have not been unfair at all; I am told they have been quite reasonable. I prefer to leave this to the creditors for the time being. If a creditor says "We have finished here," who will take his place? Perhaps the member for Avon will.

Mr. Griffiths: The rural bank that you are going to establish.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Get the rural bank first.

Mr. Griffiths: It is money that you are short of all the time, even after all the schemes and ideas that have been brought forward.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Before we destroy the good-will existing between the creditor and the farmer, we must have some other authority to carry on the farmer. The Government have not the resources with which to do it. The hon. member's own Government would not do it.

Mr. Griffiths: What about that £100,000 your Premier spoke of?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is in the hon. member's imagination. Why did he not attempt to do something last year when the Government with which he was associated was in power?

Mr. Griffiths: I was fighting so hard here that a threat was made that I would be expelled from the House.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If he went out of the House forever he would not be missed. The House can do what it likes, but if the creditor drops the farmer, who will carry him on? Better leave well alone until we can devise some means for

carrying on the farmer. So long as the farmer's future depends on the good-will between the farmer and the creditor, we had better not interfere. The hon. member's new clause ought not to be considered.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I am amused at the attitude of the Minister for Lands in regard to what took place last year and what is occurring now. How different is his attitude! Last year the position was so tragic that the Premier wanted to default to the extent of £100,000 to assist the farmers. Now the Minister for Lands twits me because I want to help them and he asks where is the money to come from. We must do something outside of the ordinary procedure to enable the industry to continue.

Mr. Cross: Why did not you do it?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Your own Premier said he was going to do it.

Mr. Hegney: You were sitting behind a Government that should have done it.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I got out of step with my own people over it. I realised then as I realise now, the seriousness of the position.

Mr. Cross: And you did nothing.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I tried to get something done to enable the industry to be put on something like a sound footing, but the cry was then, as it is now, "We have no money." The Minister for Lands knows that the new clause will not do any harm. Therefore, what objection can there be to it? In spite of the Minister's insulting remarks to me, I am submitting the amendment in all sincerity. I have been sincere in my efforts during the last 3½ or four years in drawing attention to the position in which the farmers find themselves.

The Premier: You are the only one who has discovered it!

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Never mind about that. I have tried to convince the House that something radical will have to be done. Certain things have been outlined and I am trusting that something will result in the coming year after the Royal Commission has presented its report.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member submitted this amendment because he was asked to do so. He told us, however, that he conceived it.

Mr. Griffiths: Conceived what?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This amendment. I told the hon. member last

night that he knew nothing at all about the position of the farmers. How could he know? Does anyone take him seriously? He knows nothing at all about farming and therefore what can he be expected to know about farmers' difficulties?

Mr. Griffiths: I know a damned sight more than you do.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He came here the other night all dressed up and concluded his speech by telling us he was going to a party.

The CHAIRMAN: We are not discussing parties.

Mr. Griffiths: You are very childish; why don't you talk about something a little bigger?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member is not in the least sincere about this amendment. He has merely promised to move it. He moves anything, and will bring in any old amendment.

Mr. Griffiths: This has been considered by Country Party members, and it was arranged that it should be put up here to-day.

The Premier: But did they select you for the task?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, he is the fool of the family, I think.

Mr. Griffiths: I ask the Minister to withdraw that. He has been repeatedly insulting to me.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must withdraw.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very well, the hon. member is not the fool of the family.

The Premier: Not the only fool of the family.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member says this is propaganda. What about the Premier's policy speech? The hon. member opposed it, certainly, but I am told he signed every circular in his electorate, and God only knows what he promised. This amendment was not the Country Party's programme, it is not part of his party's programme, so where did he get it?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That statement is incorrect. Already there has been laid before the Minister for Lands almost the identical wording of this amendment. So when he states it has not come from the party, he is quite incorrect.

New clause put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	15
Noes	29

Majority against	14
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AYES.

Mr. Brockman	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Seward
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Keenan	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Latham	Mr. Thora
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Warner
Mr. North	Mr. Doney
Mr. Patrick	

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Clothier	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Collier	Mr. Needham
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Cross	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Hegney	Mr. P. C. L. Smith
Miss Holman	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Troy
Mr. Kenneally	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Welsh
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Willcock
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Wise
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Withers
Mr. Millington	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Moloney	

(Teller.)

New clause thus negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [6.8] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to amend an Act that no one seems anxious to father.

