

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 15th December, 1932.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Traffic Act Amendment.
- 2, Swan Land Revesting.
- 3, Brands Act Amendment.
- 4, Cattle Trespass, Fencing and Impounding Amendment.
- 5, Justices Act Amendment.

QUESTION—MINISTERS' TRAVELLING ALLOWANCES.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What amount of travelling allowances was drawn by Ministers during each of the last four years? 2, How many visits to the Loan Council were made by the Premier during each period?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: The answer will involve considerable inquiry and the preparation of a return. The work of preparing the return is proceeding.

BILL—RESERVES.

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT. (No. 1.)

Assembly's Message.

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

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN AGED SAILORS AND SOLDIERS' RELIEF FUND.

Assembly's Message.

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

BILL—TIMBER WORKERS.

Received from the Assembly and, on motion by Hon. W. H. Kitson, read a first time.

BILL—SECESSION REFERENDUM.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [4.40]: Any member who addresses himself to this Bill must admit that he is faced with many difficulties. The Bill carries us back 30 odd years when the vote was taken on the question of whether we would enter the Federal union or not. I was in the thick of the fray, and there is no doubt in my mind that it was made perfectly clear to the electors at the time that there was a way into Federation by voting for the Bill, but the way out would only be by the consent of a majority of the people in a majority of the States. Mr. Drew will agree that it was made perfectly clear that that was the only way out of Federation for any State. If a majority of the States were taking a referendum, there might be some possibility of Western Australia accomplishing what is sought to be accomplished, namely to get out of the union, but for Western Australia to take a referendum on its own, irrespective of any of the other States, I frankly confess, appeals to me as a step that will not get us anywhere. Still, something must be done to afford relief to this State. We cannot go on developing the State under existing conditions. The framers of the Constitution thought they had safeguarded the interests of the smaller States by giving all the States equal representation in the Senate. At the time, party politics had not reached the stage they have since reached, and we were led to believe that with equal representation in the Senate—each State having six representatives in that House—the four smaller States with a combined representation of 24 members could hold the two larger States

with their 12 members in check. If the Senate had continued to be what it was intended to be—a non-party House—we would not have experienced the difficulties that have since arisen. When there is an election in this State, it is quite a common thing for Senators to come here—just as they go to other States—and complain of the unfairness of Federation and of the fact that the smaller States are not getting a fair deal. The answer is that that is not the fault of the Constitution. It is an indisputable fact that the members have made the Senate a party House, and those members who come back for re-election and cite all their grievances against Federation go straight back to Canberra, walk into the party rooms and participate in party meetings. We cannot blame the Constitution for that; we must blame members of the Senate who created that position. That is one of the reasons why I have always endeavoured, as a member of this Chamber, to be a non-party man. I have adopted that attitude because I fear that the day may come when a similar set of circumstances may arise in this State. Figures have been quoted in defence of the action of Federal Government. I have been long enough in this Chamber and have been associated with business over a sufficient period to know that if one sets out with an object in view, one can deal with figures in such a way as to arrive at any conclusion one may desire. For that reason, I do not think figures such as those quoted by Sir Charles Nathan clarify the position at all. In my opinion, he approached the position from the wrong viewpoint. He appeared to me to lay stress upon the fact, if I understood him aright, that if Western Australia were a separate entity, the people here would have to pay duty on goods we now import from the Eastern States, and that the amount involved would represent something in the vicinity of £2,000,000.

Hon. A. Thomson: We would have that much money to spend, if we did.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: But what about the people?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If the goods were produced in this State—if we were given the opportunity to produce them—we would have them in addition. Sir Charles Nathan does not seem to appreciate the possibilities of Western Australia, and its production, both primary and secondary, if an opportunity for development were afforded. It has to be remembered that the manufactories

in the Eastern States were established in the early days before there were any Arbitration Court awards, and when the duty imposed on imported machinery was small. To-day we are endeavouring to produce under Arbitration Court awards that did not operate in the days when the Eastern States industries were established, and with heavy duty imposts on machinery that were not levied in the earlier days. In addition to that, every time we endeavour to establish an industry that will benefit Western Australia, the Eastern States manufacturers dump their goods here and kill every effort we make. I shall deal with that phase later on. Sir Charles Nathan made all his calculations on a population basis, and in doing so, of course, he included all the heavy Federal expenditure that continues at Canberra which, obviously, this State would be relieved of if we were a separate entity. What is the underlying principle of secession, as I understand it? It is to give to the people of Western Australia an opportunity to develop the country and to encourage production, both primary and secondary. At this stage, I may state what I meant by my reference to “dumping.” Is there any other State that can produce fruit of a better quality than Western Australia? What has happened in the past is that whenever we attempted to establish industries connected with our fruit production, the combine in the Eastern States commenced selling their jams or tinned fruits in Western Australia, after having to pay the cost of sending their goods here, at about 5s. a case less than the product was sold at in any other capital city in other parts of Australia. Is that playing the game?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is their idea of the Federal spirit!

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Take the sugar ramp that has penalised Western Australia, our fruit industry and every individual here for years past. If Western Australia were a separate entity, we could have sugar that is all important in manufactures connected with the fruit industry and which is an important item in the daily diet of nearly every unit in the community, at about one fourth the price we have to pay to-day. Then let us consider the difficulties confronting the farmers at the present juncture. If Western Australia were a separate entity, we could do what we liked with our wheat and

our flour. On the other hand, if we attempted to do anything to assist that industry, the Eastern States would be up against us at once. I detest any suggestion of repudiation of a contract. Up to this point, I claim that Western Australia has not attempted to repudiate any contract made when we entered the Federal bond. I wish I could say the same with regard to the Federal authorities. Let me indicate what I mean. Under the Constitution, statutory authority was provided for the appointment of an interstate commission every seven years in order to ascertain that no injustice was done as between one State and another. Federal Governments have ceased to make that appointment, because the smaller States have not had sufficient influence to compel them to do so. That is a decided breach of the Federal contract. Then take the Customs revenue. When we entered into the Federation, the Customs revenue was a mere bagatelle to what it amounts to now. Yet at that time it was stated that one fourth of the Customs revenue was too much for the Commonwealth, and that the State should have more than three-fourths of it. After piling on the tariff time after time, year after year, under the Financial Agreement all we get, despite the fact that we have one third of the territory of Australia to develop, is a paltry sum of £500,000 from the Customs revenue for a period of 38 years. The Federal authorities have juggled the Customs business and the tariff until at long last one member of the Federal Senate characterised it as a "low-down piece of trickery." Before I leave that subject, I want to emphasise the fact that the Customs Act provides that increased duties shall not operate until ratified by Parliament, the assumption being that each session of Parliament would be separate, and that each year when Parliament met, the tariff that had been revised during the recess, would be confirmed or rejected by the Federal Parliament. On the other hand, the Federal authorities have got over that difficulty by postponements. The Federal Parliament is not prorogued; it is adjourned. In consequence of that evasion, Federal Governments continue to impose that form of taxation and are able to persist because the Federal Parliament does not prorogue but merely adjourns. By adopting that course, Federal Governments can avoid submitting the increased tariff proposals to Parliament. Is that a fair thing? Is that the sort of

procedure the Government of this State should be associated with? I think not. Then let us consider the position regarding the surplus revenue. Let members consider the way the Federal authorities have manipulated that item. They have juggled the surplus revenue so that we get little or nothing out of it. Why will Federal Governments not place their schedule of tariff imposts before Parliament? The Federal Constitution provides that they shall be ratified by Parliament. Why not do the honest thing and submit the schedules to Parliament? Federal Governments do not do so because they know that the people who represent the community as a whole would not tolerate such imposts. There again we find that the members of the Federal Senate fail to carry out their duty. The Senate could, if they so wished, compel the Federal Government to submit their tariff schedules to Parliament, but they do not do so. The danger I see in connection with the vote to be taken under the Bill is that we may get a "no" vote, due to the fact that it will involve an evasion of the contract we entered into 30 years ago. There are thousands of people who would like Western Australia to get out of the union in a constitutional manner, but they realise that the proposal of the secessionists is not in accordance with constitutional procedure. I am afraid, therefore, that we may get a "no" vote on that account, instead of on the main issue of whether we shall, or shall not, take steps to free ourselves from the Federal bond. Once we get a "no" vote, then I predict that our treatment in the future will be worse than it has been in the past. If we get a "yes" vote, it will have to be a substantial one, otherwise we will be in a worse position than before. I feel, in view of that fact, that something must be done; we cannot drift on as we are doing now. I entirely object to the practice of everlastingly appealing to the Federal Government for special grants. In my opinion, the matter should be finalised once and for all. So long as we have a Federal Government with power to collect the money by the support of those behind them in the manner I have indicated, so long shall we have extravagant State Governments and State Treasurers, imbued with the idea that the worse the position becomes, the better will be the terms they are likely to get from the Federal Government by way of special grants.

I cannot liken that to anything else than a father with an extravagant family, the sons borrowing seven days a week knowing that when they come to a dead-end they will have someone to fall back upon. Let us get past this stage of begging for something with which to carry on. Let us get down to the point that we cannot develop this country under existing conditions, but that we do not want to be at the mercy of the present or any other Federal Government in our desire to develop one-third of the continent. That is not the position this State wants to be put in. There should be a definite programme, and we should know what we are to get, and live within that amount. I never did like the proposal of running to the Federal Government whenever we were short of funds. Federation undoubtedly put a noose around the necks of the people of Western Australia. I will go further and say that the far-reaching effect of the Financial Agreement is causing us to gasp for breath, and that unless we get some relief we shall be strangled, or the people who are trying to develop the State will lose heart. Apart from not getting a fair deal from the Federal Government, by way of distribution of Customs revenue, which is direct taxation, the Federal authorities have invaded the State arena of taxation, and invaded it to such an extent that the State Treasurer hardly knows which way to turn in his effort to extract a little more from what the Commonwealth have left untouched. Was it thought 30 years ago that the condition of affairs existing to-day would ever arise? I venture to say that nothing of the kind was ever dreamt of. I have tried to put the two sides of the question to the House. I voted for the second reading of the Bill 12 months ago and I am prepared to vote for it again on the distinct understanding that it will be amended in Committee so as to clarify the questions to be put to the electors. If that is not done, I shall reserve to myself the right to vote against the Bill at a later stage.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East)
[5.5]: One is surprised at the opposition to the Government that is trying to fulfil a promise that it would give the people an opportunity to vote on the question

whether they are in favour of secession or not.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That promise was made subsequent to an election.

Hon A. THOMSON: We are supposed to be a democratic community. We also say that we should trust the people, and I am hoping, with a certain amount of confidence, that at least one section of the House which is in favour of the referendum, will give the people of Western Australia an opportunity of saying whether they are in favour of remaining under Federal bondage. I admit the position is difficult, inasmuch as in the Bill before us there are two questions that it is proposed to submit to the electors. Personally I have no faith in a convention, even if we had on it equal representation. I understand that in another place that proposal was defeated. As Mr. Holmes has pointed out, the Senate is supposed to be the protector of the smaller States, but we find that in spite of the Senate additional burdens have been placed upon the smaller States so that, unfortunately, we have been drifting into the position of having to become mendicants waiting upon the Federal Treasurer, drawing his attention to our disabilities, and asking him, out of the goodness of his heart, to assist a poorer brother in days of adversity. Sir Charles Nathan dealt freely with the benefits we have derived from Federation. He also said that it would be impossible for a small community of 400,000 people properly to develop Western Australia if we should be fortunate enough to secede from the Commonwealth. I endorse all that Mr. Drew said with regard to what happened 37 years ago. At that time Western Australia was the salvation of Victoria. People came over here in droves, myself amongst them. Western Australia has treated us kindly, but I am going to quote one or two of the disabilities from which we are suffering by virtue of our having entered the Federation. First may I ask what is the wonderful developmental policy of the Federal Government regarding the Northern Territory? We have heard of the great work that is alleged to have been done there. So far, however, no benefit has accrued to the people of Australia from whatever development may have taken place. Western Australia was developed along sound lines: we had con-

trol of our own customs and destinies, and if that happy condition of affairs had continued, instead of having to-day a population of 400,000 the number would be more than double. Of course, some might say that that is a matter of opinion. With regard to the development of the North-West, we have been told by members of this House that that population is declining. Why? How is it that our principal industries in Western Australia have such an undue burden to carry? It is because the larger cities of the Eastern States, Melbourne and Sydney, backed up by Brisbane, are the dominating factors of the politics of the Commonwealth. They have placed, and are still placing, an undue burden on the people of Western Australia, and we have no earthly hope, under existing conditions, of getting out of our difficulties. Sir Charles Nathan drew attention to the fact that we had received special grants, and that we must have roads. He asked, how are we going to construct roads and develop the State if we do not remain part and parcel of the Commonwealth? If he is not aware of the fact, I can inform him that the motorists of Western Australia during the past five years have paid no less a sum than £304,819 per annum to Federal revenue, a sum which in itself would permit of the construction of many miles of roads throughout the State. If we had been permitted to collect the duties paid on all motors and accessories imported into the State, it would have been possible for us to construct many more miles of road. As it is, all that money has gone into the Federal Treasury. The position of Western Australia is parlous because we are depending entirely upon the success of primary production. The future prosperity of Western Australia will depend upon the wealth that we export. We must export our wheat and wool and in the interests of the State, not in the interests of the individual, it is essential that the people of Western Australia shall continue to produce so that we might export the products and in that way meet our expenses. I propose to refer to some of the burdens that have been placed upon the working people of this State. Mr. Cornell expressed the belief that the goldfields would, by an overwhelming majority, vote against secession. I have an interesting return which

shows the kindly consideration that even the goldfields receive at the hands of the Commonwealth.

