

people as a whole realise the necessity for increased taxation, yet it is clearly the duty of the Government to attempt to keep expenditure within revenue. In any such attempt the Government will have the support of members on both sides of the House. The Labour Government who were accused of extravagance and removed from office on the score of lack of ability, have been succeeded by a combination of financial genius and business acumen that has increased the deficit by over £1,800,000.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.5 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 26th February, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

MOTION—ELECTORAL, METROPOLITAN PROVINCE.

Seat Declared Vacant.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.35]: I move—

"That in consequence of the resignation of the Hon. H. Boan as a member of the Legislative Council for the Metropolitan Province, his seat is hereby declared vacant."

I regret very much the circumstances that have rendered this motion necessary. The answers I have just given to questions asked by Mr. Kingsmill will make clear to the House the conditions under which Mr. Boan arranged for the establishment of the agency of the State Savings Bank at his establishment. They disclose the fact that this agency was not established at the request of Mr. Boan for the purpose of increasing the popularity or profits of his business, which would have been a perfectly legitimate action for any business man to have adopted. The branch was established in the first instance at the suggestion of an officer of the Government Savings Bank. At that time, four years ago, when the suggestion was first made and the agency was established, the Government were faced with the necessity of competing against the Commonwealth Savings Bank. I hold the view, and I have no doubt it will be shared by a large number of members, that in starting the Savings Bank, the Commonwealth Government were invading the proper rights of the States and were straining, to say the

least of it, the provisions of the Constitution Act governing the operations of the State Savings Bank. Even those who differ from me will, I think, agree that so long as two Savings Banks are continued this must inevitably result in a great deal of unnecessary and wasteful expenditure. The position at the time was that there was considerably over four millions of money invested in the Savings Bank, and there was a great danger of this drifting gradually into the Commonwealth Bank, for this important reason, that from the time when the Savings Banks were first established in England, the Post Office has always been regarded as the home of the Savings Bank, and as the Commonwealth had the Post Offices it was feared, and very properly, that the money would gradually drift into the Commonwealth Savings Bank. During the first two years of the operations of the Commonwealth Savings Bank the withdrawals from the State Savings Bank were on such a scale that, notwithstanding the accumulation of interest on remaining deposits, each of those two years showed a smaller balance at the end of the year than stood to the credit of depositors at the beginning of the year. Had that condition of affairs continued it would have been a serious matter for the State, for practically the whole of the Savings Bank funds were invested in large undertakings for which other provision would have had to be made had that money been withdrawn. After two years the State Savings Bank began to hold its own again, and during the year ended 30th June, 1917, there was a substantial increase in deposits over withdrawals amounting to £200,000, and for the following six months up to the end of the last calendar year there was an increase of £80,000. I am not suggesting that this big increase was due to the establishment of the agency at Messrs. Boan Bros.' emporium, but the fact that this agency was the fourth highest in the State, including the central office, shows that the policy suggested by the official of the Savings Bank, that an agency should be established there, was a wise one and one which has had a good effect. I mention this to make clear to the public that the circumstances which resulted in Mr. Boan sending in his resignation as a member of this House have arisen through his undertaking, at the suggestion of an officer of the Savings Bank, an agency which has proved very satisfactory to the Government Savings Bank and incidentally to the State in general. No doubt it is a very wise provision of our Constitution Act that members of Parliament should be debarred from accepting commissions from the Government, and it is necessary that the provisions should be observed both in the letter and in the spirit if we are to maintain that high reputation which Australian Parliaments have happily enjoyed. The action taken by Mr. Boan in resigning his seat and returning the whole of the allowance he had received during the 10 months of his membership in Parliament is, I am sure, in keeping with what might have been expected from a man of Mr. Boan's character, and from a man having such a high regard, as I am sure he had, for the traditions of this House. His action will be appre-

ciated both by members of the House and by his personal friends. Speaking on my own behalf, having enjoyed Mr. Boan's friendship for a period of nearly 30 years, I can only say I regret very deeply that a man of his wide business knowledge, who promised to be so useful a member of the House, should have been compelled to resign, and I hope it will not be long before we have him amongst us again. I beg to move the motion standing in my name.

Question put and passed.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary and read a first time.

BILL—PUBLIC EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st February.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [4.45]: When I secured the adjournment of the debate on this Bill I had no intention of raising any objection to the measure, or of dealing with any of the criticisms to which it has been subjected, but I merely did so for the purpose of seeing that the provisions in the measure were in agreement with those which I desire to see there. I am entirely in accord with the Colonial Secretary in his introduction of this measure, and congratulate him on having brought it in. It is a recognised fact that the standard of civilisation to which any nation rises is gauged by the care it displays in looking after the welfare of those in their midst who are mentally or physically afflicted. We recognise that unless those persons are equipped as well as it is possible for us to equip them, they become a burden on the State, whereas if they are trained to take their places as useful citizens, we are removing a burden from our shoulders which we should otherwise feel. Some say that this is not an opportune time for the introduction of a measure of this description, because the finances of the State are in such a condition that any increased burden should not be considered unless it is something to do with the question of the war in which we are at present engaged. I am of opinion that that is an erroneous attitude to adopt, because there are certain duties we have to take upon ourselves at any time, and no parents would be considered to be justified in refusing to give an education to a child simply because those parents might at that particular time be financially embarrassed. We as a State should remember that also, and that notwithstanding any difficulties we may be confronted with the paramount duty rests upon us to look after those who are afflicted. Therefore, I congratulate the Minister on having introduced the Bill at this particular period. I speak feelingly on this question, because for a period of 20 years I have been closely in contact with those who are afflicted in the direction mentioned in the Bill. Early in my professional career I was associated with a lad who was deaf and dumb, and who was trained by my side for many

years. I saw that lad emerge from his condition of physical affliction and incompetency to a position whereby he was able to earn his livelihood, until at last he became a citizen of worth to the Commonwealth, and he is to-day in receipt of a high salary in the position he occupies in New South Wales. If this lad had not been taken care of and educated, he would have been a burden on his people and probably on the community for many years. It is said that these afflictions are not hereditary, and that has been proved by statistics of the past, and in providing facilities for the maintenance and education of these people we are adding to the potentialities of the country and benefiting the community in a way which is commendable. It is also recognised that those who are afflicted in one direction have their senses remarkably sharpened in another. Thus it will be found that some of the remaining senses are specially acute, and by the development of those senses the afflicted are enabled to become useful citizens. To show to what extent such afflicted persons may be made into useful citizens, I need only quote the case of Ellen Keller in America, a child who was born deaf, dumb, and blind. This child, by careful training, passed all examinations in the schools it was possible for her to enter, and she would, I have no doubt, passed through a high university career but for the regulations which her physical disabilities prevented her from entering. She rose to be an authoress of no mean ability, and with the aid of a typewriter could take part in any debate. There is one question I am rather diffident about, and it is that of the age at which the children should enter the institution. I was rather inclined to think that the age of six was too young, but I have been assured by those who are training the deaf, dumb, and blind that it is their desire to get the children at as early an age as possible, because it is important that the intellect should be as free as possible from external impressions, and in that way the teachers can build up on a clear foundation. Therefore, I am of opinion now that the Government are on the right track. There was one point, however, I had some doubt about, and that was the methods it was proposed to adopt for the purpose of taking children from their parents, and particularly where the parents lived in districts remote from the city. I am sure, however, that this portion of the measure will only require sympathetic administration to make it effective. At the present time there is attending the institution at Cottesloe a deaf and dumb child who comes from Day Dawn. That child comes to the city and returns to its parents in the care of Mr. Chesson, who is a member of another branch of this Legislature. So hon. members will see that the institution as it exists to-day, looks after the children when they are coming to the institution and returning to their parents. I have pleasure in supporting the measure also because I consider the expenditure which will be involved will be very small. As a matter of fact I do not think there will be much expenditure at all. The institutions are already in existence for the reception and the training of these children, and the cost of a few additional pupils will be very small indeed. We recognise, however, that parents of

