

bourne would establish a dangerous precedent.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

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

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Council.

AS TO DISCHARGE OF ORDERS.

Hon. J. SCADDAN (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [11.59]: Before the Premier moves the adjournment of the House, I wish to ask him whether he proposes to discharge Orders of the Day No. 16 and No. 17, the Workers' Homes Act Amendment Bill and the Special Lease (Stirling Estate) Bill?

The Premier: The latter, decidedly not.

Hon. J. SCADDAN: If the Premier does not propose to do that, he will be taking a very unfair advantage of the House. He has had the Special Lease Enabling Bill, Order of the Day No. 9, discharged; and that was a measure about which the Minister for Works made a good deal of noise, saying that it was urgently needed to give an opportunity for opening up the Lake Clifton lime deposits.

The Premier: This refers to Nelson Location. The Lake Clifton Bill became law before Christmas.

Hon. J. SCADDAN: The Workers' Homes Act Amendment Bill, I think, might be discharged.

The Premier: I will consider that.

MOTIONS WITHDRAWN.

Hon. J. SCADDAN (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [11.58]: I desire permission to withdraw the motions standing in my name and appearing on the Notice Paper as Nos. 16 and 17 (files and papers in connection with the probate of the will of Miss Catherine Hayes; papers and files in connection with the retirement of Mr. E. B. Johnston from the public service); and on behalf of the hon. member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) the motion standing in his name and appearing as No. 18, (that Mr. Speaker, Mr. E. B. Johnston, does not

possess the confidence of the House); and also on behalf of the member for Mt. Margaret (Mr. Taylor) the motion standing in his name and appearing on the Notice Paper as No. 20 (to rescind resolution of the House contained in paragraph 3 of *Votes and Proceedings* of 13th February.). I should also like permission to withdraw the motion standing in my name on the Notice Paper and which was set down for Tuesday next (that Mr. E. B. Johnston be removed from the position of Speaker).

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will instruct the Clerk to remove these motions from the Notice Paper.

House adjourned at 12 Midnight.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 6th March, 1917.

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

PETITION—EARLY CLOSING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Hon. J. DUFFELL presented a petition from 58 master hairdressers asking that the Early Closing Act Amendment Bill be not passed.

Petition received and read, and ordered to be taken into consideration during the Committee stage of the Bill.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Mines Regulation Act, rule. 2, Mining Act, regulation. 3, Audit Act, Order-in-Council to vary appropriation. 4, Health Act, Kalgoorlie roads board amended by-law. 5, Boya quarry, audited accounts for year ended 30th June, 1916. 6, Roads Act, uniform by-laws for registration of camels in the North-West.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Sale of Liquor and Tobacco Bill.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. W. KINGSMILL leave of absence granted to the Hon. A. G. Jenkins (Metropolitan) for the remainder of the session on the ground of ill health.

BILL—STATE CHILDREN ACT
AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary, and read a first time.

MOTION—LAND VALUES TAXATION,
TO INQUIRE.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [4.42]: I move—

That, in the opinion of this Council, an inquiry should be instituted by the Government to test the efficacy of extending the principle of land values taxation in order to relieve the burden on industry, reduce railway freights, and to more effectively deal with the repatriation of soldiers.

In moving this motion I wish to disclaim any party motives whatever. I am not instructed by my party in this matter, nor do I wish to associate the party with my motion other than that land values taxation forms part of the Labour party's platform. I intend to refrain altogether from touching on party issues, except to say that in any references I may make to matters of finance I entirely agree with the very able and lucid speech my colleague Mr. Drew made on the second reading of the Treasury Bonds Deficiency Bill. In other respects I do not desire to touch upon anything of a party

nature at all. The issues involved in the subject to the motion are altogether too important to be discussed from a party standpoint. Anyone who surveys current events, whether in the nation as represented by the Commonwealth, or in the international sphere, must experience misgivings. Events are not cheering, to say the least of it. From the international, or even the national, standpoint, this Parliament can do nothing; but I think it is our duty to take stock with a view to ascertaining whether there is not something that we can do to put matters on a better footing within the State. Western Australia has at present a deficit of approximately two millions, an amount which, with a population of about 320,000, is somewhat alarming. Again, our farming friends tell us that wheat will not pay to grow for a return of less than 3s. per bushel. The mining industry is not improving; rather, it is retrograding. As regards the timber industry, and in fact almost every industry of this State, the same condition obtains at the present time. Matters are very far indeed from being satisfactory. In fact, it may be said that unless some alteration is made during the next year or two Western Australia will be just about bordering on a state of insolvency. The condition of the timber trade and of the fruit trade, taken in conjunction with the position in agriculture and mining, renders it imperative for us to try to do something towards improving the existing state of affairs. In the timber industry the slump is, undoubtedly, largely due to the war. Altogether apart from the war, however, we found the timber companies even under normal conditions approaching the Government with requests for reduction of railway freights; so that, even before the outbreak of war, the outlook was not good. As regards the fruit industry, although at the present time there are thousands of cases of fruit rotting on the trees, and although quantities of fruit have been taken to the rubbish tip simply because the growers could not obtain payable prices, thousands of our people are unable to obtain sufficient fruit for their needs. And on top of this we have had two increases in railway freights, one made by the late Government and the other by the pre-

sent Government. Again, in the course of about 12 months' time probably we shall have some 25,000 soldiers coming back, and as far as I can see no definite scheme has yet been laid down for their absorption. None of us are satisfied with the progress made with the various repatriation schemes. I think the War Council have a certain amount of responsibility for the present situation. I believe the Commonwealth Government have decided that they shall bear almost the whole of the cost of repatriation, and the various war councils are to be the State authorities for dealing with repatriation schemes. As far as I can see, we are making very little progress indeed. That being so I do not wish to have the responsibility on me as a member of Parliament of sitting quietly down and allowing someone else to tackle this business. I wish to try to find out where we are. Let me take a few figures in connection with the Railways to show to what pass we are drifting. The capital account of the Railways, according to the last return issued by the Commissioner to the end of June, 1916, was 18 million pounds. Last year the interest paid amounted to £625,000. They earned £2,088,110, and the working expenses represented £1,511,655, leaving a balance of £576,455. But when interest is deducted we find a loss of £18,795. That was last year, which was not altogether a bad year. We have that loss after payment of interest, and without allowing for sinking fund. When we further examine the figures we find that the earnings of the department that year amounted to £2,088,110, of which goods and minerals represented £1,261,984, parcels, horses and carriages £79,684, and livestock £76,160, or a total of £1,417,828. That is the amount being paid by our industries to the Railway Department, nearly 1½ millions in a year. When we further examine the amount paid for goods and minerals, namely, £1,261,000, we find that the tax on the industries of the State is very great indeed. According to the return on page 7 of the Commissioner's report I find that of the amount of £1,261,000 debited to goods, coal, coke, and charcoal represent £71,807, minerals £58,435, hay, straw, and chaff £20,438, wheat £170,902, other grain and flour £53,396. I draw the attention of

my farmer friends to these figures. Firewood represented £58,578, imported timber £5,693, local timber £163,759, fruit and fertilisers £78,000, all other goods £532,896. I draw attention to these figures to show hon. members that the amount the Railway Department is earning is drawn entirely from industries and to a very large extent, perhaps to three-quarters of the amount, it is coming from those who have to go into the country as pioneers, whether miners, squatters, or farmers. I would like to know the details of the amount of £532,000, which are not given. I know I am safe in saying that it largely represents goods and stores being sent up to the goldfields and into the farming districts. If we further consider these figures we find that last year there were 3,676 miles of railways, including sidings, open to traffic, 234 miles under construction, and 177 miles authorised, or roughly 4,000 miles of railway. This with a population of only 320,000 people. The Railway Commissioner at the end of last year said that there was one mile of railway for every 95 persons. In New South Wales they have one mile of railway for every 446 persons, in Tasmania for every 354 persons, in South Australia for every 199 persons, in Victoria for every 345 persons, and in Queensland for every 137 persons. The earnings in Western Australia are £165 10s. 1d. per mile, in Victoria £639, in New South Wales £778 9s. In this State we have practically 4,000 miles of railway running through almost wholly unoccupied country. We have one mile of railway for every 95 persons, and we are still going on with that policy of railway construction. I do not think it is possible for any country in the world to go on at such a rate as this and still maintain its solvency. The question we have to ask ourselves is whether such a huge railway system as we have can continue to serve so small a population. What are we going to do about it? A little while ago the *West Australian* was responsible for the statement that the railways are running through practically unoccupied country, that we have a railway going to nearly every hamlet and shack in the State, and that almost any politician can be secured to ask that further railways be constructed. To my mind, there are two alternatives: one

is that some other nation will settle the country we have failed to settle, and the other that we shall break down under the burdens which are gradually piling up upon us. We cannot continue unless we can get population; and we can only get population by making some alteration in our present railway system. We can do nothing us. We cannot continue unless we cause that is under Federal jurisdiction, but in our railway system we can reduce freights to encourage population and more equitably apportion the burden of taxation. In a recent issue the *West Australian* published a striking article upon our railway system, in the course of which appeared the following—

There is a policy to which politicians of all parties heartily subscribe, and with a magnificent indifference to ways and means. It is: The construction of railways to develop the State. Well, this policy has been followed out in part very consistently by each party that has been in power, with the result noted—that there is a mile of railway for every 95 of the population. But this is not the policy in its completeness. It is the policy of railway construction, minus the important addendum of development. We have built railways plentifully, but we have not placed people along the lines in any number worth speaking about. And, as a result, we have trains speeding or dawdling through miles and miles of sparsely-inhabited districts, but, dawdling or speeding, eating up large sums in interest, maintenance, and running costs, and earning no commensurate revenue in return. . . Having built our railways, they must be made to pay. They must be made to pay by making it worth the while of the agriculturist and the timber producer to stay in the country producing. They must be made to pay by settling people along the lands served by railways. There are 235 miles of railway now under construction; there are 412 miles authorised; there is the genesis of a deputation to demand a railway in almost every hamlet that boasts an iron shack and two hessian camps. And in Perth, there are sympathetic politicians of every political

hue to welcome the deputations with fair words and promises. But there does not seem to be one to say that stock must be taken of our railway situation in order to see where we really are, and in order to develop a policy whereby the railways may be made to pay in the only manner possible—by ensuring the increased production of goods and an increased settlement of people along the lines already opened.