Hon. J. Cornell: They would get worse treatment from the State.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am surprised at the hon. member giving utterance to such a remark within the precincts of this Chamber. Let me quote, for the information of members, a question that was asked and answered in the Senate not so long ago regarding the transport of beer on the Commonwealth railways. The question was—

Is it a fact that Richmond beer sent from Melbourne to Kalgoorlie not only enjoys the low freight of £7 10s. a ton but is carried on express passenger trains? If so, what is the reason for this discrimination and for goods paying much higher freights being carried on slow goods trains?

The answers that were given to those two questions were—

Consignments of Richmond beer from Melbourne to Kalgoorlie are conveyed by passenger train from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie. There is no discrimination. For some years prior to consignments of beer being conveyed by rail, it was the practice to carry goods on the passenger trains from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie, the quantity being limited to the haulage power of the engine. This practice is still in operation.

I understand there is a brewery on the goldfields. One would naturally think, in these times of depression, when the State Government are at their wits' end to find work and sustenance for so many men, a certain amount of loyalty would be displayed towards local products. I have no interest in any brewery; I am dealing only with the principle.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Goldfields members should drink only goldfields beer.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The questions to which I refer continue as follows:—

Has a new concession been granted for the carriage of Walkerville beer from Adelaide to Kalgoorlie at special low railway rates? If so, what is the date of the agreement covering this concession and what are the main terms of the agreement? Is it intended to reduce freights on groceries, clothing and mining requisites to the special low rates granted to beer, so far as the Commonwealth railways are concerned?

The reply to the last question was "No." I hope members will take notice of these questions.

Hon. J. Cornell: They only drink the beer because it is better than the other.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If the hon. member is consistent, why does he not advocate that beer and other commodities should be admitted free from outside? Let these commodities come to us from other countries without imposing high tariffs upon them.

Hon. R. G. Moore: The Eastern States are not foreign countries.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If it is sound to drink imported beer because it is better than the local article it should be equally sound that we should bring other commodities that we require into the country without the imposition of high tariffs.

Hon. J. Cornell: Every man in Western Australia should get his wife from within the State and not from elsewhere, if your argument is correct.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: If we got secession would you support free trade?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am replying only to the last interjection. I am not a freetrader, but I am certainly not a prohibitionist in tariff matters. Duties are imposed on the requirements of the people as high as 400 per cent. That is what we are up against.

Hon. J. Cornell: I am sure they are not necessary requirements.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The hon. member had better wait for a while. This is the answer to the questions that I have quoted—

An agreement has been entered into between the Commonwealth and the South Australian Railway Commissioners and a syndicate of Kalgoorlie and Boulder hotelkeepers that a rate of £6 15s. per ton will be charged as freight on their consignments of beer from Adelaide to Kalgoorlie. This agreement covers trial consignments from 29th July, 1932, and is to operate for 12 months from the 9th October, 1932. The main condition is that all consignments of beer purchased by the syndicate in Adelaide will be railled to Kalgoorlie.

Apparently the Commonwealth Government are prepared to enter into an agreement with this syndicate to reduce the freight from £7 10s. per ton to £6 15s. When they were asked if it was intended to reduce the freight on groceries, clothing and mining requisites to the specially low rate granted in the case of beer, the answer was in the negative.

Hon. J. Cornell: The State hotel at Leonora sells Richmond beer.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If the Commonwealth Government can reduce the freight on beer to £6 15s. a ton, it is reasonable to

expect that the freight on the every-day requirements of the people, and on requisite mining machinery should also be reduced.

Hon. H. Seddon: Perhaps they want to ensure the purchase of locally-made goods.

Hon. A. THOMSON: And why not? It looks as if the Federal Government had given special consideration to local products. I quote this as an example of the kindly consideration which is shown to the working man by the Federal Government. The tonnage that has been carried so far at this low rate is 4,980.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Is the beer any cheaper to the working man?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I do not know that.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Where is the consideration?

Hon. J. Cornell: If the beer was not better, it would not go there.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: In the Eastern States the people will not drink some of the beer that the residents of the goldfields will drink.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask members to refrain from interjecting.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The position is a serious one. Sir Charles Nathan and Mr. Cornell will no doubt try to prove the benefits we have received from Federation. I propose to indicate some of the burdens that are placed on the workers through their every-day requirements. The cost of a tweed coat f.o.b. Fremantle is £2 1s. 8d., but it carries a duty of £2 13s. 6d.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is to protect the Albany Woollen Mills.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The total cost is £4 15s. 2d. On silk dresses the duty is equal to 103½ per cent. on the United Kingdom imports, and 129¼ per cent. on foreign imports. The duty on hats varies from 54 to 70½ per cent. I suppose some of the people Mr. Cornell represents wear socks.

Hon. J. Cornell: Many of my constituents do not wear them.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The duty on cotton socks of British manufacture is 1s. 8d. per pair, and on foreign socks 2s. 6d. On the first there is a duty of 300 per cent., and on the other 500 per cent. Handkerchiefs carry a duty ranging from 40 to 60 per cent. British wire, that is required by the farmers, carries a duty of 52s. per ton and foreign wire a duty of 72s. per ton. The duty on galvanised iron is 110s. per ton, British, and on foreign 150s. On the every-day sewing machine, which is found

in most homes, there is a duty of £3 10s. I am glad that the one bright spot in local industry is the mining industry. A great deal is being done to develop it. We have the two extremes, our primary products at the lowest ebb in the history of Western Australia, and our gold at the highest level in the history of the world. Possibly under the present abnormal conditions the gold mining industry could meet some of the imposts that are placed upon it. Many mines are installing crude oil engines. Take the case of a 900 h.p. engine of that class. If it were admitted duty-free the landed cost f.o.b. would be £8,100, plus freight and insurance £640.

Hon. J. Cornell: Why not use local coal instead of crude oil?

Hon. A. THOMSON: This make the total £8,745. If we add a duty of 65 per cent. ad valorem we get an additional charge of £4,900, a duty of 30 per cent. on the case in which the parts come amounting to £30, and primage £375, we get a total of £14,038, an increase of £5,300. This shows the undue burdens that are placed upon the mining industry in the interests of Eastern States manufacturers. Take tools of trade, the requirements of carpenters, bricklayers and plumbers, etc. Here is represented an additional burden upon those artisans of between 55 and 75 per cent. In the case of axes, some years ago it was possible to buy one for 4s., but to-day the cost is 10s. Take the duty on glass. There is one factory in Australia producing sheet glass. Prior to the imposition of the present high duty, glass cost 4s. per 100 super. ft. To-day 16-oz. glass costs, with the added duty, 16s. 8d. per 100 super. ft., and in the case of 21-oz. glass the amount is 22s. 11d. It is interesting to know what Federation has cost Western Australia. Mr. Holmes pointed out that the factories in the Eastern States were established before the high tariffs had been imposed. They derived considerable benefit from that fact because, as they were established, they prevented the establishment of similar factories in this State. If that principle applies to factories, it applies equally to our primary industries. We had to open up our country by providing rails and fastenings and locomotives. I have here something that may interest members, showing the nature of the disabilities from which Western Australia is suffering. Tenders were called by the Railways Commissioner of one of the Eastern States for

locomotive tyres, electric car tyres, and motor tyres. The Australian price for the locomotive tyres was £11 5s. and the British price £11 10s. For the electric car tyres the respective prices were £5 5s. and £5 5s., and for the motor tyres £9 and £9 7s. Then for carriage and wagon tyres of three classes the respective prices were, Australian £9 6s. British £7 15s.; Australian £7 7s., British £7 6s. Australian £7 13s. and British £6 13s. One would say "There is a wonderful example of our Australian industry." But it will be noted that the Australian price is either just below or just above that quoted from Britain. If we take into consideration that the British companies had to pay on an average over 50 per cent. duty, plus £2 10s. per ton freight, we realise how the Australian railways are being loaded as the result of the high tariff.

Hon. H. Seddon: I suppose you suggest that all those should be abolished.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If our Customs were under the control of Western Australia, we would not be paying large sums by way of duty merely for the purpose of developing our country. We would not have had to pay duty on rails—and we have laid hundreds of miles of rails—and we would not have had to pay duty on imported locomotives, nor on wire and other farming requirements. I suggest to my friend that he looks up the tariff that was imposed by Western Australia upon the commodities that were then coming into this State and compares it with what we are paying to-day. If he does that, he will have to admit that an undue burden has been placed on our primary producers. Under the per capita basis as used by Sir Charles Nathan every man, woman and child in the State has to pay a quota. If we had secession, we could take over the whole of our financial responsibility and immediately begin to progress. I draw attention to the following decline in the prices received for our commodities: On the 14th December, 1931, the average price received for wool was 9.67d.; to-day it is down to 8.15d. Wheat last year averaged 2s. 9½d. per bushel, plus 4½d. bonus, whereas to-day the price is 2s. 2¾d. Flour last year was priced at £9 10s. per ton, but to-day it is only £7 10s. Butter fat last year was at 1s. 1½d. and to-day it is 1s., and even less. I am quoting these prices from to-day's paper. Then we find that gold last year was at £5 11s. 6d. per ounce, whereas to-day it is £7 17s. 1¾d. In the House of

Representatives we have five members representing Western Australia. The majority of them in season and out have honestly tried to get the high tariff reduced, particularly in its incidence on the primary producers. With what success? They have been like a voice crying in the wilderness.

Hon. J. Cornell: And will be while they cry.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The position some members adopt is that we have no right to appeal or to growl, because we were foolish enough to enter into Federation and so we must take whatever is coming to us. But I should like to know whether the hon. member who interjected puts that principle into practice in his private life. I have always honoured him for having the courage of his opinions and for fighting for what he believes to be correct. If we are suffering from a disability, surely we are justified in drawing attention to it; for if we do not, no one will take any notice of us.

Hon. J. Cornell: But there is always the danger of one becoming a nuisance.

Hon. A. THOMSON: A committee was elected, and after an exhaustive examination of the position in Western Australia they reported that in the opinion of a majority of their number Western Australia should have control of her own Customs. We certainly have a just claim to appeal to His Majesty the King. What on earth is the use of saying we have no hope of getting out of Federation? If we can go to the King, who knows no party, no section, but represents the whole of the people, and if we can tell him that the State of Western Australia by an overwhelming majority desires to withdraw from Federation, I believe His Majesty will give consideration to our request.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Are you suggesting that we should dismember the Federation?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Unless some drastic change is made, Western Australia cannot possibly carry on much longer. Sir Charles Nathan declared that we have received a proportion of the profit made by the note issue. But if we had been a separate State we would have been in a much better position than we are to-day with the Treasurer writing out Treasury bills and handing them over to the Commonwealth Bank and receiving in return promises to pay. Had we been a separate State, we would have had all the profit arising from our own note issue.

