

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 21st October, 1942.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Motion: Commonwealth and State relationships, as to referendum proposals | 919 |
| Bills: Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation), 1A. | 927 |
| Albany Reserve Allotments, 3A., passed | 927 |
| Perth Dental Hospital Land, 3A., passed | 927 |
| Public Authorities (Postponement of Elections), 2A., Com. | 927 |
| Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment, 2B. | 934 |

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m. and read prayers.

MOTION—COMMONWEALTH AND STATE RELATIONSHIPS.

As to Referendum Proposals.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [2.20]: Before submitting my motion, I would like the assent of the House to a slight amendment. The opening paragraph reads—

That this House, firmly believing that the Federal system of government is the only just and practicable method of governing a large continent such as Australia, strenuously opposes the alteration of the Federal Constitution as proposed by the Commonwealth Government, on the following grounds:—

I ask leave to strike out all the words after "House" down to and including the word "Australia," so that the paragraph will read—

That this House strenuously opposes the alteration of the Federal Constitution as proposed by the Commonwealth Government, on the following grounds:—

The PRESIDENT: Is it the wish of the House that leave be granted? There being no dissentient voice, leave granted, and the motion is amended accordingly.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move—

1, That this House strenuously opposes the alteration of the Federal Constitution as proposed by the Commonwealth Government, on the following grounds:—

(a) That the suggested amendments are apparently not genuinely aimed at necessary alterations to the Federal Constitution but will undoubtedly have the effect of ultimately destroying the Federal system of the voluntary union of six self-governing and sovereign States.

(b) That such proposals are designed to bring about unification, camouflaged as a war necessity. They would result in a distinct breach of faith with the States, which entered into a Fed-

eral union, and would not only be destructive of the best interests of Western Australia, but of every other State of the Commonwealth.

(c) That it is impossible to govern Australia wisely and justly by a huge bureaucracy controlled from Canberra, and that the passage of such proposals would only cloud the future of Australia by bitter home rule agitations from its distant parts.

(d) That while this country is fighting for its very existence and people's minds are distracted by the war, it is in the highest degree improper to divide the nation by highly controversial questions. With the people again leading normal lives free from the stress of war emotions in a period of calm reasoning and clear thinking, a genuine verdict might be obtained.

(e) That the Commonwealth Government at present possesses ample powers to deal with all matters arising out of the war, and these powers could by arrangements with the State (if necessary) be extended for a period after the war.

2, That Western Australian members of both State and Federal Houses, and all Western Australian citizens, be urged to defeat the Federal proposals.

3, That the Premier be requested to forward this resolution to the Prime Minister and the Premiers of the other States.

I thank the House for the consideration extended to me. In moving this motion I have no desire to claim credit for being the author of the whole of the words contained therein. Some of us felt that time was slipping by and that it was desirable that some action be taken. With that object in view the Country Party members appointed a committee to prepare a motion for the consideration of both Houses. A motion similar to this is being submitted concurrently for the consideration of another place.

Hon. J. Cornell: They made a poor job of it, too!

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is a matter of opinion.

Hon. A. THOMSON: At least it is an honest attempt to do something, and that is the object behind it. I propose first of all to read an extract from a book entitled "What Every Australian Ought to Know," by Sir Edward F. Mitchell, one of the acknowledged constitutional lawyers of Australia. He deals with the Federal Constitution and the possibility of amendments, and directs attention to the fact that in the Commonwealth Constitution there are nine sections which were passed by Imperial Act. I propose to read portion of his remarks for

inclusion in "Hansard" as this may enable members to appreciate the view of this eminent constitutional authority on any suggested alteration of the Constitution.

At the commencement of this chapter are printed the first nine clauses of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, and also the first and last clauses of the Constitution, namely, Clauses 1 and 128.

I do not propose to read all those provisions because members will find them in the "Official Year Book of the Commonwealth."

Looking at the first nine clauses, it is quite clear that the Imperial Act makes a distinction between the first eight clauses and what is described in Clause 9 as the Constitution. It is also clear that the last clause of such Constitution limits the power of alteration conferred by it to altering the Constitution itself as distinguished from the first eight clauses, which are usually referred to as the covering clauses.

No power is given in the Act to alter such covering clauses. The only way in which they could be altered would be by a new Imperial statute, and having regard to the fact that the whole Act was founded upon an agreement between the existing Australian Colonies (a matter which has been judicially recognised both by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council and by the High Court), it seems obvious that no Act would be passed by the Imperial Parliament to alter such covering clauses without the unanimous consent of all the parties who agreed to the particular kind of Federal Commonwealth described in the preamble and in covering Clauses 3, 4, and 6.

The difference between the power of repealing or altering the Constitution and of such covering clauses is recognised and preserved in Clause 4 of the intended Statute of Westminster, a copy of which is set out in the Appendix. The first paragraph of such Clause 4 is as follows:—

Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to confer any power to repeal or alter the Constitution or the Constitution Act of the Commonwealth of Australia otherwise than in accordance with the law existing before the commencement of this Act.

The only law existing enabling the covering clauses of the Constitution Act to be altered was by a further Imperial Act such as I have described.

Next, a reference to Section 128 makes clear the careful way in which the federating Australian Colonies took care to protect even the Constitution itself from further change, except in the manner specified in such clause. The Constitution is part of an Imperial Act and cannot be altered unless power is given by an Imperial Act to do so. Australian legislation could not of itself do so. (See 24 C.L.R., p. 64, a passage quoted and upheld in the Privy Council, *McCawley v. The King*.) Section 128 commences with a general pro-

hibition, "This Constitution shall not be altered except in the following manner." That method of legislation effected, I think, two things. The first was to negative any possibility of Section 5 of the Colonial Laws Validity Act being held to apply to an amendment of the Constitution. The second purpose was to prohibit any method of altering the Constitution other than that described by the words "in the following manner." There is no direct affirmative power of amendment given. It is given by necessary implication, but such implication is from words prohibiting its being done except in one manner—and when it is suggested that a power of amending the Constitution so as to substitute an entirely different manner of amending, is also to be implied from such words—that appears to me to be not merely directly contrary to the intention of the "political compact of the whole of the people of Australia enacted into binding law by the Imperial Parliament," see 28 C.L.R., p. 142—but also to be without any necessary foundation—in language or reason.

In addition, by such "political compact" the States respectively protected themselves as regards certain specified matters by the last paragraph of Section 128. That puts a further difficulty in the way of inferring a power to amend so as to give the Commonwealth Parliament power to legislate as it thinks fit—and would also make it directly contrary to the political compact the States agreed to.

I think it well to quote the concluding paragraph of Section 128, which reads—

No alteration diminishing the proportionate representation of any State in either House of the Parliament, or the minimum number of representatives of a State in the House of Representatives or increasing, diminishing, or otherwise altering the limits of the State, or in any manner affecting the provisions of the Constitution in relation thereto shall become law unless the majority of the electors voting in that State approve of the proposed law.

Hon. J. Cornell: The hon. member has read only so much of Section 128 as suits his purpose. He ought to read the lot.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I do not want to read the lot. I have already indicated that I do not propose to read the whole of the Constitution because it is available in the "Year Book." I thought I would be wasting the time of the House and unnecessarily increasing the cost of printing "Hansard" if I proceeded to read the whole of the Constitution. I am dealing with the position as we view it. No doubt Mr. Cornell will contribute to the discussion. I have already stated that this is an honest attempt to do something; apparently the hon. member has not been sufficiently alive to do anything.

Hon. J. Cornell: I am alive all right, but I know who ought to have done it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: This constitutional authority continues—

Apart from those reasons, I submit that the Federal union, which would exist after such an amendment were made, would be quite different in character from the Federal union described in the covering clauses I have referred to. If that be so, then the legal position would result that one part of the Commonwealth Constitution Act was alterable—and had been altered under Section 128—and the other part was unalterable except by an Imperial statute and remained unaltered. In such a case, I would submit that the alteration which was inconsistent with the unalterable part must give way to that which is not capable of alteration.

The reasons I have submitted would apply even more strongly to any attempt at unification. Unification, whatever form it takes, must obliterate the States to the extent of making them quite different political entities to the definition of them in Clause 6 of the covering clauses. I think, also, the Commonwealth would not be a Federal Commonwealth at all after unification within the meaning of Sections 3, 4 and 6 of such covering clauses.

Section 6 is as follows:—

“The Commonwealth” shall mean the Commonwealth of Australia as established under this Act.

“The States” shall mean such of the colonies of New South Wales, New Zealand, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia, and South Australia, including the northern territory of South Australia, as for the time being are parts of the Commonwealth, and such colonies or territories as may be admitted into or established by the Commonwealth as States; and each of such parts of the Commonwealth shall be called “a State.”

“Original States” shall mean such States as are parts of the Commonwealth at its establishment.

I may refer here to the fact that a special inducement was offered to Western Australia to join the Federal union. I think also that the Commonwealth would not be a Federal Commonwealth at all after unification within the meaning of Sections 3, 4 and 6 of such covering clauses, and that is the opinion of one of the highest constitutional authorities in Australia. In view of the seriousness of the proposed referendum, I feel justified in reading those extracts, so that members may have the benefit of that expression of opinion. My own views and opinions would not, of course, carry the same weight.