Mr. Latham: I think the whole of Australia claims some relationship with it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is not our child, and from amongst the bunch of emergency legislation this one seems to be the ugly duckling of the brood. We did not hatch it; we have inherited it; it has come down to us from our predecessors. Although it is claimed to be part of the Premiers' Plan, and although probably in some respects it is the main Bill of the Premiers' Plan, I think I shall be able to show that that contention will not altogether stand.

There are very few people in this country who to-day will say the Premiers' Plan has fulfilled what its originators claimed that it would; I do not think there are many who will support that claim. At the time when the scheme was first launched and the Bills were introduced here, the claims that were made for the Act which this Bill seeks to amend, and particularly the high falutin' titles, and the elaborate preambles that were given to some of the Bills, all served to surround that class of legislation with a pretty glamour. The Act which this Bill seeks to amend had a most elaborate preamble for which, I remember, the late Mr. Davy offered a kind of apology, and said he would not subscribe to all that was in it, but it had been agreed at the Premiers' Conference that each of the States should adopt the preamble. I do not wish to read the whole of that lengthy preamble, which takes up nearly half a page in the Bill, but part of it runs as follows:—

A Plan was agreed upon for re-establishing the financial stability of the Commonwealth and States and restoring industrial and general prosperity by means involving a common sacrifice.

If an Act of Parliament could do that, as so clearly set out in the preamble, we should be enjoying a very high state of prosperity now.

Mr. Latham: It did some good in the reduction of interest, so it is not all bad.

The Premier: Like the curate's egg, it is good in parts.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We did not oppose the whole of it and, as the Bill will show, we are not opposing the whole of it now. But the basis upon which the scheme was reared, we disagreed with at the time and disagree with now. This alteration that was to have been made, this restoration of industrial and general prosperity, was to have been brought about by a common sacrifice. The scheme itself had no arrangement for a common sacrifice. There is no question that what has been accomplished to cope with the position has been accomplished by the sacrifice of the great mass of the people. They have borne the big sacrifice that has been made, while another section of the people, instead of making sacrifices, have made huge profits by the scheme. From the very beginning we did not subscribe to that, and the Bill will show that although we do not propose to alter that preamble—

Mr. Latham: Why not drop the measure altogether?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We hope to do that.

Mr. Latham: I should be prepared to assist you.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, you would.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I was saying before the tea adjournment that very few people in the Commonwealth would claim that the Premiers' Plan had been lived up to in the manner its originators claimed. There can be no disputing the fact that the Plan has resulted in a few people building up huge banking accounts, while it has impoverished the great mass of the people. If proof of that be wanted, it is furnished by the loan market of Australia, as disclosed by the recent loan floated by the Commonwealth. There are millions of money lying idle in Australia to-day. The recent loan of £10,000,000 was subscribed in two days. At the last meeting of the Loan Council, which I attended, the Premier of New South Wales said that hardly a day passed by without people trying to press upon him hundreds of thousands of pounds. There were, he said, millions of pounds available for investment in Sydney and the Government were being urged to take the money. Any one who has examined the present situation at all knows that the associated banks are refusing at present to take money on fixed deposit, because they cannot find an outlet for it in order to pay the interest. That is the position at the moment, while there are scores of thousands of our citizens who have to exist on less than 7s. per week. Never at any period in the history of our country have there been such aggregations of capital, while at the same time there is so much poverty and degradation amongst the masses. There is no disputing the fact that the Premiers' Plan has resulted in taking the money away from the many and putting it into the hands of the few. When I was sitting on the other side of the House, and this measure was under discussion, we predicted that would occur. We could see no other result. Not only has the Premiers' Plan paralysed the spending power of the poor people, but it has resulted in the stagnation of the commerce and trade of Australia. In our judgment, there is no hope

of trade and commerce in this country reviving until such time as the people have had returned to them their purchasing power. Our Government do not hold themselves bound by the Premiers' Plan. We did not subscribe to it, although we supported some phases of it. We stood for its objective, which was the stabilisation of the finances of the Commonwealth, the balancing of the budgets throughout the Commonwealth. We voted for quite a number of phases of the Premiers' Plan, but there were other phases to which we took strong exception, the provisions of this Bill more so than any other phase. If it be argued that we are bound by the Premiers' Plan because Parliament passed the measure, I would remind members that the head and front of the Premiers' Plan, the Commonwealth Government themselves, have broken away from it. As we understand it, the Premiers' Plan was designed not only to balance the budget of the Commonwealth, but also the budgets of all the States of Australia. Australia is not solvent because the Commonwealth Government can balance their budget; on the contrary, it is upon the shoulders of the State Parliaments that the great work of developing Australia rests. If the States cannot balance their budgets, no one can.