I think we can endorse almost every word of that article. Unless we can formulate some policy that will ensure more population and a population that we can settle along these sparsely inhabited areas, we shall be in a very bad way. Our chief business asset, namely the Railways, instead of assisting production is killing it by increased freights. I am not blaming the present Government any more than the last, for both Administrations increased the freights. Instead of the railways making the country, they are absolutely killing it. They run through land which has been estimated to contain forty million pounds worth of unimproved land values. I know that the amount given by the Commissioner of Taxation is only nineteen millions, but on the very best authority I think I am safe in saying that our land values amount to forty million pounds. The system that has been adopted to assess the land values is very defective, and I do not think any genuine attempt has been made to arrive at our true land values. We find that the railways run through immense tracts of country and create enormous values, and, instead of our taking the cost of running the railways from the values of the land, the users of the railways are compelled to pay all the cost. And, as I have said, in order to meet the expenses the freights have been twice raised. All our pioneers, miners, farmers, orchardists, and almost every primary industry has been unduly levied upon. We have not many secondary industries; we are largely a community built up on primary industries, yet we are penalising those very industries in order that we may keep afloat. I think the only true remedy is to transfer some of the railway accounts to land values, and if we can only transfer

the interest account of £625,000 of the railways to the values that have been created by the railways we shall be doing something to help us very much. Again I will quote from the *West Australian*, and I do so because such a paper as the *West Australian* has not shown itself altogether favourable to land values taxation; therefore such an article we can take notice of. The *West Australian* goes on to say—

A fortnight ago the Premier said he was not going to touch the land tax—he would abolish it if he could.

As far as the present land taxation is concerned being of any value to help the industry, it is not, because it is too small to be of any good and it would be just as well to abolish the land tax unless we go much further with it. The article goes on to say—

As a matter of general policy a large number will be found to agree with him. But there are special circumstances in this State, as there are special circumstances in other States, which suggest that his general remark should not have a general application. Under existing conditions we cannot hope to increase settlement. But the time is coming when we should be able to do so, and to do it on a big scale. And the time is here to say that we have enough railways in being, under construction, and authorised, to serve the needs of a population many times greater than we have. Instead of a policy of railway construction before settlement we want, and for some years will want, a policy of settlement along railways constructed. Is there a main line, built at a huge cost, over which trains do not run every day, and many times a day, through thousands and thousands of acres of the best land which has never produced anything more valuable than a kangaroo? This land must be made too expensive for the owners to keep in its virgin state.

That is the truth and members of the farming community would do well to consider it because the land values taxation is not going to hit the farming community at all. The land that has been increased in value by the railways will have to bear the burden. The article goes on to say—

It is this land which is sending up the freights and fares on the railways. It is this land which hangs like a dead-weight on our whole railway system and developmental policy. We have sent settlers—too many of them—into the back-blocks, and have built railways to them at great expense—the district railways, the losses upon which make the Commissioner uneasy—while all the time there has been land comparatively near to ports which is shut out from settlement by the selfish interests of owners and the defects of our land laws. The matter does not admit of argument. It is against all principles of justice—not to say of community interest—that settlers should not only be forced far afield, but, as well, have additional railway charges imposed upon them, merely because many holders of more accessible land refuse to develop their properties, or to let others do it.

That, to my mind, is one of the most striking article we have had for many a day from a leading newspaper. Our needs and conditions have forced the *West Australian*, as it is forcing many public men, to realise that there is only one alternative for us, land values taxation with a corresponding reduction in railway freights. I do not think that the farmer is desirous of continually coming to the State and asking to be assisted. I believe every farmer would infinitely prefer to stand on his bottom and to see himself through by his own hard work if he gets a fair chance without continually coming to the State to be assisted. The farmer does not want charity any more than the miner wants charity, or the orchardist wants charity. Then may I point out, that if we can reduce the railway freights by one- or even one-third, if we could wipe out the interest charges, we should be doing a great deal to assist the farmers and those outback. There are millions of tons of ore on the fields that will pay if a real chance were given to the prospectors and the mine owners to make them pay. I believe around Coolgardie—and I know something about the mines around Coolgardie—there are millions of tons of ore which could be treated if the mine owners and prospectors got a fair chance, but they cannot

get a fair chance; while in order to balance the expenditure the Government are continually increasing the railway freights. If we could have reduced railway freights we should open a better market for the coastal producers. We have thousands of cases of fruit going to waste and there are thousands of people who are not getting enough fruit to eat. The reduction would mean not only cheaper living to those outback and the farmers, but it would be very beneficial to scores of people in the metropolitan area because they would be able not only to get cheaper produce, but building material, firewood, bricks, and with the timber from the mills for houses and the imported timber we have coming up they would be able to live and build homes much cheaper than at present. Further than that, it would bring thousands of acres of unused lands into use. As the *West Australian* has pointed out, we have these railways running through miles of land, the owners of which have never made any attempt to open up, and we can give those anxious to get into the country a chance to live, and we should come out much better than we are at the present time. I am one of those who would like to help Mr. Baxter on his farm, or Mr. Ardagh on his mine, or Sir Edward Wittenoom on his sheep station, and there is only one way possible to do it, and that is by reducing the railway freights and taking the burden from the railways and putting it on to land values. The opposition to such a course is not coming from the farmer or the miner but from a good many of those who have mistaken ideas on the subject. If we can increase the population and get prosperity in the country, that prosperity will be reflected in the City. Land values taxation is going to take a fairly large sum from big City owners but the City generally will benefit just as much as the people in the country. There is another aspect that I desire to direct the attention of my country friends to, that is, that cheaper railway freights would mean better roads. It would mean a good deal of the metal so badly wanted in parts of the country being carried cheaper than at present and the farmers would get decent roads. In many parts of the country roads are very bad and anything that can be done to

provide a better means of transport, roads or railways, is going to do something for those who are making the country. Another point to which I desire to direct the attention of members is that the railways, or at least the users of the railways, are compelled to pay for all construction charges. That should never be. Why should the railways be charged up with all construction charges? Take the two means of land transport between Fremantle and Perth. The users of the railway system have to pay every charge against the system, but when we come to consider the Fremantle road the charge for construction is a national burden. Members may be inclined to say that the local authorities do pay a good deal for the upkeep of that road, but on many occasions huge sums of money have been granted by the Government. Why should the users of the railway have to pay all construction charges while the users of the road have to pay barely a sixpence? I know that there are certain taxes on vehicles which run over the road, but they are infinitesimal compared with the cost of construction. I specially urge those members living outback to look at this aspect of the question and consider if there is any justice in charging the railways with the total cost of construction; to my mind there is none at all. I would not only transfer the interest charges but the cost of construction.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Free?

Hon. J. E. DODD: I do not say free; I do not know that it would be altogether a calamity if they were free. We must remember that there used to be a toll charge on roads at one time, but that toll has been abolished. The difference between roads and railways is, that the users have to pay the cost of the roads. If we simply charge the cost of running the railway system, leaving interest and construction charges, it will be far better for the country. Our position at the present time was very forcibly put to me the other night by illustration. We are like one of our early day mines and everybody knows something about how those mines were run. They had a huge staff, with machinery, a battery equipment and the stores necessary to run a huge mine, and in nine cases out of

ten in those early day mines there were some six or seven men underground. That is like the State at the present time. We have scores of towns with a population from 100 and 1,000, and each of these towns is fully equipped. There are police stations, post offices, savings banks (two in some places), court houses, hospitals, railway stations and all other public conveniences. These offices and public institutions could serve a population of ten millions instead of 320,000. Very little change would be wanted and surely it is not too much to ask that the values or some of them created by all these public activities, the railways and public works, should be taken by the community in order to help along the Government. In referring to the justice of the system of taxing unimproved land values, I may say I am not a single taxer. I do not believe that single tax is the panacea for every ill. There are two or three stages on which one enters into when considering the question of land values taxation. The first is when we think we can accomplish everything by means of this system. The second stage is when we begin to have doubts about it, and the third stage is when we realise we can accomplish very little without a fair measure of this system of taxation. This is the stage I have arrived at, and which I believe this House will arrive at in the near future, simply because they will be forced into it owing to our financial stringency. In regard to the justice of land values taxation, I may point out what is being done in connection with Keane's Point at Peppermint Grove. Hon. members will know that certain negotiations are taking place for the purchase of Keane's Point for public purposes. So far as I know there has been very little done by the owners at Keane's Point to improve that property in any shape whatever. I do not exactly know the situation, but I do not think anything has been done to improve the land which embraces an area of about eight and a half acres. And now we find that when the people are anxious to get possession of that block for public purposes, the owners are asking for it something like £7,000. The owners have not done anything whatever, any more than any member of this House has done, to create that value. Why should

it be, that the owners of Keane's Point should get his land for probably 10s. an acre, and after 50 years or so, when we have expended money in this State to create land values, they should be allowed to take £7,000. I am pleased to see that Mr. Lovekin, in dealing with this matter when writing to the representative of Keane's estate, made use of the following words—

There is now no doubt but that this property was offered to the Y.M.C.A. (and I am told to others also) for £5,000 (i.e., £7,000 less a donation of £2,000 from the vendor). It appears to me that if such a price would have been an acceptable one from an institution, no increased price should have been demanded from the public, who, after all, created the value.