In submitting the motion in both branches of the Legislature, we hope to set a snowball rolling that will grow larger and larger in opposition to the Commonwealth Government's proposal to amend the Constitution by submitting to a referendum a Bill which

it has prepared and which, in effect, will mean the abolition of State rights and State Parliaments. The Commonwealth Government is using post-war reconstruction as a bait to obtain for Canberra supreme power over the whole of the continent. The greed for power exhibited by the present Commonwealth Government bids fair to out-shine the totalitarian Nazi movement which, unfortunately, has brought the world to the dreadful plight in which it finds itself today. The Commonwealth Government already possesses ample power under the National Security Regulations, and it can extend these for any period after the war that it thinks fit. At present the Commonwealth Government has those powers for the duration of the war and 12 months thereafter. Doubtless, permission will be granted to extend the powers for a still longer period, should that be deemed advisable in the interests of the Commonwealth. The people of Australia today are compelled to submit to the rationing of their goods and to the control of industry. Men are being man-powered for war purposes. No person would desire to take such powers from the Commonwealth Government during a state of war; but, like Shylock, who wanted his pound of flesh, the Commonwealth Government desires to obtain still more power. In my opinion, it is now seeking the life-blood of the States. It is quite prepared to centre all control in Canberra. I shall quote what Dr. Evatt said in reply to a former Attorney-General of New South Wales, Sir Henry Manning. The report appears in “The West Australian” of the 16th October and is as follows:—

The Attorney General (Dr. Evatt) today replied to criticisms of the Constitution Alteration Bill, now before the Federal Parliament, by Sir Henry Manning, a former New South Wales Attorney General.

Sir Henry said that the Bill dealt in dangerous and ambiguous generalities. Constitutional amendments were sought on the ground that they were immediately necessary for post-war planning. Most of the legislation for which authority was asked, he declared, could be dealt with under existing powers.

That is my opinion, which I am sure is shared by all members of this Chamber. The report continues—

Dr. Evatt, in reply, said today that unless drastic action was taken before the war ended, hundreds of thousands of returned soldiers would be impoverished by inflated prices, racketeering and uncertain employment. The States, he emphasised, would not be destroyed.

The Commonwealth would have to delegate powers to the States and local governing bodies.

The States, therefore, are not considered by the Commonwealth Government as competent to deal with post-war reconstruction. I would have felt much happier had the Commonwealth Government, which is and always has been alive to the necessity for post-war reconstruction, asked for the co-operation of the States and said, "Prepare your schemes." I shall enumerate a number of schemes which would absorb our returned soldiers in Western Australia; but if this proposal of the Commonwealth Government is carried, it will simply mean that that Government will decide how and where the men shall be sent. I am not saying that the action of the present Government with respect to Western Australia is a special preserve of that Government. I remind members that during the 1914-18 war the then Commonwealth Treasurer (Mr. Watt) decided that, although Western Australia had, proportionately, sent more men to the Front than had any other State, the Commonwealth Government actually proposed that Western Australia should be deprived of the per capita payment in respect of its men on active service. I wish to be fair and just in my criticism of Commonwealth Governments as a whole. It is not astonishing to find the present Commonwealth Government seeking additional powers. Ever since the Commonwealth has been established Commonwealth Governments have been trying to secure additional powers. In view of our past experience of Commonwealth Governments, I ask whether the States—particularly Western Australia—can afford to take the risk of allowing this referendum to be held without exerting all efforts in their power to defeat it. I shall continue with the newspaper report, to which I have already referred—

Dr. Evatt added that it was better that the Federal Parliament rather than the High Court should decide matters which were not really legal issues.

That statement, in my opinion, should give every thinking Australian the gravest concern. Dr. Evatt, who is in charge of the Federal measure, proposes to take away from the citizens of Australia and from the States the right of appeal to the High Court. He has made it clear that the Commonwealth Government is ready to consider any sugges-

tion that might be made for the purpose of extending or improving this proposed constitutional amendment. He is calling to his aid the services of Australia's foremost constitutional lawyers. I think the position is very dangerous for Western Australia. After the last war the Commonwealth Government appointed a committee to inquire particularly into all schemes for the absorption of men that had been submitted to that Government. The chairman of the committee was Sir Charles Nathan, but I do not recall its name.

Hon. H. Seddon: Do you mean the Repatriation Committee?

Hon. A. THOMSON: No. Various schemes that had been prepared by the States were submitted for the consideration of that committee, which in due course advised the Commonwealth Government. Had the present Commonwealth Government adopted a plan of that kind, I would have admitted that it was seeking the co-operation of the States. So far as one may judge from Dr. Evatt's utterances and from the Bill itself, the proposal simply means that, so far as the rehabilitation of their men is concerned, the States will not be consulted. Up to the present, at any rate, they apparently have not been consulted. The Commonwealth Government will, therefore, have power to say what shall be done. I could suggest very excellent schemes for the repatriation of large numbers of men. Let me first deal with the North-West.

When I was in England with Mr. Miles in 1922, I attended a function with him. I heard him state that on the Ord River there was a place where, by the erection of a dam, it would be possible to irrigate an extensive area of country and settle a large number of people. The State Government for some time has been alive to that position. We know there was a desire prior to the war to establish a new area that was to be known as a Jewish settlement. That would not have cost the State one penny, but would have led to considerable development in the North, and provided wonderful opportunities for people to establish themselves and earn a good living. The scheme was an excellent one. The Wyndham Meat Works have never paid their way. Had the Jewish settlement scheme come into being, it would have provided not only avenues for the employment of large numbers of men and enabled them to earn a good living, but

would also have led to the production of baby beef that could have been supplied to the Wyndham Meat Works. That undertaking has not proved as successful as it was hoped it would be.

Hon. J. Cornell: Does the hon. member agree with the two resolutions that were carried unanimously at the Returned Soldiers' Conference to the effect that land repatriation should be a full Commonwealth responsibility?

Hon. A. THOMSON: That may be so, but it is not to say that the State should hand over to the Commonwealth the control of the situation, although the Commonwealth might well supply some of the requisite funds.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Returned Soldiers' Conference did not think so.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am dealing with the motion. If the majority of the people of the Commonwealth agree with the views expressed at that conference, no doubt they will be carried into effect. I am strongly opposed to handing over to the Commonwealth any of the powers we have today enabling us to control our own affairs. Another scheme that would lead to the employment of a large number of men is one concerning which the State Government already has a great deal of valuable data. The matter has been discussed, but was put out of court through the war and through lack of funds. I refer to the establishment of a comprehensive water supply in the Great Southern, extending to the agricultural areas.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Mr. Dumas has visited the Ord River, and stated that as much water was coming down that stream in a day as was running into the Canning Dam in a year.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The water supply scheme to which I have directed attention would undoubtedly assist in securing that part of the State against a drought, and lead to the employment of a large number of men. The third scheme I have in mind is one which has often been discussed. Many people consider that the Great Western line, which now stops at Kalgoorlie, should be extended to Fremantle. When I asked a question at the beginning of the session I was told that Government officials had estimated that the cost of establishing a broad gauge line through to Perth along the pre-

sent route would cost £5,500,000. I have for years advocated another route which would open up a wide area of country and provide essential transport for the settlers. My suggestion is that the line should branch off from Cunderdin through Corrigin, Brookton, Armadale and on to Fremantle.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think the hon. member is now dealing with something beyond the scope of the motion, which is one to oppose the extension of Commonwealth powers. I think the hon. member is going beyond the scope of the matter before the Chair.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am sorry, Mr. President. I certainly have digressed from the motion. The proposal of the Commonwealth Government is that it shall be given control in certain directions so that it may prepare a plan for post-war reconstruction. In opposition to that I mentioned certain directions that would assist in the rehabilitation of our men, and also assist in providing employment generally for our people. The estimated cost of a broad gauge line from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle is £5,500,000. Along the route I suggest, which offers no engineering difficulties, the line could easily be constructed for no more than half that sum. I feel that we can assist the Commonwealth Government very materially in its plans for reconstruction and rehabilitation, but certainly the States should have some say in the matter. On the 3rd November next the Austerity Loan campaign will be launched by the Prime Minister.

In my opinion, Mr. Curtin can be justly accused of gross inconsistency. He urges us to deny ourselves the purchase of goods that we require, because he argues that the money thus saved will mean more for the nation to spend. We all agree with that principle, and yet we find he calmly proposes to hold a referendum that will cost at least £100,000, plus what it will cost private citizens and others by way of propaganda for and against the proposals. What I think is one of the most serious aspects is that it means dividing the nation and splitting the people into two camps. To use the Prime Minister's oft-repeated statement, "Unity must be the watchword for Australia in a time of national danger." How can he on the one hand ask people to embark upon a life of austerity, and deny themselves those things that they would

otherwise purchase—we all admit that self-denial must be indulged in by every one if we are to win this war—and on the other hand deliberately set out to rob the States of their sovereign rights under the plea of a plan for post-war reconstruction?