Hon. J. Cornell: And nobody would have taken our notes.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I really did not intend to speak on the subject at all, but would have preferred to allow the matter go to a vote; but when members get up and attempt to show the wonderful benefits we have derived from Federation, and declare that we would not be in a position to carry on if we were to withdraw, one cannot remain silent. If the position is as those members have stated, then all I can say is "God help Western Australia." If we had secession we could develop the North-West by making the ports up there free ports, giving them opportunity to trade with the world at large; but that can never be done while the North is carrying its present extraordinary burden. If Mr. Holmes should carry out his intention to move for the deletion of the question as to a convention, I will support him, for I think we should have only one question to put to the people, namely, "Are you in favour of secession?" If the majority of the people of Western Australia are content to remain within the Federation, I will accept their decision, but I believe that in the farming areas we shall have a very decided majority against Federation. To-day we are getting for our commodities the lowest prices ever known in the history of Western Australia. In view of that, has the price of machinery and spare parts been reduced? Not by the slightest margin, although the farmers are creating the only true wealth. Of the goods exported from Australia, 95 per cent. are primary products. This House has no right to debar the people of Western Australia from voicing their opinion as to whether or not we should remain within the Federation, and so I will support the second reading.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.43]: Listening to the hon. member, I wondered whether he was sincere in the belief that the load would be lifted from the shoulders of the people in the way he desired. If I felt it would be, I would at once become a secessionist, but since I do not believe it, I remain an anti-secessionist. I will support the referendum, but for reasons of my own. In doing so I can be perfectly logical, for I hold the view that a very strong feeling has arisen in the State against the cost of Federation. People

look upon Federation as having got out of hand and become a burden to the country. In my opinion some notice should be taken of that matter in this State, and the referendum will decide it. I am convinced that all the noise is not made by people who want secession, but by people who desire a reform of Federal methods. I think it will be found that the people of this State will say, "Let us have a referendum on the matter." I believe, however, the people will regard the referendum as a demonstration to the Federal authorities that we want some reform, that we are raising our voice as a warning to them to give us some relief. Thus the people will get rid of their restless feeling and their confidence in Federation will be restored. Another complaint the people have against the Federal Government is that they are infringing on the rights of the State in their methods of raising revenue. That was pointed out by Mr. Holmes. We find persons paying tribute for the same thing to both the Federal and the State Governments. I do not wonder at people becoming restless under those conditions. There should be some amelioration of them. Federal legislators should at least show the people that they are anxious to effect economies. I am convinced the people will look upon the referendum more as a means of expressing disapproval of the cost of Federation; they are not desirous of voting outright for secession. Sir Charles Nathan put the financial position fairly before the House last night. As a result of the findings of the disabilities commission, the Federal Government endeavoured to make up the deficiencies.

Hn. E. H. H. Hall: By increasing the tariff 300 or 400 per cent.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: If Western Australia seceded, would the hon. member who has just interjected, if he were appointed Minister for Customs, not consider increasing the tariff in order to benefit the State? We would have the same conditions arising.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I would like to take the risk.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: We would get into the same position as we are in under the Federal Government. The Federal Government are anxious to make good fellows of themselves by granting bonuses and making concessions.

Hon. A. Thomson: The people here would have better control.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: No. For years we have been neglecting the North. It would be a charge against us that we were treating the North in exactly the same way that the Federal Government are treating us. If we seceded, then we would have to set about developing the North, which has been dormant for a long time. We would have to spend millions of money to put it in the position it ought to be in to-day. Sir Charles Nathan, when placing his figures before the House, rather understated the position. It must be remembered that in addition to the amounts he quoted, there was the wheat bonus which, at $4\frac{1}{2}$ d. per bushel, amounted to about £700,000, this, of course, being from Loan account. I do not think Sir Charles Nathan mentioned that. There must also be taken into consideration the grant for super and assistance to indigent farmers this year. I do not think that was in the mind of the hon. member when he gave his figures last night. If those amounts are taken into account, the figures given by Sir Charles Nathan would be almost doubled. In dealing with this matter, it is but fair to recognise that if Western Australia secedes we shall have less revenue. What will happen? I lived in Australia when it was a series of separate colonies, each with trade barriers against the other. I hope we shall not see a return of those conditions. To me it is abhorrent that we should raise barriers against our people in the Eastern States, treating them as foreigners by raising customs duties such as prevailed in pre-Federation days. Such a course would revive the ill-feeling that existed in those days, and which has almost been wiped out since the introduction of free trade between the States. The United States of America have had to deal with the same question that we are dealing with to-day, but it must be remembered that they have a very large home market. They have a population of 120 millions, and there is free trade between the States. I do not wish unnecessarily to prolong the debate. My opinion is that the task of developing Western Australia is greater than the capacity of its people. I suggest that the people should be educated in the way they should vote on the referendum. There is sure to be much confusion. There is confusion in the mind of members of this House to-day upon many points. My own feeling is that on account of the divergent views frequently expressed on this matter and the distortion

of facts which is likely to take place in the heat of argument on the referendum campaign, the Government should state the case for and against secession. The case should be stated by competent authorities, both Federal and State, so that the people will have a clear understanding of what they are voting for and what the effect of the vote will be. If that were done, we would at least feel that we had done our duty. While the decision will of course rest with the people, I shall, during the referendum campaign, raise my voice against secession. I shall support the State's remaining in the Federation. I do not think the period of 30 years we have been in the Federation is long enough to test it out. It has not been given a sufficient trial. Australia must be put on a sound footing as regards its primary production and both State and Federal Governments must combine with that end in view.

HON. C. H. WITTENOOM (South-East) [5.55]: I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. I listened with a great deal of interest to the speeches of members last night and also this afternoon. I desire to take the opportunity of congratulating my colleague, Mr. Thomson, on his speech. He gave many reasons why we should vote for the referendum. He quoted figures. He also mentioned a great number of disabilities we suffered under Federation. The only thing I regret is that there were not more members who spoke in the same way as Mr. Thomson did. The people can read his speech and understand it. He did not quote complicated figures, such as we had in one or two of the speeches. I intend to do all I can to vote for our separation from Federation, but at present we are merely asked to support a Bill, which, if carried, will compel the electors of the State, under a penalty of £2. to express their opinion on this matter. If the referendum is carried, we shall then have a very much bigger thing indeed to consider, and something which will probably be very costly. I am rather surprised that there should have been any opposition to the Bill now before us. However, it is pleasing to note—although I may be wrong—that the Bill is not likely to share the fate of a similar Bill introduced last session. I think the people of the State recognise now

that our affairs under Federation have not improved, and that we should make every effort to separate ourselves from the Federal tie. We have to make a start some time. We cannot longer tolerate the state of affairs we have to put up with at present. We know we shall have very strong opposition from some of the other States. We shall have opposition from Queensland and New South Wales and there is not the slightest doubt that our strongest opponent will be Victoria. A State like Western Australia with its comparatively small population will find it very hard to make much of a stand against the stronger States. What we shall have to do will be to encourage a combination of forces to work with Western Australia. I allude to South Australia and Tasmania. If the three States could work together, I feel sure that something would be done to relieve us from the bond under which we are at present suffering. There are organisations in favour of separation, and organisations against it. Every point that could possibly be advanced for or against the proposal has been placed before us through our letter boxes. It is not necessary for us to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of secession at this stage, though after 30 years' experience of Federation, we must admit that as regards this State at least it has been a failure. The Federal Parliament has never made any effort to recognise the dissimilarity of conditions here as compared with the Eastern States; in fact, it has done nothing to help us or to relieve us of our disabilities. The Bill embodies two questions. I would have preferred that one question only were submitted to the electors, and a simple answer "yes" or "no" taken on that question. That would have been better than including two questions. I am pleased that provision has been made for compulsory voting. Last year the Premier informed us that the cost of the referendum would have been between £5,000 and £10,000. This year the Minister has informed us that as the referendum will be taken contemporaneously with the general election, the cost will be about £3,000. While it is pleasing to know that we shall be able to save a few thousand pounds on the cost of the referendum, I consider it a great pity that the question is being submitted to the people on the

day of the general election. Undoubtedly the effect will be to set up cross currents that will seriously affect the result of the election. I hope that the Bill will be passed, and that if we cannot obtain separation, we shall be relieved of some of the disabilities under which we labour.

HON. A. M. CLYDESDALE (Metropolitan-Suburban) [6.3]: Mr. Macfarlane stated in his speech that he considered Federation had not received a fair trial. If more than 30 years of Federation does not constitute a fair trial, I should like to know what would.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: A life sentence is only 21 years.

Hon. A. M. CLYDESDALE: I know some persons to whom I should like to award that sentence. Federation has been given a good trial by the people of Australia, and in my opinion the time is ripe for a review of the position as it affects this State. There is no doubt that, as a result of the union, Victoria and New South Wales have benefited considerably at the expense of the smaller States. I do not suggest for one moment that all our troubles are due to Federation. Our heavy interest bill to-day is the result of extravagant expenditure in many directions, and that heavy interest bill will have to be met for many years to come. Last night Sir Edward Wittenoom quoted several instances of extravagant expenditure running into millions of pounds. Consequently we cannot place all our ills at the door of Federation. The measure before the House is a simple one. It contains only two material clauses. It provides firstly for submitting to the electors the question, "Are you in favour of this State withdrawing from the Commonwealth?" Last night Sir Charles Nathan quoted extensively to show that by seceding, Western Australia would suffer financially. Experts who favour secession have repeatedly quoted figures showing the position to be the very opposite, showing that this State would gain considerably by separation. I must confess that the average layman is in a quandary to come to a definite conclusion as to which side is correct. I hope the suggestion will be adopted that when the question is about to be submitted to the people, both sides will present the arguments in a manner in which they can be understood. If they are able to do that, the people will be more intelligent than I feel about it at the moment. Supporters of

Federation appear to be perturbed at the proposal to take the referendum, alleging that the result will be disappointing and that we shall be held up to ridicule by the people of the Eastern States and the Federal Parliament. When the referendum on Federation was taken, I opposed entering the Federal bond. At that time I had the honour of addressing a very large audience, and I was the only one present who was opposed to Federation. I have abided loyally by the Federal spirit up to the present, but if my judgment is correct, the opponents of secession will receive a rude awakening when the results of the proposed referendum are announced. I have no doubt that had the Bill presented last year been passed, the decision would have been in favour of secession, and I am equally certain that the majority that would then have been obtained would not have been as large as the majority that will be secured in March next. The second question to be submitted to the electors is one asking whether they favour a Convention consisting of an equal number of representatives of each of the Australian States. I hope that this question will be carried by a very large majority. I have been surprised at the speeches of some of the advocates of Federation in that they have not supported this proposal. Sentiment enters very largely into the question, but surely the report of the Disabilities Commission must satisfy the most ardent Federalist that the time is overdue for the holding of a Convention. The statement has been made by the Premier, Sir James Mitchell, that we in Western Australia are keeping 100,000 men, women and children in constant employment in the Eastern States because we have to purchase goods there, the main reason being the unfair tactics adopted by Eastern States manufacturers who have been established for years and who cut their prices to prevent our carrying on industries successfully. If those people were transferred to profitable employment in this State, Sir Charles Nathan's figures would be altered considerably. Quite a number of people are asking what material benefit this State will derive by the taking of the referendum. My answer is that the majority in the affirmative will be so large on both questions that the South Australian and Tasmanian Governments will follow suit, with every possibility of securing similar results. The three States will then be in a position to demand a Convention from the Commonwealth Par-

liament. Quite a number of members, including Mr. Thomson, are under the impression that if there is a fairly large majority on both questions, and the results are submitted to His Majesty the King, he will decide in our favour. I do not see any chance whatever of His Majesty interfering in the domestic affairs of Australia.

Hon. J. Cornell: He has too much sense to do so.

Hon. A. M. CLYDESDALE: It has never been done before, and I fail to see why it should be done now. However, if we can secure a Convention, it will be possible to stress our disabilities and we will have some chance of obtaining redress. The position may be summed up briefly. We have only 11 representatives out of a total of 111 members in both Houses of the Federal Parliament. That has been the position for 30 years, and I ask members whether they are prepared to allow it to continue. Western Australia possesses riches beyond comparison with those of other parts of Australia, and it is maintained that we cannot manage our own State? Certainly it is too large to be governed from Canberra, situated 2,500 miles away.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: It is too large to be governed from Perth.

Hon. A. M. CLYDESDALE: Yet some people maintain that Western Australia can be successfully governed from Canberra. Unfair competition from established businesses in the Eastern States prevents our people from establishing secondary industries here, thereby diverting to the Eastern States money that should rightly be circulated here. I do not need to stress that point. Mr. Holmes instanced the jam factory, and other instances could be given. I do not believe the Arbitration Court had anything to do with the closing of the jam factory. The Eastern States have their markets, and they sell their goods here at a cheaper rate than the goods are made available in the States of origin in order to prevent industries being established here. I am pleased that the clause providing for an expression of opinion on the summoning of a Convention has been inserted in the Bill. It was never intended by the framers that the original Constitution should stand for all time. Surely it should not stand for another 30 years! Mr. Macfarlane con-

siders that 30 years' trial of Federation is not sufficient. Does he want another 30 years' trial? The question of altering the Federal Constitution should not be left to our children or grandchildren. If we succeed in obtaining a Convention, we shall have a reasonable chance of getting our wrongs adjusted. If we do not obtain a Convention, the people of this State will keep on fighting until their just claims are granted. I support the second reading.