afflicted children do not always care to part with them. The weak one of the family invariably receives the greatest parental care, and there is a diffidence on the part of the parents to allow them to leave their roof if that can possibly be avoided. In some cases where children have remained at home the action of the parents has militated against the future successful careers of the afflicted. In the case of a deaf child in New South Wales—and that child was consequently dumb because it had never heard spoken speech—I had trouble in getting the parents to allow that child to go to an institution. Ultimately, however, the child was permitted to leave home, and he received a good education and is to-day the happy head of a family and doing good work in New South Wales. The small cost which will be incurred if the Bill becomes law is a matter which can be considered very lightly. It is our duty to look after the afflicted members of our community, and to do the best we can so as to fit them for the battle of life. Therefore I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [4.53]: I desire to say a few words in support of the Bill, although there are one or two matters in it that I cannot see my way clear to support. After the interesting speech made by Mr. Allen there can be few hon. members who will not feel inclined to give their utmost support to the measure. One point the hon. member made was that afflicted children if not cared for and educated would be likely to become a burden on the State. I cannot agree with that. So far as my experience goes, and I have had a fair experience behind the scenes, as it were, those who are really a burden on the State are not these people, who of course are to be pitied and who in many instances earn their own living, but it is the number of street loungers we have amongst us. The hon. member cited the case of Ellen Keller as showing what it is possible to do with children who are afflicted, but what strikes me is that it will be an outrageous demand to make on the parents' affection if we compel them, when they live say 600 or 700 miles away from an institution, to send a child to that institution to be educated. That is the only part which troubles me in supporting the Bill. But I daresay arrangements can be made whereby free passes will be issued to the children who live at such distances so that they may go to their homes at vacation time. I would prefer to see a provision of this description included in the Bill. At the same time it does appear outrageous that we should take a child of six years of age compulsorily from its parents and send it a long distance away to a home to receive education. I do not think I have anything else to say in connection with the Bill, but I rather sympathise with Mr. Duffell after the speech he made, because I realise that he took a very courageous stand indeed when he drew attention to the question of the expense which would be involved if the Bill became law, because a speech of that kind may be used against him for party purposes. I do not consider the expense will be so great that we need worry about it. I hope, however, it

may be possible to amend the Bill in Committee in the direction I have suggested.

Hon. C. SOMMERS (Metropolitan) [4.56]: I desire to support the Bill. I had the privilege of being on the committee of the deaf and dumb institution at Cottesloe, and great difficulty was experienced at times in finding afflicted children and inducing the parents to allow them to become inmates of the institution. Once it was done, however, the parents quickly saw what a great privilege it was for the children to receive the education which was being imparted. The institution at Cottesloe is partly supported by the Government, but the principal support comes from subscriptions voluntarily given by charitably disposed persons. The cost to the Government of maintaining this institution is not large. In the first instance, as Mr. Dodd has pointed out, the parents display great reluctance to part with their children because we know that the feeling towards the unfortunate little ones is more tender when they are afflicted in this way. I do not think that there should be any provision in the Bill about free railway passes because we can always find charitably disposed persons who are travelling to take care of the afflicted. But it is astonishing after a few months of training to find how the afflicted young become capable of taking care of themselves. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Hon. H. CARSON (Central) [4.58]: I think it is the duty of all countries to do whatever they can in the interests of the afflicted. At the same time I do not care about the idea of compulsorily taking the children from their parents, and when the Bill is in Committee I hope it will be amended in the direction of increasing the age at which the children may be taken from their homes. We should realise that where there is an afflicted child in a family that child commands great sympathy and the parents are prepared to make sacrifices for it. But I think it is a mistake to compulsorily take such young children from their parents when the distance of the institution from the child's home is considerable. To-day we find that compulsion does not apply to a normal child over a distance of three miles, and there are hundreds of children who are not being educated because the parents cannot afford to provide the means by which they can be sent to school. I hope when the Bill is in Committee the age limit will be increased to eight or nine years of age.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colbatch—East—in reply) [5.0]: I have very little to say in reply, but I shall endeavour to explain one or two points which have been raised during the debate. In this connection I will ask Mr. Duffell to excuse me from replying on the financial question generally. I can seriously assure him that the point of finance raised in connection with this Bill is so small that it would not justify me in going exhaustively into the question of the finances of the State generally now. When the financial proposals of the Government are submitted to the House it will be my duty to explain them to hon. members, and I can assure the hon. member I shall do it

thoroughly. Therefore, I will ask that hon. member to excuse me from going into the question now. The question has been asked as to the number of such children affected by this Bill. It is difficult to get at the exact figures but I think I shall be safe in saying that the number of children in the State at the present time not receiving education is approximately twenty. This information has been gathered from the compulsory inspectors connected with the schools and from those connected with the two institutions which deal respectively with the deaf and dumb and the blind. I would like to say that this Bill has been drafted by the Education Department after exhaustive conference by letter with the Education Departments of the different States, and that it is the direct outcome of frequent and long continued requests by the bodies controlling respectively the blind institution and the deaf and dumb institution. In each instance the institutions have tried to track up the children throughout the State and to induce the parents to send their children to these schools. In a majority of cases they have been successful and at the present time, at Cottesloe and at Maylands, children are attending from different parts of Western Australia. A certain number of parents prefer to allow their children to grow up in ignorance. In regard to the remarks of Mr. Dodd, I am still firmly of opinion that the uneducated blind child and deaf and dumb child must necessarily be a burden on someone, whereas the educated child is quite able to maintain itself. Therefore, if we look at the matter from the sordid point of view of pounds, shillings, and pence, it is right that the children should be educated, so as to keep themselves, and not be a burden on the State or their relatives. The expense to the State would be very trivial, in fact, it is negligible, although from time to time certain expenses will be incurred. The two institutions are generously supported by the public, and any increase in the cost of conducting the institutions would simply be the feeding of the children while there, and I have it on the authority of the manager of one of these institutions that the cost of feeding a child is only about 5s. a week. It is obvious that the parents of the children must at the present time be under almost equal cost in providing for the maintenance of the children at home. The Bill provides that, after the passing of the Act, every parent of a blind, deaf, or mute child, who has attained the age of six years, has to provide efficient and suitable education. No doubt some parents could provide that education in their own homes, but if they are not able to provide it in their own homes, and there is no institution within an easy reach to which the child could be sent, the Act casts on them the obligation of acquainting the Minister of the fact that they have a blind, or deaf, or dumb child which they are not able to educate, and the Minister then, in his discretion may order the child to be sent to an institution. There is no doubt the Minister would not make an order if there was a strong reason against it, and the child would not be then sent to one of

the schools provided for the purpose. The Minister will enter into an agreement with the parent as to the maintenance of the child and the parent will naturally be called upon to pay the cost of maintaining the child. In making any agreement the Minister would take into consideration the circumstances of the family, and if the Minister and the parent cannot agree as to the amount to be paid for the maintenance of the child, then the parent can appeal to the court. In cases where the parent is unable to maintain the child, and there is no doubt that in a good many cases at the present time the Government are assisting in maintaining these children, both these institutions are prepared to provide the education for the children out of the ordinary subscriptions and subsidy which they receive from the Government. In the event of the parent not being able to pay the amount of the cost it will necessarily fall on the Government to make up the amount to the institution educating the child, but beyond that no financial burden is cast on the State. Mr. Ardagh raised the point that this provision must press heavily on parents. The parent of a blind child is under the expense of maintaining the child and no Minister would attempt to make that parent, if indigent or in poor circumstances, pay more than it would cost to maintain the child now. If the child is not educated the parent will be under the obligation of maintaining the child forever, unless the obligation is cast on the State. The hon. member thought the court would be a hardship on the parent, but it is a court to which the parent can appeal. The question was also raised, and it is the only one that, to my mind, deserves serious consideration, of separating the child from its parents for a long time. I am in sympathy with Mr. Dodd, and hon. members of the House, in this connection. There is no doubt that the Bill must be sympathetically administered, and if the House desires it members can amend the Bill so as to compel the Minister, when fixing the amount that the parent shall pay, to provide that the parent shall have the child back in the home for the holidays, and provision can be made with respect to the expenses of taking the child home and back again. It is not intended for a moment to divorce the child from the parents except for the purpose of securing the child's education. Members can safely pass the Bill with the assurance that no Minister will administer the measure in such a manner as to prevent the child from going back to its parents as frequently as it is possible during the holiday times. Legislation of this description exists in all enlightened countries in the world and in all the States of Australia except in Queensland. In New South Wales they had no legislation until recently—I am not quite sure whether that legislation has passed now, but I know it was brought forward. I have no wish to rush the Bill through Committee. I hope the suggestion of Mr. Sanderson, that the Bill will be dropped for this year, will not be carried. We must endeavour to make these children useful citizens. I trust that an endeavour will not be made to amend the Bill so as to make the age nine. That would destroy the usefulness

of the Bill in making successful citizens of these children. Making a child go to an institution is at the discretion of the Minister, and if we raise the compulsory age to nine I am afraid we are going to destroy the possibility of doing the best we can for these children. All those who have the handling of children agree that if they can get a child at six years they can do more good with that child than if they got it when it reached the age of nine years. This Bill has been introduced at the repeated request of the institutions who have been doing the work for years past, and they say that if they get hold of children at the age of six or seven they never fail to do good with them, but if they do not get them until they are older there is not such good result. I believe I am right in saying, and it is the general opinion, and certainly it is in accordance with common sense, that if you get hold of children when they are young you are more likely to make a success with them than if you do not get hold of them until they are older. I have nothing further to say but any amendment that may be brought forward will have my sympathetic consideration.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Blind, deaf, and mute children:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I am sorry the Colonial Secretary has not seen fit to put this Bill away for six months, because it throws on us the responsibility of agreeing to his proposals. I do not wish in any way to block the Bill, or to pose as an authority on the subject; but in dealing with a matter of this kind it would be advantageous if we had before us in writing the considered and deliberate opinion of these educational authorities. The Minister states that both the institutions concerned are in favour of this clause. Without casting the slightest reflection upon the Minister, I still think it would be a great deal more satisfactory if we had that in writing from the institutions. On the second reading I mentioned that I had looked through the Education Department's report to see if it contained any reference to this matter. If someone would move for the age to be raised from six years to seven or eight, I would support the amendment. Some educational experts think it disadvantageous to take tender children of six years and put them in institutions as against home treatment. The Colonial Secretary might, I think, send the inspectors round to the parents of afflicted children with a view to their getting home training instead of institutional training.