The Prime Minister has appointed a committee to consider his Bill, which, if carried, will seriously amend the Constitution. There are to be 12 members on that committee representative of the Commonwealth Parliament and two from each of the State Parliaments. The Commonwealth Government evidently does not believe in equal representation seeing that it desires to amend the Constitution to suit its own policy. Such a conference of representatives of the Commonwealth and State Parliaments on a matter of such fatal consequence to the States is unbalanced and very unfair. It seems almost as if the Commonwealth Government has started on this game with a double-headed penny. What hope would the Premier and Leader of the Opposition have when it is definitely laid down that they cannot alter or object to any of the clauses of the Bill? On the 8th October, when the Prime Minister announced the names of the members of the committee who had been appointed, in answer to a question by Mr. Rosevear (New South Wales), the Prime Minister said the committee would consider the Bill and make suggestions for alterations and amendments, but that the form in which the Bill might become law was a matter for Parliament. I admit the Prime Minister has asked each Premier and Leader of the Opposition to attend a conference at Canberra, but what hope have they got of having accepted any suggestions they may have to offer?

Hon. J. Cornell: It is the Commonwealth Parliament that ultimately has to approve of the Bill.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If we may judge from the number of members who voted for the legislation associated with the Statute of Westminster and the overwhelming majority in favour of that measure, and if we may judge from the interjections and remarks already made by members of the Commonwealth Parliament in their comments on the proposals of the Commonwealth Government, there is little doubt that the Bill will receive the requisite support in the Legislature. We re-

call that both Mr. Spender and Sir Earle Page stated that the whole of the Australian railways should be handed over to the Commonwealth Government. Mr. Spender and Mr. Menzies, on the National side, are staunch supporters of the proposal that greater powers should be handed over to the Commonwealth Government. What hope, therefore, have we got if we submit to the deliberations of the Commonwealth Cabinet? If the Commonwealth Parliament was fair and reasonable and wanted to do the proper thing, it would follow what was done in the early stages of the proposals for Federation, namely, hold a convention at which each State would have equal representation. It may be argued that the States have equal representation on the Commonwealth committee. I point out, however, that although the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition will attend the conference on behalf of the State, they will be called upon to consider a Bill which the Government has already made up its mind to carry.

Hon. J. Cornell: It cannot carry the Bill through unless its political opponents support the measure.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The Commonwealth Government has already a majority in favour of it. We know that some of its political opponents are in favour of greater powers being given to the Commonwealth.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: This is not a party question.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am not dealing with it as a party question, but we know very well it is a party question from the point of view of the Commonwealth Government. No vote of mine will be cast in agreement with any proposal that the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition shall go to Canberra to discuss the provisions of a Bill that the Commonwealth Government has already made up its mind to introduce. To do so would be a waste of both time and energy. The Bill and nothing but the Bill is a matter of policy with the Commonwealth Government. I contend that the suggestion to invite the Premiers and Leaders of Oppositions in the various States to discuss the measure is merely a red herring drawn across the trail, because the Commonwealth Government has already made up its mind and intends to adhere to its intention to pass the legislation and delegate to State Parliaments, municipali-

ties and road boards powers that they will be called upon to shoulder. All this must make Western Australians feel extremely doubtful about the effect of such a move on this State.

I contend that no extra powers are required by the Commonwealth Government to give effect to what they desire. I am supported in that view by Sir Henry Manning and other authorities. Decidedly no additional powers are required by the Commonwealth Government to prepare plans for the rehabilitation of men and women in civil life, and certainly no amendment of the Constitution is necessary for that purpose. All that must tend to confuse the minds of the people when they go to any poll that may be taken. They know what happened after the last war, and everyone admits that possibly blunders were made during that period. In these later days I do not think some of the blunders will be repeated by the returned soldiers themselves, for they will stand up for their rights. They have every reason to do so. As for the State Government that was in power at that time, I believe Ministers honestly endeavoured to do their best for the soldiers on their return to civil life. While I claim that the Land settlement policy of the day did not afford a fair opportunity for every soldier affected, the fact remains that many of the men were not suited to rural life, while others were placed on blocks that were not as satisfactory as they might have been. I feel that the referendum proposed by the Commonwealth Government should not be permitted while Australia is at war.

A proposal to amend the Commonwealth Constitution should not even be discussed when it is possible at any time that the enemy may land on our soil. In dealing with this matter, the Federal Attorney General, Dr. Evatt, spoke a great deal about "the Four Freedoms." I want to know why it is deemed necessary to provide the Commonwealth Government with greater power than it possesses today to give effect to the "Four Freedoms" that are said to be so essential. The first he mentioned was freedom of speech and expression. We have had that privilege for hundreds of years. We have a perfect right to give expression to our views, and we certainly have freedom of speech. I hope we always shall have that freedom. Yet we find the Commonwealth

Government deems it necessary to amend the Constitution so that we may have freedom of speech and expression! Then Dr. Evatt says it is necessary to amend the Constitution so that the Commonwealth Government may do what is necessary to preserve our religious freedom! The Constitution provides for that very definitely, so there is no need to amend it on that score. I hope we shall always have religious freedom. Section 116 of the Commonwealth Constitution reads—

The Commonwealth shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious tests shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.

I hope effect is, and always has been, given to the provisions of that section.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Government is putting a few of them in gaol today.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I presume Mr. Cornell refers to Jehovah's Witnesses. As for them, I think it is scandalous that they should be permitted to go from house to house, knocking at doors and endeavouring to discuss the Bible and Jesus Christ with people. However, that is a digression for which I must apologise, Mr. President, but I was drawn from my theme by the interjection of my hon. friend. The next freedom sought was freedom from want. I am sure there is no individual throughout the whole of Western Australia that does not honestly hope that every individual in the State will be free from want. We are fortunate in that the comparatively few restrictions imposed upon us have not meant that we have had to go short of essential food supplies. I certainly cannot see that there is any necessity for the amendment of the Commonwealth Constitution to give the Government greater power to guarantee our people freedom from want. In Western Australia our laws are handled by the Government in a liberal and free manner. Should anyone find himself in serious difficulties, he can apply to the appropriate department and receive favourable consideration.

Hon. H. Seddon: Did you say that there had been no shortage of food?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes.

Hon. H. Seddon: What about potatoes?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Perhaps I should have said that no one has starved. Certainly

we may have been starved for potatoes, but there have been substitutes, and plenty of essential foodstuffs have been available.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Anyhow, that is a good vote-catching cry!

Hon. A. THOMSON: Then Dr. Evatt referred to freedom from fear. Fear of what? Our greatest fear is that the enemy may be able to put his foot on the soil of Western Australia.

Hon. J. Cornell: If he does, we shall hear no more about the referendum for a long time.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Of course, of the two evils I would prefer the less, and would be prepared to accept the referendum. God forbid that the enemy should put his foot on our soil! If he does not, it seems to be the intention of the Commonwealth Government to hold the referendum. I have been as brief as possible in submitting the motion to the House. I have no doubt that other members could have handled it better than I have, but I have submitted it honestly, with the best of intentions. In conclusion I would like to quote a statement made by the Commonwealth Treasurer, Mr. Chifley, during his Budget Speech. He said—

No selfish thought of personal comfort should divert us from the grim task that lies ahead. By vigorous self-denial everyone can play a useful part in winning the war. The Government calls upon all Australians for a maximum contribution.

It seems to me that while the Commonwealth Government is diligently handing out much advice about austerity and self-sacrifice, it is apparently not prepared to put into practice what it preaches. I would feel much happier if the Commonwealth Government did practise what it has preached. I would like it to say, "The Commonwealth Government would like to have these additional powers; but while the war is in progress, we shall not seek them. We shall proceed with our post-war plans and deal with the matter later on." What I object to is the manner in which the Commonwealth Government is telling the States what must be done. As a matter of fact, it can do that only in the Northern Territory, because that is the only part of Australia that is under the direct control of the Commonwealth Government, apart from the Federal Territory. It should seek the co-operation of the States, but it has certainly gone the wrong way about seeking that help. I have great pleasure in submitting the motion standing

in my name, and sincerely trust it will be agreed to by an overwhelming majority of members if it does not have their unanimous support.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan): I desire to thank the Minister for his courtesy in permitting me to speak, for a very few minutes only, on this motion before he exercises his very proper privilege of adjourning the discussion to a future date. I need hardly assure the Chief Secretary that I should not have asked for this concession had I not regarded the matter as being one of supreme importance. With your permission, Mr. President, I would remind members of the House that during the special series of sittings we held six or seven months ago, two matters arose which were regarded as of great importance from the point of view of the State and as having very little, if any, party significance. Those two matters were the question of uniform taxation and the preservation of our goldmining industry. Certain resolutions were then tabled and discussed; I think I was responsible for one. But all those resolutions were laid aside, with the result that others in identical form were carried by both Houses without division and practically unanimously.