HON. J. T. FRANKLIN (Metropolitan) [6.13]: I intend to give the Bill my whole-hearted support, because the time is opportune to give the electors a chance to express an opinion whether they are satisfied with the existing state of affairs. I maintain, in spite of what some members say, that it is the just right of the electors to express an opinion on the question. I wish briefly to reply to some of the remarks made by Sir Charles Nathan last night. He quoted certain figures, and I have taken pains to secure figures to quote against them. I was greatly surprised at his speech. His contributions to the deliberations of the House are generally well considered and of a very high order, but his address on the disabilities of Western Australia and the question of secession was most illogical, and in many respects by no means accurate. For example, he said that the State disabilities committee had shown that if the people of Western Australia collected a further £2,313,065 in Customs duties by taxing themselves on the goods they bought from the Eastern States, the revenue of the State would be increased by £1,561,065. That is quite incorrect.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: Before the tea adjournment I was referring to statements made by Sir Charles Nathan. He said, for example, that the State disabilities committee had shown that if the people of Western Australia collected a further £2,313,065 in Customs duties by taxing themselves on the goods they bought from the Eastern States, the State revenue would increase by £1,561,065. That is quite incorrect because what the State committee did show in clear and unmistakable language was that if Western Australia were a separate Dominion then, without any

additional cost to the people of this State, we would take over our part of the war debt, pay for our share of defence, war pensions, invalid and old age pensions, post office, Trans line, and all other Federal services at present performed by the Commonwealth Government in or on behalf of Western Australia, and still show an annual gain of £1,561,065. The gross cost of all imports into Western Australia during 1928-29, the year covered by the State committee's report, was as follows:—From overseas, £11.3 millions; from Eastern States, £10.6 millions: total £21.9 millions. Table 12 appended to the committee's report shows that of the total cost of £21.9 millions, £17.7 millions was the real value of the goods imported, and the balance of £4.2 millions was a duty or tax paid by the people of this State upon those imports, as a result of the Federal tariff policy. Had all the goods been imported from overseas, the whole of that duty or tax of £4.2 millions would have been paid into the Commonwealth Treasury. As it was, £1.9 millions was paid into the Commonwealth Treasury in respect of customs duties on overseas imports, while the balance of that tax or duty, namely £2.3 millions, was paid by us to the sugar people of Queensland and manufacturers and others in Melbourne and Sydney in respect of our imports of a real value of £8.3 millions from the Eastern States. The Australian tariff, as we all know, increases the cost of imports into Western Australia, whether the imports come from overseas or from the Eastern States. The cost of imports from overseas is, of course, the purchase price, plus duty, and as a general rule we find that the cost of goods imported from the Eastern States, is not much less than the cost of imports from overseas, with duty added. Let me make a simple illustration to explain my point and since Sir Charles has raised the question, let me take an item of electrical equipment, about which he will have some knowledge. A local firm are agents for Neilsen Cromie, electrical manufacturers, of Melbourne, who manufacture, among other things, ironclad fuses. The price charged for a 15 amp. ironclad fuse manufactured by Neilsen Cromie is 3s. plus sales tax. Now the same article could be purchased from Britain at 1s. 3d., but on account of a heavy

duty—it is over 4s.—it could not be landed here at less than the price charged by the Melbourne manufacturer. If such a fuse were imported, the difference between 1s. 3d. and the ultimate cost of the article to the importer would be paid into the Federal Treasury. But what is the position in respect to the article imported from the Eastern States. It is worth 1s. 3d. only but we are charged 3s., and the difference of 1s. 9d. is paid, not to the Federal Treasury, but to the manufacturing exploiter in the Eastern States. Another example that may be taken is that of sugar. During 1931-32, Western Australia imported 16,539 tons of raw sugar from the Eastern States at a cost of £487,902. Had we been a separate Dominion, that sugar could have been purchased at £7 a ton, or a total of £115,773, and had the people still been required to pay the amount that was paid, namely £487,902, the excess cost of £372,129 could have been paid into our State Treasury, instead of to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, as was actually done. These principles apply to almost the whole of the imports to Western Australia from the Eastern States. Because that tax of £2.3 millions, included in the cost of our imports from the Eastern States, has been paid to private vested interests and not to the Commonwealth Treasury, it does not, of course, appear in the Treasurer's statement, but such tax cannot be ignored on that account. Indeed, it only aggravates the position to know that the tax or duty was paid to private interests and not to the Treasury.

Hon. H. Seddon: And where would it be collected from?

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: From the people who are paying it at the present moment, but at present they are not paying themselves but are paying it to the Eastern manufacturers.

Hon. H. Seddon: They take it from one pocket and put it into another.

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: That may be so, but under my suggestion, they would take it out of their pocket and put it back into their own, not into that of people in the Eastern States. I wish people would realise that we are looking after the interests of the citizens. Although we belong to the Commonwealth, we should see to it that Western Australians receive proper treatment. Profits that are now sent to the East-

ern States should, in my opinion, find their way to the pockets of Western Australian manufacturers, not to those of the people in the East. Secession would put an end to that sort of thing and the tax or duty, which in the past we have paid to Eastern States manufacturers, would be paid into our State Treasury, if Western Australia were a separate dominion. That is the point that Sir Charles Nathan appears to have overlooked, and I would emphasise the fact that the tax or duty amounting to £2,313,065 would not have to be again paid by the people of Western Australia. The report of the disabilities committee clearly showed that the amount had already been paid. Hon. members will find the figures in Table 12 appearing on page 46 of the disabilities report. Sir Charles Nathan also referred to the statement published by the Commonwealth Treasury for the year 1931-32. That statement makes it appear that the actual Treasury receipts in this State exceeded the expenditure by £793,000. But when the tax of £2,313,065 paid by us to the manufacturers and others in Melbourne and Sydney is taken into account, the apparent loss of £793,000 from secession becomes a gain of about £1,500,000. That is the cost of Federation, even after giving the Commonwealth credit for the gold bonus of £73,000, which has since been cancelled, and after giving it full credit, too, for departmental expenditure totalling £711,000, which is comprised largely of our share of defence, which expenditure is mainly in Melbourne and Sydney. Incidentally I may remark that some of that money is being spent here at present in the war upon the emus. The departmental expenditure also includes the cost of those unnecessary Commonwealth departments that have duplicated so many existing State departments, of which health, works, electoral, marketing, harbours and lights, and veterinary services, meat inspection and arbitration are a few. It should also be noted that the Commonwealth have been given credit for the payment of full pensions under the old conditions, although many of those pensions have now been wiped out or have been reduced. On the whole, therefore, the figures both for 1928-29 and 1931-32 only go to prove the contention that secession would mean a gain of approximately £1,500,000 to Western Australia, without any additional cost to the people of this State. I have set out my remarks clearly and I hope that the House and the people of Western Australia

will have them before them, and that the citizens will realise that the time has arrived when they should do their duty by recording their votes at the ballot box. Compulsory voting is provided for and I trust we shall have a record vote so that we may secure the definite opinion of the people of Western Australia as to what they think of Federation. We should have a clear indication from them as to whether they are prepared to continue the existing injustices or whether they are prepared to make an endeavour to remove the Federal yoke from their necks. It has been stated that even if we agreed to this legislation and secured an affirmative vote with a huge majority, we shall not be able to secede. That remains to be seen. While the British Government may not be desirous of interfering with the Commonwealth Parliament, I believe they will see that justice is done to Western Australia. I support the second reading of the Bill.

Personal Explanation.

HON. SIR CHARLES NATHAN: By way of personal explanation, I do not desire to comment on the remarks made by Mr. Franklin, but I wish to refer to one assertion he made. He accused me of having made an inaccurate statement. I wish to read the actual quotation I made from the statement prepared in support of a claim by the State Government for a more generous disabilities grant. I read Clause 28 which appears on page 16 of the Government committee's report as follows:—

Table 12, prepared by the Government Statistician, shows that the duties which would have been collected on those interstate imports for the year 1928-29 amount to £2,313,065. If Western Australia had been free to impose its own customs duties and had paid for all the services performed by the Commonwealth on its behalf, including the proportion of the war services and interest on war loans, we would have benefited by no less a sum than £1,561,065.

It was on that statement that I built up my argument. Mr. Franklin is entitled to build such arguments as he likes, but he is not entitled to charge me with having made an inaccurate statement. The views I expressed were based on what I read from the report.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [7.45]: I have listened with considerable interest to the various arguments for and against the proposed referendum and I consider it only

right that I should make my position clear. I hold the same views on the subject as I did 12 months ago when I cast my vote against a similar Bill. I believe in the principle of the referendum and in most cases I approve of a referendum being taken on subjects such as this. But there are circumstances associated with this question which will in my opinion make it a dangerous course to adopt. Unless the people who are advocating secession can secure an overwhelming majority, they will seriously damage the position of Western Australia in its relationship with the Federal Government. There has been a great deal said by various speakers on the subject of the expected overwhelming majority. Personally, I think that when the facts are placed before the people, when the various financial details are submitted to them, the electors will become more or less bewildered by the conflicting statements and they will realise also that while as citizens and electors with votes for Federal elections, they will be asked to vote as electors at State elections with a view to securing a better set of conditions for which as Federal electors they will tax themselves for State purposes. I cannot see how secessionists can expect an overwhelming majority at the poll. My reason for saying that is that the Labour Party are definitely pledged to unification. That being the case, how can secessionists hope to secure a majority when, after all, the electors of the State will be asked to vote between the Labour Party on the one hand and representatives of the National and Country Party on the other? The swing that takes place from time to time, which places the Labour Party in power on one occasion and on the next places their opponents in power, may be in evidence again at the forthcoming elections. The position of the Labour Party, when the referendum is being taken, will be most fortunate, shall I say. The Labour Party will have this advantage; there are two subjects that are to be placed before the people. One is the question as to whether a voter is a secessionist or not, and the next will ask him whether he will support a proposal for a Federal Convention. It will be admitted by all sections of the community that a convention is long overdue. The Labour Party can advocate that question whatever their views may be with regard to secession. As far as Federation

is concerned, the whole history of the Labour Party during the last 30 years shows that their views are in the direction of unification. So how the supporters of secession expect to get an overwhelming majority at the poll, passes my comprehension. I congratulate Sir Charles Nathan on the figures that he placed before the House last night. He was accused of having prepared his statement. On that subject I consider it is the duty of every member who speaks in this House to prepare his statement so that he may be able to place his views as clearly as possible before members. Thus for a speaker to be charged with having read to the House a prepared statement—

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Carefully prepared statement.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I consider that the speaker should regard what may have been referred to as a charge, as really a compliment.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I meant it as a compliment; you are misinterpreting my remarks.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I cannot reconcile what the hon. member has just said with his opening sentence when he followed Sir Charles Nathan last night. He referred to Sir Charles Nathan's as a diatribe.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Apart from his figures. I did not accuse him of presenting incorrect figures.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am glad to have that statement from the hon. member because it will clear up a misunderstanding with regard to his remarks on the question of prepared statements. While on this subject, may I refer to the fact that there have been a considerable number of prepared statements placed before the public since the subject of secession has been prominently before us. We have had figures given again and again.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Until we are sick and tired of them.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The figures stressed by Sir Charles Nathan were dealt with a little while ago by Mr. Franklin. Mr. Franklin emphasised the one figure upon which the whole case for secession rests. That is the figure which is derived by estimating the amount this State will receive if we impose the same tariff charges on imports from the Eastern States that are imposed on imports from overseas. That is the main contention of the secessionists.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is not so.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The hon. member may correct me later on. My contention is that this is the one figure upon which secessionists base their whole case, and that is only an estimate. I intend to deal with it later on. The Chief Secretary in introducing the Bill made a significant remark. He said that the question of entering the Federation was very largely a matter of sentiment. I entirely endorse that. It was largely a matter of sentiment, a matter of national sentiment. But I think every member will agree with me that that national sentiment during the 32 years we have been federated has developed, even admitting there are disabilities. Many of us feel that we are suffering under disabilities; but at the same time we recognise that the national ideal has become stronger and stronger, and that to-day there is a deep sense of pride amongst the citizens of the Commonwealth at being members of the Federal Union. It was the establishment of the union that did so much to weld together the feelings between the various States; it was that which contributed very largely to overcoming the bitterness that existed between the people of say New South Wales and Victoria, and those of say South Australia and Queensland. My opinion is that when the secession issue is placed before the people of Western Australia the Federal sentiment will be proved to be stronger than all the economic arguments that have been advanced by secessionists. Reference has been made to the Statute of Westminster. Mr. Clydesdale attached true significance to that statute because it is recognised that it lays down in unmistakeable terms that the Imperial Parliament will not interfere in any way with the Dominions unless asked to do so by the Government of a particular Dominion. Therefore I contend that the question of secession, even if carried, will not be interfered with by the Imperial authorities, unless they are asked specially to do so by the Government of the Dominion concerned. So far as the Imperial authorities are concerned, the Commonwealth of Australia would be the responsible body that would be consulted. In my opinion, if the poll resulted in a small majority, it would prove more disastrous for Western Australia than no poll at all, because it would mean that our arguments for consideration would be seriously weakened and may even be

taken to indicate satisfaction with existing conditions. Consequently that is the most dangerous feature of the referendum, and that is why I am opposed to the idea of taking a poll. During the debate there have been arguments from a number of members as to the relationship the questions of free trade and protection bear to the arguments in favour of secession. Mr. Thomson drew attention to the disabilities under which we were suffering as a result of the high tariff, and in the course of his remarks he said that the tariff would be materially reduced if it were possible for us to secede.