That is rather significant, coming from the proprietor of the *Daily News*. He recognises clearly that, after all, the public have created the value for the representatives of the Keane family, who are now asking £7,000 for the property. Then again, I may draw attention to the Mt. Lawley estate. I do not know the figures in connection with that estate, but I believe the owners of it have now netted many thousands of pounds in consequence of increases in land values which they have been able to secure. I venture to say that they have made fairly decent fortunes out of the money expended by the community in making that land valuable. I may also refer to Sir John Forrest's residence in Hay-street. We saw by the newspapers a little while back that Sir John Forrest offered this place for sale by auction and he received bids up to £27,500. I believe Sir John has asked £35,000 for it. I was interested in a statement which was published giving the history of that particular block and I believe it was originally sold for something like 10s. an acre. Yet to-day the property has a value of £35,000 placed upon it by the owner; at any rate, the owner is not prepared to sell at less than that. I am willing to concede that no man has done more for Western Australia than Sir John Forrest, but leaving him out of the question as Sir John Forrest, and looking at him as simply the owner of this block, can anyone say that he has created the value which he has placed upon it? Not one iota more than any ordi-

nary citizen. Why should it be that this particular block of land in the heart of the City should be locked up and not forced to pay its full quota towards the cost of government? I might go further and say that the owners of that block, under a system of land values taxation, would have been forced to sell it, and those who tried to purchase it would by this time have had 100 men working on it, putting up a factory or a warehouse to benefit the district, whereas, at the present time it remains idle and the users of the railways are penalised and compelled to pay the entire cost of our railway system. I may also draw attention to some of the Swan River frontages. I know a little about the matter and I know that there is land held to-day the same as it was when the colony was first founded, land which was bought for perhaps 10s. an acre, but for which at the present time the owners are asking between £300 and £400 an acre. The land is still in its virgin state just as it was when Western Australia was proclaimed. Why should the owners be allowed to hold up the land, and reap the values created by the industry of the community? I might also refer to lands held under lease conditions. I do not know what those conditions are in Perth, but I know of one block in Kalgoorlie the lessee of which was paying £30 per week rent. He placed upon that land property of a value of probably £7,000 and at the end of 21 years it reverts back to the owner. Further than that, if the town continues to prosper as many towns in Australia do, when the leaseholder wants to renew the lease, he will also have to pay for the value created by his own energy and that of the people round about him. Is there any justice in such a system as that, whereby the landlord, who does nothing to increase the value of his land, is able to take all the increased values, while the community have to pay the piper? The values in this State are certain to increase by further expenditure of public money? I might refer to the trans-Australian railway which is costing seven millions to construct. Is not the money expended on that line going to further increase the values of holders of land? Then, there must be

taken into consideration, the expenditure which is taking place at the naval base. Here, again, is an instance showing how the expenditure of public money is increasing values of land and making fortunes for some of the owners of it. So far as what I am advocating is concerned, namely the transference of some of the cost of railway construction and interest to land values, I would only ask for the imposition of a tax on a fair basis. I have heard Mr. Sanderson refer to the iniquity of the Federal land tax, and I am prepared to say that he is justified to a certain extent in what he has said about that tax. No one could possibly justify an exemption of £5,000, or any exemption whatever. If we are to have justice it should be in the shape of land values taxation without any exemption at all. I do not think it is fair that we should have a graduation. Some members may ask whether, in any other part of the world, this system of land values taxation is in vogue. So far as Australia is concerned it has proved successful in Sydney in regard to municipal rating, but in Victoria the various societies which exist for the purpose of trying to bring about some justice in taxation are all in favour of land values taxation. The farmers and settlers and Decentralisation League of Victoria are strongly in favour of land values taxation with a corresponding reduction of railway freights. The Canadian platform of the farmers and settlers has a plank dealing with the matter, that is, by a direct tax on unimproved land values, including all natural resources, and I believe I am safe in saying right throughout almost every country, increased attention is being paid to this system and especially by the farmers. The land values in this State so far as the present areas are concerned, show that 40 per cent. of them are held in Perth and 40 per cent. in the rural districts. That shows clearly that the farmer is not going to pay the bulk of any tax which may be placed upon land values, and when we come to consider the corresponding benefit which will be granted to them in decreased railway freights, I think that the farmer will see that this system is the only just one he can advocate. Then I may also be permitted to direct the attention of

the Country members to the fact that their own party here are seriously considering this question, and I am safe in saying many of the members of that party are in favour of the system, provided they can get a corresponding decrease in railway freights. There is one other aspect of the motion that I want to direct the attention of hon. members to, and it is the need for doing something more in the direction of the repatriation of soldiers. The only way in which we can do that is in the manner I have indicated. What is the position so far as this State is concerned in regard to the repatriation of soldiers? If the war ends this year and we get 25,000 men back in the course of 12 months, unless more is done than we are doing at the present time, I would not like to be amongst those who would be responsible. I believe, if 25,000 men landed back in Western Australia in 12 months they would find everything in such a state of chaos in regard to settling them on the land or industries that they would be inclined to kick over the traces. If we say to these men that they must go away and fight for us and then on their return let them take whatever chance they can of getting employment, I would not like to be a member of the Government responsible for such a condition of affairs.

Resolved: that motions be continued.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I do not think we are going to get every soldier who comes back to go upon the land. We are certainly going to get a good many to do so, provided we can give them a decent chance to succeed. Again, it is not to be expected that every soldier who comes back is going to make good, but every one of them should be given a chance. At the same time, there must be many hundreds of them who will make good. After the war is over there will be many thousands of ex-soldiers who will be willing to emigrate to Australia. I know that the mingling of our soldiers with the soldiers of other countries is likely to be productive of immense good to this State, provided we can make adequate provision for those who come here. When they realise what we are paying our soldiers and what they are getting themselves, and when the soldiers mix up together and talk about their respective

countries there is not the slightest doubt that many of those who were receiving very small wages at Home will be only too glad to emigrate to Australia after the war. If possible, we should try and do something which will enable them to settle in our country and live comfortably. No member of this Chamber can evade his responsibilities in regard to our soldiers. If we only look at the matter from the personal standpoint we should strain every effort to see that they get a chance when they return. Many of us have sons and brothers at the war, and when they come back they will want to know what we have done to provide for them. As far as pensions go, I do not think our soldiers are getting an adequate deal. A young fellow who comes back to the State after having served his country and being broken in body or health should be given a fair chance, if he wants to, to marry and bring up a family. I fail to see why a man, whoever he may be, if he is crippled by the loss of limbs or in any other way, should not be given a chance to make a home for himself just as if he had never been to the war. I have often heard recruiting speakers and others refer to a picture which one often sees posted upon our walls and hoardings. The picture shows a child asking his father what he did in this great war. I have used that before at meetings of women called in order to help the Red Cross Society. It is not only the soldiers and the women who should be asked that question, but we also should be asked what we are doing to help in this war. We cannot evade our responsibilities. Knowing what I know of the repatriation scheme, I think it would be well if we could devote a few sittings to the question of repatriation in order that we may find out just where we are. If we can only reduce our railway freights, in the way I have indicated, and transfer the cost of the railway freights to the values that are being created by the railways, we will so open up the country that we can settle thousands of people in it, and by doing this we shall provide for many more in the towns. It may be asked what sort of inquiry I would advocate in the terms of this motion. Hon. members may say that we have too many inquiries already. I believe that we have.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Not too many, but they cost too much.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I believe these inquiries will not be productive of any good, and will cost a lot of money for no purpose. I do think, however, that if an inquiry to test the efficacy of the principle of land values taxation is instituted it is capable of being conducted at very little cost. We do not require to have a Royal Commission. An officer of the Government could be told off to make the necessary inquiries, and surely we have enough officers in the civil service who are competent to deal with the matter. When we consider also that the officers of Parliament during recess have not altogether too great a burden placed upon them, and the staff of *Hansard* reporters that we have here—

Hon. J. Ewing: They want a little recess.

Hon. J. E. DODD: Surely it is not going to cost the country anything to make an inquiry into such a system as this. I think we should try and obtain information from all representative bodies in the State, such as the Chamber of Mines, the Miners' Union, the Chamber of Commerce, the Australian Labour Federation, the Farmers and Settlers' Association, the Land Values Committee, and any other representative body which would be interested in dealing with this question. I sincerely hope that the House will have an opportunity of discussing the motion. I am not asking that we should place a tax upon unimproved values of land at the present time, but merely that an inquiry should be made to test the efficacy of this principle of taxation. I would urge that every hon. member, if he has not already done so, should devote some little attention to our railway system, and the reports of the Commissioner of Railways, and realise where we stand in the matter. I believe the Government are already making inquiries into various methods of taxation, and probably, when the House meets after the coming recess, the Government will come down with a policy expressive of their attitude on the question of taxation. I can sympathise with the Government in this regard. Personally, I should not care to make one of the Cabinet in the future, unless some guarantee were given of some

adequate system of taxation. It is all very well for hon. members to talk about economy. We may be able to economise to a certain extent, but cannot economise to the extent of balancing the ledger. We must have taxation, and it is no use anyone gain-saying that fact. We must have it from some source or another, but if we are going to get taxation by further penalising our industries we are going to the wall. There is only one just, honest, and fair way of imposing taxation, and that is by taxing the unimproved values of land, and decreasing the railway freights in order to open up the country.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [5.43]: I second the motion.