The Colonial Secretary: Where home training is available, yes.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The clause means that the inspector will send these children to the institutions.

The Colonial Secretary: No. The inspector reports to the Minister.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Undoubtedly the idea of whoever is responsible for the Bill is to send the children to institutions.

The Colonial Secretary: Only if they cannot get training at home.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It stands to reason that the great majority of the deaf and blind children will have to be sent to institutions. That destroys one of the arguments frequently used by the Minister that for children home education is the better as against institutional training. The Minister admits that he has not had an opportunity of consulting other educational authorities, and yet he asks us to give the department this power over children six years of age. I doubt whether in ordinary healthy children education should start at so early an age as six years, and it seems to me that we are taking on ourselves a great responsibility in applying such a provision to these defective children.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Clause 2 is the crux of the Bill. During the second reading debate it was mentioned that one of the most pathetic features of this proposed compulsory education was the taking away of the child from its parents. Under this clause education must commence at six years. My own view is that the child would fret less if removed from the parental roof at the early age of six than if removed at a later age. The provision in Subclause 2, however, that the parents are to pay such sum or sums towards the education or maintenance of the child as are agreed between such parents and the Minister seems to me objectionable. If I understand the term "compulsory education" correctly, such education should be free. The Colonial Secretary spoke of a few shillings per week.

The Colonial Secretary: That is for maintenance; not for education.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The children whom we propose to bring within the purview of the Bill are afflicted children, and they cannot be dealt with in the same way as healthy children. Of healthy children there are, even in a remote country district, generally a sufficient number to warrant the Education Department in appointing a teacher. But the department would be incurring heavy expense in sending a tutor to instruct one afflicted child; and thus it follows that the afflicted children will have to be sent to the institutions in the metropolis. They would be there for the purpose of obtaining compulsory education, and that ought to be free. I do not see how the Colonial Secretary can expect the parents to contribute anything at all in the circumstances. Even a payment of 5s. per week paid quarterly would to some parents represent a great hardship. In this provision for payment by the parents I see something which requires further consideration. If the education is to be compulsory, let it be free in the case of these unfortunate children. Until the State is in a position to supply the education free, let the Government refrain from bringing in this Bill.

Hon. C. SOMMERS: Mr. Sanderson questions whether we have sufficient authority to go on for dealing with this Bill. I can speak for the Deaf and Dumb Institution, on the committee of which I have served for a number of years; and I can assure hon. members there is not likely to be any difficulty at

all. What happens is that the inspector of the Education Department notifies the Minister of one of these afflicted children. Thereupon the inspector probably gets into touch with the institution, which in turn corresponds with the parents pointing out the advantage of having the child educated. The parents would most likely be invited to visit the institution, and they might be personally interviewed on the subject. It is a kindness to the parents, and a supreme kindness to the afflicted child. Mr. Duffell appears to think that every afflicted child is the offspring of impecunious parents. That, however, is not so. Moreover, under Subclause 2, in the case of utterly impecunious parents the Minister has power to waive any payment. At present these institutions contain numerous children in respect of whom no payment whatever is made; though I should like to add that in such cases parents frequently make contributions in kind. In the interests of the child, of the parents, and of the State it is essential that an afflicted child should be educated as speedily as possible. Many an afflicted child must lead a very lonely life indeed at home, and a visit to these institutions would show hon. members that the children in them lead a very happy existence.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: I trust the Minister will make no alteration with regard to the age at which afflicted children's education is to begin. That which applies to a normal child does not at all apply to a deaf and dumb child. A deaf and dumb child receives all its early impressions through what it sees, and through nothing else. In the normal child, on the other hand, the basis of education is the outcome of communications to the child from the parents. But in the case of the deaf and dumb no such influences are felt by the child, and it is the experience of those who teach the deaf and dumb that the earlier the training is started upon the better, because there is no more obstinate child than a deaf and dumb child whose education has been neglected. If the child is received by the teacher at the age of five or six years it has no wrong impressions to be removed by the teacher, and consequently its education can be undertaken on the best lines from the outset. There seems to be a difficulty in the minds of members because of the fact that the child is to be taken from its home and may consequently fret. That is contrary to the experience I have had. After a very short space of time the children are perfectly at home in the institution, and in a great number of cases they almost lose the desire to go back home, unless they have been kept in touch with it. But when their education is completed and they are sent out into the world, there is nothing in their minds but respect for the school they have come from and gratitude to the teachers. This same feeling of gratitude to the teachers fills also the minds of the parents, who usually are very much impressed with what has been done for the child. I am sure the clause will inflict no hardship whatever on the parents or the children, beyond the initial feeling, natural in the parental breast, at having to part with the children. Still, if the parents cannot afford to

give the afflicted child a proper education at home, it is most desirable that the child should be sent to an institution for that purpose. I trust the Committee will leave the age at six, as provided in the clause. Then there is the question of payment for the maintenance of the children in the institution. If we were to make it entirely free we should be denying the desire, which is in practically all parents, to pay for the education of their children; we should be removing from them the gratification of that desire and the incentive which lies behind it to take a keen interest in the education of their children. I am sure the Minister will be sympathetic in his administration of the measure, and I feel, too, that we must allow parents to continue to pay for their children if they can afford it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If Mr. Duffell's idea were carried out, it would prove very expensive to the State, because it would practically throw on the State the whole responsibility of maintaining these institutions. Under the present system the institutions are maintained largely by public subscription, to some extent by the contributions of those who obtain advantages from them, and for the balance by Government support. It is an excellent system which it is not desirable to disturb. If we did as Mr. Duffell suggests, it would not only be made to apply to those children whose parents cannot afford to pay for them, but would very quickly be made applicable to all the inmates of the institutions.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The Bill itself will have the very effect upon these institutions which the Colonial Secretary would avoid. Practically the whole of the Bill hinges upon Subclause 2. If the Minister is sincere in his request for compulsory education for those unfortunate people I claim that those people are fully entitled to the privileges and advantages enjoyed by sound, healthy children. I am going to test the feeling of the Committee on this question. I will move an amendment in Subclause 2.

Hon. H. CARSON: I have an amendment before that. I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause 1 the word "six" be struck out and "eight" inserted in lieu.

Notwithstanding the remarks of Mr. Allen, I think it would be a mistake to fix the age at six, in the belief that home influences would not be better than the influence of an institution.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not intend to repeat the arguments used by Mr. Allen. If the amendment is agreed to we shall be starting the education of these children at an age later than that adopted anywhere else. In England and in Scotland the compulsory age for blind children commences at five. Mr. Sanderson asked for authorities. The fact that the authorities at Home in their legislation compulsorily fixed the age at five, is evidence that they have found that age a desirable one. In England, the compulsory age for deaf and dumb children is seven, but there is at present an agitation that this also should be reduced to five. In the other States of Australia the compulsory age varies from seven to six.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We have not sufficient information to guide us in coming to a sound decision on this question. I realise that the Minister is trying to do his best, but we should have further enlightenment. The Minister says that the age for blind children in England and in Scotland is five years. I admit that that is a reference, a sort of authority that will enable us to at any rate consider the question, but it is not by any means all that I would like. This is a very complex question, and even the Minister himself can scarcely tell us off hand what authority the people in Scotland and England had for the fixing of the age at five. The whole of the educational system at Home is being discussed from all points of view just now, and therefore this question of whether five has been found to be a sound age is doubtless coming up for review. There is no reference in the "Educational Report" to the compulsory age, yet we are asked to give a vote on this important question. Personally, I am inclined to support the amendment, but it will be with the greatest hesitation. I should like to see in the Bill reference to the enactments of the other States. Is this a facsimile of another Bill?