Hon. A. Thomson: I am sure of it, just as you are sure of your opinions.

Hon. H. SEDDON: During the course of the debate the figure of £2,300,000 has been referred to as the amount that will be paid by the people of Western Australia into the State Treasury if it be possible to obtain secession. That is the figure which some hon. members told us is being paid at the present time to manufacturers in the Eastern States. The argument is also used that the tariff is so burdensome that it is crushing the farmer to the extent that he can no longer carry on. But the basis of the case of the secessionists is that taxes will still be collected, and therefore I contend the burden on the people will remain, and it will be just as heavy as it is at the present time. So that the argument that the farmer will obtain relief is a fallacy.

Hon. A. Thomson: It must be.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The hon. member argues that the tariff will be materially reduced. If the tariff is so reduced the result will be that the £2,300,000 will also be reduced, and so much less will be paid to the State Treasury. In the circumstances there will not have to be much reduction before we find additional charges heaped upon our shoulders, representing our share of the Federal expenditure, and we shall be in the position, if the tariff is reduced, of being obliged to impose taxation in other directions in order to meet our expenditure.

Hon. A. Thomson: We would pay only one tax.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That may be so, but it would be high enough to impress the hon. member with the disadvantages of self-determination. The secessionist is holding out the bait to the farmer that he is going to be relieved of his troubles,

due to high protection, by the adoption of secession. At the same time the manufacturers of Western Australia are being induced to believe that if the products of the Eastern States are shut out they will have this market preserved to themselves, and thus be able to exploit it themselves and provide increased employment. The two arguments are inconsistent. If the farmer is going to benefit by a reduction of the tariff, the manufacturer will lose that much protection. If the tariff is reduced and the manufacturers in the Eastern States can supply their commodities more cheaply, manufacturers from overseas can also compete in the local market. The local manufacturer instead of getting competition from one quarter only will be getting it both ways. The argument concerning the £2,300,000 has two faces, one to the farmer to induce him to accept secession on the ground that his costs will be reduced, and the other to the manufacturer because he will have a protected market which he can exploit and from which he can derive benefits.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Both will be disillusioned.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes. It may be argued that under self government we could adopt the policy of freetrade. That is a policy which is likely to be the most helpful one for the farmer to adopt. If we adopt freetrade any question of further manufacture in Western Australia goes by the board. No manufacturer could stand up against the dumping by highly organised manufacturing countries overseas, which will undoubtedly happen if an open market is established in this State.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: They do not stand up against Eastern States dumping now.

Hon. H. SEDDON: What chance would the manufacturers have if in addition to the dumping from the Eastern States there was also dumping from overseas?

Hon. J. Cornell: From Europe and America.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes. Members will find from reference to the statistics relative to the occupations of our citizens that the farmers, who are the strongest supporters of a reduced tariff or free trade, are hopelessly outnumbered.

Hon. A. Thomson: As unfortunately they are in every case.

Hon. H. SEDDON: If so, how can the hon. member claim that under secession the farmers will get a better deal, seeing that the numbers are against them within the State, as they are within the Federation in the matter of protection?

Hon. A. Thomson: They would have more representation in the State Parliament.

Hon. H. SEDDON: It would be better to await the result of the next election. The Labour Party have been in office on numerous occasions. I have never heard from them any suggestion of free trade or reduced tariffs. If under our existing method of representation it is possible for the Labour Party to obtain office, it is also possible that the high protection policy will be maintained. The farmer will then be as badly off under self government as he is under Federation.

Hon. A. Thomson: We rely upon men like you to keep it down.

Hon. H. SEDDON: My attitude on economics is well known. High protection is the recognised policy of the Federal authorities. Against that policy supporters of secession have declaimed bitterly. With regard to the question of the readjustment of the relationship between the State and Federal authorities, I am fully seized of the necessity for doing that. I have repeatedly advocated that as a line of exploration which will redound to the advantage of both parties. Reference has been made to the desirability of a Convention to adjust this relationship.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: But nothing has been done.

Hon. H. SEDDON: What I regard as the ideal Convention has been sitting at frequent intervals. This has consisted of representatives of the Federal Government and the premiers of the various States. One would expect such gentlemen to be fully seized of the serious nature of the problems confronting them, and to be in a position to receive the best advice available. What better results could we expect than from a Convention of that kind?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: It would suffice for my needs.

Hon. H. SEDDON: What better opportunity should we have of revising the relationship to which I have referred than by means of a conference of this kind, which meets very frequently, though unfortun-

ately only for the purpose of determining how much more money could be borrowed? The line that conference should have adopted is the very line we are advocating, the line of a Convention which would go into the question of duplication of taxation, of administration, and of overriding State authority. It should evolve a system whereby there could be removed the disabilities associated with our duplicated system of State and Federal Governments. I wish to show where a weakness has been created in the establishment of the Commonwealth Government. When the Federal Constitution was framed, and the bi-cameral system was introduced, we gave an equality of representation to the wrong House. The Senate has no control, short of a direct veto, over finance. That power is in the hands only of the House of Representatives, which is elected on a population basis. When the Constitution was framed and this power was placed in the hands of the House of Representatives, we immediately handed over to the stronger States absolute control over the finances and policy of the Federal Government. If the Commonwealth was intended to be a Federation of all the States, the objective could have been obtained by establishing one House only, in which equal representation was given to all States. The powers that have been given to the Federal Government could have been handled effectively by that House. The powers which the States have lost to the Federal Government would have been retained by them, because each State would have had equal representation. That weakness has occurred, and I cannot see how a Convention can alter that state of affairs unless the Federal Constitution is wholly reconstructed. Within the minds of many people at the time of Federation was the idea of the establishment of a Commonwealth made up of representation of the people in two Houses, the House of Representatives and the Senate. It was felt that the functions and responsibilities of State Parliaments would steadily decrease. That idea was in the minds of many people who were concerned in the framing of the Federal Constitution, and in the minds of many who voted for Federation. That is the only explanation we can give for the adoption of the Federal Constitution. I wish to refer to one or two difficulties that I foresee are associated with secession. There is room for a readjustment of the re-

lationship between the States and the Federal authorities, as I have already indicated. I gather from the literature issued by the secessionists, that they have not adequately assessed or realised the difficulties they will have to face if they secure secession. They are hopelessly out in the matter of defence, for instance. The allocations for the maintenance of a defence system have been made on a population basis. How can any people claim to be adequately defending a third of the Commonwealth with a population of 400,000, and to be able to provide anything like the necessary equipment? This is a very vital matter, and would become still more serious a problem in the hands of a new State Government.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Does the hon. member think we have an adequate system of defence now?

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am not under any delusion in that regard. If an invader came to our shores, he would be better pleased to have a disunited people to attack than a united people. He would rather have divided council and divided administration than one council and one administration.

Hon. A. Thomson: If the British Navy were taken away Australia could not hold out for six months.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The question of defence, to which the secessionists attach so little importance, would become a very vital one were we to stand on our own feet.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: The secessionist relies on the British Navy.

Hon. H. SEDDON: There is another question, which was referred to by Mr. Macfarlane. Those members who in pre-Federation days had the experience of passing from one State to another should realise the inconvenience caused by the Customs barriers between the States, and the number of Customs men that had to be maintained by each State Government to impose tariff restrictions; those members will agree that that will constitute another problem for the secessionist once Western Australia breaks away from Federation and adopts her own tariff. It would be a very difficult job, because every port would have to be policed by the Customs authorities, and the expense would have to be borne by the State. We would have to police the whole of the land frontier between Western Australia and South

Australia and, in addition, there would be the new difficulty of coping with aeroplanes, preventing any smuggling by air. Very little reference has been made by secessionists to the responsibility that would fall upon their shoulders after the establishment of this tariff barrier.

Hon. A. Thomson: How did we maintain the barrier before Federation?

Hon. H. SEDDON: The tariff was not then nearly so high, and we had not the trans-continental railway. In those days the difficulties were had enough, and the expense of running the Customs house at that time accounted for a considerable portion of the State's expenditure.

Hon. H. J. Yelland: Do not the Federal authorities maintain the Customs houses now?

Hon. H. SEDDON: I do not hear of their maintaining Customs houses between one State and another. But the secessionists have made practically no allowances for the maintenance of the Customs staff that would be required to carry out the State's tariff policy. Another question that has been ignored by secessionists, or pushed into the background, is that of the future development of Western Australia. Mr. Holmes was emphatic, and most members will agree with him, in the belief that it would be impossible to develop one-third of the continent by a population of 400,000 people; and if, as the secessionists maintain, Western Australia depends entirely on primary industries, I see no possibility of increasing the population by any great number in the near future, for agricultural development does not make for large increases of population. How then do secessionists hope to develop Western Australia, a territory exceeding 900,000 square miles, by the resources at the command of the State?

Hon. H. J. Yelland: What have the Commonwealth done in that respect?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Figures have been quoted by Sir Charles Nathan, and I do not wish to repeat them, and figures were quoted in the Federal Disabilities Commission's report of 1925, in which is shown the amount of money spent by the Federal authorities in assisting the development of the State. The amount that will have to be spent on the development of Western Australia is very considerable, and under secession it will require to be

found by the citizens of Western Australia alone. That is an aspect of the general question that must be taken into consideration. While I am on the subject of the Federal Disabilities Commission's report, a Commission on whose findings so much importance is placed by secessionists, and a Commission that was appointed by the Federal Government largely in consequence of representations made by Sir George Pearce, I may say it was as the result of that inquiry that Western Australia received a considerable grant to assist her in meeting her disabilities.

Hon. A. Thomson: It was not nearly so large as it should have been.

Hon. H. SEDDON: If the Federal Government were to give the State £1,000,000 to-morrow, many people would not consider it sufficient. However, the whole of the financial relationship of Western Australia to the Federation has been viewed in the East from a different standpoint ever since that Commission, appointed by the Federal Government as an indication of their attitude towards Western Australia, made its report. The distribution of the Federal aid roads grant alone showed that the area of Western Australia had been taken into consideration and a new basis adopted.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: How would secession be viewed on the goldfields?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Possibly the people there might have some views on the question. It is possible that they have just as strong a feeling in regard to self-determination as have the people of the metropolitan area or of the South-West, and I think the views of the people of the goldfields are entitled to just as much consideration in a secession referendum as are those of the metropolitan area. There is another aspect of the question which I would like to place before secessionists, namely the banking system. All the banks in Western Australia are controlled from the Eastern States or from overseas. Assuming that we get secession, it may be necessary for the State to start a new banking system. I have vivid recollections of something that happened a few months ago when the Premier of this State, by the skin of his teeth saved the State savings bank from being closed, and that only by the assistance he received from the Commonwealth Bank. Secessionists can advocate the setting up of

a State banking system, but I say they have no hope of maintaining a State bank in Western Australia and of meeting the responsibilities that will come upon such a bank under secession.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: Are you forgetting the experience of the Western Australian Bank?

Hon. H. SEDDON: The State Savings Bank had to be handed over to the Commonwealth because it could not meet its liabilities. As I say, the whole of the banking system of Western Australia is controlled externally, and there would be no hope of establishing a State bank and maintaining it. With the whole financial system directed from outside, what earthly hope would there be of Western Australia carrying on as a separate financial entity. At the same time I think it will be found on investigation that Western Australia has had just as much sympathy displayed towards the development of the State by banks controlled from overseas and the Eastern States as would have been displayed by a State-controlled bank. The amount of money loaned by the existing banks for the development of Western Australia has exceeded by ten times the amount deposited in those banks. In those circumstances the bond of relationship between the Eastern States and Western Australia has been materially to our advantage, and far more than secessionists are prepared to admit. If the secessionists did succeed in achieving secession, they would find their estimates of banking hopelessly astray.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Some of the biggest banks are controlled from London.