Mr. Latham: Of course, the experts always advised that the Commonwealth Government would be the only Government which would reap any benefit from the Premiers' Plan.

The Premier: They suggested the Commonwealth Government could give some relief, but that has not been done.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yet we find in place of what was clearly seen and mentioned when the scheme was under discussion, that the State Governments have an aggregate deficit of 8½ millions. The Commonwealth Government are reducing taxation and making concessions all round. The way in which the Commonwealth Government have set about making these concessions has not made the position for the States any easier. On the contrary, the position has been made more difficult. It was within the power of the Commonwealth Government to do what would probably have led to the balancing of all the budgets throughout Australia. For instance, the States have an aggregate deficit, as I have said, of 8½ millions, yet everybody knows that the Commonwealth

Government were at great pains—they were at their wits' end—to hide the full extent of their surplus. We all know they have not yet collected their income tax for last year. It was openly stated at the last meeting of the Loan Council that the Commonwealth Government had given instructions to the taxation officials not to collect income tax.

Mr. Latham: You are not supposed to reveal what happened at that meeting.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am revealing it.

The Premier: That is what was said outside the Loan Council meeting.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no secret about what happened there. Everyone knows that the Commonwealth were at pains to hide the extent of their surplus. It was admitted that had they divulged the true figure, the surplus would have been well over £6,000,000; and if they had collected all the taxation they could have got in, the surplus would probably have been £8,000,000 or £9,000,000. The way in which the Commonwealth Government have set about adjusting their taxation and granting concessions has not helped the States one iota. For instance, the Commonwealth Government could have relinquished the sales tax, from which they collected £9,369,000; they could have reduced some of their extravagances, such as duplicating State departments and avoided useless, wasteful expenditure. If they had left to the States that field of over £9,000,000, then the States could have balanced their budgets without imposing a penny additional taxation. The same remark applies to the Federal income tax. The Commonwealth only come into the field of income tax during the war, and the measure was declared at the time to be temporary. If they had evacuated that field of taxation, £10,800,000 would have been available to the States. However, the only field of taxation which the Commonwealth Government evacuated entirely was the entertainments tax, which yielded a paltry £134,000, of which this State's share was a mere £11,000. In any case, £134,000 divided among the States is infinitesimal compared with deficits totalling 8½ millions. The Commonwealth gave a little away on the sales tax; they reduced their customs and excise revenue, they gave away some of their land tax and a little of their income tax, but they did not leave

any field to the States where the States could step in and reap a benefit the Commonwealth Government enjoyed. There was quite enough money paid in taxation throughout Australia to balance the budgets of all the States. If the Commonwealth Government had stuck loyally to the Premier's Plan, they would have recognised that the money which they collected belonged to the common pool. The Governments of Australia should set about securing an adjustment between Commonwealth and States, so that each Government might obtain some relief, instead of the Commonwealth Government reaping all the benefit, and by their action impoverishing the States.

Mr. Stubbs: Is that not a good argument to get out of Federation?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is a good argument for altering the existing state of affairs. The Commonwealth, by their actions, have undoubtedly broken away from the Premiers' Plan. They had no right to do what they did without conferring with and obtaining the consent of the other parties to the agreement. In view of that fact, how can anyone argue that our Government, or any other State Government, are bound by the Premiers' Plan, when the Commonwealth Government have repudiated it? I am told that hon. members opposite have been rather busy during the last few weeks studying up the speeches in "Hansard" that were made when we were sitting on the benches which they are occupying to-day.

Mr. Latham: I do not know who told you that.

Mr. Doney: Who told you that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am told that it is years since "Hansard" has been so diligently searched.

Mr. Doney: We can truthfully say you have been misinformed.

Mr. Stubbs: That is so.