The Colonial Secretary: Yes, of the South Australian Act.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I have not had time to look up the references in order to see how the discussion went there, and what decision was arrived at. If one looked up the discussion in the South Australian "Hansard" one might find that it went through with very little trouble, but on the other hand one might find that there was a great discussion on this particular point, and that it was carried by only a narrow majority. Mr. Allen said that the deaf and dumb got all their impressions of life by what they saw. I do not agree with him. If one pricks a deaf and dumb child it will bleed, and if one tickles one it will laugh. My sole objection to voting for this is that I personally have not had sufficient opportunity of looking the matter up, and the Minister has supplied us with one reference only, and that is to the education of such children in England.

The Colonial Secretary: And the other States of the Commonwealth.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I have not looked them up. I accept his statement about England as correct, but if this five-year-old clause in England proves anything at all to me it makes me think that as children mature out here in Australia very much earlier than they do in England it should be a great advantage to shift the age from six to four.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I move an amendment—

"That all the words after 'Minister directs,' in the fifth line, be deleted."

In order to assist compulsory education for children in the ordinary way I believe the State is paying something like half-a-crown per week for travelling expenses to any child who has to travel a distance of over three miles to school. I ask hon. members to take this fact into consideration. What will this

State be expected to do if this Bill is put through? I think that this further explains my attitude on the second reading of the Bill, when I made the increased cost of the department the main ground for my opposition to it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I cannot agree with the hon. member in suggesting that because we make education free and compulsory we should therefore make the maintenance of the children at institutions free as well. If the parents send a child to one of the institutions they will be relieved of the cost of maintenance while it is there, and it is only reasonable that they should pay their share. This Bill is identical with the South Australian legislation on the question—

Hon. J. Duffell: That was in normal times.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: And is on all fours with those of the other States of the Commonwealth.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We are the authorities on this question. This is a question of the principle of our educational system, whether it is right or wrong, being infringed. We are going to make the education of these children compulsory; that is established by the Bill. It follows that we have to get exactly to the same level as the whole of the rest of the children in the country, namely, free, secular, and compulsory education. Once that is established as the guiding principle of our educational system, I cannot understand how it can be proposed to make the parents of those children, who are afflicted, pay for their education out of their own pockets. If the system provides for free, secular, and compulsory education then the parents of those children should not be compelled to pay for their education. I have much pleasure in supporting the amendment, and I only hope that it will carry out the object the hon. member has in view. The Minister evidently thinks so from his remarks.

The Colonial Secretary: What is the object of it?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The object is to make this education free, secular, and compulsory.

Hon. J. Duffell: That is the object.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I hope the hon. member is right in thinking that this will carry out his object. I hope this amendment will be carried, on the understanding that it will make the education of those children free in the sense that the education of all the other children in the State is free, free of expense to their parents.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The Colonial Secretary says that maintenance is not considered on the question of education. This proposal for compulsory education entails maintenance, and it is impossible to separate the two. The children have to be taken from home to be educated, and therefore are compulsorily taken, and this means maintenance for the children.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I do not see why we should not pass this clause as it stands. Complaint has been made that our system is costing the State too much, and I am pleased

to see that we are likely to embark in some new direction, and to recast some of our ideas in regard to compulsory free education. The Bill provides that it shall be at the discretion of the Minister as to what arrangements he can enter into with the parents as to how much they shall contribute towards the education and maintenance of their children. I intend to vote for the clause as it stands.

Hon. J. E. DODD: There is a difference of opinion between free education and free maintenance. This is a question of whether or not we can provide free maintenance. In this case, there may be a number of parents who can possibly provide the maintenance for their children, and others who may not be able to do so. Could not some provision be made by which the objections of the hon. member would be met, such as by the insertion of words to the effect that this maintenance may be paid if the parents are in a position to find the money?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The subsequent clauses provide for penalties, and I do not think this would cover the matter.

Hon. C. SOMMERS: The Minister has sole control and if the parents say that 5s. or 4s. is beyond their means, the Minister may make a reasonable agreement.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Any feelings of alarm I had have been increased by what Mr. Hamersley has said. He wants us to recast our ideas on education in the direction of making an attack on free and compulsory education. I ask hon. members to look at what that involves, and the argument is now centred on the question of maintenance and the question of education. So far as that is concerned, I, like Mr. Dodd, draw the line between education and maintenance and if the Minister will agree to the education being free and make the maintenance as low as he possibly can, I will support Mr. Dodd if he frames an amendment in that direction.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	5
Noes	13

Majority against	8
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AYES.

Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. J. W. Hickey
Hon. J. Duffell	(Teller.)

NOES

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. R. J. Lynn
Hon. H. Carson	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. E. Ross
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. C. Sommers
Hon. J. A. Greig	Hon. R. G. Ardagh
Hon. V. Hamersley	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: The clause as it stands is rather objectionable. We might amend it in the direction of providing that the House is prepared to afford education to children who are afflicted. Then, when parents are able to pay, they will be called upon to do so. If that amendment is agreed to I understand some of the subsequent clauses will have to be consequentially amended. My suggestion

would make it clear that the Committee are prepared to furnish afflicted children with free education and we would certainly expect the parents in a position to do so to pay towards their maintenance. I move—

“That in lines 6 and 7 of Subclause 2 the words ‘the education or’ be struck out.”

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: With the object of carrying out my desire, I move a further amendment—

“That in line 7 of Subclause 2, the words ‘and education’ be struck out.”

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: If the Government insist on free compulsory education and the hon. member’s amendment is carried, the Government will have to provide the institution wherein that education can be given. We must remember that the institutions in this State are not Government institutions and if the Bill becomes an Act with the amendment, the necessity will be created for the Government to provide these institutions.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: In paragraph (a) of Subclause 12 it is provided that a certificate from the medical practitioner, that in his opinion the sight of a child is so defective as to render that child unfit to be educated except by special means, shall be prima facie evidence that such child is blind. Has the Minister considered that in our schools there are many children whose sight may be defective and that a medical man may declare that such children should be separated from others?

Clause as amended put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—APPRENTICES.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st February.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH (North-East) [7.30]: The principle of the Bill is a good one. I believe in the indenture system. I do not think parents at the present time take sufficient interest in the matter of apprenticing their offspring to learn trades properly. This Bill is to protect apprentices on active service and in a number of cases positions are being kept open for those who are away fighting for the Empire. This is as it should be. I think also that no penalties of any kind should be imposed on those who are away. They should be protected in every way possible. The provision in regard to the age of apprentices who are away is a good one because many soldiers when they return will wish to finish their apprenticeship and become competent tradesmen. I do not know that I desire to say anything further except that probably the question of the number of apprentices to be apportioned to the different trades may bring about some discussion. That is a matter that can be better dealt with in Committee.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1-4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Untrue statement in forms:
Progress reported.

BILL—SEWERAGE WORKS VALIDATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st February.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.35]: I did not intend to speak on this Bill, but as my colleague Mr. Sanderson who moved the adjournment of the debate, is not here I would like to say that I received a copy of the letter referred to by the leader of the House and I am satisfied with the explanation given by the Colonial Secretary. I listened to the explanation and am now prepared to support the Bill in its entirety. The Government recognised the error that had been made and the lady referred to received some amount for the damage done. However, she wishes to oppose the Validation Bill with a view to harassing the Government. I am satisfied that justice has been done and I have no hesitation in supporting the second reading.

Hon. R. G. ARDAGH (North-East) [7.37]: I also received a copy of the letter referred to and I agree with what has been done by the Government and their officers.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—CURATOR OF INTESTATE ESTATES.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [7.40] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is the outcome of recommendations made by a select committee of the Legislative Assembly which sat to inquire into the Curator of Intestate Estates office some time during last year. Since the select committee forwarded their report to the House, the whole of the recommendations have been dealt with. I have here a complete report of the recommendations of the committee setting out in detail the manner in which each of these recommendations has been dealt with by the Government. The report is a very lengthy one and I doubt if it would serve any practical purpose if I read it. I intend to indicate briefly what were the recommendations of the committee and how they are dealt with. The full report, however, is available to any member who would like to see it. One question raised was the inadequacy of the pay made to the officer discharging these very important duties and pending a permanent reclassi-