Personally I regard the matter we are now discussing as being from the point of view of the ultimate interests of the future of Western Australia, of far greater importance than either of the questions to which I have alluded. It seems to me that it would be extremely unfortunate if we were not able to reach on the part of both Houses of this Parliament at least as great a measure of unanimity now as was achieved in those two instances. I do not propose to indulge in any lengthy criticism of Mr. Thomson's motion or in any argument in support of it. I trust that my friend Mr. Thomson appreciates the spirit in which I am making these remarks. I think that for the purpose of a parliamentary resolution which is intended to be circulated throughout the other Australian Parliaments, Commonwealth and State, this resolution is entirely too long and cumbersome, and that it covers matters which need not be discussed in a parliamentary resolution of this kind.

My own idea is that a resolution such as we want to have unanimous approval of,

might well be confined—I speak not dictatorily, others may have a different opinion—to two subjects, one deprecating the holding of referendums on highly controversial matters during wartime, and the other expressing the very strong feeling of the Parliament of this State against the proposals of the Commonwealth Government on the ground that they threaten to destroy the Federal character of the Commonwealth Constitution. I want to remind members that our Premier, in common with Premiers of different parties in different States, has already expressed strong opinions against the holding of this referendum, and also against the Commonwealth Government's proposals as put forward. It seems to me that it would be a very great pity indeed if we sought to pass a resolution the wording of which, in several respects, must make it extremely difficult for one of our parties, the dominant party in another place, to give it that whole-hearted support which is desirable. I do not think we can expect members of the Labour Government or members of the Labour Party whole-heartedly to endorse the charge against the Commonwealth Labour Government of insincerity, or the charge of camouflage.

Hon. J. Cornell: Or of not being genuine.

Hon. Sir. HAL COLEBATCH: Quite so. I have nothing more to say except that I think it highly desirable that we should follow the precedents we established during the special sittings of a few months ago, and that a resolution, preferably framed by the Leaders of the three Parties, should be presented which could obtain almost unanimous approval in both Houses. We are not concerned with party politics in a matter of this kind, nor with party ideals. We are concerned only with the interests of Western Australia. I do think my friends will be well-advised if they take steps which will permit of a resolution such as I have suggested, a resolution of an entirely non-party flavour, casting no reflections of insincerity or anything of that kind, but simply expressing our own rights. Such a resolution might be framed by the Leaders of the three Parties, and submitted to both Houses of this Parliament.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT (FUNDS APPROPRIATION).

Received from the Assembly, and read a first time.

BILL (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Albany Reserve Allotments.
- 2, Perth Dental Hospital Land.

Passed.

BILL—PUBLIC AUTHORITIES (POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [3.36]: Before any changes are brought about in certain respects, it is essential to pass legislation from time to time; but I maintain that hitherto it has not been found necessary to interfere so much with the Western Australian Constitution. Every day we hear speeches about the wonderful Australian democracy; but I ask, where is the Australian democracy? There can be only one kind of democracy in this country. But here we have a measure proposing to leave it in the hands of a Minister to recommend to the Government that certain elections be postponed; and not elections for local governing bodies only! We are asked to go deeper into the bureaucratic system and to get right away from democracy. The word "democracy" will require a new definition before long. One would have thought that this Bill referred to the postponement of elections for local governing bodies alone. Examination of the measure, however, shows that it deals with practically every association and body in the State. It deals with municipal councils, road boards, local boards of health, water boards, drainage boards, vermin boards, and, in fact, any committee or board of persons.

Thus a wide net is spread over all those public bodies, while it is to be left to the Minister to say what shall be done. Where do the electors come in, the people who find the money? They are not to be consulted at all. They are pushed aside, on the plea that the country is at war. We are told it would cost the Perth City Council £1,000 to put its roll in order. But that would have to be done under any circumstances; rolls must be placed in order. We as legislators have no right to take away the privileges of the people.

Hon. J. Cornell: We gave them this right.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Surely the hon. member does not maintain that after giving them the right to elect representatives, we are entitled to take advantage of the war to deprive them of that right. The Bill proposes to leave it to a Minister of the Crown to say whether or not there shall be elections. I ask again, why heap that responsibility on the shoulders of a Minister?

Hon. H. Tuckey: Is there not a provision in the Bill for a petition by electors?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes; but why should we place this Bill on the statute book at all? Where is the justification for not holding elections? Where do we find the right to dig up what we have placed on the statute book? Electors in every case should have the right to decide whether there shall be an election or not. The Bill defines "time of war" as meaning—

The period during which the Commonwealth is engaged in a war in which His Majesty is engaged and the period of six months next following the termination of such war.

I strongly object to the phrase, "time of war" being included in any Act of Parliament. The proper term to use is "hostilities."

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: What is the difference?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I will tell Mr. Dimmitt. Hostilities may cease, but the war may go on for seven or eight years longer. Termination of hostilities does not mean finishing the war.

Hon. J. Cornell: What about the word "armistice"?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: "Armistice" would amount to the same thing. This Bill will receive my strongest opposition, as will any measure brought forward with a view to taking out of the hands of the people the right to govern their own affairs and taking away the little bit of democracy left to them. I shall oppose rigidly any move to increase the bureaucratic system in this State. Let us try to hold on to the remnant of democracy we have today. Heaven knows it is small enough; we can hardly find it! In connection with these elections the Labour Party selects candidates. Is it democratic to select a man without giving a choice to the electors?

Hon. J. Cornell: I understand the Country Party has a scheme something like that.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Not in connection with the election of representatives on

municipal bodies. A number of boards and trusts will come under this Bill, the members of which are paid for their services. There is an unholy attempt to protect, as long as possible, the jobs that men hold, on the pretext that there is a war on. Many people will be very sad when the war ends. It will be a bad thing for us in the future if we allow Bills like this to go on to the statute book and permit political drift to continue. I hope the measure will be rejected.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East): To a large extent I am inclined to dislike the Bill because it interferes with the right of electors to express their opinion in the choice of representatives on local governing bodies. I am prepared to recognise that there are certain safeguards in the Bill. For instance, there is a provision that 10 per cent. of the electors may ask at any time for an election, and I understand from what appears on the notice paper that the intention is to limit the operations of the Bill to 12 months, which means that it will have to come up for consideration at the end of that time. Those two safeguards carry considerable weight with me.

However, there are one or two points that affect the position. As I have said, it is laid down that 10 per cent. of the electors may initiate a request for an election. If there is one thing that has been demonstrated in connection with elections of all kinds in Australia, it is the apathy of the general public concerning the right given them to determine who shall represent them on bodies of this description.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: You do not suggest that that is a new development?

Hon. H. SEDDON: It is a development that unfortunately has been steadily growing in Australia for many years. I am inclined to think that people will value rights of this kind only when they lose them.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. H. SEDDON: It is from that angle I approach this question. If one thing is evident today it is that we are rapidly losing our freedom.

Hon. L. Craig: Willingly, though!

Hon. H. SEDDON: I do not know whether it is altogether willingly. Very many things are being done under the guise of national security, which I do not think

would be accepted willingly if they were put to the people.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: This measure will accentuate that.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes. If there is a further fact evident to everybody it is that before this war goes much farther we shall be under a totalitarian regime, whether we like it or not.

Hon. A. Thomson: We are very near to it now.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is inevitable.

Hon. H. SEDDON: It may or may not be inevitable. The fact remains that we are rapidly approaching that condition of affairs, and I do not know that it is desirable. Although the Bill provides certain safeguards, it appears to me entirely undesirable. That comprises the whole of my objection, but I think it is an objection which should be raised and one to which the attention of the people of this country should be directed now, because it may be too late subsequently.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is so.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Later on when the people seek to raise a protest against what has been put over them, they will find that they are chained. That has occurred in Europe, and we must ensure that it does not occur in Australia. I express my disapproval of the Bill, although it contains the safeguards I have mentioned.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East): I oppose the Bill because any interference with or whittling down of the privilege extended to people of electing their representatives over certain specified periods is thoroughly bad and can be justified only in a time of dire emergency. Admittedly we are faced with the dangers inherent in a conflict with the Axis Powers, more particularly Japan, but an actual physical invasion of this continent would be necessary before we would be justified in taking away from the people the right they have to elect these local government bodies. There is provision in the Bill for 10 per cent. of the electors to petition the Minister for an election, but the point naturally arises as to who is to organise the 10 per cent. and prepare the petition.

Hon. G. B. Wood: It would cost more than an election.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: The only way it could be done as far as I can see would be by someone with ample funds to spare undertaking the task from a strong sense of public duty. Such a safeguard as that affords is not sufficient to enable us to accept this measure as it stands. I do not doubt that there would be no objection on the part of a large number of ratepayers to a continuance in office of the present representatives. It is very likely that many members of local government authorities would be elected unopposed.

Hon. L. Craig: Most of them.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: At the same time there are very few local government authorities in this State against whom there is not a measure of criticism by some section of the ratepayers, and an election provides a necessary safety valve for that sort of feeling. In bringing this measure before us the Government has overlooked that particular aspect of our system, or at any rate has not treated it with the seriousness it should receive. It is conceivable that there may be very few local authorities in connection with which there would be a marked swing-over, but the fact remains that the people—both the satisfied and the dissatisfied—are given an opportunity at present of expressing their opinion at the polls and the position is not so dire at the moment as to justify us in depriving them of that right.