Hon. H. SEDDON: And it is the external banks that have done so much to assist in the development of this State. Even before I started to speak, members knew my attitude towards the Bill was hostile. I have taken a keen interest in the debate and I feel that in its course members have placed their convictions clearly before the House. The debate should be of material benefit to the people of Western Australia when they are trying to make up their minds which way to vote, secession or no secession. I will oppose the Bill, and I trust that if the second reading is carried, we shall be able to introduce some desirable amendments regarding the manner in which the poll is to be taken, and especially in regard to its being taken concurrently with the voting at

the general elections for the Assembly. I will gladly support amendments calculated to make it a more practicable Bill, but in the meantime I will oppose the second reading.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [8.27]:

It is now 35 years since the question whether we should join the Federation was being seriously considered. I well remember the earnestness of the British Government, who were anxious to bring about the Federation of Australia, the object principally aimed at being a closer alliance between the States, especially in regard to the tariff barriers. Also it was hoped that there would be a closer alliance between Australia and the Motherland. In that respect it is significant that, after all those years, recently there was held the Ottawa Conference with the same idea of overcoming the difficulties facing Britain and her colonies and dominions. Those of us who took an interest in the Federal conventions that were held wondered whether they would bear fruit in the direction desired by Mr. Chamberlain and other members of the British Government. Unfortunately, after we entered into the bond, the ideal seemed to be dropped, and instead of a closer alliance between the Motherland and Australia, Customs duties were placed on English goods with the idea of building up Australian manufactures, and we became more and more separated until it can be said that the embargoes and tariffs against the Old Country have done an immense amount of harm to the development of Australia as a whole, but more particularly to the development of Western Australia. There is no doubt about the wonderful development that took place in the State during the 10 years when we had self-Government. That development, however, was nipped in the bud through our entering into Federation. Many of those people who advocated our joining Federation did so because pressure had been brought to bear upon them, and many people who voted Western Australia into Federation had not been in the State for any length of time. They did not know our special requirements or our ideals. They probably regarded their sojourn here as a temporary one. They hoped to make money on the goldfields. So far as the wide areas of the State were concerned, they were

merely regarded as areas of sand and sorrow; it was considered of no use for anyone to attempt to build up industries here and that it was not worth while to embark upon agricultural or pastoral pursuits. The one thought was to find gold and, having found it, to return either to the other States, New Zealand or other parts of the world. Many of those people have lived to realise the very great possibilities of this State, but their vote in favour of Federation has put us under the heel of manufacturers in the Eastern States who were able to build up industries ahead of us. Several speakers have said that, had it not been for Federation, Australia would not have been able to give the account of itself which it did in the late war. I would remind members, however, that before we entered Federation, Australia did give a very good account of itself in the South African war. The various States sent their contingents, and Australia's entry into the South African war led to our being looked upon as a very essential arm of the British forces. Had we not federated, we would, as regards the question of defence, be in as good or better a position than we are now. Before Federation we paid, together with the other States and New Zealand, so much annually towards the upkeep of the British Navy. It was a small contribution that the States made, but I venture to say we felt very much more secure than we have felt since we have been expending such an enormous sum of money on our Australian Navy, which I think has been responsible for about £2,000,000 a year. Western Australia derives very little benefit from that expenditure. We are closer to Singapore than we are to Sydney and if it were necessary to defend our shores, it would be the British Navy upon which we would rely, rather than upon the Australian Navy, which is usually stationed at Sydney or thereabouts. I was very glad indeed to hear Mr. Clydesdale's remarks on the Bill. I agree with him that there will be a very large vote indeed in favour of secession. Whether that is so or not, after all these years I think there should be a stocktaking. We should learn where we stand. A great many of our people feel that the State has not gone ahead in the way that it was anticipated it would when we were under responsible Government. We have been shackled. Had it not been for Federation, our agricultural resources would have been

further developed and factories would have been built to enable us to compete with the outside world. To-day we are practically debarred from getting our machinery from overseas; we import most of it from the Eastern States, not only machinery for agricultural purposes, but also for mining purposes. We are hampered not only in opening up and developing our country, but also our goldfields. The Federal Government have imposed enormous duties on everything we require for developmental purposes. Why they have done so is beyond my comprehension, if they really want our State to progress. The strong feelings I hold make it imperative for me to say that we would be better out of Federation. Failing secession, there will, however, be the convention. We can take stock and see what alterations can be made which will benefit not only this State, but other States as well. Our State is not the only one talking about breaking away from Federation. Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland also have leanings in that direction. The probability is that those States are watching what we are doing and if we secede they will be ready to step in and follow us in what we have done. After 30 years there should be a convention because there is no doubt whatever that the original ideas and aims of the framers of the Constitution have been departed from very considerably. If there is a minority vote, then we shall know where we stand. We can then say, "It is no use wasting more time over the question of secession; the feeling is overwhelmingly against us; therefore let us get on with some other business. On the other hand, if there is a vote in favour of secession, at least it will have the effect of drawing the attention of the Federal Parliament to the fact that perhaps they have not given us that consideration which they should have done, and which the originators of the scheme hoped would be the effect of the State joining Federation. I do not wish to detail members at greater length nor do I wish to go into facts and figures. If we pass this measure, those are questions which can be gone into by experts. They can place facts and figures before the people to enable them to vote intelligently on this important question. I support the Bill and hope there will not be too many amendments moved with the object of defeating it. I want the people of this State by means of this referendum to express their view upon

this important question. I have much pleasure in saying that I shall record my vote in favour of the second reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East—in reply) [8.40]: Mr. Cornell states there is nothing in the Bill to say that the referendum shall be taken on the day of the general elections, but I can assure him that is the intention. As the hon. member says, the provisions of the Electoral Act apply to the Bill, full provision for that being made in Clause 8. In regard to Kimberley electors, the regulations will provide for a declaration in all cases where an elector votes outside his district. An absentee vote could be counted in Perth for the Wyndham District and be credited to that district. These absentee forms of ballot papers can be made distinctive under the regulations. In any State election postal ballot papers must be in the hands of the returning officer for the district before the close of the poll. Communication with Perth is in most cases easier than it is between country centres, but absentee votes can be taken on a declaration at each chief polling place, not at all polling places, and the onus is on the elector to prove he is on the roll. If he makes a false declaration he can be prosecuted. Votes by absentees will be counted by the returning officer for the district in which they are recorded and will be segregated into their respective districts. Under the present provisions of the Electoral Act many persons record postal votes in entire ignorance of whether they are enrolled or not. Postal vote officers are not supplied with a copy of each of the rolls used in contested elections. In order to meet the hon. member's wishes I have had an amendment prepared to Clause 9 which I think will meet the case. This also entails a consequential amendment to Clause 16. The hon. member referred to the Commonwealth Electoral Act, but the difference between the Commonwealth and State legislation is that the Commonwealth law permits of votes being recorded anywhere within the Commonwealth and divisional returning officers have to await the returns from every other polling place, thus prolonging the finalisation of the result for several weeks, whereas the State law requires the vote to be placed in a sealed ballot box on the day of the election. Failing that, the

vote cannot be counted. The hon. member assumes that an elector voting as an absentee from his district may vote at any polling place, but this is not so as Clause 9 (2) specifies that only at the chief polling place in each district can absentee votes be recorded. Section 125 of the Electoral Act provides that postal votes must be marked off the roll, and therefore they must be marked off the district for which the elector is enrolled. This makes it possible to classify the votes for that district. In the case of the metropolitan area there would be no necessity for an elector from another district to record an absentee vote, as he could go before the Chief Electoral Officer or any postal vote officer, record a postal vote and have it delivered to the Chief Electoral Officer on that day.

Some excellent speeches have been delivered on the Bill. Sir Charles Nathan contributed an able and useful speech containing much valuable information, and the same applies to Mr. Seddon's speech. Although we may not agree with them, we must appreciate such speeches which give evidence of much time and study having been devoted to their preparation. Mr. Clydesdale, too, made a very fine effort, and I feel I am voicing the opinion of members generally when I say that, if his speech was an indication of his return to good health, we heartily congratulate him. Many of the speeches, while being quite permissible, really had no bearing on the main point of the Bill. It is really a one-clause Bill; Clause 6 constitutes the whole measure. The remaining clauses are merely machinery provisions. Therefore I have no intention of traversing the speeches of members. I think it may be said that one member has replied to another. At the same time I cannot understand why men who have been elected by the people should be averse from giving the people the right to voice an opinion on a matter of this kind. I cannot see any justification for it. After 32 years of Federation, they should surely have the right to say whether a referendum should be taken, especially as the cost will be negligible.

Hon. J. Cornell: Let us make sure.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot understand any member adopting that attitude. On no occasion have I broken my word to the House. I have dealt fairly with members ever since I have been Leader of the House, and I have never intentionally misled members. If I have inadvertently made

a statement that was not correct, I have corrected it at the earliest opportunity.

Hon. J. Cornell: You could not correct that if it proved to be wrong.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am speaking for the Government. Surely the people should have the privilege of exercising their right to express an opinion on the questions contained in the Bill. If we do not give them that right, we shall not be acting fairly to them.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair: the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am having typed copies of several amendments distributed.

Members: Very late.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The amendments were drafted in conjunction with Dr. Stow, and I was unable to get copies until this afternoon when it was too late to place them on the Notice Paper.

The Chief Secretary: Could they not have been distributed much earlier?

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That a definition be inserted as follows:—
“‘Area’ means (1) each of the areas defined in the Electoral Districts Act, 1922, as amended by the Electoral Districts Act Amendment Act, 1923; and (2) that portion of the State comprised within the electoral districts of Kimberley, Roebourne, Pilbara and Gascoyne.”

I wish to have means to ascertain the wishes of the people in the various parts of the State. There will be the metropolitan area, agricultural area, mining and pastoral area, and the northern area consisting of the four North-Western constituencies.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There can be no serious objection to the amendment, except that it will load the Bill. The Chief Electoral Officer informs me that it will be done in any event.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Did you say it could be or would be done?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I said distinctly that it would be done, irrespective

of the amendment, which will have the effect only of loading the Bill.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Will each area be shown?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. J. M. DREW: If it is only a question of burdening the Bill, there is no good ground for objecting to the amendment. Otherwise the Chief Electoral Officer may decide not to make such provision. When the referendum was taken in 1900, the areas were defined and the voting in each area was recorded and published.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Chief Electoral Officer has to mark each district roll.

Hon. E. H. Harris: But not the area.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is the same thing.

Hon. G. FRASER: There seems to be some confusion as to what is intended by “area.” Mr. Seddon means the four areas indicated and not the different constituencies.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The idea is to show plainly the opinion of the people in those four areas. I wish to ensure that the figures will be made available clearly and distinctly, so that there can be no doubt in future as to how the people in different parts of the State voted on the question.

Hon. A. THOMSON: This is rather a skilful suggestion. If it is good enough to elect members of the Assembly according to districts, that basis should be sufficient indication of the result of the referendum. I regret that the amendments were not before the Committee in time to allow them to be studied. I oppose the suggestion of setting up the metropolitan and goldfields areas against the country districts.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: It was not until this morning that Mr. Seddon and I had an opportunity to go through the Bill and frame our amendments. We then found that the Chief Secretary had a number as well. The object of the division of the State is so that the Chief Electoral Officer will be able to show exactly what the people desire in different parts. With the division, he will be able to issue figures showing that the people in the North may, for instance, desire to remain in the Federation, whereas the people in the South may desire secession.

Hon. A. Thomson: Cannot those figures be taken out from the individual electorates and groups later on?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Yes. But the Chief Electoral Officer could compile them officially.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If too many details are dragged into any system, it tends to break down. The amendment may improve the Bill, but I have a recollection of the House dealing with a similar matter 12 months ago, and the object then was to secure amendments that would not be agreed to in another place, and the Bill would be defeated. I do not know whether that is the object now.

Hon. H. Seddon: Do you suggest that?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: No.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Perhaps it is not far out.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope the Committee will not accept the amendment. If anyone desires the information, it can readily be taken out when the vote is known. If we were to agree to this, and sent the amendment to the Assembly, what would happen? We would make ourselves look foolish.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 and 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Issue of writ for referendum:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That at the beginning of Subclause 1 the words "simultaneously with the issue of his warrant for the issue of the writs for the next general election for the Legislative Assembly" be inserted.

The object of the amendment is to ensure that the referendum shall take place on the day the general election is held.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Seddon seeks to destroy something that is of value in the Bill and he is attempting a grave mistake. Ninety days are allowed for the referendum, and 60 days for the ordinary election. If, by carrying the amendment we cut down the period to the 60 days, it will prevent the consideration we desire shown to the people in the northern parts of the State.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6 Question to be submitted to electors:

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: To oppose the clause would be mere waste of time, because I have to recognise that I am one of a small minority. Can the Minister inform the Committee, whether in view of the suggestions made here and elsewhere, the Government will prepare a formal case for and against secession and publish the pamphlet so that the people may have an intelligent idea regarding what they are voting on? If the Minister can give us an assurance on that point, it may save the necessity for moving an amendment later on.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I regret I cannot give the assurance desired. It would be a difficult matter for the Government to undertake.

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: It is done in connection with Federal referenda.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I will submit the question to the Premier.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Government are sponsors for the Bill and, in those circumstances, I should think the case they would put up for secession would be much better than the one they would submit against secession. The issuing of such a pamphlet would be a dangerous weapon to put in the hands of the Government.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 and 8—agreed to.

Clause 9—Persons who may be admitted to vote at referendum:

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause 1 the words "as hereinafter mentioned" be struck out.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The amendment is far-reaching and wants a little consideration. I will ask that the further consideration of the clause be deferred.

Clause postponed.

Clauses 10 to 14—agreed to.

Clause 15—Taking of postal votes:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added to Subclause 2:—"Provided that a separate ballot

box shall be kept for the reception of the ballot papers for each district, and each such envelope shall be deposited in the appropriate box."