On motion by Hon. H. Carson debate adjourned

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Land and Income Tax.

2. Land and Income Tax Assessment Act Amendment.

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—PORTS AND HARBOURS.

In Committee.

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

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Governor may proclaim ports and harbours for the purposes of 18 Vic., No. 15, and 37 Vic., No. 14:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Will the Colonial Secretary tell us what Clause 2 of the Bill actually is?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The object of the Bill was explained on the second reading, but I have no objection to repeating the information. The Crown solicitor is of opinion that the present Swan river regulations are invalid, in consequence of the whole of the river above the Fremantle

bridge not being proclaimed a port. That portion of the river known as Perth Water (between the Causeway and a little below Barrack-street) was proclaimed a port under the Customs Ordinance Act, 1860. This Act was repealed, and the power to proclaim ports was included in the Customs Consolidation Act, 1892. As this is a Customs Act, the Crown Solicitor is doubtful if the power could now be exercised by His Excellency the Governor, and he considers new legislation necessary to give the Governor power to proclaim ports. If this proposed legislation is passed, the Government could then proclaim the whole of the navigable portion of the Swan river above the Fremantle bridge a port. The object of this legislation is to make the Chief Harbour Master's control of the river legal by appointing him Harbour Master for the Swan river. Under existing conditions the Crown solicitor is of opinion that the Chief Harbour Master has no legal control, and that the regulations cannot be enforced.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: To my mind this Bill, equally with another, presents a Federal problem. According to *Quick & Garran*, page 852, the Federal Parliament has authority in the matter of lights, beacons, buoys, harbours and rivers. I desire to have from the Minister, before this Bill is passed, an assurance that the Government are clearly seized of the position.

The Colonial Secretary: I can only say that the position is as I have stated in the Committee.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: If Mr. Sanderson refers again to *Quick & Garran*, I think it will be found that the Federal powers therein referred to are powers which the Federal Parliament have concurrently with the State Parliament.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I merely raised the question as I desired to get the assurance I asked from the Minister. It seemed to me that there is an inclination in the direction of duplication of control, and in passing legislation of this character it appeared this Parliament was duplicating control.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3, 4—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—EARLY CLOSING ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 11:

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I have received a petition signed by 58 master hairdressers of the metropolitan area praying that this amendment be not made. The petitioners claim that it would be detrimental to their interests, pointing out that eight hours on Saturday is to them the equivalent of 18 hours on any week day. It is also urged that it is to the convenience of the working classes that hairdressing establishments should remain open on Saturday afternoons. Personally, I think it right that all trades should fall into line, and I cannot see that employees in this trade should be compelled to forego their Saturday afternoon recreation. I have placed the petition before the Committee, but I reserve to myself the right to support the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member, having intimated his support of the Bill, it is unnecessary for me to say much. I should like to say, however, that I do not for a moment consider that the 58 signatories by any means represent the whole of the master hairdressers of the metropolitan area. A previous petition on this subject presented to the Government was signed by 6,000 residents in the metropolitan area. It would be a simple matter to obtain the signatures of 60, or even 100, employers in any trade. I should be an advocate for the repeal of the Early Closing Act entirely if some means could be devised whereby the hours of employees could be limited. But, whilst we have an Early Closing Act, in my opinion the present position regarding hair dressing saloons is anomalous.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: It is only fair I should add, for the information of the Committee, that the signatures have been secured by two only of the master hairdressers.

Hon. J. E. DODD: It seems to me there can be nothing controversial in this Bill. It is a question which has been before previous Governments for years, and I believe

the master hairdressers themselves have asked for this amendment.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—MENTAL TREATMENT.

Second Reading.

Order read for the resumption of the debate on the second reading.

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—Power to receive for treatment soldiers suffering from mental disorder:

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: Possibly owing to insufficient acquaintance with the Bill, it seems to me there may be an opening under this clause for all the old troubles and scandals as regards insufficient protection for people who may unhappily suffer from mental affliction. Anyone can under this clause set up a so-called hospital and hold invalids in it. There would, of course, be certain regulations; but, if there is no previous license required, the regulations might be evaded. What is to hinder a wealthy exploiter of such persons from meeting the regulations by connivance with certain officials? There ought to be a preliminary license.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The intention is to permit of soldiers so afflicted being admitted to the Claremont Hospital for the Insane, or to such place as may be set apart by the Government specially for their treatment. The request of the Commonwealth Government was that, so far as possible, these patients should be treated separately from ordinary patients.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Without any official information, we all know that there are these cases among returned soldiers and that they have to be dealt with. They are going to be very difficult and very expensive cases. Nevertheless, we all agree that they will have to be treated with the highest

consideration. That means expenditure. How is this State to put up adequate buildings in suitable localities to deal with these cases? It cannot be done. In my opinion, if this Bill has been introduced at the request of the Federal Government we should inform the Federal Government that we much regret, owing to the condition of our finances, we are quite unable to take on this further liability, which, moreover, is a liability that should and must rest on the Federal Government. To pass this Bill through, as we shall be doing to-morrow, with all the Standing Orders suspended, will be a perfect disgrace. The point to which Mr. Cullen has drawn attention should also be considered. I put this specific question to the Colonial Secretary—how do the Government propose to carry out Clause 2 in the present state of the finances of Western Australia?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I cannot help expressing astonishment at Mr. Sanderson's attitude. There has been nothing unusual in the course of this Bill. How the money is to be found has, I submit, nothing whatever to do with the Bill, the object of which is to permit of returned soldiers temporarily suffering, owing to wounds or shock, from mental disorder being admitted for treatment to suitable establishments without being certified as lunatics. This the Commonwealth authorities hold, and I think everyone holds, to be a necessary and desirable thing. These men when they return will be entitled to, and will receive, pensions from the Federal Government. Whether those pensions will be adequate or not is not a question we have to discuss at present. Whatever the amount of such pensions may be it must be sufficient to enable the sufferers to pay for their treatment whether at the hands of the State or at the hands of private persons. The present proposal is that the patients treated in the Claremont Hospital for the Insane shall be paid for at the rate of £1 per week by the Commonwealth Government. Whether that rate is high enough will be open to question, perhaps. At any rate, the rate can be revised without any reference to this Bill. The point raised by Mr. Cullen is worthy of consideration. There must be some danger in the absence of medical certification; but I sub-

mit the danger run is slight, and is protected by Government regulation. I think it is necessary that soldiers thus afflicted should be admitted as proposed, and I think hon. members may depend upon it that the authorities will take every care to prevent abuse.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I suggest to the Colonial Secretary that the real point aimed at by the framers of the Bill can be achieved without raising the danger to which I called attention. The real point is that returned soldiers suffering from mental trouble may be admitted for treatment without being certified as lunatics. Where is the necessity for providing in this clause that anyone may constitute himself a caretaker of persons afflicted with mental disorder? It is the gratuitous re-opening of a danger which it took society a long time to cast out. There would be no difficulty in regulating the admission of such persons under conditions which would not hurt their feelings or the feelings of their friends at all. The clause as it stands is too dangerous. Cases might arise in considerable number where it would be convenient to interested persons to get these mental patients out of the way. I do not think Government regulations would be a sufficient safeguard.

Sitting suspended from 6.17 to 7.30 p.m.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have looked closely into the point raised by Mr. Cullen, and I do not think there is reason to fear any danger from this provision. At the present time mentally deranged persons are treated in private establishments. But, for the conduct of these establishments people have to obtain certificates, to conform to certain regulations, to have their certificates renewed from time to time, and in addition to have their establishments inspected. The Bill does not propose to undo that procedure, but merely to permit of the treatment of soldiers mentally affected, without certification. It may be taken for granted that, just as regulations under the existing Act permitting of the treatment in private institutions are very stringent, the regulations under this measure will be still more stringent. Every possible precaution will be taken. I think the point is amply safeguarded by means of the regulations,

and I fail to see how the object aimed at, namely, the effective treatment of returned soldiers suffering from mental disorder, can be achieved by any other means.

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: I recognise the idea in the minds of the framers of the Bill. They want to provide safeguards, and at the same time avoid any branding of the persons to be treated. But I am afraid their object will not be met by the Bill. The very fact that a large proportion of the persons to be treated will be treated in the lunatic asylum will serve to defeat the first object of the Bill. Still, if the friends of the Bill are prepared to take the responsibility, I do not think it will be wise in me to carry my objections further.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I would like the leader of the House to give an assurance to be placed on record that any of our soldiers unfortunate enough to be incarcerated in the institution at Claremont will be segregated as far as possible from the other inmates. Also, that in the event of the money forthcoming from the Federal Government in payment of the cost being insufficient or if no money is forthcoming, the soldier's allowance shall not be taken to offset the cost of his treatment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As to the question of separate treatment, that has been specially asked for by the Commonwealth authorities, and as far as possible every effort will be made to afford it. At the present time, happily, the number of patients is so very small as to render separate treatment unnecessary. The hon. member may be assured that the measure will be administered with the greatest sympathy towards the patients. The question of expense is still being discussed between the State and the Commonwealth Governments. I am prepared to say that if the Commonwealth authorities will not allow a sufficient pension to provide that the dependants of those unfortunate sufferers may be properly maintained, the State Government will forego what they consider their rights as against the Commonwealth Government, and will see to it that those dependants enjoy such advantages as are given in the other States.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Duration of Act:

Hon. J. F. CULLEN: The clause requires to be modified. It is contrary to our Standing Orders, because of its indefiniteness. According to its reading there will be a time when the Act will be in force and at the same time will not be in force. The clause reads as follows—

This Act shall continue in force during the continuance of the present war, and for a period of twelve months thereafter, and no longer, except that with respect to persons who at the end of the said period of twelve months are receiving treatment under this Act, it shall continue in force so long as they continue to receive such treatment.