There is one classical example in the metropolitan area: I refer to the Subiaco municipality. It is hardly likely that that municipality or the members of the local council would appeal to the Minister for an election to be held. They might do so, but from what I have heard it is possible they would not. Ten per cent. of the electors have to present a petition. They have to organise and petition the Minister in a case like that, and I think that is wrong. It would not be so bad in small districts where 10 per cent. would represent a couple of hundred people, but there are many areas in which 10 per cent. would represent thousands of people, and that is a very big consideration. If we pass this Bill we shall only be adding to the feeling which is prevalent today and which is helping to destroy public confidence in semi-governmental institutions. We know that there is considerable criticism today but, where there is an opportunity for elections

to be held, the majority of people have a chance to exercise their franchise and obtain the kind of local government they consider to be in the best interests of the community. Under present war conditions, as they affect this country—conditions which may continue for another five or ten years—we are not justified in agreeing to this measure.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West): I am surprised at the opposition to the measure, considering that the two Houses of Parliament, without very much discussion, agreed to extend their own lives.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Under different circumstances.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not see that at all.

Hon. V. Hamersley: The Japs were nearly on our shores.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Let the measure be brought down again this year and see how it would fare!

Hon. L. CRAIG: People may say, "It is all very well to extend your own lives; you are well paid, but when it comes to the lives of the local authorities, you hold up your hands in horror as if the suggestion to extend their lives were a crime."

Several members interjected.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The position now is probably just as serious as, if not more serious than it was last year, and I do not think the argument along those lines holds good. It has been said that people want elections; I do not believe that is so. It is contrary to all the information I have received. One has only to attend a ratepayers' meeting to see how many take advantage of the opportunity to exercise their right to criticise the local authorities.

Hon. H. L. Roche: There are no elections at a ratepayers' meeting.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member himself said that ratepayers should have an outlet for their criticism. The annual ratepayers' meeting provides an outlet, but they are not taking advantage of it.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They never do.

Hon. L. CRAIG: If ordinary people, particularly in the country areas, were consulted, it would be found that they do not want these elections.

Several members interjected.

Hon. L. CRAIG: If I may have your ear for a little while, Mr. President, instead of having to listen to so much controversy on

my right, I may be able to be heard. My voice is reasonably strong, but I cannot shout down half a dozen members! It is not as if there was no provision in the Bill for an election. From some of the previous speeches one would imagine that under no circumstances could local authority elections be held. That is not so. Ten per cent. of the electors can hold an election.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They can request the holding of an election.

Hon. L. CRAIG: If a question was serious enough, more than ten per cent. of the electors would attend a meeting of ratepayers and a petition could be signed at that meeting. I entirely agree with the amendment suggested by Sir Hal Colebatch.

Hon. G. B. Wood: I do not!

Hon. L. CRAIG: The suggestion is that where a local authority itself feels that the ratepayers want an election or itself desires an election, it can petition for an election to be held, and such election shall be held. With that amendment included there should be no objection to the Bill, which simply does away with the necessity for preparing rolls and permits those authorities that do not want an election to do without one.

Hon. A. Thomson: But they already have rolls.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, but they would have to be brought up-to-date. The secretaries of local authorities are busier today than they have ever been before.

Hon. W. R. Hall: You are right there.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am a member of a road board and there is scarcely a week goes by that the secretary is not requested to compile some return for one authority or another.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Is not that part of his job?

Hon. L. CRAIG: No. My board is one of the smallest in the State.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It should not exist.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It should; it has no loan rate.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Three road boards in that area should amalgamate. Their overheads are too high.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must ask members to allow Mr. Craig to proceed without interruption.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I was dealing with the point of extra work for secretaries. We have already had to employ one of the ratepayers in order to assist our secretary be-

cause of the extra work. We had not had to do that during the previous 20 years. That shows that the secretary has more work to do than ever before. As a matter of fact we have just had to refuse to compile returns in connection with vehicles, firearms, numbers of families for evacuation purposes, and a million and one other things that have been requested. To say that road board secretaries have not much to do at this particular time is not in accordance with facts.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Such people do not know what they are talking about.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am glad to have the hon. member's support. Two or three members who are also active members of road boards have spoken with some authority on this measure, the second reading of which I support.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East): It is my intention to oppose this Bill. The Commonwealth Government intends holding a referendum and there is no reason, therefore, why these ordinary road board elections should not continue to be held. I would not have risen to speak but for the fact that I desire to contradict a statement made yesterday by Mr. Wood when he said that the secretaries of road boards had very little to do at the present time.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Surely you do not disagree!

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Road board secretaries today are the busiest men I know of in Western Australia.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: One of them is standing for Parliament.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I can speak with knowledge of the position in the South-East Province. Whenever a patriotic committee is formed or a meeting is necessary, the road board secretary is asked to take the minutes or act as secretary in an honorary capacity. I oppose the Bill.

HON. C. B. WILLIAMS (South): We must have an understanding of what underlies this issue. I can quite appreciate that with scattered road boards it is necessary that we should endeavour to save expenditure and thus assist the State and the war effort generally. To hold one of these elections it is necessary to have electoral officers and returning officers. I support the Bill.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East): Most members have spoken on the Bill and perhaps I should not cast a silent vote. In the district I represent there are six local government bodies affected by this measure. I have spoken, I think, to fairly representative members of them and I am expressing their opinion when I support the Bill. It seems to me that the normal right of rate-payers to hold these elections has been emphasised too much. We are passing through difficult and serious times and the Minister should have power to postpone these elections if the exigencies of the day make such a course necessary. Mr. Craig pointed out how, without much hesitation, we passed a measure last year—

Hon. G. W. Miles: And are likely to pass it again.

Hon. H. L. Roche: That was last year.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN—postponing the parliamentary elections. Members stated that they voted for the Bill because times were very serious. Of course, it is when times are serious that we pass such measures. We would not consider them at other periods. I am pleased to understand from some members that their views have changed, and that they, at any rate, are satisfied that the times through which we are passing are much brighter than were those when they supported that measure. I am, however, sorry to say that I for one think their optimistic outlook is far from warranted. Although they have indicated, in spite of what might happen tomorrow or next week or next month, what they are going to do if the measure is brought forward again, I only hope that events will not so deteriorate as to cause them to alter their declared outlook. Only today I read in "The West Australian" about the war position. If one can read what these news chroniclers have written about the outlook in the Solomons and at Stalingrad, with all the implications, and remain satisfied that the position is better than it was when we passed the legislation dealing with parliamentary elections, then all I can say is that that sort of reasoning is the type that has got us into so much trouble. I have digressed a little from the Bill. The people I represent do not feel that their rights are being outraged or in any way curtailed. I support the Bill.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (in reply): I did not expect such a lengthy debate on this measure. I agree with those who have referred to the seriousness of the war position. Mr. Heenan put it aptly just now. If we can look calmly at the present situation, then we are living in a very false atmosphere. The fact of the matter is that the road board elections have been put off under the National Security Regulations, and only three objections were received from the 127 road districts in the State. Out of 21 municipalities in Western Australia, six wrote in before the Bill was introduced and advocated the postponement of elections. The Government has received three letters against it. As I said when introducing this Bill, there are three main factors. The first is the serious manpower position; the second is the difficulty of getting out the rolls, and the third is the fact that every man and woman in the State who realises his duty is already working at full pressure. We cannot afford, in my opinion, to have the peacetime holiday local authority elections. Members who have spoken against the Bill dealt lightly with the cost of preparing the rolls. The mere receiving of new names does not prepare the rolls.

As a matter of fact, the City of Perth, which meets with the same difficulty as other local authorities, has a mayoral electoral roll which consists of 26,000 names, covering 457 pages. The publishing costs amount to £815. It is necessary to have printed 25 mayoral lists, 150 mayoral rolls, and 150 rolls for each of the eight wards, making a total of 1,375 lists and rolls. It is also necessary to engage, over a period of several months, a fairly large temporary staff to carry out this task, and, in addition, extra work is imposed on the permanent staff. The £815 previously referred to is made up in the following way:—Printing, £352; compiling and checking, £463. That is a big job, and anyone acquainted with the manpower position will know that local authorities have had great difficulty in maintaining adequate office staffs.

Road board secretaries and town clerks, together with their staffs, are busier now than at any other time in our history. Members will find that town clerks, road board secretaries and members of local local governing bodies throughout the

State are working during every spare minute of the day to do something for the war effort. We cannot afford to engage in peace-time frivolities. No danger to democracy is involved in the postponement of these elections. The idea came from the local authorities themselves and the Minister is acquiescent regarding their wishes. Some time ago the Minister said that he would postpone an election if any local authority passed a resolution with that object in view. I admit that Sir Hal Colebatch's amendment will improve the Bill. We should take this measure seriously. I do not anticipate the dangers which many members predict. We are only doing what the majority of road boards and municipalities desire. After considering the crisis we are facing, we feel it is necessary to postpone these elections, with the safeguards contained in the Bill.