Is it intended that the postal votes shall be counted in the various districts, where they must be marked off on each roll?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Will all the votes be put into one ballot box? If they are put into the one box, when they are taken out, will they be sorted and allotted to the districts from which the electors came?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: When the votes are received by the Chief Electoral Officer, he checks them with the roll, and the votes are then put into a ballot box. The important part will be the checking with the roll.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Are you going to determine the electorates from which the votes came? Will the "yes" votes be grouped and the "no" votes grouped?

Hon. G. FRASER: The whole of the postal votes will be recorded from the State point of view, not from an area. The counterfoils will be checked, and the ballot papers will then be placed in a box. How is it going to be determined which district a particular vote came from when the counterfoil has been removed?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: If the votes are all going to be put into the one box, how will it be possible to know from which districts the voters came?

Hon. G. FRASER: The only way out of the difficulty is for the postal votes to be marked as belonging to their proper district before they are put into the box.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: There is no provision for that. Each district should be able to supply a complete record of the votes recorded in it, whether direct or as postal votes.

Hon. G. FRASER: The difficulty could be overcome if the electoral officer were to mark each paper with the district to which it belonged. When the boxes were opened the papers could then be sorted out in their different districts, and the figures added to the other votes recorded.

Hon. H. SEDDON: We do not yet know what will be done with the postal votes. Apparently there will be a group of so many thousand postal votes taken from all over the State, and we shall not know from which district these votes have been recorded.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Provision is made in the Electoral Act for votes to be counted

in the electorate in which they are recorded. Why not effect a saving by sending all the ballot boxes to Perth and have one big count made? This would dispense with a number of officers who would otherwise be engaged, in recording the counts. The vote for Western Australia would then be in the hands of one set of officials. The amendment is a very sound one.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I oppose the amendment, because it is not vital to the Bill. Why go to all this extra trouble to find out how the districts voted?

Hon. H. SEDDON: I want to know how the districts have voted. Certain sections of people in this State are not going to be governed by what is done by other sections. The views of the districts can only be ascertained by a correct record being kept of the votes cast by the people belonging to those districts. There can be no accurate record unless the postal votes are kept under control.

Hon. W. J. MANN: This is a matter for the efficiency of the Electoral Department. The vote on secession will be watched throughout the Empire and the figures will be scrutinised by experts. I cannot see what objection the Chief Secretary can have to the amendment. Apparently a system of catch-as-catch-can will be adopted.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Mr. Fraser's suggestion is the best one. Why cannot the postal votes be marked as coming from the district to which they belong? When the boxes are opened these votes can be recorded as coming from their respective districts. This would ensure an accurate vote being recorded for each electoral district.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There are 212,000 people who can take part in this vote, and there will be approximately 12,000 postal votes. There can be no record of the postal votes, whether in the affirmative or in the negative.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Do the Government wish to hide the vote?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, it is really a matter for the Electoral Department, but I have no objection to Mr. Seddon's amendment.

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

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, the clause was consequentially amended as follows:—

Subclause (1).—Insert after "officer" in line 29 the words "who shall keep a separate

record of the count in respect of each district."

Subclause (3).—Add the following:—"The Chief Electoral Officer shall also ascertain in manner aforesaid the total number of affirmative and negative votes which have been cast in each district and area, and a majority of affirmative or negative votes (as the case may be) for any district or area shall be deemed to indicate the decision of the electors therein."

Cause 16—Count of votes:

On motion by the Chief Secretary, consideration of this clause was postponed until after the consideration of postponed Clause 9.

Clauses 17, 18, Schedule—agreed to.

Postponed Clause 9—Persons who may be permitted to vote on referendum:

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I move an amendment—

That all words after "enrolled" in line 20 be struck out.

I fail to see why any special case should be made for a man to record an absentee vote on the referendum when the elector has not the same privilege in recording a vote for a candidate to the Assembly.

The Chief Secretary: Then you do not want him to have a vote on the referendum?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Yes, but I do not want it to be framed in the language of the Chief Secretary. The absentee vote should be abolished, and the elector made to record his vote when he votes for his Assembly representative.

Hon. H. SEDDON: If this clause remains as printed, a very serious injustice will be imposed on country electors, who have to record their absentee votes at the chief polling place in each district. Take the electorate of Kanowna, stretching from Laverton down to Esperance. An elector in that electorate who wants to record a vote for the referendum can only do so by attending at the chief polling place at Kanowna. And under the compulsory provision, if he cannot get in to record his vote he will be fined.

Hon. G. FRASER: If the clause goes through as printed, the Chief Electoral Officer will have to advertise two separate methods of recording votes. A person voting by post will have to do so on a certain day, while to record an absentee vote on the referendum he must wait until another day. This will lead to widespread confusion amongst the electors. The ordinary postal

vote system should be the system for both votes, that in the Assembly electorate, and that on the referendum.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment. In the Commonwealth Electoral Act all such matters are left to regulations to meet the case. I propose to move an amendment on the same lines.

Hon. A. THOMSON: In view of the definite statement made by Mr. Seddon, I should like the Minister to give us an interpretation of Clause 12, which I think smooths away all difficulties. Under that clause as I read it, every elector in Western Australia will be able to vote under the conditions applying to the Assembly elections.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member is quite right. The provisions of the Electoral Act apply to the Bill also.

Hon. G. FRASER: If that is so, if Clause 12 covers the position, what is Clause 9 there for? In my view it is some special provision made for a special occasion.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: This is a very important point, and I am firmly of opinion that there will be in each outside electorate hundreds of electors deprived of the vote. If the clause be as the interpretation given by the Chief Secretary, why have we Clause 9? I intend to divide the House and so give members who represent outlying districts the opportunity of saying whether the electors shall or shall not record their votes.

The CHAIRMAN: Before a division is taken, I wish to state I am desirous of voting with the Ayes, for this reason: I am altogether averse to giving a visitor to the town of Kanowna who is on the roll for some other district the right to record an absentee vote, when the only means a great number of the Kanowna electors, who are scattered over a territory as large as New South Wales, have of recording their votes is by post.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	10
Noes	..	..	..	13
				--
Majority against	..	..	..	3
				—

AYES.

Hon. J. Cornell
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. W. H. Kitson

Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. R. G. Moore
Hon. Sir C. Nathan
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. E. H. Harris
(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. J. Ewing
Hon. J. T. Franklin
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane

Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. E. Rose
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. H. J. Yelland
Hon. E. H. H. Hall
(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I move an amendment—

That the following words be inserted at the end of Subclause 2:—"and when any elector requests a vote at any polling place appointed under this subsection the following shall apply: The Returning Officer shall hand to the elector the necessary ballot papers, together with an envelope marked 'ballot paper' and direct the elector to mark each ballot paper in accordance with the directions therein set out. The elector shall then endorse and seal the ballot papers in the envelope marked 'ballot papers' and return it to the Returning Officer who shall then enclose the declaration made under subsection (3) hereof in the envelope marked 'declaration' who shall then enclose both envelopes in an envelope marked 'Voting in absence papers' and forward it to the Chief Electoral Officer who shall scrutinise, count and record all declarations and ballot papers so received in a manner similar to that set out in Sections 15 and 16 hereof for the scrutinising, counting and recording of postal votes."

I shall be glad to know whether the Chief Secretary will accept the amendment

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Certainly not. It will have the same effect as the previous amendment would have had.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: In the circumstances, I withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave withdrawn.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 3 the words "if so required by the presiding officer prove to his satisfaction by means of" be struck out, and the words "make a" inserted in lieu thereof: Also that the words "such elector" in the same subclause be struck out and the word "he" inserted in lieu.

Every person who records a vote should make a declaration. The provision is somewhat on the lines of the Federal Act.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is very necessary that the Chief Electoral Officer should be empowered to frame regulations under this section. I therefore move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added to Subclause 3:—"Provided that voting of electors under this subsection shall be under and subject to regulations, and such regulations may prescribe all matters (not inconsistent with this Act) necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying this section into effect, and in particular may provide for—

- (a) the forms of absent voters' ballot papers;
- (b) the manner in which votes are to be marked on absent voters' ballot papers;
- (c) the method of dealing with absent voters' ballot papers, including the scrutiny thereof, and the counting of votes thereon; and
- (d) the grounds upon which absent voters' ballot papers are to be rejected as informal."

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Regarding paragraph (d), will the regulation under the Electoral Act stand, or is it intended to put up a separate regulation to deal with this referendum?

The Chief Secretary: The present regulation will stand.

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

Postponed Clause 16—Counting of votes:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That after "postal votes" in line 1 of Subclause 1, the words "and votes recorded by electors under Subsection 3 of Section 9 of this Act" be inserted.

The amendment is practically consequential.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That after "officer" in line 2 of Subclause 1, the words "who shall keep a separate record of the count in respect of such district" be inserted.

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

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

BILL—BILLS OF SALE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [10.23] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of the Bill is to amend the Bills of Sale Act in relation to stock, in order that a bill of sale may be granted not only on stock that is already on a station—the word “station” applies to farms and dairy farms as well—but to stock that may be in transit to a station. The reason is that finance is necessary to purchase sheep at a sale yard, and it is not always possible for the buyer to finance the purchase himself, and he has to borrow money for the purpose. He therefore makes arrangements to borrow the money and the lender naturally wants immediate security. Provision is made under the Bills of Sale Act by which it is possible to register a bill of sale on wool or stock separately or combined on any station, without notice, but this applies only to wool or stock already on the holding and makes no provision for stock in transit. Ordinary bills of sale require 14 days’ notice and naturally in the case of a purchase as mentioned, the lender wants his security at once. To meet this difficulty a lot of financiers have been putting in the bills of sale words which covered not only the stock on the station but stock in transit. The legality of this was recently tested in the Full Court and it was ruled that such a bill of sale was null and void as against any third party because of the inclusion of sheep which were not on the property, but would still stand good as between the grantor and grantee. The result of the decision is that pastoralists and stock owners will find it practically impossible to raise money for the purchase of stock, and the banks and big stock firms, who have already financed farmers and pastoralists, will, in order to protect themselves, have to endeavour to get substitute bills, which will mean considerable expense and inconvenience. It is therefore considered expedient to amend the Act to obviate the possibility of hardship being inflicted on pastoralists and others by the stoppage of finance and to legalise any such bills that may have been given. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2.)

In Committee, etc.

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

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—MINE WORKERS' RELIEF.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [10.34]: I regret that a Bill of this description, which is so beneficial and far-reaching in its effects, should reach us so late in the session, and particularly at this hour of the night. If I have pulled my weight in connection with any particular subject during the 20 years I have been in Parliament, I can claim it is the one affected by the Bill. For many years past, one of my main concerns has been to make the life of a miner more lengthy, and his conditions of work a little more healthy. I can fully realise that members not conversant with the mining industry, and who were not in this House in earlier years when legislation of this description was initiated, find it hard to work up any enthusiasm on such a subject. On the other hand, those who have been interested, as I have been, in the gold mining industry for 30 odd years, and have seen good men go to premature graves, can appreciate the importance of such a Bill. We have to congratulate Sir James Mitchell for having headed Governments on two occasions that have dealt with this type of legislation. First, through the instrumentality of the present Minister for Mines, the original legislation was introduced to deal with this important question. Since then it has been a matter of concern for every member representing mining constituencies. I prepared myself, as I usually do in respect of Bills such as the one before the House now, with a view to giving of

my best on such an important subject. If I were to proceed at this juncture with the speech I prepared, in view of the state of the House and the lack of interest displayed by members, I would throw myself open to an invitation to spend some time at the mental home at Point Heathcote. I shall rest content with the case put up by Mr. Seddon in favour of the Bill last night. I intend therefore at this stage to deal with the apparent weaknesses of the Bill only. That should be sufficient for the occasion in view of the reception I am experiencing this evening. Mr. Seddon pointed out that the Bill goes further than the existing legislation. The first great weakness the Bill contains is that it is a measure to compensate only for injury done. There is no endeavour, as in South Africa, to remove from the mines men suffering from silicosis. The men will have to go on until they reach the advanced stage of the disease. The Bill will more or less encourage men to remain in the mines until they are prohibited, either because of tuberculosis or of silicosis or of a combination of both, from further employment there. I consider that the highest form of assistance than can be rendered is the prevention of the sacrifice of human life and from that standpoint, the object of the Bill should be that as soon as silicosis is detected in a miner, he should be informed—that course is followed in South Africa—that work in a mine was not suitable for him because he was showing signs of disease, that if he remained in the mine he would go from bad to worse, and that if he left the mine, he would be granted a certain amount of compensation for doing so. He should be informed that if he left the mine at that stage he would have many years of useful life before him as a unit in society, upon which he would be no drag. He should be told further that if he did not leave the mine then, he would not be able to get any more compensation. If he were told those things, he would be given clearly to understand two points. First, he would be given to understand that by continuing work in the mines he would merely shorten his life, and, secondly, that if he preferred to shorten his life by remaining in the mine, he would get no additional compensation. To-day the inducement still remains that