I submit that this is entirely indefinite, and contrary to the Standing Orders. Some of the cases may be lifelong. I do not think there is any need for the clause.

The CHAIRMAN: In my opinion the clause is contrary to our Standing Orders. Standing Order 174 reads as follows—

The precise duration of any Bill the provisions of which are intended to be temporary shall be inserted in a distinct clause at the end thereof.

The duration of this Bill only becomes precise after the declaration of peace, which, unfortunately, is highly indefinite. I rule the clause out of order, because the precise duration is not defined therein. Wherever my attention has been called to the same point, as in several Bills we have had, I have given the same ruling.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I take it the other point raised by Mr. Cullen, namely, that the Act will be in operation and not in operation, can easily be overcome. As a matter of fact we have several Acts in exactly the same position, as for instance the Industries Assistance Act. There the time within which advances may be made is limited, just as here is limited the time within which patients may be received. But under the Industries Assistance Act there is no time limit as to the general operation of the Act. In this the two provisions are alike.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: There is no need for the clause.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Well, the hon. member can vote against it.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: I submit, Mr. Chairman, that your ruling ends the clause.

The CHAIRMAN: No. If hon. members accept my ruling they must vote against the clause in support of the Chair.

Clause put and negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—STATE TRADING CONCERNS (No. 2).

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 1st March.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE (*South-West*) [7.45]: I look upon this Bill as an important one, and I am in sympathy with it to a very large extent. I wish to say straight away that, being a West Australian and having lived the whole of my life in this State, my sympathy always goes out to the man on the land. But I realise that a great many of those who are at present on the land should never have gone there. To my mind, the man must fit the land, and the land must fit the man; otherwise it is useless a man going on the land at all because he cannot make a successful farmer. I contend that many men at the present on the land should never have taken up farming, and that many of them will never make a living as farmers. I wish to say also that I have yet to learn that wheat growing alone, more especially in the dry area, is a possibility, unless we have some better methods and unless we can secure better prices for what is produced. I do not wish to criticise the Hon. J. Mitchell further than to say that when he was previously Minister for Lands he took up this question of settlement of men on the land in a right royal and energetic manner. The land settlement question was particularly popular at that time. I stated years ago, and I hold the same opinion still, that we were constructing railways too far out into the dry districts. Our railways should

have been linked up and we should have seen that land for selection was taken up in localities near existing railways before we sent men further out. It looks very much as though it was a case of inducing settlers to go far out by promising that railways would be carried to them. If Mr. Paterson, the manager of the Agricultural Bank were asked, he could a tale unfold. The time was when Mr. Paterson himself looked over each applicant for assistance, and he has himself told me that he has often lent money to the man himself, and not on his land, in the same way as farmers whom I knew years ago were judged, some by the condition of their gateways and others by the amount of manure lying about. That may seem ridiculous, but there is a lot in it. Attention to details of that sort, or the lack of it, at the proper time will make or mar any business. I think the time has come when we in Western Australia should look these things squarely in the face. It has been suggested to me that if we are to assist farmers out in the dry areas we should give them credit for the whole of the increase in the wheat production of the State. I do not wish to take away any credit due to those settlers, but I submit that the greater part of the increased wheat production has been done by the older and more experienced settlers in the nearer settlements. Without mentioning names, I could refer to a number of well established farmers in the Northam and other adjacent districts who have produced largely increased quantities of wheat in recent years. I do not wish in any way to discredit the men further out, and I realise that many of them are living practically on nothing; and to me it would seem to be more charitable to buy them out and settle them on the land in some other area. Hitherto this State has been spending money, I might almost say recklessly, in the building of railways. Mr. Dodd mentioned to-day that we had a mile of railway for every 96 persons in the State. I make it 100 persons, which is near enough. These are the things which are exercising my mind. Without any party feeling I desire to say this. Unfortunately it is a fact that in 1911 we had a surplus of £13,000. Early in 1917 we were faced

with a deficit of over two millions, and we are going to the bad still. I am not speaking from a Liberal or a Labour standpoint; I am dealing with facts. If what I say when I am speaking thus hits someone, I cannot help that. I repeat the State is still going to the bad, and I am not blaming the Government. We have a commission roaming around at an enormous cost, and I have yet to learn what use it is. If we had sent out practical men to see which farmer should be assisted and which bought out, it would be something practicable; but this commission which is costing so much money is not doing a half-penny worth of good. The Government should go carefully into this question, looking at it from a business standpoint, and see whether a saving could not be effected. Let it be understood that it is my intention to vote for the Bill, and that I am not merely sounding a note of warning, that this is one direction in which we might inquire whether the expenditure is justified and what we are likely to get as a result of that commission. There is another matter to which I regret the necessity for referring. The machinery which has been manufactured by the Government and sold at less than the cost appears on the books as a credit. It would be interesting to know what amount of that credit should more properly be included in a bad debts list, and even wiped off the books altogether. Again, we have been told that some hundreds of farms have been thrown back on the hands of the Government. That is another matter which might be closely examined into. It is idle to talk of further taxation. We have sufficient taxation ahead of us at present against the time when our men come back from the front. We must see that they are looked after; and I for one will not be a party to sending those men out into the dry areas to settle on the land. I say in all seriousness it is time that we gave attention to these matters with the object of endeavouring to see whether something cannot be done to stop the drift. The deficit is increasing at an alarming rate, but there are other avenues for improving the financial position than by the added production of wheat. We must be careful to see where such a policy is likely to land us. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.56]: If hon. members will turn to page 1082, Volume L., of *Hansard* they will see the view expressed by the present leader of this House on this Bill in 1914.

The Colonial Secretary: Not on this Bill.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I say on this Bill. He then said it would be a very great pity if this Bill—that is the Bill of 1914—were to be a permanent piece of legislation.

The Colonial Secretary: I am still of the same opinion; the sooner we get rid of it the better.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That was in January, 1915. I have listened with the closest attention to the discussions which have taken place on this Bill, and have endeavoured to learn from members who could speak with authority on this subject. We have had speeches from Sir Edward Wittenoom, Mr. Clarke, and one of the members who represents the province in which I live, Mr. Hamersley. Where could be found, either inside or outside this Chamber, three members who are entitled to speak on land questions in Western Australia with greater weight than those three members. What do they say about this Bill? Ask the financial institutions what they think of it? The Government are never tired of telling us that they have come to restore confidence amongst the financial classes in this country. What do the financial institutions think of the Bill? Have they had the opportunity of fairly considering it? My impression is, and it is confirmed by several communications I have had with them that they have not had time to consider it. Do not let the leader of the House blame me for that. He may tell us that it has been before the country for weeks or months. I made certain inquiries this morning on the subject as to whether the Bill had been considered, and the answer I got was that it was going to be considered this week. I said, "You had better be quick because all the Standing Orders are going to be suspended and the measure is going to be rushed through, and you will have it on the Statute Book before you know where you are." The person to whom I was talking thanked me and rang off.

The Colonial Secretary: Has he been asleep during the past three weeks?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That is the kind of interjection I expected. I ask hon. members to bear with me while I answer that question. Everyone is aware at the present moment how difficult it is for people in responsible positions who are directing financial affairs in this country to get into touch with what is going on. They have their own businesses to attend to and that as a rule is quite sufficient to take up the time of an ordinary business person. But at a time like this everyone knows the heavy responsibility which is thrown on those people and the innumerable questions that come in hour by hour which must be investigated and discussed and decided on. There is Federal legislation and State legislation and Imperial legislation, and if the hon. member thinks that his is a fair retort to make to business people, I say let them answer it. I was only repeating what was told to me. Is three weeks sufficient? One never knows what measures are coming on or whether they are going to be dropped or pushed through. I claim to have as much diligence as the average man of intelligence, and I have had the advantage of sitting through the discussions on this Bill. It has taken up a great deal of my time through the past fortnight in going through this Bill and trying to understand it. There is no member here who will contradict me when I say that this is a highly technical and legal Bill which cannot be grasped by a layman, and which cannot be grasped by a lawyer by casually glancing at it. It is littered with references to other Acts and in order to understand those Acts one has also to devote considerable time to dealing with the references. Therefore I say the retort of the Colonial Secretary as to what they had been doing during the past three weeks is somewhat grotesque; it is almost as grotesque as the Bill. Furthermore, there is the greatest difficulty, even for a member of this House who has the assistance of the trained and valuable officers to help him, in getting information, and when we have obtained it, it is most unsatisfactory in some cases. I have maintained right through the discussion on this Bill that we cannot deal with the position unless we understand what the

Agricultural Bank has done in the past and is doing now, and that is very germane to this Bill. I can claim to have some personal knowledge of that bank because I was a client for some years, many years ago. I only mention that to show that I have first hand knowledge of that bank, the proceedings of which during the past 20 years have been followed by myself with the closest attention. I asked one of the officers of this House to bring me the latest annual report of that bank and he brought me the report for the operations of the bank for the year ended 30th June, 1913. If hon. members will turn up the Agricultural Bank Act they will find a provision that every year the trustees shall furnish to the Minister a balance sheet and report upon the operations of the bank, such balance sheet and report, together with the report of the auditor, to be laid as soon as possible before both Houses of Parliament. Is not that interesting information for hon. members? It must be admitted that the operations of the bank are closely connected with this Bill. It is essential to follow the operations of the bank year by year to understand the position, and when we call for the latest return we find that it is four years old. I do not blame the leader of the House, but I say it is a most discreditable performance that a report of the bank has not been laid on the Table of the House since 1913. Here, again, of course I must speak subject to the fear of correction. I can only say that I called for the report and this is what they gave me. I was so dumbfounded that I took the opportunity during the adjournment to get the report called for in another place and it may be that the leader of this House may have a most scathing criticism to make on what I am saying now about this report that I am making reckless statements. How are we going to conduct business on these lines? How outrageous it is for anyone like myself who is attempting to help to carry on public business on sound lines when we have to tolerate this kind of thing.