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

| | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|
| Ayes | .. | .. | .. | 15 |
| Noes | .. | .. | .. | 11 |

Majority for 4

AYES.

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Hon. L. B. Bolton | Hon. W. R. Hall |
| Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch | Hon. E. M. Heenan |
| Hon. J. Cornell | Hon. W. H. Kitson |
| Hon. C. R. Cornish | Hon. W. J. Mann |
| Hon. L. Craig | Hon. H. Tuckey |
| Hon. J. M. Drew | Hon. F. R. Welsh |
| Hon. F. E. Gibson | Hon. C. B. Williams |
| Hon. E. H. Gray | (Teller.) |

NOES.

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Hon. C. F. Baxter | Hon. H. V. Piesse |
| Hon. J. A. Dimmitt | Hon. H. L. Roche |
| Hon. E. H. H. Hall | Hon. A. Thomson |
| Hon. V. Hamersley | Hon. G. B. Wood |
| Hon. J. G. Hislop | Hon. H. Seddon |
| Hon. G. W. Miles | (Teller.) |

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Postponement of elections:

The **HONORARY MINISTER**: I move an amendment—

That in lines 5 to 7 of paragraph (a) of Subclause (1) the words "either for the whole or any part of the period of such time of war" be struck out, and the words "for such period not exceeding twelve calendar months" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I move an amendment—

That in line 11 of paragraph (c) of Sub-clause (1) after the word "Minister" the words "from a public authority representing the opinion of a majority of the members of such public authority or a petition" be inserted.

This would mean that the present provision for 10 per cent. of the electors to demand an election would stand and, in addition, a majority of the members of any local authority might ask for an election and be assured that an election would be held. I understand that the Minister approves of the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. member desire an absolute majority? In legislation last year, the Council made an amendment to provide for an absolute majority.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I have no objection to the insertion of the word, but it seems tautological. "A majority of the members of the board" is self-explanatory.

Hon. H. SEDDON: There is a good deal in the suggestion. A snatch vote might be taken which would be a majority of the meeting, but not a majority of the board.

The CHAIRMAN: The majority would be preserved by the quorum.

Hon. W. R. HALL: We could provide for a full meeting of the board, or a majority of the members present at a meeting. Some members of public authorities have enlisted, and a board might not be able to observe the terms of the amendment.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Apart from members being absent on military service, there might be a vacancy on the board and it might be difficult to get an absolute majority.

Hon. W. R. Hall: I want the matter clarified.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: The board with which I am associated consists of 11 members, and if six favoured an election, that would be satisfactory. The amendment provides for a majority of the members of the board.

Hon. W. R. Hall: We should provide for a majority of the members at a general meeting.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: No, a majority of the members of the local authority.

Hon. G. W. MILES: Suppose there are only six members of a road board, it would mean that four would have the right to decide that an election should be held. If the word "absolute" is inserted difficulties will undoubtedly arise. We ought to follow Sir Hal Colebatch's suggestion and not include the word "absolute."

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I oppose the amendment. Why should members of a road board anticipate the feelings of ratepayers as to whether or not an election should be held? Are the road board members first to conduct a referendum? One member may decide the issue. I am a member of a board consisting of seven members; four might be in favour of an election and three against, but the four might not represent a larger number of ratepayers than might the other three members.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I appreciate the point raised by Mr. Miles. Should that position arise, however, it would be a simple matter to get a petition signed by 10 per cent. of the ratepayers calling for an election.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I move an amendment—

That in line 12 of paragraph (c) of Sub-clause (1) the word "ten" be struck out and the word "five" inserted in lieu.

It has been said that it would be easy to get a petition signed by 10 per cent. of the ratepayers of a municipality or a road board. I challenge the statement. In some of the municipalities in the province which I represent there are 7,000 or 8,000 ratepayers on the roll and it would be extremely difficult and costly to get a petition signed by 700 or 800 of them.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I oppose the amendment, for the reason that in the province I represent there are some boards with only few ratepayers. I would prefer that a petition should be signed by 20 per cent. of the ratepayers.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I oppose the amendment. Personally, I consider 10 per cent. a reasonable provision. A deputation from a municipal council that recently waited upon me was quite content with the provision for 10 per cent.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I support the amendment. As Mr. Dimmitt said, it would be hard to obtain the signatures of 10 per cent. of the ratepayers in some huge road board districts.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Why?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Because the ratepayers are scattered all over the district. I would not care to undertake the obtaining of signatures to a petition in some of those districts. It would be difficult enough to get the signatures of five per cent. of ratepayers in the district I represent.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I oppose the amendment for the reason advanced by Mr. Tuckey. We have about 127 road boards in Western Australia.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That is beside the point.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The Chairman will call me to order, if necessary! Some of the boards have a revenue of only £1,000 or £2,000, and it would not be difficult to get a petition signed by 10 per cent. of the ratepayers.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Mr. Dimmitt seems to have designs on the lives of some of the poor people living in the country districts. In some districts there are wards with less than 20 ratepayers entitled to vote.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That should not be so.

Hon. L. CRAIG: But it is so in the North.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Speak about something you know!

Hon. L. CRAIG: If the hon. member knew as much about the North as I do, it would be well. The amendment would stultify the Bill. Better throw the Bill out altogether than bring about such an absurdity as the amendment suggests.

Amendment put and negatived.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move an amendment—

That in line 15 of paragraph (c) of Sub-clause (1) the word "local" be struck out and the word "public" inserted in lieu.

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

Clauses 4 to 6—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [4.30] in moving the second reading said: The object of this very short but important Bill is to make compulsory the quarterly adjustment of any alteration in the cost of living figures in accordance with those submitted by the Government Statistician. The Bill also provides that any person in receipt of wages and allowances in excess of £699 per year shall not be subject to the basic wage variations. The genesis of the Bill is in the recent refusal by the Arbitration Court to grant an increase in the basic wage in accordance with the variation in the cost of living figures. It will be recalled that in February last the Arbitration Court, for the first time since 1931, when by an amendment to the Act, the quarterly adjustment of the basic wage became operative, declined to make an appropriate adjustment, with the result that there was every possibility of industrial unrest throughout the length and breadth of the State. Up to that time the court had worked in such a way that when the cost of living was falling, there was a fall in wages for the worker, and when the price index numbers indicated increased cost of living, there was a consequent increase in the basic wage.

If one delves into past records in this connection, one will not find a precedent for the decision conveyed by the Court last February. Before 1925, basic wage rates did not operate in this State as they do at the present time. A minimum wage was set for each separate award or industrial agreement, and variations existed in the various awards in respect of the minimum wage. In the Bill of 1925, which provided opportunities for lengthy debates in this House, many amendments were passed, one of which provided for the annual fixation by the Arbitration Court of basic wage rates in three districts, namely, the metropolitan area, South-West Land Division and the Goldfields Division.

All the conditions having relationship to the basic wage were then annually inquired into. The basic wage was fixed and employer and employee alike recognised the procedure of an annual review as an efficient way of determining the basic rate. Evidence was submitted by employers and employees, and, in addition, the court itself had the right to obtain such evidence as it thought fit. In 1931 the Industrial Arbitration Act was again amended. One of the amendments provided for the quarterly adjustment of the basic wage in accordance with the cost of living variations, in addition to the annual fixation. When that amending Bill was introduced, the basic wage in the metropolitan area was £4 6s. a week, but the Statistician's figures in March, 1931, disclosed when the first adjustment was made that a reduction of 8s. would result under the new arrangement of quarterly adjustments. As a result the workers of that day suffered a reduction in wages from £4 6s. to £3 18s. per week. That was not all. The basic wage then went lower still in that year, namely, to £3 13s. 6d. It was subsequently reduced in 1933 to £3 8s. per week.

Members well know the reason for the introduction by the Government of that day of the amendment to the Act. All countries were in the throes of a serious depression—the most serious the world has ever known. Prices dropped quickly and considerably, and the Government asked Parliament to amend the Act so as to permit of a quarterly adjustment to enable a reduction in wages much sooner than was possible under the annual inquiry and adjustment method. Thus the workers had to accept the decisions of the Arbitration Court which meant, in the circumstances, consistent reductions in their wages.

Hon. G. W. Miles: But when costs rose they accepted increases as well.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But prior to that, when the cost of living was increasing the workers had to wait for many months before they could secure through the Arbitration Court an adjustment of their wages. Members will remember the great congestion that occurred in connection with the court's work. Some organisations had to wait for 12 or 18 months or even longer before they could get their applications heard. Although the prices of commodities were in-

creasing all the time, they could secure no redress for long periods. When the system of quarterly adjustments was introduced, the workers were affected much more quickly, particularly on the downward grade.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It was purely a matter of circumstances.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That must be admitted, but if Mr. Bolton desires to take that point, then I think he must admit that it was purely a matter of circumstances that created the recent position. The workers were entitled to what they sought and obtained as the result of the promulgation of National Security Regulations, but now they will be entitled to that consideration as a right, provided the Bill is passed.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What about the 5s. prosperity increase they got in 1939? Will they be entitled to that in the future?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have yet to learn that there has been any alteration in the conditions that led to that action. If the court considers the time has arrived when it should reach a different conclusion, it will no doubt do so, but at the present time wages are pegged.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Yes, but you do not want the court to do so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have indicated what was the main reason for the amending legislation, and one argument used by the then Government was that, even though it was apparent that workers would have to accept a reduction in their wages while the difficult circumstances continued, there was the other side of the picture, in that workers would benefit more quickly when the tide turned and prices rose, with the resultant increase in the basic wage. That was accepted by all workers in industry. Naturally there was some criticism. The decision of Parliament was accepted and adhered to, and wage-earners suffered severely in that period of trade depression.