Mr. Latham: They do pull your leg!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have seen something that has been going on. I have not been walking about the House blindly. I know hon. members opposite have been making extracts from speeches that we made when we were in Opposition, and they will tell us we are bound by our promises to the people. We are here to carry out the pledges which were given while we were on

the hustings. On account of the policy we put before the people we are in the position we hold to-day, and we are in duty bound to stand up to our undertakings. An extract from the policy speech made by the Premier at Boulder reads as follows:—

If Labour should be returned to power, the emergency legislation based on the Premier's Plan will not be re-enacted in its present form. It must be drastically altered.

After hon. members have read the Bill and listened to the explanation of it, we shall leave it to them, and to others, to say whether we are drastically altering the Act or not. First of all, while in Opposition we took strong exception to the application of the financial emergency legislation to cut wages and salaries in private employment. No doubt everyone who was a member of the last Parliament will recollect how strongly we fought against the application of that legislation outside the Government service. We held then, as we hold now, that to apply wages and salaries cuts to private enterprise was not part of the Premier's Plan. I will not weary the House by reiterating the observations we made at that time. Those hon. members who were not members of the House when that discussion took place, will find in "Hansard" lengthy extracts from the discussions which occurred when the Premier's Plan was being decided upon. I wish only to quote the remarks of our own Premier at the time, and the decision of the Premier's Conference on this particular point. To the suggestion that wages and salaries cuts should apply to private enterprise exception was taken first of all by the then Commonwealth Prime Minister, Mr. Scullin. It will be remembered that the drafting of the Bill was referred to what was known as the legal committee, which did the drafting of measures for the conference. Our then Attorney-General, the late Mr. Davy, was chairman of the committee; and he reported to the conference, on behalf of the committee, that the cut in salaries and wages should apply not only to Government services but to private employment as well. To that suggestion exception was quickly taken; every Premier and every Minister attending the conference, with the single exception of Mr. Davy himself, opposed the idea. Not one Labour or Nationalist Premier or Minister supported the idea of applying the cut outside the

Government services. Sir James Mitchell said—

I think that our court can adjust wages in July. I am of opinion that we ought not to bother about outside matters, but stick to our job.

Later on Sir James said—

I do not think we want legislation prepared on this matter.

All the other Premiers and Ministers voiced their opposition, and the resultant decision of conference was that the legal committee be not asked to prepare legislation as to wages in private employment. That decision is recorded on page 80, at the top of the second column, of the conference minutes. Thus it is not part of the Premier's Plan to apply the wages cut outside Government employment. As a matter of fact, it was done here in defiance of the Premier's Plan. It was done in opposition to the decision which I have just quoted. The Government of this State and the Parliament of this State are the only Government and the only Parliament in Australia that made the cut apply to private employment. Nowhere else was it done. No other Government suggested it, and it appears on no other Australian statute-book. We took strong exception to it when it was proposed here. We fought the suggestion night and day. And now we are taking the first opportunity of removing the provision. Hon. members will note that we are not proposing to re-enact that provision. We object fundamentally to the idea of Parliament being created a wage-fixing tribunal. It is wrong in principle. It is objectionable in every way one cares to examine it. You, Mr. Speaker, know as well as I do that in years gone by there was a fairly substantial section of the Labour movement that supported the idea of Parliament fixing wages. I fought that idea inside the movement, and I will fight it whenever I have the opportunity of doing so. The Labour movement never stood for it, although a section tried to have it adopted as our policy. It appears to us in every way unsound and objectionable. Parliament is utterly unfitted to fix wages. We have set up a tribunal for that purpose, and have clothed it with authority to examine and obtain evidence, and to canvass all the circumstances surrounding the subject. How are we equipped to deal with such a matter? What information have we? We are totally

unfitted for such a task. To bring such questions into the political arena, especially in industrial areas, would, as I and other members said when sitting opposite, introduce into the politics of this country an element that would be degrading in the extreme. The Arbitration Court says that a certain amount is to be the basic wage below which no one can be called upon to work, and then Parliament may say to the court, "You can decide what you like, but we are going to do something else. We are going to say that the basic wage shall be 10 per cent., or 20 per cent., above or below what you say it shall be." Again, if Parliament can say that the basic wage shall be lower than the Arbitration Court has decided, Parliament can also, it must be conceded, say that the basic wage shall be higher than the Arbitration Court has fixed. That means that wage-fixing would become a political football, and in many elections would be the deciding issue.