Hon. J. Cornell: We ought to adjourn as a protest.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: There is no one more anxious than myself to close up. Do not let hon. members imagine that one word I say here is with the object of delaying

public business; but one has a certain responsibility because we are paid a fee of £300 to attend to public business, and I am going to try to do my best to give value for that money. I have listened to the discussion on the Bill very closely and I have come to the conclusion that it is a bad Bill and if it is rejected altogether it would be a very good thing. Imagine my gratification on looking up the records to find that I held the same view about this proposal at the very start. I do not want to weary hon. members by reading what I said in 1915. It is only a brief summary that I would make, that at the start when the Bill was first introduced I expressed my detestation of it and I have carried that out right through the piece. I said this was a highly technical Bill. I wish to justify that statement.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: We all accept that.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Then I need not labour that point, but as the hon. member is aware it is sometimes necessary to emphasise a matter as all the listeners are not of the same mental quickness and aptitude. That of course is not a reflection on any hon. member. I think my friend will agree that he has a special knowledge and his special attainments give him a position in this House which we all recognise but to the level of which we are not able to reach. There may be some who have not troubled to look at the Bill or have not had time to do so and they may be in the position that they are not going to take the *obiter dictum* of my friend without some emphasis from myself. Clause 4 starts off, "Notwithstanding anything contained in the principal Act to the contrary." It is obvious that unless we know what the principal Act is it does not convey very much meaning. Let us turn up the original Act and what do we find? It was to enable seed wheat and other commodities to be supplied to settlers and advances to be made or guaranteed by the Government to assist persons engaged in farming, mining and other industries and for purposes incidental thereto, etc. We can, however, confine the whole of our attention to the farming industry. Hon. members should look at Section 15 of the

original Act of 1915. They will see what a wide sweep that was to start with.

Notwithstanding any provisions of the Land Act of 1898, and the Transfer of Land Act, 1893, or any other Act or law to the contrary.

I am not going to emphasise that point because most hon. members will clearly recall the discussion which took place and the part which was played by the leader of the House in consideration of the question of mortgagees' rights. It went on to say in Part 2—

An acknowledgment and contract in the prescribed form shall have the effect of a mortgage and bill of sale of the lands, crops, and chattels charged as aforesaid, to secure the repayment of all such advances with interest, and with respect to the said lands held by the applicant shall confer on the Colonial Treasurer all the powers of a mortgagee under the provisions of the Transfer of Land Act, 1893, and the Registrar of Titles shall, on the application of the Colonial Treasurer, cause any such acknowledgment and contract to be registered as a mortgage in the proper registry.

Let hon. members look at Clause 4 of this Bill—

It shall not be essential for an acknowledgment and contract to be signed by an applicant.

Then, if we look at Section 7 of the Act of 1915 we find—

Where commodities have been supplied or are deemed to have been supplied or are hereafter supplied, or advances have been made or are hereafter made, under the principal Act, or an application in writing signed by the applicant, a caveat in or to the effect of the form in the schedule to this Act.

What does that mean? It means that owing to the slackness in the administration of this Act the Industries Assistance Board now comes to this House to get powers which the Minister in charge himself admits are very extensive powers and "which are open to criticism but trust to me." What would have been the criticism of the leader of the House if the Labour party had come

down with this Bill? They would have been very interesting and scathing indeed.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: It is really their Bill.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Very well. That is an interesting interjection. It is really a Labour Bill! That is precisely the criticism I have been making against the legislation which has been coming to this House since the Government took office, and exactly the same criticism I applied to the Treasury Bonds Deficiency Bill. The leader of the House will not say that this is a Labour Bill. It was drafted and approved and introduced by the Minister for Lands.

Hon. J. Cullen: It is an emendation of the previous law.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: A very bad emendation. It is an emendation which shows the hasty manner—I will not say slovenly—with which the Government have proceeded. In the discussion upon the measure in another place the only amendments moved were moved by the Minister himself. Surely it was an unusual course for the Minister to introduce amendments when there was practically no discussion upon the Bill. Furthermore, we have on the Notice Paper notice of amendments to be moved by the leader of the House which ought to have been put in in another place. I have been unfortunate in dealing with some measures which come before us on occasions when I have not spoken on the second reading and have thereby been prevented—very properly—in Committee from dealing with anything but the specific clause under discussion. In this Bill, as far as I can see, there will be ample time and opportunity to fully consider the measure clause by clause. Therefore, I am not going to say anything more than I can help on the second reading except what I should be prevented from saying when we get into Committee. I ask hon. members to look at Clause 16 of the Bill. It says—

The amendments made by this Act shall have effect as from the commencement of the Principal Act.

Is that the kind of clause that is going to establish confidence amongst the commercial community and the financial institutions of the country? Here, at a time when we want assistance and the Government want assistance—public require it from every

quarter, what does the Government do? They alienate the sympathy and support of the financial institutions and very justly arouse their suspicions by introducing a Bill which, as Mr. Cullen has said, is really a Labour Bill.

Hon. J. F. Cullen: I did not say it was a Labour Bill. It is not a party Bill at all.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Not a party Bill?

Hon. J. F. Cullen: Certainly not.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: That is interesting, too. Well, if party stands for anything at all it stands on the question of principle and how we are going to deal with public affairs. If the hon. member tells me it is not a party Bill, I say it is essentially a party Bill.

Hon. H. Millington: A Country party Bill.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Country party is not particularly anxious to see the Bill put through at all; it may even be anxious, I understand, to drop it altogether. On that particular point it is interesting to observe that the Leader of the House and the Minister for Industries are the two persons against whom the members of the Country party are most severe in their criticism. Have we not heard the Country party persons both on the public platform and even in the lobbies of the House upon the Minister for Industries? Let the leaders of the Country party say what they think of him.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: A good opinion?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The hon. member knows. It is published to the world that they regard the Minister for Industries as the one man who should be got rid of as far as the land is concerned. It was a special stipulation, as far as we can make out from the events which occurred elsewhere, that the Minister should not be the Minister for Lands. What do we find?

The Colonial Secretary: No such stipulation was ever made.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I accept the statement, but there are a good many people who will not do so.

The Colonial Secretary: I say it as one who was present at the time.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I accept the statement unreservedly. There is a large number of the members of the Country and

people outside of that party who will not accept that statement.

The Colonial Secretary: Members of the Country party were present and made the same statement over and over again.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I accept the statement unreservedly. It is certainly a most significant matter that the Minister is not given back his portfolio. He is more responsible, from my way of looking at it, for bringing financial disaster upon the State than anyone else in it. This insane inflation of land values and land settlement, this damaging of a heritage, which I myself look upon as the heritage not only of ourselves and our children but of those who come after us, he is more responsible for than any individual in the State. If there is any member of the Government responsible for insane inflation of land values and settlement in Western Australia it is the Minister for Industries.

Hon. J. Ewing: He did some good.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: A gambler's throw may turn out right. That is a point to be remembered. If the Minister carries us through the next five years I will say that the gambler's throw has turned out right, and he is welcome to all the glory and kudos that he will get from that. As a public trustee—that is what our Ministers are—I say that he has no right to gamble with the fortunes of the people whose business he is paid to look after. What is perfectly justifiable as an individual, as a bank manager, or a bank director so far as the public are concerned, is intolerable and outrageous from the point of view of a trustee such as the Minister for Lands in Western Australia. What is the result? This Bill is the result of that performance. If it were going to stop there something might be said, but we have got to that position and everyone knows it, a difficult position, in regard to our land settlement and our financial responsibilities in our midst when we must consider who shall take the responsibility. It would be easy for me now to go through the Bill clause by clause, pointing out the clauses which I consider objectionable, what clauses I can support, and what clauses I am prepared to discuss in Committee. No one is more anxious than myself to further the conduct of business on sound

lines. But here we have three Bills in three years, and a highly technical Bill now going through with the Standing Orders to be suspended, and therefore without proper consideration. If the Country party were satisfied with the Bill and if the financial institutions were satisfied with it, even then I would raise a protest against its being put through. But the financial institutions have not had time or opportunity to consider the measure thoroughly. Everyone knows what the measure wants, everyone knows why it is drafted—to give more power to the Industries Assistance Board. Undoubtedly that is the main object of the Bill. If it were not for the knowledge I have that the Bill has not been fully considered, I would not speak at such unusual length as I am speaking now; but just the same complaint as I made about the Apprentices Bill applies to this measure. There is a case in point of the way in which one would naturally expect public affairs to be conducted. We are told, and rightly told, that we should not put through controversial legislation at a crisis like this. Therefore, when an Apprentices Bill comes forward as it did last week, the natural question to ask the Government is, "Have you consulted the trades unions." Surely they have a right to be consulted. They may not have the slightest objection to the measure. Possibly they may make one or two suggestions. Possibly they may fight it tooth and nail. But surely the natural thing for the Government to do would be to consult the trades unions who are vitally interested in the measure. As to this Bill the trades unionists are not going to have much to say, but the financial institutions and people who are interested in property in this country have good reason to ask to be consulted in the matter. But this Bill has been brought forward for the special purpose—and I do not blame the Government for this—of strengthening the position of the Industries Assistance Board. Personally, I look on it with suspicion. But that is not the business of the Government; the Government are not there to please me. We have some right, however, to complain when no steps, so far as we can make out, have been taken to consult the parties who are interested in this matter; that is to say,