I have figures that show the annual declaration and interim variations in the subsequent adjustment of the basic wage until the 3rd August 1933, since when it has been on the increase. For the purposes of record in "Hansard," I shall quote the figures for the period from the 1st July, 1926, to the 3rd August, 1933.

Some of these relate to the annual declarations, which we still have as well as the quarterly adjustments. It is on the basis

of the annual declarations that the quarterly adjustments take place. The details are as follows:—

| Date of Operation. | Metropolitan Area. | | South-West Land Division. | | Goldfields Areas and other parts of State. | |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------------|----------|--|----------|
| | Males. | Females. | Males. | Females. | Males. | Females. |
| | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. | £ s. d. |
| * 1-7-26 | 4 5 0 | 2 5 11 | 4 5 0 | 2 5 11 | 4 5 0 | 2 5 11 |
| * 1-7-29 | 4 7 0 | 2 7 0 | 4 7 0 | 2 7 0 | 4 5 0 | 2 5 11 |
| * 1-7-30 | 4 6 0 | 2 6 5 | 4 5 0 | 2 5 11 | 4 5 0 | 2 5 11 |
| 3-3-31 | 3 18 0 | 2 2 2 | 3 17 0 | 2 1 8 | 3 17 0 | 2 1 8 |
| * 1-7-31 | 3 18 0 | 2 2 2 | 3 17 0 | 2 1 8 | 3 17 0 | 2 1 8 |
| 18-8-31 | 3 18 0 | 2 2 2 | 3 16 0 | 2 1 0 | 3 17 0 | 2 1 8 |
| 5-11-31 | 3 13 6 | 1 19 8 | 3 14 6 | 2 0 3 | 3 17 0 | 2 1 8 |
| 29-2-32 | 3 12 0 | 1 18 11 | 3 14 6 | 2 0 3 | 3 17 0 | 2 1 8 |
| 3-5-32 | 3 12 0 | 1 18 11 | 3 13 6 | 1 19 8 | 3 17 0 | 2 1 8 |
| * 1-7-32 | 3 12 0 | 1 18 11 | 3 13 6 | 1 19 8 | 3 18 0 | 2 2 2 |
| 2-11-32 | 3 10 6 | 1 18 1 | 3 12 6 | 1 19 2 | 3 18 0 | 2 2 2 |
| 28-2-33 | 3 9 0 | 1 17 3 | 3 11 0 | 1 18 4 | 3 18 0 | 2 2 2 |
| 16-5-33 | 3 9 0 | 1 17 3 | 3 9 6 | 1 17 6 | 3 18 0 | 2 2 2 |
| * 1-7-33 | 3 8 0 | 1 16 9 | 3 9 6 | 1 17 6 | 3 17 6 | 2 1 10 |
| 3-8-33 | 3 9 3 | 1 17 5 | 3 9 6 | 1 17 6 | 3 17 6 | 2 1 10 |

* Annual Declaration.

The Arbitration Court's interpretation of the amendment of the law is worthy of notice. From all decisions given, up to the notable one that led to the introduction of this Bill, it is apparent that the President of the Arbitration Court was of the opinion that he was bound by the Act to give effect to the variations as disclosed in the figures presented by the Statistician. The employers' and the employees' representatives were likewise under the same impression. In January, 1932, when dealing with the Statistician's figures for the October-December quarter of 1931, the President of the court said:—

The Statistician's figures for the metropolitan area show that the cost is £3 17s. for the last quarter. That is a reduction of less than 1s., and consequently no adjustment will be necessary or will be made. The Statistician's figures disclose that the cost of living for the South-West Land Division, to put it in exact figures, is £3 15s. 10d. That shows, therefore, that in that area the cost of living has fallen by over 1s. Consequently there will be an adjustment for that district.

The employers' representative said:—

I agree that the adjustment which is made is that required by Parliament and is in accordance with Parliament's request.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That showed he was of opinion it was incumbent upon the Court to do so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Showing that he misunderstood the position.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am pointing out that all parties were in agreement on that issue at the time. Regarding the next quarter, the President again announced the decision of the Court to reduce the basic wage, and we find the employees' representative making the following statement:—

The figures just announced by His Honour are in accord with the instruction by Parliament. In the meantime this court can only, in this matter, carry out the definite instruction of Parliament and give another spin to the suicidal cycle—reduced wages, which is reduced purchasing power, causing reduced employment, followed by a further reduction in wages.

So we had all three in agreement that there was no discretion in any alteration to be made. If the figures disclosed that a revision was necessary, then such revision must take place in accordance with the provisions of the amending Act. In August of 1933 prices rose to the extent of 1s. 3d. per week in the metropolitan area—enough to justify an increase, and the court gave its decision accordingly. A sequence of increases has since been maintained, except for a slight reduction of 6d. in the declarations made in the years 1935 and 1936, based, of course, on figures submitted by the Government Statistician. On all these occasions the court

granted the variations without question or argument, and everyone appeared to be convinced that the court's variation of the basic wage in accordance with changes in the cost of living was an automatic procedure and did not allow of discretion.

That was the position of affairs up to February of this year. In that month the court had submitted to it the figures in connection with the October-December quarter of 1941. These figures disclosed that an increase of 1s. 7d. per week in the basic wage for the metropolitan area was justified. But, to the amazement of all concerned, and by a majority decision, the President declined to make any order or adjustment for an increase. Despite the fact that the Government Statistician's statement to the court disclosed an increased cost of living in the metropolitan area and the agricultural districts, the President stated that the court exercised a discretionary power to make no change in the basic wage, bearing in mind the effect of an increase by way of its repercussions on industry. This is an extract from a statement which the President made—

We have, in my opinion, now arrived at a stage when the court has seriously to consider the fact of an increase in the basic wage to the extent that the figures would indicate, and its repercussions on industry and the general economic structure of the community. After very serious consideration, and with a full knowledge of the responsibility which the decision implies, I have come to the conclusion that no adjustment should be made in this instance; that is, that the basic wage now declared and in operation shall continue.

The President then proceeded to give his reasons for the decision made, one of which was that the granting of the increase would place the State basic wage for the metropolitan area even more out of line than it already was with the then-existing Commonwealth basic wage for Perth. Another reason was that the court had in 1938, on the occasion of the annual inquiry, increased the real wage in Western Australia by granting a rise in the basic wage rate, irrespective of the cost of living, of 5s. per week. There was yet another reason, however, and this probably is the most important. The President emphasised the view that inflationary forces were at work, and that to increase further the basic wage would be to increase the momentum of inflation; while stabilisation, if only temporary, might put some brake on the inflationary tendency.

Complete disagreement was expressed by the employees' representative on the bench, who stated that the workers had already borne the increased cost of living and that they had the right to expect the court to maintain their standard of living by the automatic process designed by legislation. He said—

I fail to see that this court has the right to withhold any amount based on the cost of living which would lessen the 1938 basic wage standard. In common with other people, I am deeply conscious of the gravity and peril which menace the people of this State, and I am not satisfied that the existing war situation ought to be used as a reason for such a drastic change in the basis of wage fixation in Western Australia. The determination to be made to-day presents some entirely new principles.

The remarks of the President concerning inflation were, to my mind, quite outside the scope of his jurisdiction. The question of monetary policy is surely not one for individual courts. The Arbitration Court's decision was naturally received with much concern by the various trade unions. Their representative argued in the Supreme Court against the decision of the Arbitration Court, but the decision of the Supreme Court was that the Industrial Arbitration Act conferred discretionary power with respect to the quarterly adjustments. The word "may" in Section 124A was the peg on which that decision rested. Industrial unrest then became widespread in Western Australia, as a result of that decision.

In February of this year the National Security (Economic Organisation) Regulations were issued by the Commonwealth Government. These regulations not only sought to peg salaries and wages but also provided for a limitation of profits and price-control at the levels existing as at the 10th February, 1942. The regulations were Commonwealth-wide in their application. They did not, however, provide that salaries and wages could not be altered under any conditions; but they did provide that whilst salaries and wages should be pegged at the 10th February, 1942, they could be altered in accordance with variations in the cost of living in any State.