fication a special allowance has been granted with a view of making the remuneration commensurate with the important duties discharged, also in accordance with the recommendations of the committee the staff has been increased and the office equipment has received consideration. In this office there was no typewriter which was quite essential for the proper discharge of the work and this has now been supplied. A proper system of keeping accounts has been laid out but the new system is only being followed in estates which are now coming to hand. The old estates are being dealt with under the old system. A special book-keeper is being utilised for this purpose. With reference to the suggestion that small estates should be quickly wound up, this Bill now before the House seeks to achieve that object. Steps will be taken in regard to many matters commented on by the committee, the valuation of jewellery, etc. and the disposal of the same, I daresay members are familiar with the cases that gave rise to the appointment of the committee. One point raised was that not sufficient care was taken in the valuation of jewellery and other assets belonging to persons whose estates fell into the hands of the Curator to administer. The Government officers are acting on the suggestion that out stations should be communicated with and other duties clearly explained on the lines of the new procedure. Steps are to be taken with a view to tracing the next of kin and arrangements will be made with the Treasurer whereby means will be made available to finance any estates that have no liquid assets in order that they may be carried on for the time being. Special staffs are to be appointed to deal with the numerous soldiers' estates now having to be administered. Members will realise that a number of soldiers' estates have now to be dealt with, and these are to be taken into consideration and administered with the least possible delay and without unnecessary expense to the liquidators. Such action will be taken as will secure the protection and rights of all parties. Coming more particularly to the immediate object of this Bill, I have to explain that the office of Curator of Intestate Estates takes its origin from an Act for the protection and better administration of estates of deceased persons passed in the year 1883. These provisions were repealed in 1903, and with some modifications were incorporated in the Administration Act of that year. Under the existing law the Curator is not charged with the administration of deceased persons' estates to such an extent as to enable him to complete the administration by distributing the assets among the beneficiaries. That is a defect in the existing legislation, and that was the defect pointed out by the select committee to which I have referred; and it is in order to remedy that, and to permit of finality being arrived at, this Bill is introduced. The Curator's functions under the existing legislation are to protect the estate and to pay the debts of the deceased pending the grant of probate to the executor or of letters of administration to the next of kin. It may easily happen

under this Act—and as a matter of fact it has happened—that estates have never been wound up at all, which is obviously a most unsatisfactory condition of affairs. The procedure, too, under the existing Act is cumbersome and unnecessarily expensive. In the first place, an order to collect is granted. Then, after an interval of time, varying according to the value of the estate from three months in small estates to six months in the case of estates exceeding £100, an order to administer may be obtained, enabling the Curator to pay debts. But, notwithstanding the orders to collect and to administer, no part of the estate can be distributed amongst legatees or next of kin except small advances by order of the Court, until ordinary probate or administration has been obtained apart from the Curator himself. The object of this Bill is to enable administration, with all the powers of an administrator under letters of administration with or without a will annexed, to be exercised merely in those cases in which, under the existing law, partial administration can be granted to the Curator subject to these conditions. When the Bill was originally introduced in another place, the intention was to give the Curator extended powers. But it was thought that amendment in that direction was a step towards making the Curator a public trustee; and after discussion those clauses were eliminated, with the result that all this Bill proposes at the present time to do is to empower the Curator to deal finally and completely with those cases which he has power to deal with at the present time, but which he is not now able to bring to finality. These are the conditions to which the extended powers are subject: (a) That the Court in its discretion instead of granting administration may make in the first place a temporary order for collection and protection only, or may limit or restrict its grant; (b) that, on the grant of probate or administration to the executor or the next of kin, the Curator is at once superseded. It will be observed, therefore, that without in any way interfering with the rights of an executor or of the next of kin to administration, in all proper cases where the Curator should intervene administration is granted by an order in the simplest form, which confers all the powers and duties of an administrator, and enables the Curator to carry out the administration to its completion except so far as probate or letters of administration may be applied for and granted independently of the Curator, in which case he merely hands over the estate to his successor; that is, the person to whom probate or letters of administration may be granted. The effect of this amendment will be that, so long as the parties interested in the deceased's estate approve of the administration by the Curator, the initial orders to collect and administer will suffice, and that the delay and expense of procedure under the present Act—first of all having to obtain an order to collect, secondly, having to obtain an order to administer, and then having to wait probably for many years for someone to apply for probate or letters of administration, so as to permit of distribution of the

estate among the beneficiaries—will all be avoided. I may mention that there are cases in which estates have awaited distribution for many years; there are estates which have been in the Curator's hands for very many years and show no signs of disappearing. The Curator does not intervene on the death of any person except in one or other of the following cases: First, where some person leaves no executor, widow, husband, or next of kin, resident within the jurisdiction and willing and capable of acting in execution of his or her will or administration of his or her estate; secondly, where the executor named renounces probate of the will of the deceased, and all the persons primarily entitled to administration, by writing filed with the Master decline to apply for administration; thirdly, where probate or administration is not applied for within three months of death; fourthly, where after the expiration of 30 days from the death there appears to the court to be no reasonable probability of application being made within such period as aforesaid, or where the estate or any portion thereof is unprotected or liable to waste and the executor or husband, widow, or next of kin is absent from the locality, or of such portion of the estate, or is not known or has not been found; and, lastly, where the estate or any substantial portion thereof is of a perishable nature, or is in danger of being lost or destroyed. Provisions have been adopted from the Acts of the Eastern States and New Zealand for reciprocity, and to regulate the dealing with the assets in several States whether death occurs in Western Australia or elsewhere, and to facilitate the payment of money or delivery of chattels to beneficiaries living beyond the Commonwealth and New Zealand. The fees of the Curator have been slightly raised, from one per cent. on the value of the estate to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and from four per cent. on moneys actually collected to five per cent. These increases in fees, I think hon. members will agree, are quite justified when we come to compare them with fees charged in other circumstances and in other States. At the present time, under our Act the charges are one per cent. on the total value of the estate. The West Australian Trustee Company charge $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the capital value up to £50,000. In South Australia the Curator charges $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. In Victoria he charges five per cent. on the gross amount realised. In New South Wales the charge is five per cent., and if real estate an additional 2 per cent. New Zealand and Tasmania each charge $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. So that in fixing our rate at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. we shall still be lower than some, and as low as the lowest, of the other Australian States.

Hon. J. Duffell: What is the New Zealand charge?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have not got the New Zealand charge.

Hon. J. Duffell: I think New Zealand has a public trustee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Under our present Act four per cent. is charged on moneys actually collected, while the West

Australian Trustee Company charge five per cent. on all incomes and out of pocket expenses. This Bill proposes to charge only five per cent. on collections. A calculation has been made showing the cost of winding up estates up to £100. Under our present Act the cost would be £10 17s. 6d., while under this Bill the cost would be £11 17s. 6d.; so that I think it will be admitted that no injustice is being done by the increased fees proposed to be charged. The supplemental clauses of the Bill do not materially alter the existing Act. That portion of the Administration Act which applied particularly to the Curator of Intestate Estates is repealed by one of the schedules to this Act, and power is given to the judges to make such rules as are necessary. That provision is already in the existing Act, and is transferred to this Bill. There are probably some details of the Bill which hon. members will desire to discuss in Committee, but for the present purpose I do not think it is necessary for me to say any more. I move—

“That the Bill be now read a second time.”

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [7.56]: I am rather pleased that this Bill proposes some amendments in the measure which is already on the Statute-book. It is very desirable that the position which has existed for the past few years should be altered. To me it seems most extraordinary that the Curator should have in his hands estates for periods up to 20 years. Such a state of affairs ought to be brought to an end. I have not looked closely into the measure, and I do not know whether it repeals the whole of the existing Act.

The Colonial Secretary: It repeals only that portion of the Administration Act dealing with intestate estates.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Act certainly wants amending in one direction. That is in respect of the section which makes the administration of estates the value of £500 a close combine for the solicitors of this State. That is an extraordinary position, and one which should be corrected; and I hope steps have been taken to correct it under this Bill. Anyone who has to administer an estate naturally wishes to work in conjunction with the Government department administering the Act; but this Act specially debars any officer of the Supreme Court from giving information to a trustee in an estate if that estate is of the value of more than £500. Any question arising in connection with such an estate, the officers are by the Act absolutely debarred from answering, with the result that the trustee is compelled to go to a solicitor unless he cares to take upon himself the responsibility of construing the Act on his own account and bludgeoning through in his own way. I certainly hope that the debarring section to which I have referred will be eliminated from the principal Act. If this amending Bill does not provide for that, I hope the Colonial Secretary will take the opportunity of inserting the necessary provision when the Bill is in Committee.

The Colonial Secretary: But this Bill deals only with intestate estates.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It refers, however, to the principal Administration Act, and I hope the Minister will give us an opportunity of going a little further and of having that section repealed. I rose merely in order to draw attention to that section, which has been brought under my notice. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East—in reply) [8.0]: If the second reading is carried, I shall be very pleased to postpone the Committee stage until to-morrow, so that the hon. member may have an opportunity of dealing with the matter.

(Question put and passed.)

Bill read a second time.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT (CONTINUATION.)

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st February.

Hon. H. CARSON (Central) [8.2]: Hon. members must recognise that this has been a very valuable piece of legislation to the State.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Expensive, if not valuable.