the financial institutions of this country. The Minister in charge of this Bill in another place said that the Chamber of Commerce had not been consulted on the Bill. On that ground I would say that I am opposed to the measure. I am opposed to it in any event, but I am still more opposed to it at such a time as this, in view of the attempt to rush the measure through without full consideration. I shall support the various amendments of which notice has been given, in the direction of limiting the powers of the Industries Assistance Board. In my opinion, the proper method to face the difficulty which is generally admitted to have existed in 1913, 1914, and 1915, was to strengthen the Agricultural Bank. If the Agricultural Bank had had sufficient capital to meet the requirements of its clients, then, in view of the strength of the private banks that carry their clients, there would have been but a comparatively small number of settlers requiring State assistance. The number I cannot give, but I say that it is the Agricultural Bank where the weakness was shown and where the trouble occurred immediately the drought and the war fell upon us. The Agricultural Bank had not sufficient capital. The warning which was given by Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Clarke might be regarded. I do not expect members to recognise me as an agricultural authority, although I have been interested in the agricultural industry for several years. However, the warning of Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Clarke on this Bill was, "How far are you going; what further liabilities are you going to take on your shoulders at a time like this?" If hon. members would not listen to the warnings of Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Clarke, they certainly would not listen to mine. Only the force of events, apparently, will compel the whole country to consider seriously how far we are to go before we are compelled to stop, compelled to stop either by force of circumstances or because we deliberately and in cold blood, without heat or excitement, say, "We will not continue financing what we think is not a sound proposition." There is no one more in favour of production than I am, but on one consideration, that the production is at a profit. What is the use of talking about production

if we are to lose money all the time? We can breed polar bears in St. George's-terrace if we will spend enough money on it. We can produce polar bears there, but at what a price? In this matter of wheat production in which we are all interested as taxpayers and residents of this country, and in which I quite admit the whole Empire and indeed the whole world is interested, unless it can be done at a profit, we shall not benefit either ourselves or the Empire or humanity. It must be done at a profit. It is because I think this Bill has been introduced for the special purpose of strengthening the Industries Assistance Board that I offer it so vehement an opposition.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [8.39]: I am sure we must all admire the outspokenness of the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. We must also feel that it would be better if other members in this Chamber were equally outspoken. I would also like to express my admiration of the observations made this evening by Mr. Clarke, an agricultural member, concerning the amount of money at present being spent in connection with the agricultural industry. As long as I have been in this House I, as a goldfields member, have always voted for the proposals which agricultural members in this Chamber told us would be for the advantage of the agricultural industry. There is no agricultural railway which I have not supported. There is no proposal regarding the Agricultural Bank, or any other project that I know of, put forward by agricultural members as likely to advance the interests of their industry, that has not had my hearty support. I felt that agriculture was an industry which in common with all the industries of this State was worthy of support from the Government in its early stages. At the same time, we cannot forget that just now we have reached a position in this State's financial affairs which must cause us all to reflect seriously before embarking upon any expenditure of consequence, no matter how desirable the object may be. After this war, undoubtedly the indebtedness of the Commonwealth and the indebtedness of the State, and the amount we shall have to pay in interest and sinking fund, will be very considerable indeed, will be an enormously

heavy burden on our people. Furthermore, if this State requires to get any money it will have to pay a very high price indeed for it. There is some doubt whether we shall be able to get money, no matter what price we may offer. For all these reasons, desirable as it may be to spend money in furthering our industries, we must recognise that there is a limit to our capacity in that direction. I was indeed glad to hear Mr. Clarke and Sir Edward Wittenoom speak as they did in this debate. Mr. Sanderson, I gather, does not intend to vote for the second reading. I certainly could not join in any opposition to the second reading of a measure of this sort. The Industries Assistance Board is one of those institutions which have grown upon us gradually. We hardly knew what it was when we brought it into existence; but now that we have it in operation I do not see very well how we can oppose the various amendments of the original Act, which apparently will help considerably in the operations of the board. Hon. members will recollect that the first idea of the Industries Assistance Board arose out of the distress from which a number of farmers in this State were suffering as the result of the drought. The original idea grew into the form of an Act which went very much further than was originally intended—namely, the idea of helping drought-stricken farmers. The measure was limited in its scope, first of all, to the 31st March, 1916. The Act was subsequently amended limiting its operation to the 31st March, 1917. The present Bill goes very much further than either of the previous measures. As regards commodities to be supplied or moneys to be advanced, the present Bill is limited to the 31st March, 1918; but under another clause it is quite clear the board must remain in existence for five years longer. I speak about this Bill because it occurs to me that the Industries Assistance Board are now doing a good deal of the work which we originally thought would be carried out by the Agricultural Bank. It appears that there is a great chance of an overlapping between these two institutions—the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board. I understand that the two institutions are,

to some extent, working together, and that the inspectors under the Agricultural Bank do a certain amount of work in connection with the Industries Assistance Board. But I would urge upon the Government that, if the board is to be made a permanent institution, as seems likely, the administrative capacity of the present Government ought to be able to devise some means by which the two institutions could be brought more closely together, perhaps amalgamated in some particular form, so that the Agricultural Bank might do the total work now being carried out.

The Colonial Secretary: That has been done. They are very closely associated now.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: In some respects, yes, but the continuance of both institutions will mean an increased cost of administration which might be obviated if they were brought still more closely together. Of course the Industries Assistance Board, under the original idea, was supposed to be of perhaps more helpful and less commercial a nature than the Agricultural Bank. Even in respect of the Agricultural Bank, there never was any period of its existence when it was expected to be managed on cold commercial lines. The first object of that bank was to help along the agricultural industry. It was quite a different institution from a private bank. It did not require any profit. It was supposed that if the industry was helped along, and expenses were paid and nothing lost, the Agricultural Bank would have fully achieved its purpose. The Industries Assistance Board has ramifications that are very considerable. According to the leader of the House the functions of the board now extend to one-third of the total area cropped in this State, or 650,000 acres. It would be interesting to know what is the area that comes within the operations of the Agricultural Bank, so that we might learn exactly how many farmers there are in the State completely independent of either institution; because the aim in regard to both these institutions is to make the farmers perfectly independent of all such aids. The present administration of the Industries Assistance Act has effected a considerable improvement in the bringing about of a system of decentralisation. I

know a little concerning the workings of the Act, and I know of the complaints that previously existed, owing to the centralisation in Perth. The fact that the present Government established eight outlying centres and appointed 21 inspectors is much to their credit. I would suggest to them that if they want to go still further along that line of improvement they should see in what respect they can bring the Industries Assistance Board into closer touch than it is at present with the Agricultural Bank. It is well known that not much confidence is felt at present in the administration of the Agricultural Bank. Men who know a good deal about that institution are making very severe comments concerning its administration, as regards the quality of the land recommended to the men who receive assistance, and also in respect of the lack of regard to the character of the persons receiving assistance. One of the chief considerations to be borne in mind by the administrators of both these Acts should be the paying of attention to the character of each individual applicant for assistance. Many cases have been recited to me in which the money advanced both under the board and under the bank has not been spent to the best advantage, nor even for the purposes for which it was intended. Undoubtedly the Bill will considerably help the operations of the Industries Assistance Board. I would be glad if the Colonial Secretary, when replying, would tell us something about the operations of the board in respect of mining. I understand some money has been granted for this purpose, and it would be interesting to learn to what extent the powers of the board have been exercised for the assistance of the mining industry. I would suggest to the board at present, when so much money is being spent on the agricultural industry, that what has been spent hitherto on the mining industry is very small in comparison. If they pursue the policy of spending money, more attention might be given to mining than has been done in the past. I believe that if money was spent in this direction under the advice of disinterested mining men, it would be in the best interests of the State. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

BILL — AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th February.

Hon. J. M. DREW (Central) [S.53]: It appears from the Bill that the Agricultural Bank in the past had not the same powers in reference to foreclosure as had private mortgagees. This is an extraordinary discovery, and one that does not reflect credit on the business capacity of the administrators of the bank. Some millions of money have been lent by the Agricultural Bank since its foundation, and now it seems the security is defective and has been defective over a long period of years. It is admitted by the Colonial Secretary that the bank has been doing things in the past which it had no statutory right to do. It seems to me, after having given the matter much consideration, that the time has arrived when there should be a full inquiry into the administration of this institution. When the Labour Government were in power there used to be some complaint, and perhaps with reason, as to the inadequacy of the information supplied in reference to the operations of the trading concerns. Our Agricultural Bank is the largest trading concern we have. As the Colonial Secretary has informed the House, it has no fewer than 12,000 clients. Little or no information has been given during recent years as to the operations of the bank. Like Mr. Sanderson, intending to speak on the Bill, I endeavoured to secure a copy of the latest report issued by the Agricultural Bank. On Saturday last I came to the House and got the officials, not only of the Council, but of the Assembly, to make a search. I discovered that for the past two years there had been no report submitted by the Agricultural Bank to the House, and no doubt the last report supplied had reference to the year 1913. I got the Auditor General's report, expecting to see in it some reference to the Agricultural Bank. I did see a brief reference to the effect that among the institutions which had to supply reports to Parliament was the Agricultural Bank, which, as we know now,

has not supplied such a report to Parliament for the past two years.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Three years.