leads miners to work on in the hope that sooner or later they will get more compensation. The other big weakness is that at present the State bears all the cost of compensation payable to men suffering from tuberculosis or tuberculosis plus silicosis. The expense on account of silicosis only is borne under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act and the premiums are paid by the employers in respect of miners suffering from silicosis only. The Bill now provides for taking the full burden in respect of tuberculosis and tuberculosis plus silicosis off the State and that responsibility has to be shared in the first place, under the Workers' Compensation Act, and, secondly by the three parties—the State, the miner and the employer—who have to make their respective contributions to the compensation fund. It sets out that the compensation payable under the Workers' Compensation Act shall be up to £750 for silicosis in the advanced stage, which is the position to-day, and, in addition, compensation for silicosis plus tuberculosis, which is to-day a definite charge on the State. That is done in one way only, and upon that way the whole continuity of the Bill rests. To-day, as far as the Workers' Compensation Act is concerned there is only one insurer, the State Insurance Office. Assume that that office was abolished to-morrow, the Bill would go with it, or we should have to induce the private companies to come in and insure against silicosis and silicosis plus T.B. But there would be a considerable increase in the premiums. That then is another apparent weakness in the Bill. A further weakness is this: Under the Bill it is proposed that all beneficiaries under the Miners' Phthisis Act prior to the proclamation of the Bill we are considering, will remain where they are and draw the same rates of compensation. But so far as the future beneficiaries are concerned, they will be placed in a different category. There are to be the three-party contributions to the funds, and the £750 can be drawn at the rate of £3 10s. a week for advanced silicosis or advanced silicosis plus T.B. There will also be an amount from the fund to make up the figure to the basic wage of the district. In the case of a man suffering from T.B. only, he draws so much per week and so much for each child. In the case of bene-

beneficiaries under the Bill when the £750 is cut out, provided the beneficiary continues to contribute to the fund, the benefit will be prescribed by regulation. We do not know what that benefit will be, but we do know that the benefits to the men under the existing law are to continue. They are provided for by regulation and cannot be altered if one House objects to their being altered. The new beneficiaries have no starting point. Their benefits will be prescribed by regulation. I ask the House, as I did in 1922, to amend Section 45 to correct an apparent weakness. The amendment I suggest as a starting point is that no lesser rate of benefit shall be prescribed than the benefits being received under a prior law at the passing of this Act or at the time that the regulations to cover the new beneficiaries are prescribed. The House stood by me in 1922. All sections of the community should be treated on a basis of equality. The House will be doing its duty if it amends the Bill in the direction I suggest and returns it to another place so amended. If another place says that it cannot agree to the amendment, then this House need no longer persist in what we consider is an obvious duty. But it is our duty all the same to point out to another place where weaknesses exist and where they may be improved. I ask that that course be followed in connection with the amendment I have on the Notice Paper. I will give an illustration to prove the weakness. Say two days before the Bill comes into operation Smith is prohibited from further working in a mine on account of silicosis plus T.B. He draws an allowance under existing regulations up to £4 5s. a week. Assume that in a short period he dies and leaves a widow and child. Under the present regulations the widow will draw £2 a week and 8s. 6d. for the child until it attains the age of 14. After this Bill is proclaimed Brown is prohibited from working in a mine on account of silicosis plus T.B. Then he dies. What his widow and child are going to get is not set out. Under the existing law, what a person has cannot be taken away. But I do not see the justice of this, that on the passing of the Bill a person shall have something greater under existing regulations than those who will come under the law when the Bill is proclaimed. If the finances are such that a man under the new law will get less than the man is receiving

under the existing law, there is only one thing to do and that is to bring the man under the existing law down to the level of the man under the new law. That is all I ask the Council to do. There is another weakness. The Bill, as far as compensation for silicosis under the Workers' Compensation Act is concerned, undoubtedly tears the vitals right out of a portion of the Workers' Compensation Act. If this Bill is passed, there will be no question of deciding about compensation for silicosis plus tuberculosis under the Workers' Compensation Act. That will be fully determined under this measure. As to the illegalities that may arise, through this Bill amending another Act, there is only one insurer in the field of these industrial diseases, and it is not likely the State Insurance Office would test the legality of the law. It would be like the Crown taking action against the Crown. There is another weakness in the measure. It provides for a board of five members, two from each side, with an independent chairman and, in his absence, a deputy chairman. It is stipulated that the chairman should have only a deliberative vote. I have put on the Notice Paper an amendment to round off and complete this clause by the inclusion of the words "that in the event of an equality of votes on any question at any meeting, such question shall resolve in the negative." If there are four members at a meeting, two voting for and two against a motion, what will happen? I understand there is a working arrangement on the existing board, but there is nothing in the Bill to say what shall be done. The chairman is usually the warden. My amendment will round off the clause. Last night I interjected that the attempt to provide for the prospector was a laudable one, but it was like a stab in the dark. I hope the provisions dealing with prospectors will prove beneficial to them. Again I congratulate the Minister for Mines upon bringing down this Bill. It can honestly be said that he is one of the few Ministers for Mines who has introduced measures of this character of a purely constructive nature. He brought down the original Mine Workers' Relief Fund Bill. The Hon. A. McCallum introduced the Workers' Compensation Act, which was also a constructive measure. The Minister for Mines has endeavoured to consolidate the three organisations which now exist, namely, the Workers' Compensation Act, the

Miners' Phthisis Act, and the Mine Workers' Relief Fund Act. I admit this legislation is largely experimental, but I hope it will work out in the desired direction. I take a deep interest in the health and welfare of the miners. I hope we shall not lull ourselves into a false sense of security by thinking that we have done all that is necessary, that we have reached the end of a difficult case when we have got all these men out of the mines. Eternal vigilance will be necessary from now on with regard to the working conditions of men underground, more particularly as the mines go down to deeper levels. Already there is evidence of branching out, as in the case of the Lake View and Star, and the Wiluna group, which are working from 40,000 to 50,000 tons of ore a month. Every vigilance possible will be necessary to see that the atmosphere in which the miner works is, if not as healthy as God's open air, as healthy as it can be made. If we can bring that about we shall have achieved something. I support the second reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East—in reply) [11.5]: I thank members for their appreciative references to the Bill. As the matters which have been raised are largely those which can be dealt with in Committee, I will not detain the House at this stage.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. W. H. Kitson in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 37—agreed to.

Clause 38—Meetings:

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 3 the following words be added:—"and in the event of an equality of votes on any question at any meeting such question shall resolve in the negative."

If three or five members attend a meeting of the board, there must be a majority on one side or the other; but if only four members attend, the voting may be equal. Something is necessary to provide for what will happen then. This amendment is needed to round off the provision. Of course, if the Minister can say definitely it is intended

that all questions must be decided by a majority vote, the amendment will scarcely be necessary.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: When it was decided that the chairman or the deputy chairman should have only a deliberative vote, Subclause 3 was inserted to meet the situation. It was done purposely.

Hon. G. W. Miles: If there are only four members present, and two vote each way, the question will be decided in the negative?

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Very well; I will withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 39 to 44—agreed to.

Clause 45—Benefits to be prescribed:

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That there be added to the clause:—"Provided that a lesser scale of benefits shall not be prescribed under this section than the scale of benefits prescribed under the Miners' Phthisis Act, 1922, and in operation at, or at any time subsequent to, the passing of this Act."

Is it considered just that a lesser scale of benefits should be prescribed for new beneficiaries? The old beneficiaries will continue to be paid by the Government, although they have not contributed anything towards that compensation, whereas the new beneficiaries will be required to make contributions. Therefore it is only fair to say there shall be a starting point, and that the rates of benefit to the new beneficiaries shall not be less than that for the old beneficiaries. To-day mining companies, in addition to paying the cost of workers' compensation, are asked to pay benefits for advanced silicosis and silicosis and tuberculosis, but the load of the new cases is taken off the Government to the extent that they are compensating only men with pure tuberculosis, and they have to be compensated through the fund.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: The amendment might be all right but for one thing, which is, where are we to find the money to carry it out? I am advised that if the suggested charges were doubled, there might not even then be sufficient money. Again, I am not sure that the amendment, coming from this House, would be in order; because under it the Government would have to con-

tribute, and so it would mean an added burden on the taxpayer.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The existing scale of compensation is a sole charge on the taxpayer and is met through Consolidated Revenue. The proposal under the Bill is to relieve the taxpayers of that full charge and spread the burden over the worker, the mine owner and the Government. Therefore it is a flight of imagination to say the amendment will be increasing the burden on the taxpayer. Then the Chief Secretary says the money cannot be found. But under the law as it stands we have to go on finding compensation from Consolidated Revenue for the men prohibited. The object of the Bill is to relieve the taxpayer of the obligation to provide for these men out of Consolidated Revenue. Assume for the sake of argument that the Bill becomes law, a set of regulations will be laid on the Table of the House. The regulations will provide that after a worker has exhausted the £750 compensation which he will receive under the Workers' Compensation Act, he shall get a benefit of £1 a week, while another worker will be receiving £2 a week. Then this House can move that the regulation be disallowed on the ground that the amount is not enough.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot agree with Mr. Cornell. If the amendment be carried, it will have the effect of increasing the burden on the people. I ask the Chairman's ruling on the matter.

The CHAIRMAN: The proposed amendment would increase the burden on the people. I rule that I cannot accept it.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am looking after the rights and privileges of the working miner. I have now obtained from the Leader of the House the statement that the persons responsible for the framing of the Bill recognise that if the same benefits are to be given to the new beneficiaries under the Bill, as will be continued to the old beneficiaries under the prior law, a set of circumstances will arise which will make it impossible for the three parties to continue to contribute.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 46 to 52—agreed to.

Clause 53—Benefit in respect of a mine worker referred to in ss. 50 and 52 of this Act:

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: When I dealt with this clause on the second reading, I raised the point whether it would not be well to define "prospectors." I made that suggestion to the Chief Secretary.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have received an opinion from the Crown Law Department. They say—

Prospecting and mining under this Bill have the same meaning as prospecting and mining under the Mining Act, 1904: and any person who would be regarded as a prospector under and for the purposes of the Mining Act must and will be treated as a prospector under this Bill.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 54 to 62—agreed to.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and passed.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1, 2, 3, Schedules A and B—agreed to.

Schedule C:

Hon. G. W. MILES: When speaking on the second reading I criticised the method of Government book-keeping as regards the Sale of Government Property Trust Account. As I have given notice of a motion on this subject, I do not intend to ask the Committee to consider an alteration of the method at this stage.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedule D:

Hon. G. W. MILES: I hope the Government will take steps to ensure that the wool grower gets the full value for the wool he sells. Scales are obtainable that weigh almost to the ounce, and I think legislation is necessary to ensure that growers receive the full net weight of the wool. It is the only commodity for which the producer does not receive the full weight, and the amount represented is £300,000 or £400,000. The com-

mittee who sat in the Eastern States dealt with the matter, and I hope the Government will take it up with the Commonwealth authorities and introduce legislation. The Minister for the North-West appointed a committee to advise the Government regarding the development of that area. I hope the Government will not pigeon hole the report. I am glad Mr. Harris has asked for it to be tabled. Recently the Press announced a project for the development of Northern Australia, and I wish to urge upon the Government the necessity for doing something to develop the northern part of this State. Otherwise the trade of the Northern Territory will be diverted to Eastern Australia. If we could get a scheme for the development of the Kimberleys, there would be a chance of holding that trade.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedules E, F, G and H, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—LAND AND INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1.)

Second Reading.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [11.52] in moving the second reading said: The object of this short Bill is to amend an obvious error in the Act. In Western Australia there are large numbers of sites that have been dedicated to the building of churches. Whenever a new townsite is proclaimed, the Government have made available, on the application of church authorities, sites for churches. It will be many years before the churches are built. Under the State Act the land is taxed and although the individual amounts are small, in the aggregate they total a fairly large sum. Churches, in common with other institutions, find it difficult to meet their obligations during the present hard times. The Bill proposes to amend Subsection 1 of Section 10 by inserting in line 13 of paragraph (e) after the word "occupied" the words, "or held." The Federal Act exempts such land under Section 13, paragraph (g) which reads—

society solely as a site for (1) a place of worship for a religious society or a place of residence for any clergy or ministers or order of a religious society.

The words "or held" are also included in the Road Districts Act and the Municipal Corporations Act. The Bill will bring the State Act into line with the three Acts I have mentioned. The authorities of the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church and Methodist Church are the chief sufferers from the tax and it is desirable that they be freed from that impost. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 12.1 a.m. (Friday).

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 15th December, 1932.

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

All land owned by or in trust for any person or society and used by that person or