Hon. H. CARSON: I am surprised at the interjection. At the present time the whole amount outstanding is just about half a million, with a prospect of a considerable reduction. Undoubtedly this has been a very good piece of legislation, not only for the farmer but for the State, and it will eventually be the means of enabling the farmer to get over all his difficulties. Mr. Clarke cautioned the Government against dealing with settlers; more particularly those in the dry areas. I am very optimistic regarding the dry areas, and I think if hon. members would look up the figures for the last two years they would find that the returns from the dry areas have been very much better than those from what are called the wet areas. The policy of the Government in regard to the dry areas has not been a good one. Certainly, it has been amended of late years, but the amended policy should have been initiated at the very beginning of the opening up of the dry areas, that is to say, the extension of the term of payments by five years and the enlarging of the areas to be held, so that a man would be enabled to carry stock. Mr. Clarke referred particularly to the Agricultural Bank Act. No one will gainsay that the establishment of the Agricultural Bank has been of very great advantage to the State. It would have been impossible for this country to be developed as it has been without the Agricultural Bank. No doubt there will be losses, but they will not amount to any very considerable sum. No State in Australia has been developed without cost to the State. It will be recognised that the moneyed man very rarely takes up the farming proposition, and I think we are the more indebted to the men who have gone out into the dry areas to develop the country. If we are not going to

develop those dry areas it will be a very poor outlook for the State. Let me give an instance. Most members know Mr. Leake, who started 40 or 50 years ago at Kellerberrin. After reaching the age of 70 years he goes out still further and takes up country as a farming proposition. Surely this is evidence that these dry areas are not going to be the failure some would have us believe. My farm is supposed to be in a dry area, yet last year we had 30 inches of rain. These so-called dry areas will, sooner or later, prove a very great asset to the State. The men who pioneered them have done so in abnormal conditions of adversity. It is the duty of the State to encourage those men, so that they shall be able to make good. I wish particularly to call attention to a matter which I think should be fully explained. No doubt the Act has been abused, both by the farmer and, in at least one instance, by the Minister administering it. Probably hon. members are aware that recently we had a case in court, *Drage versus the Crown*. The papers in connection with this case were asked for, but the Minister said the case was sub judice, and so declined to let us have the papers. A previous Minister granted a very large sum to a tenant farmer. It was the duty of the Minister to have obtained the consent of the landlord to this transaction. This he did not do. When this client of the Industries Assistance Board got his crop off, the landlord seized the wheat, which I think he was justified in doing. The Industries Assistance Board would not give him a certificate, and so he sued the Government for it, and won the case. Now the Government have appealed against that decision, and it is going to cost the State a considerable amount if the Crown loses the case. Personally, I think that if justice be done the Crown will lose the case, because this gentleman is the landlord, and the rent of the property is his living, and he has been deprived of that living through the neglect of the Minister to get his consent to the rendering of assistance to his tenant. I know that the board objected to the granting of the money to that client, but the Minister overruled the board's objection. I think we should know something more about this case. In all probability I shall ask for some other papers which will serve to disclose the position. To complicate the matter further, this client of the Industries Assistance Board who received the money in spite of the objection of the board, has been evicted by the landlord.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): When was the advance made?

Hon. H. CARSON: In 1915, and a very considerable amount it was. The judge who tried the case said that the Act was not for clients of that sort. I hope the Government will give some explanation regarding the matter. Some of the farmers have abused the Act, and I trust the Government inspectors will see that those abusing it will not get any further assistance, and that, on the other hand, the inspectors will stand by those endeavouring to do the best for themselves and for the country. I will support the measure.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [8.10]: A great many people believe that the assistance given by the Industries Assistance Board is a very great blunder. But we have to take into consideration the facts as they have arisen from time to time, and in looking over the report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture I notice that they sum up the reasons for the position in four clauses. The first of these comprises the droughts of 1911 and 1914. The second is the delayed construction of railways, which necessitated the Government coming to the rescue of the settlers. For the third they point to the enforced payment of rents and water rates on the part of the Crown, as against the settler, which made his position so much more difficult, and the fourth reason given is want of experience amongst settlers. That is the summing up of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into agriculture. To those reasons I would add another. I say the troubles of the settlers have been caused very largely by the regulations issued by Mr. Bath when Minister for Lands. I refer to the cancellation of all transfers. It is well recognised in the agricultural districts that when Mr. Bath issued his edict that he would not countenance the transfer of blocks, he knocked the bottom out of the securities of the men settled on the land. Up to that time the financial institutions had freely encouraged the settler in his improvements, had helped him, and were charging him a very reasonable rate of interest. In every direction one could obtain financial help to develop the land in a bona-fide way. But when that regulation was issued it naturally meant consternation on the part of the financial houses. The backing previously given to the settlers had to be withdrawn, with the result that numbers of settlers were forced to try to obtain assistance from the Agricultural Bank. But the bank was not in a position to grant all the applications. This, combined with the droughts and the war, placed those settlers in a very unenviable position, and it became necessary for the State to save its securities. It held the whole of the settlers' securities, and no financial institution was in as good a position as the Crown to render the necessary support to the large industry which had been fostered by previous Governments. Here I pay a tribute to Mr. Mitchell, one of the Ministers directly responsible for placing a great many settlers on the land. Mr. Mitchell has been blamed from one end of the State to the other for putting settlers in dry areas, which, as Mr. Carson has told us this evening, have undoubtedly given better results than many of the older settled districts. I have only recently had a trip through some of these areas, and am satisfied that the whole of the development which has been done will repay this State, if only from the point of view of the increased and improved stock-carrying capacity of the country where that development has occurred. There are millions of acres which are to-day available for the carrying of stock, upon which it would have been hopeless before this money had

been expended to attempt to put any stock at all. In that direction I am satisfied that the State will fully recoup itself, altogether apart from the question of the growth of wheat or other cereals. I have never yet seen anything definite from this, or any other Government succeeding that operating at that time, as to the attitude to be adopted in regard to transfers. I doubt if the regulation has ever been recalled, and it would be interesting to know if it is still in force. It would also be interesting, to those who are likely to advance money to the settlers, to know whether the Minister in charge is going to administer the Act in the manner indicated at the time the regulation was brought into force.

Hon. J. A. Greig: I do not think that regulation was ever enforced.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: With this sort of thing hanging over our heads financial institutions would be absolutely stupid to advance another penny until that regulation is definitely withdrawn. So far I have not been able to ascertain that it has been withdrawn. I should like to say something with regard to the manner in which settlers view this particular institution. I was speaking to one settler the other day, and he told me that this board was one of the best things ever passed by any State Government, that he had been on the Industries Assistance Board for several years, and that it would take a team of horses to drag him off it. He further said that no matter how financial he became he would still stand by the board because he felt he could rely upon it. I also got a further interesting statement from this gentleman to the effect that ever since he had been on the board he had only received one statement from it, and that this particular statement gave him an extraordinary amount of concern. Although the wheat pool had received the whole of his wheat, extending over the last three years, and he had put into the pool no less than £1,100 worth of wheat, and although all this had been placed to his credit in the Industries Assistance Board, when he received the statement it showed that he was still £900 in debt to the Board. As he was only £900 in debt when he started he could not quite understand it. I told him that he must have had some intermediate account, and have been unable to follow out the true position, but he said he had only received one statement during the time he had been under the board and that was in March last. It will also be interesting to know if there are many others on the board who have only received statements once in three years. This gentleman I am speaking of is a well-known citizen of the State, and holds a very important position in the eastern wheat belt. I take it that his case would only be typical of other cases, and we should know if this system is the one generally adopted by the board, or whether this is only an exceptional instance. There are many men under the board who are drawing 9s. a day to work on their farms. Where a close inspection takes place, no doubt this has been the means of assisting many deserving families, but there are instances in

which undoubtedly it has proved a very expensive system of keeping men upon the land. That 9s. a day enables some of the settlers to continue their operations of loafing around the district and refusing to take on work anywhere else when there is plenty of it available, and in many instances the actions of the department have been abused. I take it that the department knows, through its inspectors, when it makes these advances, that the settlers concerned are doing bona fide developmental work in connection with the improvement of their property and getting in the harvest for next year, but I am still satisfied that there are many instances in which these liabilities are being dodged by the settlers. Of course, we cannot keep a close watch upon every man, but it would be just as well if a close watch was kept by the department for fear lest we should be paying too great a price for keeping some men on the land, who perhaps would be very much better off it. I am reminded of a matter of very great concern to storekeepers who had advanced money and assisted settlers by way of goods, machinery, etc., and in fact practically kept them on the land, but who have been unable to get anything from the receipts of the farmers. Whilst the Government are advancing 9s. a day to keep these men on the land and are looking after their wheat, they are taking from the resources of the farmers their first claims for rent and water rates and other charges, but these poor storekeepers who have been waiting all this time are not even able to get interest upon their money, and are told by the department that the surplus has been nil. It is very hard indeed that some consideration cannot be extended to these storekeepers. I myself have been in the position of having sold a horse or two to one or two farmers, but it invariably happens that we put in about three years of waiting and receive absolutely nothing from the department at the end of that time. It does not matter very much with regard to small amounts, but there are many storekeepers who are in a very unenviable position in this regard. It must be galling to them to find that they are still overlooked, in spite of the fact that many of the people who had the money have put large amounts of wheat into the pool, and that the Government still take the full measure of their share, whereas the storekeepers who deserve the greatest consideration for the help they have extended to these settlers before the Government stepped in, have had nothing done for them at all. I support the further continuance of this measure because I realise that there is noble work being done by our settlers. The women of the country also are working nobly side by side with their husbands. Only a few days ago I saw a boy 10 years of age driving a wagon down a road with a load of wheat up and six horses in the wagon. There are many boys of that age doing that kind of thing and doing very much harder work than that, but, unfortunately, what with the rabbits and bad crops, and the like, some of these farmers have only had an advance of 3s. and are not making as much out of their crops as are the people who are handling them at the railway