Certain anomalies also were provided for, such as the case of a worker who had been promoted and where such promotion justified an increase in his salary or his wages. But the main reason for the provision of the regulation legally allowing an increase was that any variation in the cost of living

should be allowed. The wording of that particular portion of the regulation relating to the variation in the cost of living was such that it precluded Western Australia from sharing the benefit of the incidence of the regulation, although, as I am advised, it was understood by the Commonwealth that all States had been covered. The regulation was applicable only where the law of the State provided for the automatic adjustment of the basic wage in accordance with the cost of living. The decision of the Supreme Court was that the Arbitration Court had discretionary power in such matters, there being no automatic variation. Therefore the Commonwealth authorities, by the National Security Regulations, unconsciously placed the workers of Western Australia in an invidious position. In effect, the salaries of workers in all States of the Commonwealth were pegged, but workers in all States excluding Western Australia were given the benefits of basic wage variation by the regulations. Workers argued that if the disabilities of the regulations were to be imposed upon them, they should at least enjoy the benefits of the regulations. That, I contend, is a reasonable conclusion.

Representations were made to the Commonwealth to remedy this unjust position by amending the National Security Regulations so that, in so far as the policy of wage pegging and cost of living variations were concerned, uniformity would exist throughout the Commonwealth. What was the result? The Commonwealth said that it recognised the position in which this State was placed, but that the position was one which was peculiar to Western Australia only, and accordingly the Commonwealth would grant the necessary power to the Premier of Western Australia, by way of regulation, to remedy the matter. To this the State Government did not agree, and argued the point with the Commonwealth Government. The State Government considered that the matter should be appropriately dealt with in a manner similar to that obtaining in other States. The Commonwealth did not give ground, but it did amend the original regulation, by which time we were well into the quarter ended the 30th June.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Why was not the Industrial Arbitration Act amended then?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: More than one reason could be given for that. In the

first place such an amendment as that which we are now considering could not be obtained quickly. In the second place, long experience of this Parliament, and in particular of this House, has shown that it is almost impossible to get this Chamber to agree to any retrospective provision in any Act of Parliament. If I had been asked for my advice on this particular point, I would have frankly said, "You have no hope of getting the Legislative Council to agree to this amendment with retrospective effect to cover the increase in the cost of living as from December of 1941." I think I would have been right in expressing that opinion.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Even though we have some new members!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so. I think I would have been right. That perhaps is one of the main reasons why it became necessary for the Commonwealth Government to amend its National Security Regulations.

Hon. G. W. Miles: At the request of the State Government. It took powers away from this democratic country. That is the point.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I propose to tell the hon. member what happened. There is nothing to hide. The workers of this State were placed in an invidious position as a result of the decision that put them outside the scope of the National Security Regulations, which provided that the increase could apply only where variations were automatic. Consequently the workers had been deprived of a considerable increase in their basic wage. Any other steps necessary at that time were perfectly justified. To have waited for the Legislative Council to agree to a retrospective application of this principle would have been fatal from the workers' point of view. Mr. Miles will perhaps be interested to know that when the true significance of this regulation was known, the Commonwealth Government was approached and asked to vary the regulations so that they would govern the position in Western Australia.

The Commonwealth Government replied that it recognised the position in which this State was placed, but that it was one which was peculiar to Western Australia, and accordingly it would grant the necessary power by way of regulation for the Premier of this State to remedy the posi-

tion. In other words, the Commonwealth Government really said that when it framed a regulation it wanted that regulation to apply uniformly, if possible, in all States and if that was not possible, and there was one State in which there was an anomaly, it was prepared to give to the Premier of that State the right to rectify the position by way of regulation. That is what happened here. We considered that the Commonwealth Government should have attended to the matter, but on account of the reason I have submitted, it said, "You may be right, but we would prefer the State Government to do it."

The amended regulation—Regulation 17a—did not, however, meet the position that had arisen. It could not be operative until the Arbitration Court had next considered the Government Statistician's figures. The wording of the regulation was such that the Government could not act until the March-June figures had been presented to the court, and it could then act only to the extent of dealing with the increase shown in that quarter's figures. Previous quarters' figures—there were three quarters in all—were not covered by the amended regulation. These facts were pointed out to the Commonwealth Government and, as a result of the representations made, Regulation 17a was appropriately amended to meet the position, and the Premier was given the additional power required.

Members know what followed. The Arbitration Court met and the Statistician presented his figures for the March-June quarter. That was done early in July. The figures were examined and subsequently the President of the court made statements and declarations which were inconclusive. He would not say whether he would or would not grant the increase as represented by the figures submitted by the Statistician. He also expressed a doubt as to the legal power of the court to grant the increase in view of the existence of the National Security Regulations and asked that counsel be briefed by the parties' representatives to argue that particular point.

In the meantime workers right throughout the State were becoming restless. Legally the Government had to wait until the court met to deal with the March-June figures. It could wait no longer, and therefore acted, it being considered that the pro-

cedure followed by the court in July was unquestionably unjustifiable and could have brought into existence industrial chaos, the effect of which would have been felt right throughout the State. Accordingly, the Premier issued an order under the National Security Regulations and raised the basic wage rates in the metropolitan area and in the South-West Land Division, no increase being applicable to the goldfields areas on account of the fact that the statistician's figures disclosed there had not been a sufficient variation in the cost of living in that district.

I have endeavoured to trace briefly the arbitration position in this State respecting the fixing by the court of the basic wage in accordance with the Statistician's figures. I have dealt with the difficult position brought about by the discretionary decision of the court in February last, which has been responsible for the submission of this Bill. It is safe to say that had the Government not acted when it did there would have been a first-class industrial upheaval in this State which would have been calamitous in the circumstances obtaining at the present time. It is necessary to prevent a repetition of this state of affairs. Therefore this Bill is submitted asking Parliament to declare that a quarterly adjustment of the basic wage shall in future be automatically applied to the basic wage rates operating in the districts affected in accordance with the figures submitted by the Statistician.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Why have the Arbitration Court?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Why retain it? Nearly all its powers have gone.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think one of the interjectors is genuine on this point. I feel sure he will admit that the State Arbitration Court has been responsible to a very great extent for the lack of industrial trouble in Western Australia.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I am glad to hear you say that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think he will also admit that had we no State Arbitration Court, and were we forced to rely on negotiations between employers and employees—in other words, if we reverted to the bad old days—there would commence another cycle of industrial trouble, which

neither he nor I wish to see. I think I am entitled to pay a compliment to the workers of this State—

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Not the employers?

The CHIEF SECRETARY:—for the fact that they have such a good record in comparison with other States.

Hon. L. Craig: They have a higher rate of pay.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: And a good lot of employers.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The rate of pay is based on the cost of living, and on the principles laid down in the Industrial Arbitration Act.

Hon. L. Craig: Not entirely on the cost of living.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know how the hon. member can get away from that.

Hon. L. Craig: They received a loading of 5s.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, on account of the so-called prosperity.

Hon. L. Craig: I am glad to hear the Chief Secretary use the word "so-called."

The CHIEF SECRETARY: One could indulge in quite a long discussion on those lines if one so desired, but there is no need to bring that argument into this matter. This measure will provide for a permanent amendment of the Act that will ensure that if the cost of living figures presented by the Government Statistician each quarter indicate that there is an increase or decrease in the cost of living of more than 1s., the court must, of necessity, make a variation in its awards. It does not do away with the annual fixation of the basic wage which, as members are aware, is usually fixed after a very thorough inquiry. Quarterly adjustments deal with the variations that take place during the year, and it is only fair and reasonable that when we expect the worker to accept a reduction in wages because of the figures presented to the court, he should be entitled to expect that when an increase is indicated, he should receive that increase. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

House adjourned at 5.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 21st October, 1912.

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Questions: Tramway Department, South Perth bus stand | 940 |
| Pig feed | 940 |
| Fruit industry, as to freights and ullaging | 941 |
| Motions: Commonwealth and State relationships, as to referendum proposals | 941 |
| Forests Department, as to cutting rights | 958 |
| Workers' Compensation Act, to disallow fees regulation | 967 |
| Public Trustee Act, to disallow charges regulation | 971 |
| Bills: Local Authorities (Reserve Funds), 1s. | 941 |
| Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation), 3s. | 941 |
| Goldfields Water Supply Act Amendment, report | 941 |
| Albany Reserve Allotments, returned | 970 |
| Perth Dental Hospital Land, returned | 970 |

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (3).

TRAMWAY DEPARTMENT.

South Perth Bus Stand.

Mr. J. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Railways: 1, On whose authority did the Tramway Department establish a bus stand on the north side of St. George's Terrace, near Barrack-street, for the new bus service operating between the city and South Perth? 2, Did the Western Australian Transport Board or the Police Traffic Branch, either separately or jointly, recommend the site? 3, Were the above-mentioned authorities consulted beforehand? 4, If not, why not? 5, Why was the Perth City Council not consulted in this matter before the stand was established?

The MINISTER replied: 1, The authority of the Commissioner of Railways. 2, Police Traffic Branch approved the site. 3, Yes. 4, Answered by No. 3. 5, In January last the Transport Board advised the Perth City Council of the proposal to establish a bus stand on the north side of St. George's Terrace.

PIG FEED.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is slaughterhouse offal, cooked or uncooked, suitable as pig food, and does it compare in the production of quality pig meat with a ration containing wheat, barley, maize, or other grain, peas, and similar legumes? 2, Is it possible to arrange for the supply of wheat and other products as mentioned at prices so economically attractive as to discourage the use of