The Premier: The highest bidder would win.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. The scale of wages would be put up for sale. One party might go before the electors and say, "The basic wage is to be £4." Some other party might say, "We will give £4 5s." A third party might offer £4 10s., and again some other party £4 15s. All parties would be bidding against one another, and the highest bidder would win. I am voicing tonight a view which I voiced when on the other side of the Chamber, a view which every member of this party voiced from that side. However, in spite of our protests the provision found its way on to the statute-book. This is the first opportunity we have of removing it, and we are seizing that opportunity. What would be the position of industry in this State if Parliament were to fix wages? If in the electorates there was to be a bidding for votes by offers of higher and higher wages, what would be the position in industry? No man would think of investing money in industry here if wage-fixing were to become an issue in political contests. I cannot conceive of anything more objectionable. It may have suited some hon. members in a time of crisis to put through the principle of cutting wages, but they must concede to the other side that when a time of prosperity comes it is open to the other side to increase wages. If the principle applies one way, it

must apply the other way as well. We oppose any such view. We say that the principle should never have been adopted. Our predecessors in office were the only Government in Australia that adopted the principle. Our statute-book is the only one in this continent which carries such an objectionable law, and we hope that the House will agree to wipe it out straightaway. The next point to be considered is that, in order to be logical and consistent, we must, as a Government, apply the principle of abstention from such interference to our own wages men. Therefore the Bill provides that every wages man in the Government service is to be exempt from the principal Act. All who operate under decisions of the Arbitration Court, or have their wages fixed by industrial agreements or otherwise, all whose wages fluctuate according to cost of living figures, in accordance with which the basic wage itself fluctuates, are to be exempt from the operation of the Act. Our desire is to see the Arbitration Court function untrammelled and unfettered by political decisions.

Mr. Latham: That will not affect many of the workers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At present every worker with a margin of less than 9s. above the basic wage is outside the Act. It is only those who have a margin of 9s. or more above the basic wage who are still subject to these cuts. Most tradesmen have a margin of 24s., though there are a few, such as oxy-welders and first-class blacksmiths and first-class engine-drivers, who have a somewhat higher margin. Generally speaking, tradesmen's wages are on a 24s. margin above the basic wage. The Bill proposes, as I say, that every man whose wages are governed by Arbitration Court decisions or industrial agreements, and whose wages fluctuate with the Arbitration Court's declaration of the basic wage, shall be outside the Act altogether, and shall be left to be dealt with by the Arbitration Court. If there is a case for arguing that such men should not receive their present wages, Parliament is not the body to deal with that case. There is a properly established tribunal which can hear the case; and anybody who considers that a wage is too high should not be afraid to go before the Arbitration Court, present his evidence, and rely upon justice being meted out to him there. Next, we look round to see what can be done for the salaried section of the com-

munity. We think they are entitled to be treated equally well with the wages men. I wish to repeat that the Act which the Bill seeks to amend is not of our creation. We would never have adopted such an idea. We inherited the legislation and have had to carry on under it to a certain extent until we had time to look around and devise some other method. We propose, regarding the salaried section, that all salaried employees classified up to £293 a year—that is to say, those who received up to that amount as at the 30th June, 1930—shall be exempt from the Act and their salaries shall be adjusted according to the alterations in the cost of living. In other words, salaried officers in the Public Service who receive up to that amount, shall be treated in the same way as the wages men. They will be exempt from the financial emergency cut and the basic wage alterations will apply to them. Perhaps members know that the salaried staff in the Railway Department already have that system applied to them. There are 47 employees only in the whole of the railway service, from the Commissioner downwards, whose salaries or wages are not adjusted according to the fluctuation of the basic wage. Even men in receipt of £700 or £800 have their salaries adjusted in that way. It does not apply to other civil servants, teachers and so on, whose salaries are not subject to fluctuations in the cost-of-living figures. That principle is now to be applied throughout the service with respect to those who received salaries up to £293 as at 30th June, 1930. The amount of £293 has been selected because it defines a definite range in the staff. It includes what is known as the whole of the automatic ranges. Those receiving above £293 have been classified into definite positions. Therefore, there is a clear line of demarcation.