siding and on our wharves. I take this opportunity of congratulating the Minister upon his action in placing the handling of wheat under the control of one firm, and one firm only. He was quite right in doing that. If the matter is left to one firm to deal with, and the farmers work in with that firm, we shall be able to devise a much cheaper scheme of handling the wheat harvest of Australia. That bulk handling has not been brought in for the benefit of those on the Industries Assistance Board is a matter for regret. The whole of the production of these settlers has been handled at great expense in the past. Prior to that scheme being brought into operation the wheat was handled by several firms who shipped it home to London, and whose charges, together with the charges at the London end, made a total cost of more than double what it will cost under the present scheme to handle the wheat. These firms used to get 3d. a bushel to handle the wheat at this end, but were sub-letting the work in the country for ½d. a bushel. They were allowing ½d. a bushel to their sub-agents to do work for which they were getting six times as much. The reply was that they took all the responsibility. I have never yet been able to realise what that responsibility was. My opinion is that the responsibility was all upon the shoulders of the poor unfortunates who produced the wheat. That will be the finality of it and therefore if the profits made by these farmers can only be handled by the one firm, it will enable that one firm to deal with the wheat in a much better manner and to distribute whatever they make within their own borders rather than pay dividends for companies outside. I therefore congratulate the Minister in the attitude he adopted. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. C. SOMMERS (Metropolitan) [8.31]: A number of farmers who were under the Industries Assistance Board are to-day clear of debt. Naturally they are anxious that their outside creditors should now be paid, but their difficulty is to find out how they stand with the Government, and repeated applications have been made for a statement of accounts. It is almost impossible to get that statement of accounts from the Industries Assistance Board, and I would specially direct the attention of the Honorary Minister to this state of affairs. As Mr. Hamersley has pointed out settlers have been assisted by storekeepers and financial institutions in past years. Private individuals also have helped them to a considerable extent, and it does seem unfair that now farmers are in the position to pay they are not allowed to do so. Of my own personal knowledge I know of cases in which farmers are clear of debt and it is impossible for them to get a statement of accounts. If the Minister desires to help the farmers I can make another suggestion. The Government should give closer attention to the question of the supply of good sacks. The majority of sacks this season are so faulty that in filling them in the field many fall to pieces. Every sack costs practically 1s. landed on the farm, and as settlers only get 9s. at the siding for the bag

and the wheat it contains, it is a serious item to lose 1s. on each bag. A few years ago sacks were really of good quality. Now there is a weakness either in the seam or in the centre. It is only adding insult to injury to charge such prices for a faulty article. Apart from that the bags when handled at the siding often go to pieces and that means extra labour in re-filling and sewing, to say nothing of the waste of wheat which must take place. Attention should also be given to those people who are on the land who will never make good. To my knowledge advances have been made to men who are absolutely hopeless, men who never ought to be on the land, and the sooner they are sent off the better it will be for themselves and for the State. To continue making advances to these people is only to pile up our debt. In many cases the men are not suited to the calling and sometimes the land they are on is inferior and that makes the position worse. A thorough re-organisation has taken place and the system of investigation and inspection is much better than it was, but when an inspector reports that a man is in a hopeless position, the loss should be cut straight away. If the Minister desires, I can give him some cases on which he can make a start. There is not the slightest doubt that what is occurring in our own district must be occurring in others, and the sooner the promiscuous lending of money is ended the better it will be for the State. I repeat, in conclusion, that as the trading community have been so liberal in establishing these men, it is only a fair thing to ask the Government to make special efforts to give settlers statements showing how their accounts stand.

Hon. H. STEWART (South-East) [8.36]: Probably I would not have spoken on this Bill except for the fact that Mr. Kirwan raised the point as to whether it was necessary for the board to continue its operations. The hon. member also said that all sections of the community were unanimous in the desire for the establishment of the board, but they seemed to be of an opinion that a mistake had been made. At any rate, the hon. member made use of an expression to the effect that we, too, were equally culpable for the mistake. In reply to the general tenor of the hon. member's remarks I may say that the Industries Assistance Board was founded to deal with the cases which were so bad that the merchants would not carry them on, and the board was established because representatives of the farmers inaugurated a public meeting and took a firm stand. There were two refusals on the part of the Government, but eventually the Government recognised that this was a matter of vital importance to the State and that the men who were then in unfortunate circumstances should be assisted over a difficult period and given a fighting chance to make good by remaining on the land. That is the principle which is guiding the Government at the present time. Each man should have a fair chance, and the Minister in charge of the Industries Assistance Board, having classified the cases now

under the board it is obvious that the business of the board is being handled in a more systematic way than was done in the past. The House will probably be interested to learn that a great improvement has taken place in the conduct of the affairs of the Board. It may be illustrated in this way: Before the re-organisation of the board had taken place, a clerk in the office of the Farmers and Settlers' Association had devoted the whole of his time to bringing cases of settlers who wrote down to the Association under the notice of the board. There should not have been any necessity for such a service, but the distressed settlers could themselves get no satisfaction whatever from the board. In recent months, however, since the re-organisation for which Mr. Mitchell must be given credit, probably only two cases per month have been brought under the notice of the board by the Farmers and Settlers' Association. That is evidence of a substantial improvement in the conduct of business by the board. At the meeting advocating assistance to distressed farmers Mr. Gardiner stated that it was worth a million to the country to keep the people on the land. Now they are classified, and from the cases which have been brought under our individual notice, we find that there may be some who should not any longer remain engaged in the agricultural industry. Through no fault of his own a man might be to-day in a very bad way and classed by the Industries Assistance Board as "doubtful" or "bad," owing entirely to unfavourable climatic conditions and hard luck, but in one season he might be able to make good, and so improve his position as to be classed as "fair" or "good," and in another season he might emerge with a credit balance and then be could remain with the board with a surplus to his credit or finish off his business with the board. Mr. Kirwan stated that he would like to see those men who were in credit with the board discharged. Those men, however, have been so well treated that they are inspired with confidence at the treatment the board has given them, and while they desire to remain the board has the use of their credit balances amounting to about £30,000. They are in a good position and so long as the board has the conduct of these men's business, I cannot see that there is any objection to them remaining still on the books of the board. These men who may to-day be in a fortunate position have been through adverse times, and having found a body which has given them fair treatment, they are no doubt anxious to continue their dealings with that body, and in some instances, too, it may be, that having had good treatment, they desire to remain associated with the board in the event of misfortune again overtaking them. We know it is not advisable for a man lightly to change from one financial institution to another. The Industries Assistance Board and the farmers have got to understand each other, and unless there is some good reason why the business relations should cease, I see no objection, while the board is continuing its operations, to such farmers remaining connected with

the board if they desire to do so. There is another point and it is that the board has really been a clearing house for the other Government departments, and probably a quarter of a million sterling has been paid in land rents alone. Mr. Hamersley made reference to the question of 9s. a day. We have had cases brought under our notice where people have really imposed upon the board and drawn their 9s. a day and not tried to make good. No doubt the Minister will, through his inspectors, weed these people out before the lapse of much further time. It seems hardly a fair and proper arrangement that there should be a rate of 9s. a day for different men on the board when some are married and have large families, while others have only themselves to keep. That is a system that I do not think should have been allowed to go on up to the present stage. The Royal Commission on Agriculture made a serious indictment against the Agricultural Department, namely, that the Agricultural Department failed to cope with the position, as the State developed from time to time. Had there been that perspicacity in good administration, that is one of the things which we should expect in a department of agriculture, there would not have been made such a mistake as that. From every point of view a married man with a family is particularly valuable to the State and especially to the agricultural industry. It is difficult to inculcate a love for agriculture among the people reared in the cities, so that when the Bill offers the same inducement to the single man to make good as to the married man it is not offering encouragement commensurate with the importance of the State, to the farmer with a family. With these few remarks I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister—East—in reply) [8.47]: Some members have spoken on the Bill as if it were some drastic reform. Mr. Kiwan in the course of his speech raised many points and I shall endeavour to give him the information required. First the hon. member said that a great deal of money had been mis-spent in connection with the Industries Assistance Board, the Agricultural Bank, and Agricultural Commission. So far as the Industries Assistance Board is concerned, certain losses were made through the importation of bran, pollard, and maize, but that was at a time when there was a drought. The main reason for the loss was that the season broke up rather early thereby necessitating the Government of the day making a reduction in the price charged for these products so as to get them off their hands. It is also well known that certain advances for stores were made monthly although settlers were not actually working on their blocks. This happened in the early stages of the working of the Act when the old board was in existence. It was a difficult matter for the Government to bring an Act into working order and the board into existence—a new organisation—in the space of a few months, and I see now as I said at the time, it was left