Hon. J. M. DREW: I understand the last report was for 1913. Whenever a Bill was introduced for the purpose of increasing the capital of the Agricultural Bank, a lot of information of a certain class was supplied to both Houses of Parliament. We were told of the good work done by the bank, and the number of acres which had been cleared over a certain period, and in addition we used to be told, up to half a dozen years ago, that the only loss incurred by the institution was £10. During recent years we have heard nothing at all about the profit or loss of the Agricultural Bank. The reply given to a question by Sir Edward Wittenoom was that 734 farms had fallen back to the bank, that 219 had been sold, and that 515 were on the hands of the bank at the present time. Even that reply does not at all indicate the true position. At one stage, when the previous Government were in power, there were no fewer than 2,800 farmers under the Industries Assistance Board, and the vast majority of them, perhaps all of them, were indebted to the Agricultural Bank for interest and part of the principal. Those liabilities were met by the Industries Assistance Board. I daresay that the same thing is still going on to-day, that the Industries Assistance Board is not only financing the farmers directly by supplying seed wheat, fodder, etc., but is also paying the farmers' interest bill to the Agricultural bank. It follows that of the 12,000 clients of the Agricultural Bank, over 3,000 are unable to meet their obligations at the present time. That is an alarming state of affairs and gives rise to the question as to the real position of this institution. I want to say boldly that in my opinion the trustees are not responsible. They have had to work in with the policies of various Governments, although they are supposed to be outside political control. We know that a member of the previous Liberal Ministry went round the country stating it was not necessary for selectors to have money, that they could get all the money they required from the Agricultural Bank. That was an open invitation to them to take up land with the assurance

that they would be financed by the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. J. E. DODD: That statement has since been denied.

Hon. J. M. DREW: I am pleased indeed to hear it. In saying what I have I am trying merely to relieve Mr. Paterson of the whole of the blame. Mr. Paterson at one time was very cautious indeed—that was the time when he had sole control—as to who should get money from the bank. For years the selectors in the Northampton district could not get any help whatever from the Agricultural Bank—at any rate, no real help—and it was not until private financiers came forward and offered to assist that the Agricultural Bank came in. The bank's refusal to lend money in that district was on the ground that Mr. Paterson did not consider the land of a sufficiently good character to warrant his taking any risks. Today, the Northampton district is the heaviest wheat-producing district in Western Australia, taking into consideration the area cropped. The largest average yield of wheat in this State was obtained in the Northampton district. The Agricultural Bank, I understand, has to take the responsibility in connection with the scheme for the repatriation of soldiers. Under that scheme I daresay that the trustees will have to do very much as they are told by the Government, but the bank will have to accept the risk. It is the intention, I am informed, to settle returned soldiers in the South-West, where it is intended they shall be engaged in fruit growing. It seems to me somewhat in the nature of a satire on that proposal that during recent months the fruit-growers' product has been sacrificed in the metropolitan market and that the middleman has gained all the profits.

Hon. J. Duffell: The Chinaman.

Hon. J. M. DREW: Or the Chinaman, probably. We do not want that repeated in connection with the repatriation of our soldiers. The Hon. J. F. Cullen has stressed the experience of the State in connection with the Denmark estate; and I am afraid that unless great care is taken and caution exercised, that we shall have a repetition of the Denmark experience in the South-West. I was the only member of this House who opposed the purchase of those lands and that railway, and everything I then prophesied

has come true. That should be a warning to the present Government to exercise the greatest possible care in connection with the settlement of our soldiers on the land. We should have the fullest possible information—not now, there is not the time, but early in the next session, in reference to the stability of the Agricultural Bank. The bank should do what the directors of a public company do, should furnish the same information as it does to its shareholders as to assets and liabilities, and profit and loss account and this statement should be audited by the Auditor General. We do, at any rate, know sufficient now to justify us in expressing a hope that the Government will not overlook this matter, and that every information will be supplied to hon. members in regard to the administration of this institution as soon after the opening of the next session of Parliament as possible. The fact that this Bill is necessary shows there has been laxity in the administration. There are three trustees attached to the bank, some of them businessmen, and it has taken them years to discover that they do not possess the same powers in regard to foreclosure as are enjoyed by private mortgagees!

On motion by Hon. J. Duffell, debate adjourned.

[Hon. W. Kingsmill took the Chair.]

BILL—APPRENTICES.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 1st March.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South-West) [9.8]: In my opinion this Bill is one of the greatest importance. We have been told by the Colonial Secretary that it is desired to get the opinion of the persons most affected by the Bill. I can assure him that had the Government obtained the opinion of those persons who are affected by the Bill, it would never have been introduced. I know from my own knowledge that what was said by the Colonial Secretary in reference to the Government of New South Wales is not correct. A similar proposal was made to the Labour Government to introduce a Bill but the late Government decided not to do so.

I can assure the Colonial Secretary that this Bill is highly controversial. It affects every industrial agreement and award of the Arbitration Court, and affects not only the employees, but also the employers. For that reason I think the Bill might well be withheld until after the coming adjournment and until the Government meet the House again. It provides that the employer shall be entitled to engage apprentices to fill the places of those apprentices who have enlisted. It may be well if I were to point out some of the objections taken to the Bill by those persons who are interested. First of all, objection is raised by some unions in regard to Clause 3, which provides that when an apprentice goes to the war, the employer may take on another apprentice in his stead. The position may be that an apprentice has served three years and been away for two years. When he left he will not have been a competent tradesman. Another objection is raised in regard to Clause 4 which is a peculiar clause. It provides—

In determining the number of apprentices, or proportion of apprentices, to other workers under any industrial agreement or award made prior to the commencement of this Act, any apprentice whose contract of apprenticeship has been suspended under this Act shall, during the period of such suspension, and during the period of service under such contract of apprenticeship as revived under this Act, be excluded; and any worker absent from his employment on active naval or military service, but entitled to return thereto on the termination of such service, and not temporarily replaced, shall be regarded as a worker in the service of his late employer.

In other words, supposing there were 600 men employed in a factory. A certain number of apprentices would be permitted, say 12. If half the workers enlist, the Bill provides that the number of apprentices shall be in proportion to the number of workers in the factory and including those who have enlisted; whereas so far as the apprentices are concerned who have enlisted they do not count, and the factory might be half filled with apprentices. It is claimed that this Bill is an attempt to remedy certain contingencies which have arisen out of

the war. If this were a war measure in the same way as war measures have been introduced in England, to provide unskilled labour on skilled work for the purpose of ending the war, I believe no objection would be raised. But that is not the object. I again urge that the Government should place the whole matter before the members of the Arbitration Court and get their opinion on it. There are one or two matters to which I wish to draw attention; and I think if the Government can see their way clear to now withdraw the Bill for the time being, and get the opinion of the employees and employers, and of the Arbitration Court, they will save a good deal of trouble and do very much better.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East—in reply) [9.15]: I merely rise to reply to the two points raised by Mr. Dodd. In regard to the time an apprentice is away, and counting that as portion of his time of service, it seems to me that we have to choose between two alternatives, and it is a case of choosing the one likely to do the least injustice. If a lad has served a couple of his five years' apprenticeship and he goes away to the war for two years, we are doing him a cruel wrong by not counting the period of his absence. We are not giving him any consideration for his patriotism if we say that he must complete the whole of his five years of service on his return. I admit that we are running a risk if we allow him to serve only three years, by which he may become a less competent tradesman than if he had served the whole five years. But which is the fairer or better thing to do, to take the risk of a man being slightly defective as a tradesman by reason of his not having served the full five years, or, because he went to the war, to do him a great injustice by compelling him to serve the extra two years on his return from the war? I know it has been the custom, in regard to the barristers' board, to allow the time a man is away on service to count in computing the period of his articles, and in other ways it has been considered better to take that small risk rather than do an injustice to the individual. If that matter is thoroughly considered by the unions, I think they themselves will take that view.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: Would it not be better to let them consider it?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: So far as the other point is concerned, I am inclined to take the same view as Mr. Dodd. It does seem to me to be rather straining the principle we want to get at to say that the number of the apprentices who are away shall not count, and that the number of the workmen who are away shall. I have no hesitation in saying that if by deleting all the words after "excluded" in Sub-clause (b) of Clause 4, the hon. member's objection can be met, I would say take them out, and leave it thus simply that the number of apprentices is fixed by the number of workmen actually employed. At all events, I hope that an effort will be made to place this Bill, or something like it, on the statute-book, because it seems to me it will be a bad thing, not only for the individuals but for the State, if we are going to throw obstacles in the way of young fellows learning a trade at a time when, above all others, we want to do everything we can to make them efficient workmen. If the House will agree to the second reading of the Bill I will consent to postpone the Committee stage until to-morrow. In the meantime inquiries may be made as to whether the deletion of the second paragraph of Clause 4 would meet the objections raised, and on the other hand I will consider the suggestion made by the hon. member. It is not the wish of the Government to force legislation through this House without those interested having ample time to consider it. I think the object of the Bill is highly desirable, and I think a good deal of wrong will be done if the passage of the measure is unduly delayed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 9.20 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 6th March, 1917.

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read assenting to Sale of Liquor and Tobacco Bill.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Kalgoorlie Roads Board, By-laws under Health Act.

By the Attorney General: 1, New General Rule under Mines Regulation Act dealing with the use of intoxicating liquor; 2, Additional regulation under the Mining Act, 1904.

By the Minister for Works: 1, Alteration and amendment of uniform general by-laws for regulating the registration of camels and licensing of camel drivers; 2, Audit of Accounts of the Boya Quarry under the Government Trading Concerns Act, 1912 to 30th June, 1916.

PRIVILEGE—NAMING A MEMBER.

To Expunge from Official Records.

Mr. HOLMAN (Murchison) [4.55]: With the indulgence of the House, and on a question of privilege. I desire to move—

That the motion moved by the Premier, on which a division was called but not completed, on Tuesday, 27th February, 1917, as follows:—"That the member for Murchison be suspended from the service of the House," be expunged from the official records of the House.