Mr. Latham: Will it not have the effect of bringing them down to the same level?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are making provision for that in the Bill, which contains a clause dealing with that phase. It provides that no man who is classified at a higher rate shall be brought down below a man who is classified under him. Of course, whatever figure were selected there would be sure to be some overlapping. Therefore we propose in the Bill that we extend the provisions that enable anomalies to be adjusted. We acted under the section that

gives the Minister power to adjust anomalies when we altered the position on the goldfields where a number of men were receiving less than the basic rate. We acted under those discretionary powers and placed the goldfields employees in the same relative position in regard to the basic wage as the coastal employees were in at the moment. So we propose in the Bill that discretionary power be extended to allow the Minister to adjust anomalies in cases that are really on the border line. The man in receipt of £293 a year is really the one who draws £6 a week. That is probably a little higher than the wages men, very few of whom receive that amount. We are going a little higher with the salaried men to give relief to them and we do that on account of the clear line of demarcation between the two sections. We would have liked to do something for the men on the higher ranges of salaries. For the moment, in our first year, we find it impossible to do it. Naturally we would like to repeal the whole Act. I remember well the Attorney-General of the day, the late Mr. Davy, protesting how distasteful to him were some of the provisions included in the Act. We would like to abolish it entirely, but the position is such that we cannot revolutionise the position within the short time we have been in power. I do not know whether members are disappointed, but the Bill contains no relief for members of Parliament.

Mr. Latham: What I am more concerned about is where you will get the money to enable you to give the relief you propose.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is not the hon. member's concern; it is ours.

Mr. Latham: But it is ours, too.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Our Leader is the Treasurer and he will have the greatest worry and responsibility. He will need all the assistance that can be rendered.

Mr. Stubbs: How much expenditure is likely to be involved?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is difficult to arrive at those figures with any degree of accuracy.

Mr. Latham: We should have them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Government have gone into the matter as far as they can, and the Bill embodies our proposals to Parliament. In doing that, we undertake the obligation to get through. That

is our responsibility. Some of those who are in receipt of pensions have been hit fairly hard. Some of them have had their pensions reduced to a few shillings. We propose to act under the discretionary powers with regard to them.

Mr. Latham: Was there not a limit of £280?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not for pensioners.

The Minister for Health: That was for wages men and others.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am told that some of the pensioners were placed in a very difficult situation because of the cuts in their pensions. We propose that each case shall be treated on its merits and we will take advantage of the discretionary powers that we seek. We could not devise any scheme that would provide a definite fixed system of rehabilitation. In some instances, if we fixed a definite percentage we would do injustice to some pensioners and more than justice to others. We found it impossible to do that and we ask that the position of the pensioners be adjusted under the clause I have referred to. After each case has been examined, a report will be submitted and Cabinet will arrive at a decision. The Bill also provides that once an official emerges from his present position of having the financial emergency cut applied to his salary, he will not revert to that position. Should there be a reduction in the cost of living figures that will reduce his salary below the limit fixed, he will remain outside the application of the Act. Should the cost of living go up, he is to be given the full benefit of the increased figures. Should the cost of living go down, he will not be brought under the Act again. It will be noticed that the Bill proposes to re-enact the provisions relating to the reduction of interest to mortgagors. We supported those sections when the Bill was before Parliament originally and therefore we re-enact them. I have dealt briefly with the main provisions of the Bill. The measure will be revived again next session when we shall be able to review the whole position. We ask for its re-enactment for one year and we hope the position will so improve in the meantime that we may be able to grant still further relief to those we have found it necessary to keep within the scope of the Act, much as we object to

such a law finding a place on the statute-book. When the Premier was speaking on the hustings he said that the Act would not be continued unless it was drastically amended. I do not know whether the House will regard our proposals as drastic, but I regard them as such in more ways than one. We have gone a good way, and have been generous in many directions. We are setting the whole of the wages employees free from the cuts that they have suffered and which, in our judgment, they should never have experienced. We are restoring spending power to the people that we are convinced will have a material effect in reviving the industries of the State. Our action will bring comfort and pleasure into many homes. We have lived up, by these proposals, to all the obligations that the Premier undertook on the hustings, and have given effect to the full to the promises he made to electors when they returned the Labour Party with such a substantial majority to Parliament. We can submit the Bill to the House claiming to have a clear mandate from the people to give effect to it. As a Government, it is our obligation so to control the finances that we shall be able to keep within the limit that has been set the State by the Loan Council. After very careful and earnest consideration, the Bill represents our decision and the obligation to give effect to the provisions is upon us. We submit our proposals to Parliament for endorsement. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment (No. 2).
- 2, Fire Brigades Act Amendment.
With amendments.

House adjourned at 8.16 p.m.