too late. It did not give the Government sufficient time to do justice. As to losses that have occurred, these were in connection with assistance rendered, and in any large undertaking which the Government might take on, one of the main reasons is that persons are not particular in their efforts. While losses undoubtedly were made it is pleasing to note that the properties sold by the Agricultural Bank total £11,405. I refer to properties taken over by new clients, they number 36 in all. The Agricultural Commission stated that there was hardly any necessity for the Industries Assistance Board to go on now, but I say that it is just as necessary now to have a board as in the first instance. A summary of the Commission's report appeared in the Press on December 14 and the Commission arrived at the conclusion that instead of a board being in existence a system of payment to storekeepers should have been inaugurated. I think if that had been done there would have been more abuses than the small abuses that occur under the present system. Reading between the lines, the report indicates that the work of the board should be carried on but limited to poor and struggling clients only. There are clients who are willing to leave their accounts with the board; in fact clients are asking for them to be left with the board. The department should not say that because a man is becoming solvent he should go off the board. If a person's financial position enables him to carry on, he can get a clearance right away. There have been accounts sent out which have not reached the hands of clients but I say that any man in a solvent position can get a clearance. Dozens of cases have passed through my hands of men who say, "We are solvent, why cannot we get a clearance?" But on inquiry I have found these people are a long way behind. Farmers are, as a rule, poor book-keepers. If any client is in a sound position and can carry on and wants a clearance, the board does not hesitate to give it to him. It is a benefit to the department if a settler is in a solvent position to allow him to stay on, because the board can finance on that man's money. Mr. Kirwan said that no indication had been given as to the cost of the board, and the approximate loss. The administration of the board for the 12 months ending on the 31st March showed a loss of £6,460. The total loss made by the board to date on profit and loss was £51,500. Mr. Kirwan asked for particulars as to advances made to mines. Under the Industries Assistance Board no advances have been made to mines. Mr. Kirwan went on to ask how the board had been affected by the rabbit invasion. Of course the rabbit invasion will affect all securities unless it is dealt with at once. I cannot allow Mr. Clarke's reference to what he called a drastic Act to go unnoticed. I do not know why it is called a drastic Act. It has been of wonderful advantage to the farmers and to the State in general. Mr. Clarke referred to drought areas and said it was doubtful if wheat could be grown in these areas. I asked several times

what was meant by dry areas, but could get no opinion. During the last three years the wheat yield in these areas averaged better than on the areas closer in. I sought for information in regard to these dry areas. I wanted to know what part of the country the hon. member and other hon. members were referring to, but they could not tell me; they only referred to the dry areas. From what I can understand a dry area would be an area with only an eight-inch rainfall. There is a ten-inch rainfall where wheat is being grown and in these areas it will be found that splendid results are obtained. Another statement by Mr. Clarke was that women were working in bran bag skirts, and that farmers were living on boiled wheat and treacle. I have seen no evidence of poverty like that. During all the tours of the Royal Commission they could not find one case of people in such a bad way. I had a knowledge of the country long before the Industries Assistance Board came into existence and I never knew of a case of that description.

Interjection.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): One would think from the interjection of the hon. member that he was opposed to this measure. I would ask him to bear in mind that it stimulates production, and that the only way in which this State can succeed is by production. Mr. Carson made reference to a case which is sub judice—the Drage case. I cannot deal with the matter this evening, on that account. It arose out of an advance granted some two or three years ago, and I am sorry that I am prevented from giving Mr. Carson to-night the information he desires. I quite agree with hon. members who stated that the payment of 9s. per day is in some cases abused. But, still, there have been drastic alterations during the past 12 months; and under the present system, whereby inspectors have to pay monthly visits to the individual farms and see the amount of work done before cheques are paid, most of those abuses have been wiped out. I do not say they have all been wiped out; there may be a few still in existence; but, if any loafing is going on, then the inspectors are not doing their duty. However, the cases of abuse must be in an extremely small minority. Mr. Hamersley made a reference to bulk handling. I shall not speak on that question to-night, beyond assuring the hon. member that it has not been lost sight of by the Government, and that since taking office we have not neglected it for ten minutes. I may add that we hope to have ample provision for bulk storage available next season. As regards the references by Mr. Hamersley to the cost of wheat handling, notwithstanding the fact that in all previous years Western Australia was looked upon as the most costly of the Australian States for wheat handling, this year we are far below the lowest of the of the Eastern States in the cost of handling of crops. Our cost to date has been very low indeed. On the subject of corn sacks, I quite agree with Mr. Sommers, but nothing can be done to get a better quality until different conditions prevail in the foreign countries which export jute. I have been in close touch

with the matter for some time, and, so far as I am able to judge, the merchants in India do not care a jot whether they ever sell a bale of corn sacks to Australia at all. What they are looking for is two million pound orders from the Imperial Government. With regard to farmers under the Industries Assistance Board, it was decided some four months ago that every precaution should be taken, and that where it is conclusively proved that a client of the board cannot make good, his account should be closed. Still, every consideration will be given to clients who have a reasonable chance of pulling through. With regard to settlers who are on inferior lands, I may say that a number of them have been transferred to other properties, and that this process is being carried out almost daily. Those who are in an impossible position, in the way of inferior land, are being transferred to better properties, where they will have a chance to make good. Mr. Stewart's reference to the payment of 9s. per day has no bearing whatever on the Agricultural Department. The matter is one relating to the Industries Assistance Board, who are separate altogether from the Agricultural Department.

Hon. H. Stewart: That was in the initial stages of the Industries Assistance Board.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): The Industries Assistance Board at no time had any connection with the Agricultural Department, though they were at one time connected with the Agricultural Bank. When any indictment is presented—as in connection with the Royal Commission on Agriculture—I contend specific charges should be made. It is easy to prefer indictments against departments, but I contend that the charges should be of a definite nature. I do not know that I need keep the House longer this evening.

Hon. V. Hamersley: What about the storekeepers?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): The Government are dividing up the returns from clients of the Industries Assistance Board on the same basis as last year—a percentage basis. Whilst I know there are some very hard cases, in which the storekeepers have had their accounts hung up for a considerable period, the fact remains that in the case of any client whose position is solvent a percentage of the account is being paid each year.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 9.8 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 26th February, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

MOTION — GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

The PREMIER (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore) [4.36]: I move—

"That for the remainder of the session Government business take precedence of all motions and orders of the day."

We are now discussing the Estimates, and I think all members will agree that it is undesirable to protract the session any further than absolutely necessary. Private members have already had a good deal of time to bring forward motions, and nearly eight months of the financial year have now expired. Furthermore, the Government desire to get into session again as soon as possible after the end of the current financial year; and, with that end in view, hon. members will, I trust, support me in this endeavour to complete the labours of the present session as speedily as possible. Private members have already been given every latitude in connection with their business. The time for private members' business, as we know, expires at a quarter to eight o'clock on Wednesday evening; but I have never sought to prevent discussion beyond that hour, having always moved that motions be continued. In the circumstances, the House will no doubt agree that the time has arrived for curtailing private members' business.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [4.39]: I can quite understand the Premier's desire to get on with Government business, and more particularly to have the Estimates passed. In moving to restrict the time allotted to private members' business, the hon. gentleman, of course, is only following the practice adopted in previous sessions. It is true that the Premier has been generous in the time he has allowed to private members since the session opened; but it seems to me that in carrying the motion we should be swinging from the extreme of generosity in this respect to the other pole. I have no doubt that there are various motions on the Notice Paper which hon. members regard as important; and, in addition, there are one or two private Bills. To deprive private members entirely of the opportunity of having their business discussed would, in my opinion, be going too far. The practice in the past has been to reduce private members' time by making it every alternate Wednesday; and then, towards the close of the session, the motion now submitted by the Premier has usually been agreed to by the House. I think we might well follow that practice this session. After all, a day or so is neither